



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

March 2016

Dear Constituent,

Thanks for contacting me about Personal Independence Payments (PIP).

As Co-Chairman of the All Party Group for Learning Disabilities, I had already had a meeting with the Minister for Disabled where I raised my concerns over the proposed benefit changes on the Budget Day itself and, last Thursday, I wrote to the Chancellor to further raise these concerns with him (the letter was coordinated by the Conservative MP for Brigg and Goole, Andrew Percy).

Since then, events have moved this debate on and as you know we now have the Rt. Hon Stephen Crabb MP as the new Secretary of State for the Department of Work and Pensions. Yesterday he announced that there would be no changes to PIP in the remaining four years of this parliament.

Personally, I would still like to see some changes to the assessment that goes alongside PIP, as I have raised the quality of these several times since PIP was introduced. If we could improve these and ensure that existing medical information was evaluated pre-assessment I think we could actually save a lot of money by reducing the need for tribunals.

The Government is absolutely committed to improving the quality of life of those facing disadvantage. I agree it is essential to ensure that those with disabilities get the support they need to live full and independent lives. That is why the Government is supporting people with physical, mental or cognitive conditions to live independently; nearly £50 billion was spent on disability benefits and services in 2012/13 and overall spending on the main disability benefits is forecast to be higher in every year to 2017-18 than it was in 2009-10.

Importantly, the introduction of the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessment looks at people as individuals, rather than just focusing on physical disabilities. Figures show that the most severely disabled are being protected, with a greater proportion getting the higher rates. Benefits associated with the additional costs of disability will continue to be non-means-tested and non-taxable cash benefits, exempt from the household benefits cap.

Once again, many thanks 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