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HOUSE OF COMMONS

07 MAY 2020

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Patrick Boyd
Director, Headway Teesside
Headway Teesside,
The Old Smithy,
1 North Road,
Stokesley,
TS9 5DU

29 April 2020

Dear Patrick,

Thank you for writing to me regarding the issue of those affected by ABI and the impact of the Coronavirus. I fully support your concerns that those with hidden disabilities such as those with ABI should be included in the vulnerable groups as defined by Public Health England's list of people defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable from COVID-19. This would then open up the support including help with food, shopping deliveries and additional care.

On 27 March 2020 Luke Pollard MP the Shadow Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Secretary sent a letter to the Environment Secretary regarding steps to safeguard the food supply chain and ensure everyone has enough to eat. He asked the Government to take urgent action on measures including: "Issue robust consistent guidance to supermarkets for all elderly, vulnerable customers and key workers to be given priority access hours to shop, and receive priority for online deliveries and click and collect slots; Better communicate how local resilience forums will identify vulnerable people and assist them to provide reassurance and support."

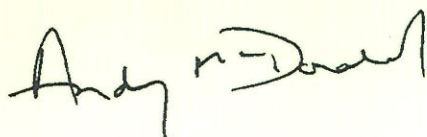
Additionally the Shadow Communities and Local Government Secretary Steve Reed MP, wrote to the Housing, Communities and Local Government Secretary on 14 April 2020 in which he expressed "widespread concern about the effectiveness of the Government's plan to shield the most vulnerable during the crisis", adding: "This stems from the Government's decisions to centralise control of shielding rather than to work closely with local government and communities where data and knowledge of infrastructure on the front line could be hugely beneficial."

The Government is using medical data as the sole basis for identifying the most vulnerable, it excludes other highly vulnerable people such as those experiencing severe financial hardship, loneliness, food insecurity, at high risk of domestic abuse, or experiencing mental ill health and that, as a result, highly vulnerable people are missing out on the support they need to cope. I believe the Government should explain why it is not operating the shielding programme in closer collaboration with local authorities "ensuring that all highly vulnerable people are covered by it". I have therefore passed a copy of your letter to Geoff Field the Middlesbrough Council Local Resilience Forum representative for his comments.

I have also copied in the Chief Executive of Middlesbrough Council for the authority to look to see what additional support we can provide to people with Acquired Brain Injury locally.

Please be assured that not only do I support your campaign but that I will do what I can to raise this very important issue.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy McDonald". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and 'M'.

ANDY MCDONALD MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR MIDDLESBROUGH