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Baroness Berridge of the Vale of Catmose

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the School System
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Vicky Ford MP

By email: vicky.ford.mp@parliament.uk

8th September 2020

Dear Vicky,

Thank you for your email of 22 May, enclosing correspondence from your constituent, Ms Jo Harrison, Participation Lead at Essex Family Forum, regarding the provision of grants and support to the most vulnerable families during the COVID-19 outbreak. I apologise for the delay in responding.

Family Fund have been delivering grants to families who are raising disabled and severely ill children for over 40 years. Essex Family Forum's bid for additional funding was carefully assessed and considered, alongside other charitable organisation bids, to ensure that they had the resources to provide families with this additional support during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Family Fund carefully assess all applications on an individual basis, providing access to a range of advice and financial support available to families. Family Fund processed and awarded approximately 16,629 new grants to vulnerable families during May and June 2020, with the most requested items being those which help educate and stimulate children and young people during lockdown for the purposes of home schooling. Data collected from Family Fund demonstrates that they were able to award up to 82% more equipment to help families, such as laptops, tablets and sensory resources, than in 2019.

Family Fund data shows that the average waiting time for a grant across their UK wide schemes was around five weeks or less, with an urgent 48 hour referral facility for matters such as emergency hospital costs or a critical need for a grant or service, identified and prioritised by Family Fund during the application process.

Thank you for writing on this important matter.

ELIZABETH BERRIDGE

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE