

Inspired by last week's KM supplement for Mother's Day I thought I would write my first column back on the few things I have learned about being a mum just three weeks into the job, and then from next week I shall return to politics and no longer bore the readership with tales of motherhood!

As well as all the fabulous drawings in the My Mum supplement, I love all the descriptions kids write about their mums – giving the best cuddles seemed to be the main theme. It is only as you get older and perhaps not until you become a parent yourself that you realise that there is so much more behind the security of a reassuring and loving cuddle.

In such a short time I have learnt that, in addition to the unconditional and sometimes overwhelming love you discover, the definition of multi-tasking is re-written to include being able to rock a baby while writing a column, eating soup and having your first cup of coffee all at once, that housework can be done at twice the speed and half the noise, and that the Parliament Channel has some really interesting programmes to accompany the night feed!

Furthermore, I have learned about the generosity of people, those I know and don't. We have been inundated with kind messages, cards and gifts from people genuinely thrilled for Freddie's arrival. I know I am no more special than any other new mum but with my job and being the first Tory minister to go on maternity leave it was always going to be a bit more public but we are so grateful to everyone for their support.

Over the next few weeks my new found multi-tasking skills will be honed as my maternity leave progresses and I look forward to getting back into the swing of things while still being able to give those cuddles he, and I, will love and remember forever.