



Chris Heaton-Harris
Member of Parliament for Daventry
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
Tel: 020 7219 7048

October 2020

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on people with disabilities and for bringing Scope's Disability Report to my attention.

I am aware that so many people with disabilities feel forgotten during this crisis. As well as addressing this, we must ensure rights are not eroded and look for opportunities to change things for the better, for good.

I have not yet read Scope's report in detail, but my colleagues in the Department for Work and Pensions and the Government Equalities Office have.

As you know, guidance for the extremely clinically vulnerable states that shielding has been paused. People who have been shielding will still be able to receive priority slots for supermarket deliveries, as well as prescriptions, essential items and food deliveries by NHS Volunteer Responders. If you find yourself in this situation and feel you might need local volunteer support, please do contact your local authority.

Regarding welfare, the Government acted quickly at the peak of the crisis to suspend all face-to-face assessments for health and disability-related benefits while also extending award periods, giving people peace of mind that their benefit payments would continue. Ministers are protecting the health of individuals claiming these benefits, many of whom are likely to be at greater risk of severe coronavirus symptoms due to their pre-existing health conditions.

The measures in the Coronavirus Act are temporary and proportionate to the threat we face. They will only be used when strictly necessary and will only be in place for as long as required to respond to the public health emergency. Local authorities are still expected to do as much as they can to comply with their duties to meet needs during this period, and the legislation does not remove the duty of care towards an individual's risk of serious neglect or harm. The legislation must not be used as cover for negating basic duties.

The National Strategy for Disabled People is a key opportunity to enact changes that really make a difference to people with disabilities. There is important work underway involving Government, disability charities and businesses to produce practical measures that will transform the daily lives of



Chris Heaton-Harris

Member of Parliament for Daventry
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
Tel: 020 7219 7048

people with disabilities and ensure they can fully participate in society. The strategy will be ambitious and will support people with disabilities in all aspects and phases of life.

This National Strategy will put fairness at the heart of government, levelling up opportunities for people with disabilities. Importantly, while it will build on evidence and data, it will also be based on insights from people's daily experiences. The strategy will include existing commitments, like the increase in special educational needs and disability funding and careers advice, as well as identifying areas where further improvement is required.

I know my colleagues are keen to hear from as many experts as possible, including charities such as Scope and from what I've read of the report so far, I think we are all pointing in the same direction.

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**