



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

September 2018

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about the quality of early education and the early years workforce.

High quality early education is vital and it is especially important for improving the life chances for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. A good early years education is the cornerstone of improving social mobility. I am wholly supportive of the commitment, set out by the Education Secretary, to halve the number of children finishing the reception year without the early communication and reading skills they need over the next ten years.

In the Early Years Workforce Strategy, the Department for Education committed to undertake a feasibility study into developing a programme to grow the graduate workforce in disadvantaged areas. The aim being to narrow the quality gap between settings in disadvantaged and more affluent areas.

Encouragingly, the quality of early education continues to improve. Ofsted data shows that the proportion of good and outstanding providers is now almost identical in the least deprived areas compared with the most deprived. Similarly, evidence tells us that children in disadvantaged areas are now just as likely to be able to access high quality education as children in more affluent areas. The attainment gap in early years development has fallen by 14 per cent since 2010.

Recruiting graduates into the early years workforce remains very challenging, despite successive governments making significant investments in this area. It is therefore important that complementary approaches to improving the skills of the workforce are explored. I welcome that significant investment will be made in professional development for the early years workforce. The Education Secretary has announced £20 million of funding for professional development across the wider workforce, focused on disadvantaged areas. This will ensure early years professionals have the expertise to support very young children's early language and literacy skills and the Department has been clear that it remains committed to ensuring there are routes to graduate level qualifications in the early years sector.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY

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