

# Marie Goldman

MP for Chelmsford



## The importance of dealing with casework for my constituents

PROBABLY the most important job of any MP is casework – helping constituents with issues relating to government-run services, and helping them navigate many other issues.

Last calendar year, 2025, my small team and I received over 100,000 emails into my MP inbox. This year, we're on track to exceed that. Unfortunately, that means we are unable to reply to all queries as quickly as we would all like to, but have to prioritise the really urgent issues.

Below is a flavour of just a few of the issues we are currently dealing with.

### Royal Mail

We have been contacted by several constituents over the past weeks regarding their concerns about the postal service. On the whole there has been a sense of disappointment amongst constituents about the service they have received from Royal Mail, in particular the frequency of deliveries and lack of visibility of 'posties'.

Many constituents have shared concerns about their post being delayed from several days to weeks, with one constituent stating that they had not received any post at all for ten days.

These delays have been causing particular anxiety for constituents who are waiting for time-sensitive communication such as letters from

the hospital, fine notifications, and information about their finances.

For example, constituents have mentioned not receiving healthcare appointment notifications until after the appointment date has passed and waiting excessive lengths for replacement bank cards.

Constituents have noticed that they will go for a long period without receiving any post, before receiving very high volumes all at once. They have noted that this is especially the case for second-class mail, which we have received several complaints about.

One constituent also mentioned that they had received post intended for another address in error.

Further back in the casework archives there have also been concerns about parcels being delivered more frequently than letters, notably around Christmas time.

I've written to Royal Mail about these issues, and in particular asking them what measures they are putting place now to ensure that they will be able to cope with the Christmas rush.

I'll update constituents who have contacted me directly about these issues when I hear back from Royal Mail.

### Send Transport

Several constituents have raised their concerns over Send transport

provision in advance of the new school year.

Recent examples include delays in providing parents with information about their children's transportation arrangements for the upcoming school year. This includes a lack of information about timings, transport providers and details about drivers not being provided until the day before term starts, causing significant anxiety for both parents and students.

In addition to this, we also had a case about a child's school transport being removed as they were now over 16. This caused the child's parent significant concern about how their child would continue to access their education, alongside how the parent would be able to juggle their working commitments whilst accommodating their child's needs. Following a second appeal the student was provided with transport, but the parent is concerned that they will have to go through the same process again next year.

My team have been in contact with Essex County Council to understand what's going on and push for a better service, including more timely information.

### Child Maintenance Service

I'm hearing more and more from local families who are struggling with the Child Maintenance Service,

and the pattern is worryingly consistent. Cases drag on for months, parents are passed from one adviser to another, and too often the answer feels like computer says no. When you're trying to keep your children fed and housed, that kind of bureaucracy isn't just irritating – it's damaging.

The rules themselves don't help. A paying parent's income has to fall by 25% before payments can be adjusted, even if their hours have been cut or they've lost work. On the other side, receiving parents tell me they're expected to do their own detective work when the other parent's finances don't stack up, because the CMS is reluctant to refer cases to its investigative team.

Some of the problems are frankly astonishing. If the CMS makes an error and a parent overpays, they're told to go to court to get their money back. Historic records from the old Child Support Agency have been destroyed, meaning past agreements can't be verified.

The result is a system that leaves both paying and receiving parents in financial distress. Families deserve a service that deals with real-life situations, not one that hides behind rigid criteria and outdated processes.

This isn't just an issue that affects my Chelmsford constituents, but something that affects people across

the country. My Liberal Democrat colleagues and I have been pushing for answers in Parliament. We will continue to do so.

### Capita Civil Service Pensions

I've been contacted by a growing number of former civil servants who are caught up in Capita's mounting backlog in administering pensions. The stories are deeply worrying. Some retirees are still waiting for payments they're entitled to, including people in real financial difficulty. Others can't get basic queries answered, and potential retirees are left in limbo without the pension projections they need to plan their futures.

The updates people do receive are often meaningless: "waiting to be reviewed" or "awaiting third-party information", with no sense of when their case will actually move. It's not good enough. When you've worked a lifetime in public service, you shouldn't be left chasing a pension that should already be in place.

I've arranged another meeting with Capita for next week to get proper answers on the cases my team and I are handling. Chelmsford residents deserve clarity, competence, and a system that treats them with the respect they earned through decades of service.

Thanks for reading.

Marie

## Five-year programme for health eating among county's youth children

AN award-winning programme dedicated to improving nutrition and healthy eating among young children across Essex is set to expand under a new five-year agreement between Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) and Essex County Council (ECC).

Nourishing Our Future began as a research-led project to help children and families build positive relationships with food, recognising that healthy eating habits are developed at a young age.

Following the success of the programme's first two years, ARU and ECC have signed a new agreement that will see Nourishing Our Future (NOF) grow its research and impact over the next five years.

The programme has already gained national recognition and has presented evidence to Parliament six times. It has received silver awards for Public and Population Health at the LGC (Local

Government Chronicle) Awards and Collaboration and Partnerships at the iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards, and is shortlisted in the Early Years category at this November's Children & Young People Now Awards.

Last year, NOF published the first study of its kind focusing on food and nutrition in Essex. Involving 58 day nurseries, 94 childminders and 67 preschools, the report found that food costs and managing food preferences were the biggest barriers to healthy eating in Essex.

The programme also launched the Essex Early Years NOF Award to celebrate food and nutrition practices across Essex's early years sector.

The NOF Award gives early years providers a structured framework – co-produced with pre-schools, day nurseries and childminders – to help them implement the Department for

Education's early years Nutrition Guidance, as well as develop and showcase best practice, their own food environments and nutritional education. It is supported by bespoke training and resources provided by nutrition experts.

As well as continuing to deliver the NOF Awards and host the annual NOF conference, the new five-year agreement will see a significant expansion of the programme's research activity, led by ARU's School of Education in partnership with Essex County Council's Public Health and Education departments.

The collaboration will involve a PhD research project linked to the NOF programme and funding bids for further research, key findings published in leading academic journals, and work to ensure that research outcomes help to influence national policy for the benefit of future generations of children.

Dr Kay Aaronicks, Head of the

School of Education at ARU, said: "Nourishing Our Future has shown what can happen when universities, local government and the early years sector work together around a shared purpose. Over the past two years we've had the privilege of working alongside hundreds of early years educators, listening to their experiences, working with them to change practice and seeing the difference that genuine partnership can make.

"This ambitious new five-year collaboration reflects the strength of the relationship we've built with the Public Health and Education teams at Essex County Council and our shared commitment to improving our youngest children's food and nutrition health education.

"I'm excited about the opportunities ahead to grow the evidence, support innovation in practice, influence policy and, most importantly, continue working with

the educators and parents who are helping to shape healthier futures for children."

Sarah Muckle, Director of Wellbeing, Public Health and Communities at Essex County Council, said: "Essex County Council is proud and excited to have signed a new five-year collaborative agreement with Anglia Ruskin University, building on the success of our partnership through Nourishing Our Future over the past two years.

"Through our work together in NOF, we have demonstrated the value of combining research, local knowledge and practical action to improve outcomes for children and families across Essex. We look forward to continuing this strong and productive partnership, working together to develop evidence-based solutions that help children, young people, families, and early years educators to live healthier and happier lives."