



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

November 2018

*Dear Constituent,*

Thank you for contacting me about the inclusion of New Clause 7 into the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions) Act.

I would like to make clear that the Government's policy is to allow a free vote on matters of conscience.

There has been much debate about the subjects New Clause 7 relates to and I agree with the Secretary of State that change is needed in Northern Ireland. However, I disagreed with the tabling of the amendment within the scope of this legislation. The Act does not allow the law to be changed as it asks civil servants to work within the confines of the law as it exists today. The amendment requires the Northern Ireland Secretary to issue guidance to senior civil servants and to submit a quarterly report to Parliament on the impact of the laws in question.

The Government believes that any future reform in Northern Ireland must be debated and decided by the people of Northern Ireland and their locally-elected politicians. This has been the position of successive Governments, both Conservative and Labour.

I therefore welcome the Secretary of State's commitment to work closely with Northern Ireland's political parties to restore strong, inclusive devolved government at the earliest opportunity.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris".

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

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