



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

12<sup>th</sup> October 2023

*Dear Commitment,*

**RE: EARLY CHILDHOOD (UNICEF CAMPAIGN)**

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of support for families with young children. I have read your comments with interest.

First, thank you for your kind invitation to attend UNICEF UK's 'Early Moments Matter' exhibition on the 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023. Unfortunately, owing to prior, longstanding diary commitments, I was unable to attend, although please rest assured that I will continue to follow the issues raised closely.

I recognise the importance of early childhood for the development of a child and their future outcomes. I am assured that the Government is working to ensure better access to public services that young children, and their parents and carers, require.

The Government has made it a key priority that every patient who needs an appointment should be able to see their GP within two weeks and that every patient who has urgent needs should be able to see their GP on the same day. To deliver these targets, the Government is investing an additional £3.3 billion in each of 2023/24 and 2024/25 to enable rapid action to improve urgent and emergency, elective, and primary care performance, to pre-pandemic levels. A plan for recovering access to primary care, including GP services, was published in May, outlining measures that will make it easier for patients to contact their GP and will end the 8am rush.

At the Spring Budget, the Chancellor announced that the Government is significantly expanding the support on offer by providing 30 hours a week of free childcare for 38 weeks a year, for eligible working parents of children aged 9 months to 3 years. This will be rolled out in phases from April 2024 and is in addition to the 30 hours a week already provided for eligible working parents of 3 to 4-year-olds.

The Government will also be providing £204 million to support the hourly funding rate paid to providers to deliver existing free childcare in England in 2023-24, with a further uplift to £288 million in 2024-25. This funding will be allocated by the Department for Education through local councils. Funding rates to local authorities are being increased by an average of 32 percent for the current 2-year-old entitlement, and by an average of 6.3 percent for 3-and-4-year-old entitlements.

Finally, the Government recognises the effect that the pandemic has had on the mental health of children and young people. The 'NHS Long Term Plan' increased investment in mental health services by at least £2.3 billion a year by 2023/24, so that an additional 345,000 children and young people are now able to get the necessary NHS-funded mental health support.



Mental health support teams now cover 26 percent of pupils in schools, a year earlier than originally proposed in the 'Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision Green Paper'. This will increase to 399 teams, covering around 35 percent of pupils by April 2023, with over 500 planned to be up and running by 2024. Roll-out of further mental health support teams is being developed and will be confirmed in due course.

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,*

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

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