

Rt Hon Harriet Harman QC MP
Member of Parliament for Camberwell and Peckham
Mother of the House of Commons

Spring Report

2022



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This is my Spring Report 2022 in which I:

- share with you how I'm going about my work as MP,
- hear from you if you agree with how I'm approaching things and
- what further issues you think I should be addressing.

Introduction

2022 has seen us coming out of the Covid restrictions but the shadow of Covid still very much hangs over us.

So many people have died and left families grieving.

Many people who've survived Covid still suffer the, sometimes very serious, effects of Long Covid. Thousands of local people are on long waiting lists for NHS treatment as our underfunded NHS struggles to catch up. And existing NHS staff shortages are exacerbated as many health workers are having to take time off work with the highly infectious Omicron Covid variant.

This spring, families face a severe worsening of the cost of living crisis, with energy bills which were already increasing, soaring up because of Putin's war on Ukraine. Food and energy bills are going through the roof but the Government is doing nothing to ensure that people are getting an increase in their benefits or their help.

The Ukraine invasion has seen us all stand together against Putin's aggression but it's been frustrating to see the Government prevaricate about freezing and confiscating the assets of Putin's cronies and their woeful inability to set up and run a humane emergency visa system for the women and children fleeing the violence.

I'd like to thank my Parliamentary team for

- all the work they did during Covid,
- what they did to help those fleeing Kabul after the Taliban takeover, and
- all the work we continue to do helping constituents with their problems.

Haniel Hamman



The Labour Party
@UKLabour

Instead of providing working families, pensioners and businesses with security, Boris Johnson and his Conservatives have abandoned them.



Interview with Politics Home for International Women's Day 2022

8th March

The Harriet Harman interview: "There are some things only women MPs can do"

As a feminist, minister, leader and Mother of the House, Harriet Harman's 40 years in Parliament have seen her fight relentlessly for change for women. In her first print interview since the sudden death of her husband Jack Dromey, the Labour MP for Camberwell and Peckham outlines her plans to take her work global, and tells Kate Proctor how she is adjusting to a 'new reality' without her partner of five decades.



"There are some things only women MPs can do, and without women, they will not be done," Harriet Harman says serenely from behind her round office table overlooking Parliament Square. Reaching for a photograph of Filipina senator Risa Hontiveros, she shows off an image of the politician touching the baby-bump of a female campaigner fighting for better maternity rights.

"Look at those women – smiles all around," she says, intimating that a male politician in the Philippines, or indeed any country, may not have been able to have the same interaction.

Harman believes that globally women must take the lead on tackling issues that affect them as a gender, such as violence against women – because otherwise who will? "They have to lead the drive for maternity rights," she continues. "They have to lead the drive for economic equality for women.

"A lot of them face massive difficulties from their own families, from their community, from the establishment, but they're absolutely determined... But they don't have the global networks that men do".

Sounding as passionate as ever about her life's work - the championing of women in Parliament politics and society - Harman, 71, is about to start focusing on feminism from an international perspective. She will be taking testimony from 50 female politicians from around the world – Australia, Nepal, Ireland, Jamaica to name a few – in order to delve into their experiences in their own parliaments. She wants to hear their struggles, battles, tactics for female representation, and hopes the resulting research will form the basis of a book. This is a sizeable project to undertake as she prepares to stand down as an MP at the next general election, but she sounds fired up to get it completed. Already, she says she can see incredible similarities, between countries thousands of miles apart. Whether it's a 25-year-old politician from Jamaica or a woman with 30 years' experience in the Maldives, she says it is clear there is a "universality of our agenda".

"If women left to their own devices, in every country in the world, come up with the same issues, we can't all be wrong," she adds triumphantly. "Actually we're all right."

Harman is focused and thoughtful when we meet in her office in Portcullis House, a wonderful, light space with impressive views over Parliament. Close by is the office of former prime minister Theresa May; the pair sparred for years as leader and shadow leader of the Commons, gaining a grudging respect for each other. Over Harman's chair lies a green sash emblazoned with the slogan "100 years of women voting," and in the corner is a wooden plaque from female politicians from Cameroon who attended her pre-pandemic Women MPs of The World Conference held in Parliament. She is also wearing green today, saying she wanted to wear something a little brighter than she has recently...

A few weeks ago, Harman suffered a catastrophic personal tragedy with the sudden death of her husband and partner of 47 years, Jack Dromey, a celebrated trade unionist and latterly the Labour MP for Birmingham Erdington. His passing on 7 January from heart failure sent shockwaves through Westminster; warm tributes were paid from across the House. Harman says it was heart-warming to see the sheer volume of tributes, which came as a comfort to their three grown-up children. We will return to this later in the interview.

Looking through the window, and across to Parliament, I ask what still frustrates her about how women's rights are dealt with generally, and the working conditions for women MPs in this country.



Bluntly, everything takes too long, and women are still told to "watch their tone", she responds.

The introduction of proxy voting in 2020, for example, came after a decades-long campaign. She hits out at the "passive resistance" of male politicians who need to go further than merely saying they agree with a policy change. Their inaction can be a barrier, she believes.

Mainly, though, it's a question of speed. "I want the time to be concertinaed between when you make the argument, win the argument, nobody will disagree with the argument and you end up with change," she says.

She is angry at how former health secretary Matt Hancock told shadow minister Rosena Allin-Khan to consider her tone in the Commons in 2020. New Health Secretary Sajid Javid has also told Allin-Khan she has misjudged the "tone of the House".

It's illuminating, because underneath, that is really [saying] 'you shouldn't be speaking at all, please speak only with our permission.'

"This is men telling women how women should speak. It's illuminating, because underneath, that is really [saying] 'you shouldn't be speaking at all, please speak only with our permission,'" she says.

Harman is thankful however that in 2022 violence against women and girls is now an absolute priority. And that male MPs can utter words like "menopause" and "periods" in the Chamber without embarrassment, making it easier to discuss women's health.

The current debate about trans rights was foreseen, she claims, when as women and equalities minister she co-authored the landmark Equalities Act back in 2010, alongside then-solicitor general, Vera Baird.

"All those discussions about discrimination against trans women and men and the interaction with single-sex services were all envisaged," she said.

Equalities is about achieving a balance, she says, and this can be hugely challenging. "For example because of the idea of protection of freedom of religion, religions are allowed to discriminate on grounds of sex. You're not forced to have a woman in all religions, with equal access [as] men."

She regrets that the row around women and trans rights has taken a "toxic" turn. A current flash point is concern over discrimination against trans women on the grounds of sex in specific settings such as a domestic violence refuges or rape crisis centres.

Harman says the Equality Act ensures there is no blanket ban on trans women accessing services, but there are circumstances in which single sex-services may exclude some individuals, and she thinks this is right.

"The fundamentals of the Gender Recognition Act (2004), and the Equality Act (2010), remain sound – that you should protect trans people from discrimination, and transphobia, but you should also have exceptions, which are able to be used but on a narrow basis, not on a blanket basis."

Harman says Scotland, which is moving faster than England over what the exact process for gender recognition should be, will provide helpful context to some of the debate, and she also anticipates court cases over access to single-sex services.

Turning to the departure of first female Metropolitan Police Commissioner Cressida Dick, who resigned in February after a perceived inability to reform the culture of the force, Harman says she simply wasn't the right person to lead change.

Dick had "shown herself to be someone who was defending the organisation, even including defending the indefensible", Harman adds.



"Given the circumstances, it would be very disappointing if the new appointment doesn't mark a major step forward."

Harman talks about her late husband with affection. The many mourners at his funeral included former prime ministers Gordon Brown and Tony Blair, with the latter giving a Bible reading. Particularly striking was the outpouring of sorrow and respect from Conservatives. Pensions minister Guy Opperman said he was bereft at Dromey's death, writing: "It was an honour to know him, and we are poorer for his loss."

Harman says: "I knew what good relations he had with everybody because it was sometimes quite hard to get home after a vote, because we were walking along a corridor, and Jack would have to have about 20 conversations with people!"

"It was really heart-warming to see how incredibly supportive and nice people were, and very comforting for the children to see that."

As well as a huge number of successful trade union campaigns, Dromey was a champion of women in the workplace throughout his life – and this started at home, she says. When Harman was elected at the 1982 Peckham by-election, she was pregnant with her first child, Harry, and the pair went on to have another son, Joe, and a daughter, Amy, within her first five years in office. With his constant support and encouragement, she became a secretary of state and deputy leader of the Labour Party, later serving as acting leader between the departure of Ed Miliband and election of Jeremy Corbyn.

"It was really heart-warming to see how incredibly supportive and nice people were, and very comforting for the children to see that."

She says Dromey used to give a "two-fold strong message" to the children. It was "what a great mother you've got" and "what marvellous things she's doing at work". "Even when there wasn't much evidence of either to reinforce that – there was always an upbeat message!" she says.

"It must be very difficult to be a woman MP if you feel you've not got the support of your own children. If your children don't feel it's a good thing then you are bound to have doubts as to whether to carry on doing it, but the propaganda at home was full on. All the time," she says smiling.

"It helped them think it was as things should be."

Harman says she regrets that she cannot discuss with Dromey the political events of the last few weeks, and misses the constant political conversations they had, dating back to the 1970s.

"You know, Jack and I politically had kind of grown up together. So, I want to be discussing Ukraine with him. There's a whole load of things which have happened since he's died that I can't discuss with him anymore.

"Everything else that happened until the day he died... I know what he thought about, and we discussed them over the years, but there will be new things where he's not around to be discussing them with me."

As we leave her office to head to Parliament's terrace she points out that the office next door to hers was Dromey's. The lights are off and his name plate has been removed. It's incredibly sad and must be difficult to walk past every day.

On life now without her partner, Harman says she still doesn't recognise her "new reality". She says several times during our discussion that she is now a woman without a man, but that she is not alone. With three children and five grandchildren, and a lifetime in the Labour Party, she is surrounded by people.

"My mum lived til she was 100, so I might have another 30 years. So I've got to be advancing into this new scenario.

"The other thing is that when I first got together with Jack, it was in a context of society's view that you had to have a man and if you didn't... that was a disaster.

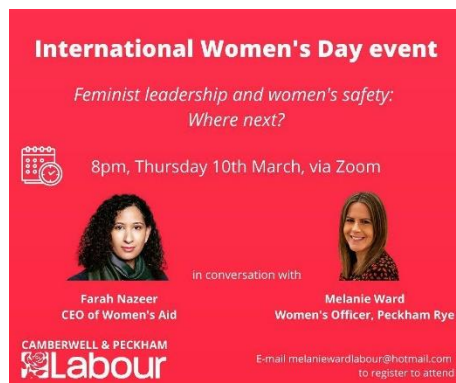
"And if you were a widow, that was terrible, because you didn't have a man and your life was over.

"I'm now emerging as a woman without a man into a very different context. We don't buy that argument anymore that women's lives are worthless because they're not with a man. It's not easy but I shall try and walk the talk."

Supporting the Call to Action to end rape and sexual violence in Tigray

Extreme sexual violence has been rampant in the armed conflict in Tigray, Ethiopia. According to the UN over 26,000 survivors are waiting for services for their injuries.

On 7th March I attended an event hosted by Helen Hayes MP in the House of Commons and heard powerful testimony of the sexual violence in the conflict from Filsan Ahmed, former Minister of Women, Children and Youth of Ethiopia, and Lucy Kassa, an Ethiopian journalist. I strongly support their Call to Action to end these horrific crimes.



International Women's Day event with Peckham Rye Labour branch on feminist leadership

On Thursday 10th March Peckham Rye branch held an International Women's Day event. I joined Farah Nazeer, CEO of Women's Aid to discuss the issues facing women. We talked about the importance of amplifying women's demands and the need to ramp them up. Today's unreasonable demands are tomorrow's conventional wisdom.

Speaking at International Women's Day event hosted by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Women in Parliament



Harriet Harman · Mar 9

There are some things only women MPs can do. The problem is not women not stepping forward to be MPs. The problem is the men standing in their way! #InternationalWomensDay2022 @MariaMillerUK

Maria Miller · Mar 8

Amazing end to #InternationalWomensDay2022 -hosted APPG WomeninParliament meet with 100+ women considering standing for @HouseofCommons -thanks @eleanor4pepping @HarrietHarman @theresa_may & MP panel-#Thankyou @LloydsBank @fawcettsociety @5050Parliament @UNWomenUK @ClaireCoutinho



The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Women in Parliament aims to achieve 50% women in Parliament. I spoke at their International Women's Day event. There was a large turnout and alongside the Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons, Dame Eleanor Laing MP, I spoke about my experience arriving in the House of Commons as one of only 3% women MPs. Parliament is now 35% women and women are a 'critical mass', but we still have further to go. The problem is not women not stepping forward to be MPs, but the men standing in their way.



Met Police found to have acted illegally in banning Sarah Everard vigil

The Met Police have been found to have acted unlawfully by banning the vigil for Sarah Everard on Clapham Common on 13th March 2021. In phone calls with senior officers, I privately urged the Met to let the vigil go ahead and to reach agreement with Reclaim These Streets on how it should be organised so as to protect public



Harriet Harman · Mar 12, 2021

Cmon @metpoliceuk now agree a way for this vigil to happen safely. Many women want to show their concern. Including women met police officers!

Reclaim These Streets · Mar 12, 2021
We have an update from our High Court case earlier today, please see the statement attached. #ReclaimTheseStreets
[Show this thread](#)



For Immediate Release
Date: 12th March 2021

#ReclaimTheseStreets judgment now in: ruling confirms law does not prevent protest in all circumstances

Reclaim These Streets, the volunteer collective planning to hold a socially-distanced vigil on Clapham Common on Saturday 13th March, challenged the Metropolitan Police in the High Court today.

Reclaim These Streets' argument centred around challenging the Metropolitan Police's interpretation of coronavirus legislation, when taken together with the Human Rights Act, stating that the force's understanding of the law is wrong.

A spokesperson for Reclaim These Streets said:

"We were always aware of the challenges of organising a Covid-secure vigil, but safety has been the top priority from the beginning. We proactively reached out to the relevant authorities to ensure that the event could take place safely and legally and we are delighted that Justice Holgate has recognised this and found this to be true. This is vindication for all those women who have been devastated by the death of Sarah Everard, who simply want to come together to share their grief and solidarity. The Metropolitan Police did not engage with us and said that any kind of protest would be illegal."

"We are pleased that the Judge spelled out in a detailed ruling that the law does not prevent the police from permitting and facilitating protest in all circumstances. The law is now clear that it is up to the police to conduct a proportionality assessment and the circumstances of each case. The judge has made clear that the police must make their own decision about whether the protest can go ahead and that must include a proportionality balancing exercise."

"Because of this ruling, protest during the Coronavirus pandemic is now potentially lawful in England, as police are now able to take into account the fact that our protest has public health and public safety as a primary focus. We are working with the Council, who remain wholly supportive. We ask the police to act within the law now and confirm that they will work with us to ensure that the protest can go ahead within the context of the overwhelming public response to Sarah Everard's death."

ENDS

Notes:

* Reclaim These Streets is a volunteer collective movement aiming to raise awareness of the dangers women face on the UK's streets on a daily basis. The organisation is spearheaded by a group of volunteers, throughout the country, who are passionate about bringing about change."

health and comply with Covid restrictions. I also urged the Met publicly to negotiate so there could be a safe and peaceful protest. But they did not listen, refused to negotiate an agreement and simply banned it. And the Government were no help, having pushed through restrictions on demonstrations which were unclear. Because of the strength of feeling about Sarah Everard's murder, women gathered anyway. The police breaking up the demonstration caused dismay and many women were arrested. This is just another example of the Met Police:

- not listening to women and
- breaching the rights of demonstrators.

I urged then that none of the women should be prosecuted. Any outstanding prosecutions against those women should now be dropped immediately.



Harriet Harman · Mar 14, 2021

Beyond belief that @metpoliceuk Commissioner refusing to meet or talk to @ReclaimTS! They are reflecting fear & concerns of millions of women & girls. Ignoring them will not make them go away. They want change! And we're going to ensure they get it! twitter.com/reclaimts/stat...



Harriet Harman ✓
@HarrietHarman

Met mishandled vigil plan from the outset. They should have reached agreement. Terrible scenes in Clapham. I don't want to see any of these women in court.



Keir Starmer ✓ @Keir_Starmer · Mar 13, 2021

The scenes in Clapham this evening are deeply disturbing. Women came together to mourn Sarah Everard - they should have been able to do so peacefully.

I share their anger and upset at how this has been handled. This was not the way to police this protest.



Harriet Harman ✓ @HarrietHarman · Mar 19, 2021

Women should not have to pay coronavirus fines over Sarah Everard vigil, Harriet Harman says | The Independent



independent.co.uk

Women should not have to pay coronavirus fines over Sarah Everard vi...
'No one can argue there was any certainty on criminal law on this,' says chair of human rights committee

Demanding answers about the discovery of the body of Ms Sheila Seleokane at Lords Court

I was deeply concerned by the discovery of the body of Ms Sheila Seleokane in Flat 16, Lord's Court on 18th February and it's particularly worrying that her body was found so long after concerns were first raised by residents in Lords Court. It is terrible that a woman could have died in her flat and been left there for so long, possibly as long as 2 years. There are major questions for both Peabody Trust and the police about this.

I visited Lords Court on Wednesday 23rd February and talked to some of the residents who were home. I was accompanied by Cllr Sunil Chopra, Councillor for



Nunhead and Queen's Road Ward, Cllr Stephanie Cryan, Cabinet Member for Council Homes and Homelessness, and Cllr Evelyn Akoto, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing.



I have been in contact with the chair of Peabody Trust, Chair Lord Bob Kerslake, and Peabody's Chief Operating Officer, Ashling Fox. I asked of them a series of questions about how they dealt with the concerns tenants raised. They have commissioned an inquiry to report to them.

I have also spoken to the Borough Commander of the Metropolitan police, Colin Wingrove, and have written asking the police about their involvement and in particular, why they believe their officers were right to decline to enter the

flat on their two visits to Lords Court in October.

I have written to Southwark Council to ask them to confirm when they were first made aware of the situation and what action they took.

Peabody say that Ms Seleokane last paid her rent in August 2019 and that her Universal Credit began covering her rent in April 2020. I have asked the DWP to outline the process which led to Ms Seleokane's rent being paid directly to her landlord Peabody Trust when she was already dead.

I am continuing to support the residents of Lords Court whose complaints were not heard. I will continue press for answers and for lessons to be learned by all agencies involved in this tragic case.

Joint Committee on Human Rights hears from mothers and children in historic adoption inquiry

Our human rights include the right to family life and it's hard to think of a more important right than that of

a child to be with its mother and a mother to be with her child. Yet between 1949 and 1976, hundreds of thousands of babies were taken from their mothers and placed for adoption for no more reason than that their mother was unmarried. Now these mothers are speaking up about the enduring pain arising out of what was done to them.



Harriet Harman @HarrietHarman · 18h

The @HumanRightsCtte is hearing from birth mothers about their experience of adoption practices in the 1950s 60s & 70s.

"What was it like finding out you were pregnant in the 1950s?"

"It felt like fear. I was just terrified." @AnnKeen11 tells us

On Wednesday 16th March the Joint Committee on Human Rights, which I chair, heard heart-rending evidence from mothers and children affected by historic adoption practices between 1949 and 1976. The Committee heard about the trauma and suffering that those adoption practices caused, how they were made to feel like they had digressed and that they deserved their pain, and how the mothers never willingly gave up their babies. You can watch the full session [here](#).

The Committee will be hosting a roundtable on 27th April to hear further from mothers and children, and we will hear from the Secretary of State for Education, who is responsible for adoption, Nadhim Zahawi MP, on 25th May. You can find more information about the inquiry [here](#). The Committee will produce a report by the summer on the findings of its inquiry.



Harriet Harman @HarrietHarman · 18h

"It was so awful for lots of us who were in Mother & Baby homes. And what was the crime we committed? That we were pregnant without being married" @AnnKeen11 tells @HumanRightsCtte about the experience of unmarried mothers in the 1950s, 60s & 70s

Joint Committee on Human Rights continues to take evidence in its inquiry into protecting human rights in care settings

The Joint Committee on Human Rights has held further evidence sessions as part of its inquiry into protecting human rights in care settings.



On 23rd February, the Committee held a session focusing on capacity, mental health, and human rights concerns for people with dementia, with learning disabilities and autism, hearing from representatives of Royal Mencap Society, Alzheimer's Society, and several academic experts.

On 9th March, the Committee heard from representatives of care providers. The first panel focused on the issue of personal autonomy and enforcement of human rights and examined how care users and relatives are involved in

deciding their care and treatment, particularly for individuals who may lack capacity to make decisions. It also investigated current mechanisms for seeking redress when human rights have been breached, including the role of the Care Quality Commission. The second panel heard about care providers' approach to respecting the human rights of those under their care.

I have written to the Prime Minister about ongoing visiting restrictions in care homes, asking him to ensure that the Government monitors care home compliance with the visiting guidance, and to ask again that he put that visiting guidance on a statutory footing.

Dear Prime Minister

I am writing on behalf of the Joint Committee on Human Rights regarding ongoing visiting restrictions in care homes.

At Prime Minister's Questions on 9 March 2022, the Prime Minister responded to a question from Peter Dowd MP on care home visiting restrictions, saying:^[1]

"I think everybody understands the anguish of people who have not been able to see their loved ones during the pandemic, and as he knows, we have relaxed the restrictions in care homes."

However, as we noted in our report in May 2021, and most recently in our letter to you on 29 October 2021, individual care homes are able to decide which rules to follow, because compliance with the guidance is not mandatory.

Indeed, we have seen reports that care homes are applying restrictions inconsistently.^[2] Ruthie Henshall, Ambassador for Rights for Residents, recently told this Committee:^[3]

"Because [the guidance] is not law, it has become interpreted by each care home, and it is a postcode lottery as to where you live and whether you get even a half-hour visit every two or three weeks."

The imposition of restrictions risks potentially breaching the rights of patients, residents, and their family members, including their right to family life (Article 8 of the

European Convention on Human Rights), and their right to liberty and security (Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights).

This Committee has repeatedly called on the Government to ensure compliance with the visiting guidance by placing it on a statutory footing. Meaningful visits must be facilitated whenever possible, in all care settings.

In your response to this letter, we would be grateful if you could set out how the Government is monitoring compliance with its visiting guidance and whether you will now reconsider placing the visiting guidance on a statutory footing. We would be grateful for a response before 31 March.

Yours sincerely,

Harriet Harman MP

Interviewing Women MPs of the World

In 2018 I held a conference for Women MPs of the World in the chamber of the House of Commons. What was clear was that despite such different contexts, the quest for women's rights, and the demands and challenges, are so similar



amongst women MPs all around the world. Out of that 2018 conference arose an idea for a new project interviewing women MPs from Parliaments all over the world.

I have so far interviewed women MPs from Australia,

Barbados, Jamaica, Somalia, Sierra Leone, the Bahamas and Nepal, with many more planned. In the interviews I ask them:

- how they got into politics,
- what they have been able to, and hope to, achieve,
- how they work with other women both inside and outside parliament,
- and if there's anything else they'd like to tell me.



Attending the Commonwealth Day Flag Raising Ceremony

Monday 15th March was Commonwealth Day. Commonwealth Day is an annual celebration observed by people all over the Commonwealth, a voluntary association of 54 countries home to 2.4 billion people. I was pleased to be able to celebrate the day by attending the Flag Raising Ceremony in the Houses of Parliament. I was able to talk to MPs

including from Sierra Leone and Pakistan, and the Nigerian High Commissioner at the reception.



Launch of Southwark Labour Manifesto

On 12th March I spoke at the Southwark Labour Conference launching the 2022 Southwark Labour Manifesto for the upcoming local elections. Congratulations to Southwark Labour on a bold and inspiring manifesto for May 5th Council elections. There was wide consultation before the manifesto was drawn up and it includes:

- building 11,000 new council homes
- guaranteeing education, employment or training for every 18 year old
- providing more affordable childcare including two new community nurseries
- making swimming and gyms free for all residents
- delivering a quality kitchen and bathroom for every council tenant



Welcoming Paulette Hamilton to Parliament

On 7th March I joined the rest of the Parliamentary Labour Party to welcome Paulette Hamilton, the new MP for Birmingham Erdington, to Parliament.

Women's Safety and the Met Police

Cressida Dick, The Commissioner of the

Metropolitan Police, the most senior police officer in the UK has announced that she is standing down early.

Clearly she had lost the confidence of the Mayor Sadiq Khan and her position had become untenable.

The next commissioner, who'll be appointed by the Home Secretary, in consultation with the London Mayor, will need to do a much better job. And will need to rapidly turn the Met into a force that all Londoners can have confidence in.

And that means ridding the Met of misogyny, racism and homophobia and ensuring that the only officers in the force are those who, like the majority of officers, want to do a good job serving the public.

It was a disappointment for me to see the first woman Met Commissioner's term of office end under a cloud. But for some time it was evident to me that she'd have to go. She was popular with her officers but I don't think she was prepared to use her leadership to insist on necessary change even where it would have been resisted by some officers.

When it became clear that the man who abducted and murdered Sarah Everard was a police officer, Wayne Couzens, she said that the force had "an occasional wrong'un". But it was clear that it was not just "one bad apple" but that there was a wider problem of misogyny. Couzens was in a WhatsApp group with other officers which was sharing lurid and misogynist messages. There were other officers on a WhatsApp

ESTABLISHED 1865
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LONDON WEEKLY NEWS & Mercury

group who shared the tragic pictures of the murdered bodies of sisters Nicole Smallman and Bibaa Henry. There were officers at Charing Cross police station who shared misogynist, homophobic and racist tweets. A black officer in Croydon recorded shameful "banter" in the canteen.

It's clear that the Met's screening and monitoring woefully fails even to identify let alone root out men who are totally unfit to be police officers who let Londoners down and bring shame on all the decent Met officers.

In her defence, Dick complained that the police disciplinary procedures, which are laid down by Parliament, protect officers who ought to be dismissed. But she never once told us London MPs that this was a problem or asked us to change those procedures, which we would readily have done.

The Met, under Dick's leadership, refused to allow the vigil to remember Sarah Everard to go ahead on Clapham Common. My proposals that the Met should negotiate to allow a small, socially-distanced vigil to go ahead were ignored and the result was thousands of women came to the vigil anyway and many were arrested.

And even this week the Met leadership have once again shown their ineptness. They should have negotiated with the protesters who occupied the Russian oligarch's central London mansion to protest about Putin's invasion of Ukraine and to urge support for refugees and they should have arranged the terms on which they'd leave the property. Instead the police smashed their way in and arrested the demonstrators.

The Met cannot just be a representative sample of Londoners. They have to be better than that. Unlike ordinary Londoners, they have the power to arrest and detain. We must be completely confident that they will use those powers honestly and in a way which contains not a hint of racism, misogyny or bigotry. There needs to be a complete overhaul of vetting and monitoring of officers. The processes for disciplining and dismissing officers need to be reformed.

Cressida Dick either didn't see the need to do this or didn't know how to. The next Met Commissioner must set about it as his or her first task.

Ukraine



Every day now the news from Ukraine gets worse. Millions of Ukrainians have fled. The death toll of soldiers and civilians is mounting. Ukrainian cities are being reduced to rubble. Putin has shelled a town right near the Polish border and there seems no end in sight.

As President Zelenski spoke to us in the House of Commons last week, you couldn't help but marvel at the extraordinary resistance that the Ukrainians have shown. When Putin first invaded, many expected that when the Russian tanks rolled over the border Ukraine would fall within hours if not days. It is a true David and Goliath situation yet Ukrainians have shown they are prepared to resist and more than 2 weeks later the Russians have still not been able to take the capital Kiev. Our Government have been right to make it absolutely clear that we deplore the Russian invasion. Ukraine is a sovereign nation and has the right to self-government. And the UK has been right, too, to say that we stand strongly with NATO as the centrepiece of our defence.

As the official opposition we are backing the Government and are showing Putin that the UK is united against this invasion, as is the EU. But as the opposition we have a duty to scrutinise the Government's response and spell out where they should be doing more.

There are 3 areas where they are falling short.

Firstly, the Government should be tougher on clamping down on the wealthy Russian oligarchs who use London as the centre to launder their billions. This is not money that they've earned from hard work or innovation. They've got rich by creaming off the national assets that were privatised when the Soviet Union fell. That money should be in the hands of the Russian people not a few super rich oligarchs. And they use this wealth to prop up Putin so we should freeze those assets immediately.

Secondly we should be doing much more to play our part in helping those who are fleeing from Ukraine. Mostly women and children, they don't want to be leaving their homes but they have no choice. Poland has already taken in more than a million of these refugees but so far our government has let in fewer than 1,000.

And thirdly, the Government should be helping with the impact of the Ukrainian invasion on the cost of living crisis here in the UK. Even before the invasion, families here were struggling with increased costs, particularly with food and energy bills. Russia is a big producer of gas and Ukraine a big producer of food. With supplies interrupted, petrol, energy and food bills are all soaring and the Government must step in to protect those on low incomes who simply can't find the extra money for these rising bills.

We are lucky to be safe here in the UK. But we can't turn away from the people who are suffering in Ukraine and ignore the effect that it's having on people's living standards here. And we must recognise that Putin's actions are a threat to all democracies. We must not do anything that will escalate the crisis but we certainly can and should do more to isolate Putin and act in solidarity with Ukraine.

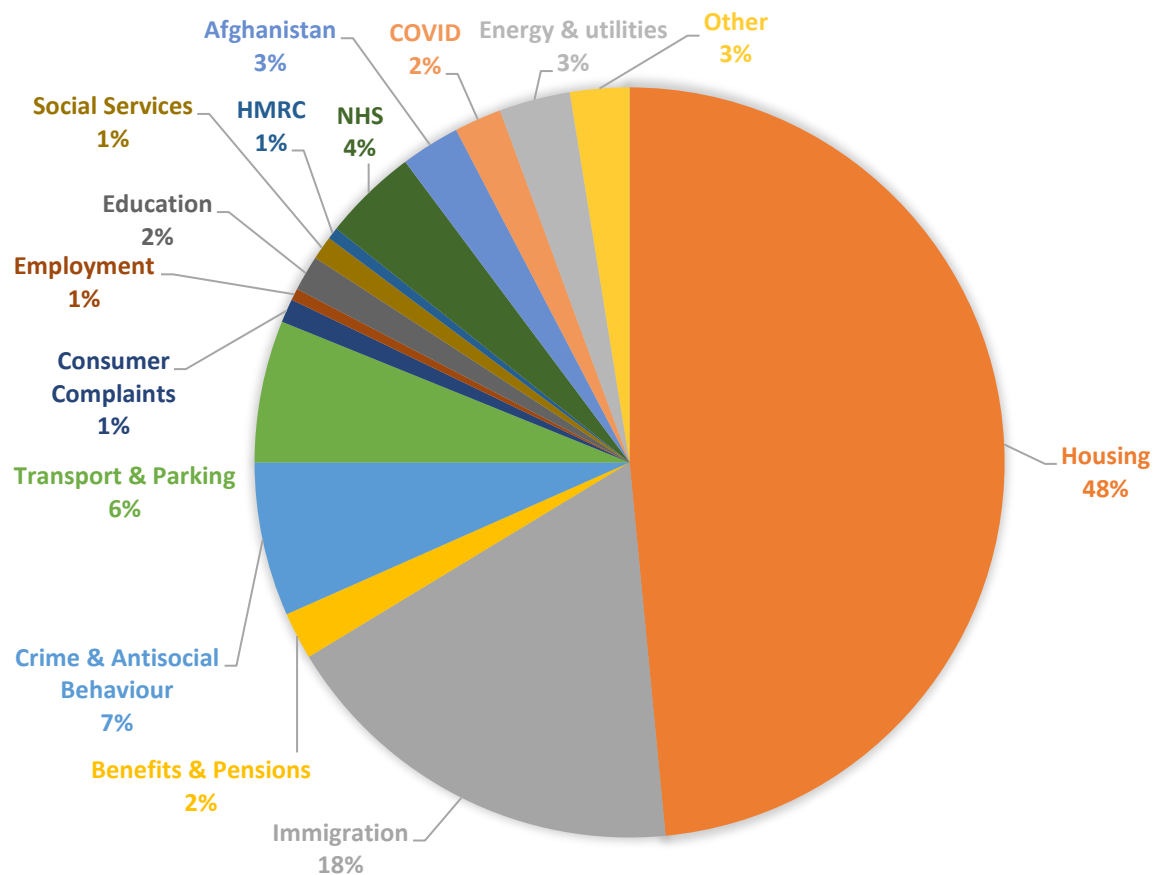
Constituency problems - update

My casework team continue to deal with problems including ongoing COVID-19 issues, and there continues to be an increase in the number of constituents seeking my help.

New cases breakdown – December 2021

In December I took action on **639** cases. In 2021 I took action on a total of **8,242** cases.

In December I recouped **£1,650** for constituents. In 2021 the total I recouped for constituents was **£90,059.07**. This includes underpaid benefit payments, coronavirus business grants for local business owners, waived HMRC penalties and compensation for errors and delays from housing associations and the Home Office.



December case summaries:

- A number of constituents across Camberwell and Peckham have been experiencing significant delays in the local postal service provided by Royal Mail. I have written urgently to Royal Mail requesting a full report on all the postcodes affected and asking what measures Royal Mail plan to take to ensure that residents receive an efficient and consistent postal service. I continue to monitor the situation and press Royal Mail to improve their service.
- A Council tenant in Walworth asked for my help to resolve a number of serious issues she was experiencing with her property, including a gas leak and severe damp. Her insurance company, Zurich, had previously assessed the issues and placed her in temporary accommodation so that the repairs could be carried out. This was originally expected to be for a period of only 3 months, yet after 5 months the repairs had still not been completed. I wrote to both Southwark Council and Zurich Insurance Group asking for a full report into this situation and what urgent steps both agencies were taking to resolve this issue. Both Zurich Insurance and Southwark Council apologised to my constituent for the delays and said that the outstanding repairs had now been completed. Zurich Insurance also offered my constituent compensation of £550, which she accepted. Disappointingly the signs of damp have begun to appear again in my constituent's home and so I have now made further enquiries to both Southwark Council and Zurich Insurance Group demanding action to permanently solve this issue.

- An EU Citizen from Camberwell Green asked for my help to get a new home after overcrowding had meant she had to move out of her previous property. She had made a housing application to Southwark Council but she was now being told that her account had been closed, and she was struggling to contact the Council to discuss this. I wrote to Southwark Council on her behalf to ask what support would be available to her and received a response encouraging her to re-join the housing register. Following the clarity provided by the response to my inquiry my constituent was able to follow the advice and has now been placed in temporary accommodation, awaiting permanent rehousing.
- A Camberwell woman had been waiting for the outcome of her medical driving licence application since March 2021 and asked for my assistance with chasing the DVLA for the result. I wrote to the DVLA requesting a report on the progress of her application and to ask when my constituent could expect to receive the outcome. As a result of my inquiry the DVLA has actioned her application and she has now received her medical driving licence.
- An East Dulwich man contacted me with safety concerns about the faulty gates at Goose Green Park. He told me that a dog was recently hit and killed by a car near the park after the faulty gate was left open and that he had real fears about what could happen if children were able to run out of the gate and into the traffic on East Dulwich Road. I wrote to Southwark Council and they have now completed all the repairs.
- A woman in Camberwell asked for my help because her property was filled with a foul odour which appeared to be coming from her bathroom. She could not find the cause but suspected it was blocked drains. She had reported the issue to her landlord, Hexagon, but they had still not scheduled an appointment to fix the problem. I wrote to Hexagon requesting that they urgently arrange for contractors to visit the property to identify the source of the foul smell and clear any blocked drains. Hexagon have finally arranged for contractors to attend the property at a suitable time for her.

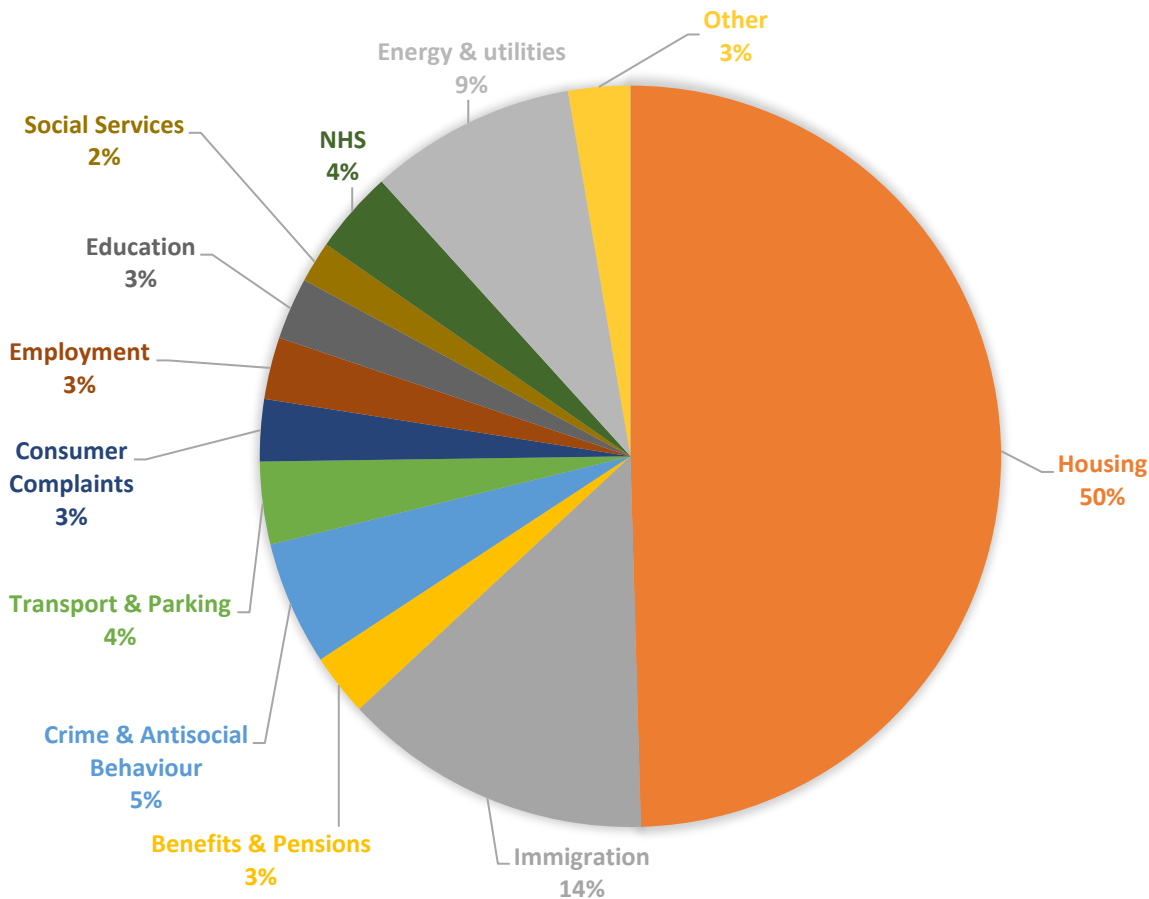
In December I received **450** emails from constituents on policy issues including:

- Support the opening of new safe routes to the UK for refugees at Report stage of the Nationality & Borders Bill – I support the opening of safe routes
- Support Amendment 8, Amendments 9, 10, and 11 of Nationality and Borders Bill – I supported amendments during the passage of the Bill
- Act Now - End the social care charging scandal – I support reforming social care putting it on an equal footing with the NHS
- Support the Radiotherapy 4 Life #CatchUpWithCancer campaign and support calls for a more urgent response to the cancer backlog – I support this campaign
- Please support 'Crime Not Compliment' campaign - Make Public Sexual Harassment a Crime – I strongly support criminalising sexual harassment
- Support the 'The No Child Left Behind' pledge to end child poverty – I support ending poverty for all children
- Equity UK campaign to protect entertainment workers from the COVID-19 winter crisis – I agree with the need for greater support for people in the creative sector

New cases breakdown – January 2022

In January I took action on **546** cases.

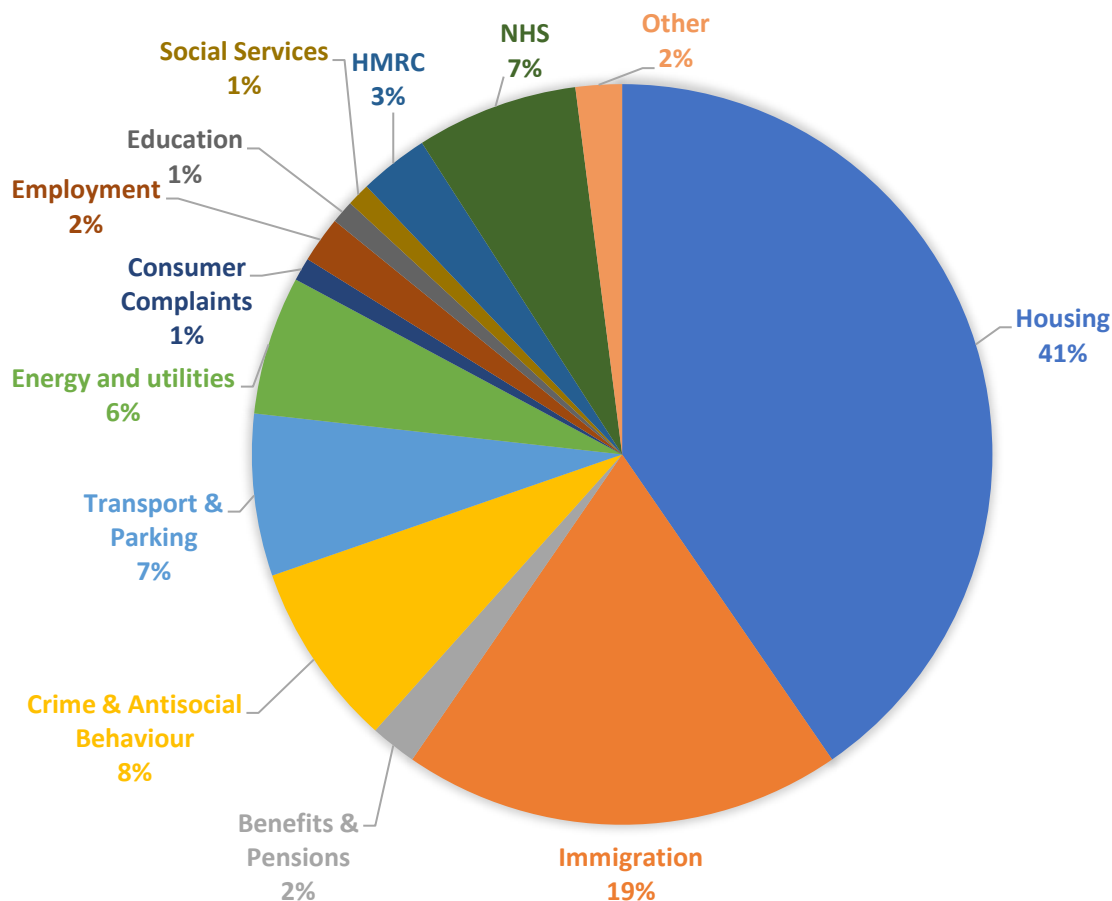
In January I recouped **£1,100** for constituents. This includes underpaid benefit payments, coronavirus business grants for local business owners, waived HMRC penalties and compensation for errors and delays from housing associations and the Home Office.



New cases breakdown – February 2022

In February I took action on **455** cases. In 2022 I have so far taken action on 1,001 cases.

In February I recouped **£400** for constituents. In 2022 I have so far recouped **£1,500** for constituents. This includes underpaid benefit payments, coronavirus business grants for local business owners, waived HMRC penalties and compensation for errors and delays from housing associations and the Home Office.



January and February case summaries:

- A man from Peckham Rye contacted me for help obtaining a collision report from the Metropolitan Police after his son was hit by a car and sustained significant injuries requiring hospital treatment. He needed the vehicle registration details of the car involved so that he could submit a compensation claim to help support his son's treatment and recovery, but the Police had not responded to his request. I wrote to the Metropolitan Police who confirmed that, following my request, they had provided the report to my constituent.
- A woman from Peckham asked for my help with her energy bills. Her daughter has multiple sclerosis and relies on electricity to power her specialist hospital bed in their home, and she believed she was being overcharged following a recent switch to Octopus Energy. She also thought her top-up meter was faulty. I wrote to Octopus Energy to request that an engineer attend the woman's property to inspect the meter and to outline what support they can provide her. Octopus Energy responded to let me know that as a result of my inquiry they will be fitting my constituent with a smart meter so that she can more easily keep track of her usage, and that for the meantime they have applied her £140 Warm Home Discount Scheme payment to her account.
- A couple from Peckham contacted me about a persistent roof leak. They had been trying to resolve the problem since January 2018 but their freeholder, Metropolitan Housing Association, had recently closed their Stage Two complaint without offering any form of permanent resolution. The couple told

me they had self-referred this issue to the Housing Ombudsman but had still not received a response. I contacted the Housing Ombudsman for information about when my constituents could expect to receive a response and the Housing Ombudsman shared with me their final investigation report, which ordered Metropolitan Housing Association to pay £1100 in compensation. The constituents confirmed the payment has now been made.

- A Camberwell lone mother of a four-year-old child wrote to me for urgent help with a mice infestation in her property. I quickly wrote to Southwark Council to raise this unacceptable situation and to ask them to resolve it by either eradicating the infestation and deep cleaning the property, or urgently moving the family to a more sanitary property. The Council wrote to me to let me know they were treating the property to get rid of the mice and that prevention works were also being undertaken to prevent any future infestations. A visit has been scheduled by the Council for later this month to confirm that the infestation has been completely eliminated.
- I was contacted by a 92 year old man who was having difficulties in arranging his second Covid-19 booster vaccination despite being told that he was eligible for it due to his age. The constituent was struggling to book his appointment online and due to his mobility concerns he specifically wanted to have an appointment at his nearest vaccination centre, the Tessa Jowell Health Centre. I wrote to South East London Clinical Commissioning Group on his behalf and received a response which explained that my constituent was eligible for the walk in service at the Tessa Jowell Centre.
- A woman living in Camberwell wrote to me because she and her elderly parents had been living without heating for over three months. She had raised this with Southwark Council repeatedly and around 20 contractors had attended her property on several separate occasions, but it had not been resolved. I wrote urgently to Southwark Council who explained that the situation was being formally investigated as a stage one complaint but that the works would be undertaken as soon as possible. My constituent has now confirmed that heating has been restored at her property.

Help and Support

Concerned about British nationals who need assistance in Ukraine?

Consular support is still available to British nationals through the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office helpline (open 24 hours, 7 days a week) on:

+380 44 490 3660 (from Ukraine)

+44 (0) 1908 516666 (from the UK)

[Click here for UK Government advice about the situation in Ukraine.](#)

Concerned about non-British family members in Ukraine?

The British Government has announced that British nationals and people of any nationality settled in the UK will be supported to bring family members to the UK. This includes immediate family members (under Family Migration visas) as well as parents, grandparents, adult children and siblings (under the Ukraine Family Scheme).

To check your eligibility and begin the application call the helpline (open 24 hours, 7 days a week) on:

From Ukraine: **+44 808 164 8810** – select option 1

From the UK: **0808 164 8810** if you are in the UK – select option 1

Find further information on UK Government guidance support to Ukrainian nationals and their families.

Concerned as a Ukrainian national in the UK?

The Home Office has agreed some temporary concessions to support Ukrainian nationals currently in the UK who are now unable to return when their existing visa expires.

If you are in the UK and need assistance, contact UKVI on:

0808 164 8810 – select option 2

Monday to Thursday (excluding bank holidays), 9am to 4:45pm.

Friday (excluding bank holidays), 9am to 4:30pm.

Find further information on UK Government guidance support to Ukrainian nationals and their families.

Need legal advice?

The Ukraine Advice Project UK offers free legal advice on UK immigration, visas and asylum by qualified legal advisors for Ukrainians affected by the crisis.

Send details of your circumstances and the advice you need to:
ukraine@freemovement.org.uk

Find further information from **Ukraine Advice Project UK**

Support and resources for British and non-British nationals who have been affected by the situation in Afghanistan from August 2021. Please click on link to information and advice:

- **Support for British and non-British nationals in Afghanistan**
- **Afghan citizens' resettlement scheme**
- **Afghanistan - Foreign travel advice**
- **Support for veterans**

Southwark Council:

- [General information on Coronavirus](#)
- [Covid-19: What can you do to help](#)
- [Financial support for residents](#)
- [Food access](#)
- [Coronavirus housing advice](#)
- [Covid-19: Support and information for businesses and employers](#)
- [Southwark COVID-19 community grants](#)
- [Voluntary sector help and advice on Coronavirus](#)
- [Impact on council services](#)
- [Advice on potential coronavirus related scams](#)

Bereavement support:

- The government has published a [bereavement support leaflet](#) to help those who have lost a loved one. The leaflet shares information to help bereaved families, friends, or next of kin make important decisions during this national emergency, sets out what to expect next, and signposts the extra help and support that is available.

Citizens Advice – Benefit advice:

- <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/coronavirus-check-what-benefits-you-can-get/>

Government business advice:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19>
- Government's Business Support Helpline on 0300 456 3565, Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm.

HMRC:

- [helpline for businesses and self-employed people who are concerned about their tax](#) due to COVID-19.
- 08000 241222, Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm.

Domestic violence help and support:

- [Solace Women's Aid](#) - Advice Line - 0808 802 5565
- Monday - Friday 10am - 4pm. Additional 6pm - 8pm on Tuesdays.
- Email: advice@solacewomensaid.org

Mental health help and support:

- [Lambeth and Southwark Mind](#)
07871 940 763 - 8am to 3pm Monday, Tuesday and Thursday
- [Samaritans](#) - 116 123 - 24/7

Legal advice

- [Southwark Law Centre](#)
- [Citizens Advice Southwark](#) has resumed drop-in sessions from 9.30 am to 4.00 pm 5 days a week at:
 - Peckham - 97 Peckham High Street, SE15 5RS
 - Bermondsey - 8 Market Place, Southwark Park Road, SE16 3UQ
 - Walworth - 6-8 Westmoreland Road, Walworth, SE17 2AY

RIP Jack Dromey MP

On 7th January 2022 Jack Dromey died suddenly of heart failure, aged 73. His death is a dreadful shock and loss. I'd like to thank all the Camberwell and Peckham Labour Party members and the many people from the local community who got in touch to express their respect and admiration for Jack and their sympathy to me.

On 2nd February MPs from all sides spoke in tribute to Jack in the House of Commons. You can read what they said [here](#). And this is what I said:

Thank you, Mr Speaker. On behalf of myself and my family, I warmly thank all hon. Members who have spoken today. I say to everyone from all the around the country who has sent us cards, emails, texts, tweets, and who have posted on Facebook, that the memories they have shared with us, and the respect that they have shown for Jack, have given so much comfort to me and his beloved family as we face the total shock of his sudden death from heart failure just three weeks ago.



Jack hated inequality and oppression, and his life's work was a steadfast focus on supporting those who were fighting against it. His roots in the Irish working-class immigrant community, his solidarity with black and Asian people fighting against inequality, and his respect for middle-class people who, though not suffering hardship themselves, wanted to work to end it for

others, made him the polar opposite of the culture wars and the living embodiment of the coalition that is the Labour party. He spoke up for people and they heard him, and that made them stronger, whether they were those he worked with or those he had never met.

Much has rightly been said about Jack's support for me in my work. It was phenomenal and it was unswerving. But it was not just because I was his wife; it was a matter of principle. Jack believed that men should support and respect women, and he detested men who he saw holding their wives back in their own self-interest.

For all of us who received it, Jack's support was a super-power. It made us all walk taller; it made us all feel stronger. We will so miss him. I thank you, Mr Speaker, for your tribute, for your kindness to me and to his family, and for allowing us this time today to pay tribute to Jack.



I was grateful to be able to take a period of bereavement leave but I am now fully back undertaking my duties as Camberwell and Peckham MP



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