



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

March 2022

*Dear Constituent,*

Thank you for contacting me about infant feeding.

I recognise that breastfeeding is a personal choice for each woman to make and that not all mothers are able to or choose to breastfeed.

It is widely agreed that breastfeeding delivers significant health benefits to new-born babies and promotes strong bonds between mother and baby. It provides the child with a perfect balance of vitamins and nutrients and protects mother and baby from infection and disease. That is why, when possible, the Department of Health and Social Care encourages exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a child's life. I understand that breastfeeding rates vary nationally, and I believe that it is important that local commissioners offer all new mothers the best quality of care. There are now more than 2,513 more NHS midwives than a decade ago. They can help provide women with the advice and support needed to breastfeed.

In line with UNICEF's Baby Friendly guidelines, all women should be supported to make informed decisions and to develop a close relationship with their babies soon after birth. The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities is working with local services, midwives and health visitors to make this vision a reality, with a particular focus on areas needing urgent support. Additionally, I welcome that the Government has provided £300 million to implement the Early Years Health Development Review, which seeks to support local authority services for mothers and their babies in the critical first 1,001 days, including Family Hubs and breastfeeding support services. Further, Healthy Start Vouchers are available to new mothers to ensure they are able to obtain the vitamins they need to support them whilst breastfeeding.

You may be pleased to know that recommendations are being implemented from the Better Birth report, to improve maternity services in England. This includes the promotion of breastfeeding.

For those who choose not to breastfeed, the Government supports the safe use of infant formula, and I know that regulations are in place to ensure that all types of infant formula meet the nutritional needs of babies.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

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

Website: [www.heatonharris.com](http://www.heatonharris.com)