

# Marie Goldman



POINTS OF VIEW

MP for Chelmsford

## My maiden speech in Parliament and speaking in debate on SEND

**P**ARLIAMENT'S first week back after the summer recess was very busy. It was especially significant for me because I finally had the opportunity to give my maiden speech.

As I explained in last week's column, a maiden speech is the very first proper speech that a new Member of Parliament gives after being elected. Until you've given your maiden speech, there are certain things that you aren't allowed to do in Parliament, such as speaking in Westminster Hall debates, so getting it out of the way means you are no longer restricted in parliamentary proceedings.

I gave my maiden speech on Wednesday, September 4. I spoke about Chelmsford's rich history in science and technology, the humble beginnings of the BBC which grew out of Marconi's first entertainment radio broadcast in the heart of Chelmsford, and my sincere wish to see schools and teachers given the resources they need to provide children with the best possible start in life. I also paid tribute to my predecessor, Vicky Ford.

You can watch my maiden speech on my YouTube channel, here: [bit.ly/MGMaidenSpeech](https://bit.ly/MGMaidenSpeech).

On Thursday, September 5, I attended a debate on a topic that is close to my heart: special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Rather than taking place in the main House of Commons chamber - the one with the green benches that we see all the time on the TV - this was a Westminster Hall debate. These happen in a much smaller room hidden away at the top of the stairs on the right-hand side as you enter Westminster Hall itself. In terms of look and feel, this is much more like a council chamber, and the chairs and tables for the MPs are arranged in a horseshoe formation.

I was very keen to speak in this debate as it is such an important issue that I have been campaigning on for many months (as regular readers will know) and it affects so many people across Chelmsford - indeed across the whole country.

I had applied to make a full speech



Chelmsford MP Marie Goldman, Cllr Charlene Adutwim and Cllr Graham Pooley with the new Waterside bridge in the background  
MARIE GOLDMAN MP

in the 90-minute debate, but it soon became apparent that the debate was over-subscribed, with at least 30 MPs having put their names forward to speak.

But there was a very important point that I wanted to make about the perverse way in which local authorities, including Essex County Council, are using their very limited resources to fight legal battles with parents at tribunals using barristers and King's Counsels (KCs), despite losing their cases 98 per cent of the time.

I also wanted to point out the failure of successive recent governments to match financially the large increase in age eligibility for SEND provision brought in by the 2014 Children & Families Act. When the MP leading the debate (Labour's Richard Burgon) was making his opening speech, I realised that probably the only way of being able to make my point was to intervene. An intervention is a bit of a strange

name for something we do naturally in everyday discussions with the people around us. Essentially, it means interrupting someone who is in the middle of their speech and asking them if they will let you make a point on something they have just said (or at least that's the way it's supposed to work).

In Parliament, an MP can attempt to intervene by slightly rising from their seat and asking if the honourable member (or right honourable member if they are a member of the Privy Council) will 'give way'.

That is what I did while Richard Burgon was speaking and I am grateful to him that he agreed. You can watch my intervention here: [bit.ly/MGWSEND](https://bit.ly/MGWSEND)

While the SEND system is unarguably broken, I take heart from the large number of MPs who attended the Westminster Hall debate. Just a short year or so ago, I doubt that would have been the case. I doubt even more the willingness of the previous government to get to grips with the underlying issues and fix the system. I am hopeful that the new government will do far more to alleviate the suffering being felt by so many parents and families affected by SEND.

Turning to Chelmsford, I was very pleased to have the opportunity to visit Farleigh Hospice last week and to learn more about the incredible work they do caring for people, often in the very last stages of their life. But that doesn't mean that they are necessarily all old.

In fact, Farleigh tell me that they are seeing a younger and younger cohort come to them. That's very sad and also quite concerning. I'm keen to learn more about why that might be, but also keen to support hospices like Farleigh to get the sustainable funding they need to continue the vital work they do that can make someone's last few days more comfortable and dignified.

I don't know how their amazing staff manage to keep doing their work with such compassion, understanding and friendly smiles. But they do, and I'm sure that makes all the difference to the families and individuals they are caring for.

I'm pleased to see the Waterside bridge by the Essex Records Office taking shape with the two large arches now in place. I met up with the Lib Dem councillors for Moulsham & Central and we were struck by just how close to the original CGI drawings the new structure

is in appearance. I think the new bridge will be a good addition to the centre of Chelmsford. I think it looks quite striking, but it's also vital to unlocking the old gasworks site for redevelopment, so I'm pleased to see the visible progress that's been made over the past few weeks.

A few residents have been in touch with me to find out what's happening with the Army & Navy redevelopment. This is a project being led by Essex County Council and you can check progress on its website here: [bit.ly/AandNECC](https://bit.ly/AandNECC). However, given the Chancellor's recent announcements about a review of major capital projects, I have written to the Department for Transport seeking reassurance that this project will still receive the promised funding.

Finally, the Lampard Inquiry began its public hearings this week. This is a statutory inquiry into the deaths of mental health inpatients in Essex and the initial hearings are taking place at Chelmsford Civic Centre. You're likely to see and read a lot more about it over the coming months. If you'd like to find out more, please visit the inquiry's website here: [lampardinquiry.org.uk](https://lampardinquiry.org.uk).

Thanks for reading.

Marie

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