



April 2021

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about eating disorders.

I appreciate how challenging this condition can be to live with. With eating disorders on the rise, please let me assure you that tackling these disorders through early and effective treatment remains a key priority of our NHS. I firmly support Eating Disorders Awareness Week as an important way of raising awareness for these conditions.

Regarding EDM 1552, Members of the Government do not, by convention, sign any Early Day Motions, as doing so is likely to breach the Ministerial Code's rules on collective responsibility. Please note that I have never signed any Early Day Motions in my time in Parliament. While I support all moves to increase awareness of the impact of eating disorders, including binge eating disorder, I believe that the Government and NHS are proactively seeking to provide the right support for people with eating disorders of all types.

Early intervention is vital in the fight against eating disorders and everyone with an eating disorder must have access to timely treatment. An ambitious new access standard has been introduced, aiming for 95% of children (up to 19 years old) with eating disorders to receive treatment within a week for urgent cases and four weeks for routine cases by the end of 2020. While in view of the coronavirus pandemic I know that this has been a particularly challenging year, and I share your disappointment that this target was not met, I know that NHS staff have been working extremely hard to refer people as quickly as possible: I am certain that services will continue to improve, particularly as NHS services return to normal following the disruption of the past year.

As part of the NHS Long Term Plan, published last year and delivering a £33.9bn cash funding increase, the next five years will see boosted investment in children and young people's eating disorder services. Four fifths of children and young people with an eating disorder now receive treatment within one week in urgent cases and four weeks for non-urgent cases. As need continues to rise, extra investment will allow the NHS to maintain delivery of the 95% standard beyond 2020/21.

The importance of early intervention to help people with eating disorders cannot be underestimated, which is why I welcome increased funding for children and young people's mental health to help to identify people suffering with the mental distress of an eating disorder. The NHS Long Term Plan, through a £2.3 billion uplift in annual mental health funding, makes a commitment to enable an additional 345,000 children and young people aged 0-25 to access support via NHS funded mental health services and school or college-based mental health support teams. Using BMI to identify people with an eating disorder remains a useful tool, and improved access to mental health support will enable earlier intervention for young people.



**Chris Heaton-Harris**

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The Government is committed to improving eating disorder services for adults. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has updated its guidelines, and NHS England recently completed a national review of provision. NHS England is now considering the next steps for the four-week waiting time pilots for adults announced in the NHS Long Term Plan and my colleagues in the Department for Health and Social Care are working to ensure that people are properly supported as they transfer between children's and adults' services. The Government is currently delivering against the standards set for waiting times for eating disorder treatment.

My colleagues in the Department of Health and Social Care are considering a range of options to help people, particularly children and young people, to have a healthy, balanced diet and to take part in exercise. I understand that PACE labelling, also known as Front-of-Pack Nutrition Labelling (FOPNL), has been shown to reduce the number of calories consumed by individuals, and as such it is important to consider its inclusion as part of wider goals to reduce obesity. However, I fully support consultation on all measures to ensure that the impact on people with pre-existing health conditions or eating disorders is fully considered. The results of this consultation are currently being analysed.

Eating disorders are an acutely distressing mental illness but with the right approach, and appropriate investment, I am confident that the NHS will be able to offer help, care, and support to all those who suffer from eating disorders.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP**  
**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**