



November 2021

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about Down's Syndrome, or Trisomy 21. I know many people have very strong concerns about this matter.

A range of support is available for families with children born with Down's syndrome. This includes an early intervention programme to help with the child's development and provide support to the family. The programme is delivered by health visitors and midwives and can include speech and language therapy, physiotherapy, and individual home teaching programmes. In addition, where a child has a special educational need, the local authority should also make support available to ensure the child has access to the same educational opportunities as any other child.

Also, the Government's National Strategy for Disabled People ensures people with disabilities can lead a life of opportunity and fulfilment. The strategy supports disabled people in all aspects of their lives, looking at areas such as education, housing and transport.

The consultation "health is everyone's business" explored ways in which government and employers can take action to reduce ill health-related job loss. With the results of this consultation now published, I fully support the Government's clear objective to make sure that disabled people and people with health conditions can lead the fullest, most independent lives possible, reaching their potential. As part of this, I am encouraged that the Government is committed to its ambition to see one million more disabled people in work by 2027.

The NHS runs a screening programme which offers women more choice in pregnancy. Screening is an option, not an inevitable aspect of routine antenatal care, and the programme carefully explains that parents are entitled to choose whether or not to have the test. They are then able to make an informed choice based on personal values and beliefs whether to participate in the programme and the options available to them. In 2016, the UK National Screening Committee recommended the introduction of screening for Down's, Edward's and Patau's syndrome, following a thorough review of the available scientific and cost evidence relating to Non-Invasive Prenatal Testing (NIPT). Since 2018, women have begun to be offered a safer screening test as an additional test, reducing the need for diagnostic invasive tests which carry a risk of miscarriage, with the rollout complete by the end of 2021.

I believe that women who choose to have antenatal screening for Down's syndrome should be able to make an informed decision based on the results of robust tests. It is essential to ensure that prospective parents receive the right information and support throughout the screening process. A range of interested parties, including Down's syndrome charities, were worked with to develop information for both prospective parents and healthcare professionals.

The National Institute for Health Research welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including Down's syndrome. These applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made based on the importance of the topic to patients as well as health and care services, value for money and scientific quality. Total spending on a specific topic depends on the number and scale of successful research funding bids.



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Between April-June 2013 and April-June 2020, the number of disabled people in employment increased by 1.25 million, an increase of 43%, and the disability employment gap reduced by five percentage points. However, I know many disabled people are concerned the pandemic will impact disproportionately on their employment prospects.

Clearly there is much more to do, and I am wholly supportive of the Government's determination to reduce the disability employment gap further. My colleagues in the Department for Work and Pensions assure me they are working closely with disabled people, representatives, health care professionals and employers to achieve this. I know that with appropriate help and support, many people with Down's syndrome are able to lead healthy, active and more independent lives.

Thank you again 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