



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt. Hon. Rishi Sunak MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London, SW1A 2AA

26th March 2024

Dear Prime Minister,

Almost twenty-four years ago, in November 1999, I was selected to be the Conservative Parliamentary Candidate for Harlow. It was a long road to getting elected; battling three General Elections to eventually win in 2010 with a majority of almost 5,000, increasing to over 14,000 over the past fourteen years.

As MP, I have done everything possible to work hard for Harlow. I have been honoured to have served as the Chair of the Education Select Committee, as Deputy Chairman of the Party, attend Cabinet, and most recently, under your premiership, be proudly appointed once again as the Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education.

I have also been incredibly proud to support you, and your administration's aims to build an apprenticeships and skills nation, building on my own personal passion for this ambition. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to bring through the Lifelong Learning Act which will revolutionise adult learning and education. Our Higher Education reforms will ensure that even more students can achieve good outcomes from their studies. In particular, our work on apprenticeships, skills, T-Levels, HTQs and the new Advanced British Standard means that we will end the artificial divide between academic and technical education once and for all, ensuring many more young people today can access prestigious skills and vocational learning in a way they have never been able to in the past.

As the Minister, with your backing, we have seen funding for Degree Apprenticeships increase to £40 million, £50 million for apprenticeships in growth sectors and, last week, the £60 million to boost the take up of apprenticeships by small businesses, the Care Leaver Bursary increase from £1,000 to £3,000, and hundreds of millions of extra funding for our Further Education Colleges. Moreover, the Skills for Life work we have done to boost careers education in schools and colleges - creating a one-stop shop for advice and guidance, strengthening the Baker Clause, and partnering with UCAS to see them advertise apprenticeships alongside academic degrees - will bring the skills ladder of opportunity to many more students. I truly believe that our reforms are transforming standards in skills in the same way that the Conservatives have transformed standards in schools.

However, after well over two decades as the Harlow Parliamentary Candidate and as MP, I feel that it is time for me to step down at the forthcoming General Election, and in doing so, to resign as a Minister in your Government.

I would like to thank the Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP, who is a true believer and trailblazer in apprenticeships and boosting skills education, and especially to my private office team and the outstanding officials in the skills, apprenticeships and higher education teams at the DfE, for their tireless work to deliver a skills and apprenticeships nation.

I believe that across the country, there is quiet admiration for your work ethic, integrity and ability to solve complex problems faced by our country. I look forward to continuing to wholeheartedly support you from the Backbenches in the weeks and months ahead, at the upcoming election, and of course, to spending my remaining time as an MP, championing Harlow.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Halfon

Rt. Hon. Robert Halfon MP
Member of Parliament for Harlow