

Biography – Helen Whately MP, Minister of State for Social Care

Overview



Position: Minister of State (Minister for Social Care)

Party: Conservative

Constituency: Faversham and Mid Kent

Majority: 21,976 (43.6%)

Background

Helen Whately is the current Minister of State (Minister for Social Care) at the Department for Health and Social Care. She served as Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury from 2021 to 2022 and Minister of State for Social Care from 2020 to 2021.

As Minister of State (Minister for Social Care), she is responsible for the work of the DHSC, including:

- adult social care:
- winter planning for adult social care
- funding and markets (charging reform)
- quality (system reform)
- workforce
- integration, including discharge
- community health services
- major diseases:
- cancer
- diabetes
- strokes
- rare diseases
- screening
- dementia
- end-of-life care
- COVID-19 vaccine licensing and damage payment scheme
- long-term conditions

Health interest and background

During her school years she undertook work experience in hospitals, with the intention of following her parents into a medical career. However, Whately commented in her maiden speech, after being elected as an MP, that it instead incentivised her to pursue a career in which she could improve healthcare as a whole.

Prior to her ministerial appointments, Whately demonstrated her interest in health and social care policy by sitting on the Commons Health Select Committee and chairing the APPG for Health, and Personalised Medicine and APPG for Mental Health.

Whately was appointed Deputy Chair of the Conservative Party by Theresa May in 2019 and was retained in the position by the following Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

She served as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Arts, Heritage and Tourism from September 2019 to February 2020.

In the 2020 cabinet reshuffle, Johnson moved her to the post of Minister of State for Social Care. Whately was the Social Care Minister during the COVID-19 pandemic in the United Kingdom.

Given the pressures of the pandemic, Whately did not focus her attention on digitisation of social care during her tenure.

In the 2021 cabinet reshuffle, Johnson moved her to the post of Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, serving under Chancellor Rishi Sunak. She resigned from the position in protest at Johnson's leadership amid the 2022 government crisis.

Whately's re-appointment has been met with a mixed response after she was criticised for the government's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic and guidance given to care homes.

Parliamentary career

Whately was elected as MP for Faversham and Mid Kent at the 2015 general election with 24,895 votes (54%) and a majority of 16,652 (36.4%). The constituency is considered as a safe seat and has been represented by Conservative MPs since its creation in 1997. Unsurprisingly therefore, Whately held her seat at the 2017 general election, with 30,390 (61.1%) votes and an increased majority of 17,413 (35%). At the last general election, she was re-elected with an increased majority of 21,976 (43.6%).

In July 2016, Whately was appointed as the parliamentary private secretary (PPS) to the international trade minister Greg Hands. Following her re-election, she became the PPS to the secretary of state for education and minister for women and equalities, Justine Greening.

In January 2018, she was appointed as PPS to Brandon Lewis, the minister without portfolio and Conservative Party chair. Later in the year, she became Vice Chair of the Conservative Party for Women.

On 17 April, Whately was promoted to Deputy Chair of the Conservative Party. On 10 September, she was appointed as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Arts, Heritage and Tourism by Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

Pre-parliamentary career

After leaving school, she taught English in rural Nepal for a year. Lightwood read Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford.

After university, she worked at PricewaterhouseCoopers for two years as a management consultant trainee, before working at AOL, where she was involved in setting up its internet film service. After this she worked as a media policy advisor for the then shadow secretary of state for

culture, media and sport and Conservative MP Hugo Swire.

She unsuccessfully contested the 2010 general election in the Kingston and Surbiton constituency for the Conservative Party, losing to the incumbent Liberal Democrat MP Ed Davey by 7,560 votes (13.3%).

From 2007 to 2015, Whately worked as an engagement manager for the management consultancy firm McKinsey & Company in its healthcare division.