

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

11th July 2018

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Tom Pursglove'.

RE: PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH AND HEALTH VISITORS.

Thank you for contacting me recently about perinatal mental health and health visitors; your comments upon which I read with great interest.

I agree that health visitors play a very important role in supporting parents and babies across the country. The Government wants people to be empowered to shape and manage their own health and care, and make meaningful choices, particularly in relation to maternity services.

To help achieve this, the Government has increased the number of midwives by over 1,800. Furthermore, by the end of the Health Visitor Programme in 2015, it had delivered almost 4,000 more health visitors compared to May 2010, an increase of around 50 percent, with 1,000 health visitor students in training. Health Education England is ensuring the sustainable development of the health visitor workforce, and there are presently over 800 health visitor student training places commissioned, which will offer more families the support they need in the early years.

Protecting perinatal mental health is a high priority for both the Better Births strategy and the Five Year Forward View for Mental Health. The Institute of Health Visitors was funded to train almost 600 perinatal mental health visitor champions to identify and treat maternal mental health conditions. I am also happy to see that the Government will implement the continuity of carers, so new mothers will receive care from the same midwives throughout their pregnancy and birth, and into the postnatal period, to better guard perinatal mental health.

The National Institute of Health and Care Excellence recommends a six week postnatal check to assess how a woman has experienced her transition to motherhood, which includes checks on her mental health. My ministerial colleagues have made clear that all GP surgeries must offer these checks, and those who opt-out from doing so will receive a reduction in funding. So far, I have been informed that only four practices in England have done so.

In addition, the Government has invested £356 million in improving perinatal mental health in England over five years, providing support and care for at least 30,000 women by 2021; it has also invested £2.24 million in new safety equipment. Furthermore, I understand that £1 million has been invested in improved training for staff to help deliver healthy babies more safely. This is all part of the overall strategy to improve maternity services, and improve perinatal mental health services.

Looking to Corby & East Northamptonshire, I have previously had the pleasure of visiting Home-Start Corby, to meet some of the fantastic volunteers who give up their time to help support families in Corby. I was also able to hear directly from some of the families just how much of a huge help that Home-Start has been to them, by providing support to these parents, some of whom have had difficulties with mental health. It is clear that Home-Start volunteers

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are an invaluable lifeline for many people across Corby, including for mothers suffering from perinatal mental health issues. It was also encouraging to hear from the patrons and trustees about their tireless efforts in pursuit of fundraising, and I will continue to do everything I can to help them with this endeavour.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**