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### **Child Poverty:**

Poverty wastes potential and harms our country's success and prosperity. More important still, it hurts children, not just in the future, but as they grow up. It harms their health and damages their self-esteem and wellbeing.

As constituents may know, the Chancellor delivered a financial statement to the House of Commons on 22 November 2023. While I am pleased that benefits were increased in line with September's inflation figures of 6.7%, I know that there is still uncertainty surrounding the future of the Household Support Fund and about cost of living support payments which are due to end on 31 March 2024.

The social security system should provide genuine security for all families, but I am concerned that cuts since 2010 have pushed more children into poverty. Meanwhile, rising costs of living and falling wages mean more and more families are facing hardship.

Reducing child poverty is at the centre of how we secure opportunity for children and young people from every background, but I do not believe the Government has a serious plan to tackle it. I want to see a cross-Government taskforce aimed at breaking down the barriers to opportunity for every child, with child poverty reduction specialists at the heart of this work. I believe we need a genuinely supportive welfare state and higher quality jobs to help tackle poverty. Employment should be the main route to reducing poverty for those who can work, but the Government will always have a role to play in ensuring that families receive the appropriate support.

That is why I support calls for reforms to Universal Credit, to ensure it offers a proper safety net and makes it pay to work, as well as reforms to job support. I want to see a long-term plan to grow our economy and raise living standards in a sustainable way. This would increase household incomes as well as strengthen public finances.

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