

# Funding the Future

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As [the Guardian](#) has noted:

*New figures show more than 150,000 unpaid carers are now facing huge fines for minor rule breaches, as MPs, charities and campaigners demanded an immediate amnesty.*

They added:

*The Guardian can reveal 156,000 unpaid carers are repaying severe penalties – in some cases tens of thousands of pounds – for often unwittingly overstepping the £151-a-week earnings limit while [caring for a loved one](#).*

11,600 carers hit by the penalties are paying back sums of more than £5,000. About one in five unpaid carers in work breached the strict weekly earnings limit last year, an illustration, campaigners say, of a broken system.

The last point is the key one. Of course, benefits have to be limited as to who can claim them. But benefits also have to recognise the realities of life - where rigid control of everything that happens within chaotic real-world situations - as the lives of carers usually are - cannot be controlled. That is most especially true when care-giving is the absolute and necessary priority of those providing it.

A system that does not provide for that is callous.

A penalty system that imposes costs way in excess of the loss suffered by the government, as this one does, is beyond callous.

Creating the capacity to pursue claims that impose poverty when the object of this benefit was to relieve it is indicative of a mindset that has lost touch with reality.

Of course, if there is fraud, chase it, but I very much doubt that many of these claims involve fraud. They refer to simple human error. In that case, there should be forgiveness in most cases, coupled (perhaps) with repayment, at most, of a part of the sum overpaid, representing a fair tax rate (ten per cent?) on the excess earnings not declared.

But so long as this persecution continues, we are living in a country governed by a political party that shows it just does not care.