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20 April 2020

The Rt. Hon. Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister,

The National Pensioners Convention is the largest campaigning organisation in the UK standing up for rights and dignity in retirement for today's and tomorrow's pensioners.

We have in the past requested meetings with the Secretary of State for Health and Social care or someone in the department to talk about the ongoing crisis in social care and to share some solutions. Unfortunately, it has always been a busy time and we have not had the opportunity to sit down and have a reasoned discussion about the future of care.

A decade of chronic underfunding of the NHS, Local Government and Care providers is the responsibility of the current government and the decisions taken during that time have, as we now see, come home to roost. The benefit of hindsight is a wonderful thing, and we believe with that the government may have made different decisions. In particular, the behaviour by your party in the House of Commons on denying a pay rise to NHS staff – the same staff you now call heroes – giving their lives on the front line. The fragmentation of NHS and care services has underpinned the way in which both have been woefully unprepared to deal with the COVID-19 crisis.

As you recover from your infection with the virus, we are sure you agree that there are lessons to be learned from this extraordinary chapter in our history. It is abundantly clear that public services of any kind are crucial in times like these with the economy on the downward trend, workers at home, job losses and a myriad of other issues that are an impact on each and every one. There will, no doubt, be a reflection by the government on the damage inflicted on those public services by the year on year funding cuts with the same, if not more, expectations on service delivery.

We understand the enormous impact on the economy of this tragic situation and older people already contributing directly or indirectly to the treasury around £160 billion a year are happy to continue to do so. However, there is a section of society that appears to be able to grow their wealth with impunity. We believe there are opportunities to be taken now to ensure that the huge inequality that exists in this country – not just in access to health and care services – is redressed.

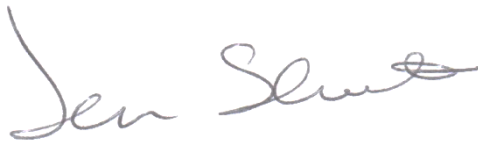
As a survivor of COVID-19 yourself, you have had first-hand experience of the wonderful people who work in our NHS who without hesitation always put patients first. The loss of life cannot go unanswered and we believe you know the right thing to do now. Respecting each individual for their talents and contributions to the country should be an everyday part of government policy, behaving as adults should to set an example on the road to recovery.

The NPC asks you to lead the government on a very different course to that taken prior to COVID-19 reaching the UK. There is an opportunity now to make a huge difference to health and care services and invest in the future by:

- Fully funding the NHS
- Fully funding Local Government
- Funding Charities with public service track records in health and care
- Fully funding a National Care Service free at the point of need, through general taxation.
- Creating an income for 'informal carers' – those who save the government billions of pounds each year for the pittance of carer's allowance or in lots of case, nothing at all.

We know difficult decisions will have to be made as the economy suffers world-wide. Being a forward-thinking government prepared to take ground-breaking actions will boost the economy in so many ways. In doing so, you will also give confidence, stability and a future for health and care services – proof that you are indeed their champion.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jan Shortt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jan Shortt
General Secretary

Enc. Copy letter to Rt. Hon. Matt Hancock MP