



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

February 2021

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about child poverty.

I can assure you that eradicating child poverty is an absolute priority. I proudly stood on a manifesto that pledged to continue efforts through the tax and benefits system to reduce poverty, including child poverty. I firmly believe that children should grow up in an environment with no limits to their potential and I am pleased the Government is making it a priority to put more money in the pockets of low-paid workers.

The way we measured child poverty in the past, based on median income, was deeply flawed. For example, by this measure the number of children in poverty went down significantly during the last economic recession. That is why new measures have been introduced to focus on the root causes of poverty, chief among them being educational attainment and levels of work within a family.

The Prime Minister has given a clear commitment to do whatever it takes to support people during the Coronavirus crisis and this has included a number of measures to protect children and ensure no child goes hungry. Due to the pandemic, I know that many children and parents in our Daventry constituency faced an entirely unprecedented situation over the summer. To reflect this, additional funding was provided for a 'Covid Summer Food Fund' which enabled children who are eligible for free school meals to receive food vouchers covering the 6-week holiday period.

Schools do not need to provide lunch parcels or vouchers during the February half-term. There is wider government support in place which will ensure support families and children continue to receive support outside of term-time through the £170 million Covid Winter Grant Scheme.

At the start of the pandemic, extraordinary measures were put in place to help vulnerable children, including extending free school meals when schools were partially closed.

While there has been considerable coverage of what Parliament did not agree, there has been less attention to what it *did* agree and what I supported. MPs backed the existing emergency package of support measures for families which is worth billions on top of Free School Meals. Parliament also endorsed ongoing activities to help the most vulnerable children in society.

This is part of the wider support available for children and families at this challenging time. An additional £63 million has been distributed to local authorities in England to help those who are struggling to afford food and other essentials. In addition, Universal Credit and Working Tax



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Credit have been temporarily uplifted by around £1,000 a year as part of an injection of over £9.3 billion into the welfare system.

I will be keeping a close watch on this issue and will do all I can to ensure our children are protected from poverty.

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