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*Dear Constituent,*

Thank you for contacting me about childcare, parental leave and flexible working. I have noted the concerns of those taking part in the March of the Mummies protest.

The Department for Education (DfE) continues to look at ways to improve the cost, choice, and availability of childcare, and to encourage families to use their full entitlement of government-funded support.

The DfE has spent over £3.5 billion in each of the past three years on its early education entitlements and intends to continue this support.

In the 2021 Spending Review, the Government increased funding: £160 million for 2022/23, £180 million for 2023/24, and £170 million for 2024/25, compared to the 2021/22 financial year. This allows local authorities to increase childcare providers' hourly rates and reflects cost pressures and changes in the number of eligible children anticipated at the time of the Spending Review.

For 2022/23, the DfE has increased the hourly funding rates for all local authorities by 21p an hour for the two-year-old entitlement and, for the vast majority of areas, by 17p an hour for the three and four-year-old entitlement.

Regarding parental leave, maternity leave entitlement in the UK is one of the most generous in the world, with employed women entitled to 52 weeks of maternity leave, of which 39 are paid.

New fathers are eligible to take two weeks of paid paternity leave within the first eight weeks following the birth or adoption placement. Eligible employed fathers also have other entitlements to balance work with childcare, including paid annual leave, unpaid parental leave and the right to request flexible working.

Shared parental leave allows eligible parents up to 50 weeks of leave and 37 weeks of pay in the first year.

In recent years, the Government has consulted on reforming both parental leave and pay, and the legal framework to request flexible working (where employees can request a change to their hours, pattern or place of work). It will respond to both consultations in due course. Although there clearly cannot be a 'one-size-fits-all' approach, the Government supports flexible working in all its forms, where it has benefits for, and is agreed between, both individuals and employers.

Thank you, once again, for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

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

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