



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Dr Carolyn Wilkins
Chief Executive
Oldham Council
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Our Ref: KHM/PARK02002/02152986

11 December 2015

Dear Dr Wilkins

Thank you for your recent letter, received 23rd November, regarding Council resolutions passed at Full Council on 4th November regarding the Welfare Reform and Work Bill and Universal Free School Meals.

As you may be aware, as Shadow Minister for Disabled People, I led for Labour on the Welfare Reform and Work Bill in Committee, Report and Third Reading in the Commons, alongside my colleague Emily Thornberry MP, Shadow Minister for Employment.

I agree with the Council about the effects of the Bill on the poorest, the jobless, the sick and disabled people as well as those in work on lower incomes, who were due to be affected by the Chancellor's tax credit cuts. You can read my extensive contributions opposing the Bill in Hansard and on the Bill Committee page of the parliament.uk website.

Despite the Chancellor's u-turn on tax credits, I remain extremely concerned about the cuts that will affect working people on Universal Credit, which will disproportionately affect people in Oldham as we are a pilot roll-out area. Recent Commons Library research shows that a lone parent, with two children, working full time on the NMW, on Universal Credit will lose £2,400 next year. In addition, changes on housing support, cuts to people in the ESA WRAG group and many other measures in the Bill are punitive. Please be assured that I will continue to oppose them.

With regard to Universal Free School meals, I opposed plans reported in the media earlier this year to scrap universal infant free school meals and raised my concerns with Ministers. I note that you have written to the Secretary of State for Education on extending the programme to all 7-11 year olds and I would appreciate having sight of this response.

Thank you once again for contacting me on these issues. As ever, if there's anything I can do to be of assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

DEBBIE ABRAHAMS MP
Oldham East and Saddleworth

Debbie Abrahams MP is proud to represent the people of
Alexandra, Lees, Saddleworth, Shaw & Crompton, St Mary's, St James' and Waterhead

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