Dear David,

I am writing to deliver an open letter on behalf of twenty-one Warrington councillors, community leaders, service users, their families and I regarding the treatment of frontline staff at Catalyst Choices.

We are concerned that staff do not have fair representation through their trade unions as a result of Catalyst Choices having no recognition agreement – something that is denying staff the vital ability to negotiate and speak up collectively. Many staff have reported worsening conditions and struggles with understaffing, overwork and loss of pay through contract changes.

While we appreciate that underfunding in Social Care is a national issue, we believe that the effects of this underfunding make it even more important for staff to have trade union representation, equipping them to have a fair say on changes that affect their work life and campaign collectively for improvements.

I hope you appreciate our concern and the importance of preserving decent conditions for care workers and high-quality care for our loved ones in Warrington and will therefore reconsider the lack of agreement and cooperation with the staff trade unions, UNISON and the GMB. The first step to doing so is to formally recognise both trade unions.

Kind Regards,

Charlotte Nichols MP
Warrington North
Open Letter in Support of front-line staff at Catalyst Choices

Dear David,

We the undersigned, support staff at Catalyst Choices struggling with worsening working conditions who are campaigning for dignity and respect at work and for a stronger collective voice through their Trade Unions.

Catalyst Choices are in the process of implementing new contracts which will involve a substantial loss of pay for many, including losses to sick pay, overtime pay, bank holiday pay and redundancy payments. For some staff, this will mean a loss of nearly £2000 a year. Major cuts to terms and conditions are being proposed following an unsatisfactory consultation period which denied staff the opportunity to negotiate collectively and ignored staff calls for savings to be made in a way that does not unfairly and disproportionately affect frontline staff. Staff are clear that conditions should be raised for all workers across the board instead of improvements for some meaning losses for others.

Frontline staff are struggling with understaffing and unmanageable workloads. Support workers regularly report having to work across two bungalows with multiple service users in each due to staff shortages, putting service users at risk and huge pressure and strain on support workers. Staff are often denied sufficient rest time between shifts and are expected to carry out tasks that are beyond the remit of their job descriptions for no extra pay. Many staff worry about worsening health and safety procedures and an increasing inability to deliver the quality of care that they desperately want to provide. Both those delivering and receiving care deserve better.

Worryingly, Catalyst Choices do not currently recognise trade unions. This means that they do not need to consult or negotiate with staff unions when making changes that affect staff’s working lives. Every worker has the right to be in a trade union and they deserve the opportunity to raise concerns and campaign for improvements with a strong and independent collective voice. The company have consistently tried to undermine staff efforts to organise in a union and clearly wish to suppress any activity among staff that might result in them building a strong, unified collective voice which would enable them to have a fairer say in how the business is run and to defend the quality of care.

If the company continues to disregard the collective voice of staff, we recognise that not only will many long-term, dedicated employees choose to leave the company, but Catalyst Choices will also continue to struggle to recruit new staff as conditions inevitably worsen. Further to this, we expect the quality of care to drop substantially as the continuity of service and experience of those delivering it diminishes. We therefore urgently call on Catalyst Choices to recognise UNISON and GMB for collective bargaining purposes.

For our care workers, our loved ones and the wider common good we support the call from staff at Catalyst Choices to have a recognised trade union in their workplace.

Yours Sincerely,
Charlotte Nichols, MP for Warrington North
Helen Wright, Daughter of Mosslands Resident
Pat Daintith, Niece of Catalyst Choices Resident
Steve Roughsedge, Catalyst Choices Resident
Canon Christopher Cunningham, Church of the Sacred Heart
Father John Schofield, Parish Priest at St Joseph’s Penketh
Father Mark Drew, Assistant Priest at St Joseph’s Penketh
Paula Askew, Landlord at the Poacher Pub
Rick Askew, Landlord at the Poacher Pub
Amanda King, Councillor for Great Sankey South
Jan Davidson, Councillor for Culcheth Glazebury & Croft
Hans Mundy, Councillor for Latchford East
Karen Mundy, Councillor for Latchford East
Jean Carter, Councillor for Great Sankey South
Colin Froggatt, Councillor for Poulton South
Diana Friend, Councillor for Poulton North
Graham Friend, Councillor for Poulton North
Russel Purnell, Councillor for Poulton North
Morgan Tarr, Councillor for Orford
Alex Abbey, Councillor for Burtonwood and Winwick
Les Morgan, Councillor for Latchford West
Andy Hill, Councillor for Rixton & Woolston
David Keane, Councillor for Penketh & Cuerdley
Hitesh Patel, Councillor for Great Sankey South
Tony Higgins, Councillor for Fairfield & Howley
Brian Maher, Councillor for Poplars & Hulme
Jean Flaherty, Councillor for Fairfield & Howley
Linda Dirir, Councillor for Penketh & Cuerdley
Matt Smith, Councillor for Culcheth Glazebury & Croft
Pauleen Nelson, Councillor for Birchwood
Sarah Hall, Councillor for Bewsey & Whitecross