



September 2021

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about child poverty.

I firmly believe that children should grow up in an environment with no limits to their potential and that we must continue efforts to reduce poverty, including child poverty.

First, thank you for highlighting the statistics for our local area. I would emphasise that my colleagues at the Department for Work and Pensions have been unable to assess the robustness of Loughborough University's modelling, as their methodological choices have not been shared. National Statistics on the number and percentage of children in low income households are published annually in the "Households Below Average Income" publication. These remain the most accurate published measurements of low income. These latest statistics show that in the past decade, 100,000 children have been lifted out of absolute poverty (both before and after housing costs) and levels of combined material deprivation and low income for children are at their joint lowest level.

Since the start of the Covid-19 outbreak, quick action has been taken to support families. Over 11.5m people have been kept in their jobs through the furlough scheme, while welfare changes worth over £7.4 billion were quickly introduced. The £500m local authority hardship fund was established and a £63 million local welfare assistance fund was also created so that councils can help those struggling to afford food and other essentials. While some of the help you mention was instigated at the start of the pandemic, further support has been introduced as it has progressed. As you would expect, discussions are ongoing across government about the best way to support people.

The benefit cap allows for a yearly income of £20,000 outside of London, and £23,000 within London, and I am not aware of plans to change this. However, I would emphasise that claimants with a sustained employment record may benefit from a nine-month grace period before the cap applies. Exemptions also apply for the most vulnerable claimants who are entitled to disability benefits and carer benefits.

As you may know, ministers commissioned an independent review into the food system in the form of the National Food Strategy.

Part One of that review was published in July 2020 and it gave recommendations to support this country through the turbulence caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Part Two of the independent review sets out proposals for measures to combat obesity and improve overall health of children and adults, as well as proposals for specific initiatives to educate children about nutrition at school. My ministerial colleagues will now carefully consider the report's conclusions and respond with a White Paper within six months, setting out priorities for the food system.



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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