



May 2021

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about child poverty. I proudly stood on a manifesto that pledged to continue efforts to reduce poverty, including child poverty. I firmly believe that children should grow up in an environment with no limits to their potential.

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 £9 billion were quickly introduced, including through a temporary uplift in Universal Credit worth up to £1,040 a year.

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 was instigated at the start of the pandemic, further support has been introduced over the last year. 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. These amounts are equivalent to a taxable salary of about £24,000 or £28,000 respectively. 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.



Chris Heaton-Harris

Member of Parliament for Daventry
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
Tel: 020 7219 7048

I very much welcome the publication of the first part of the National Food Strategy, which will kick start a full review of our food system. I have read with interest the first part of the National Food Strategy and await the second part, which I understand is due this year. This is an independent report, and I know that Ministers across government will consider its recommendations carefully.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Chris".

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY