



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

## **Parliamentary Report**

**December 2023**



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## This is my December report 2023 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.

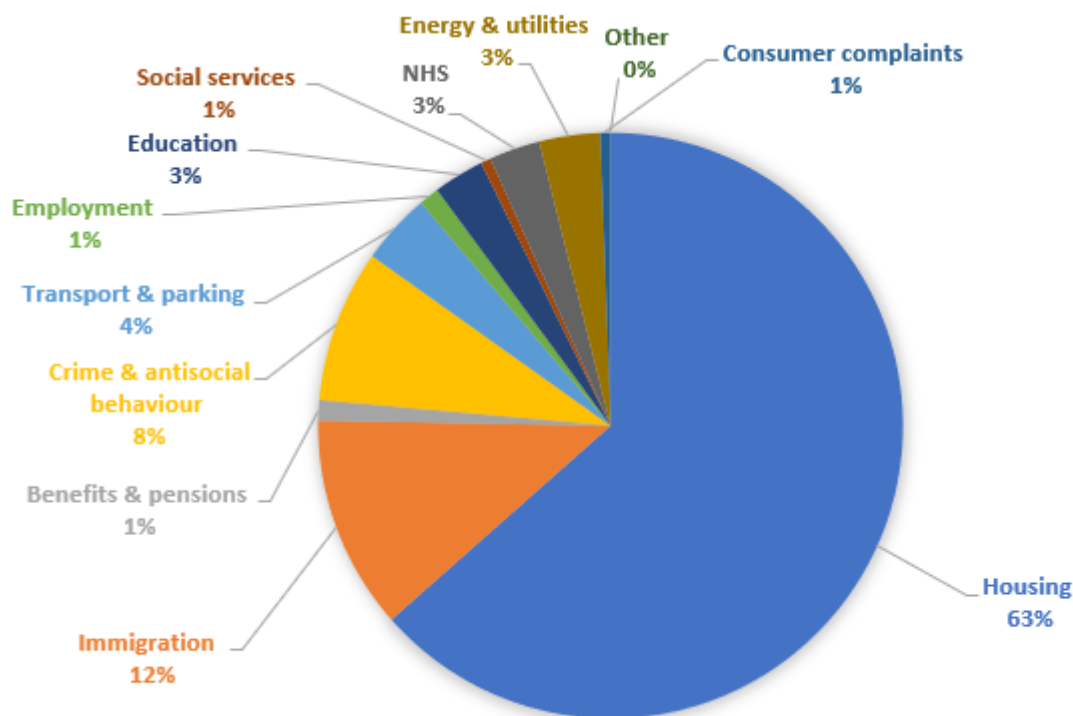
## Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year

*Haniel Hamman*

## Constituency problems - update

### New cases breakdown – November 2023

In October I took action on 727 cases and recouped £5,264 for constituents. In 2023 so far I have recouped **£260,888.69** for constituents.



## Case summaries:

- I was contacted by a Camberwell man who had submitted a claim for Pension Credit in June 2023 but was yet to receive a decision from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). I wrote to the DWP to ask them to look into my constituent's claim and provide me with a full report. I received a response from the DWP stating that my constituent had been awarded Pension Credit backdated to April 2023, amounting to £6106.08 with ongoing weekly

payments of £195.91. A Special Payment of £150 was also issued by the DWP to apologise for the distress and inconvenience that my constituent experienced.

- A Southwark Council tenant in Peckham contacted me following a leak in her property which had left her without lighting in her kitchen for over two weeks. The woman informed me that she was visually impaired and that the Council had made an appointment to fix the lighting that was over a week ahead. I wrote urgently to Southwark Council to ask that the necessary repairs be undertaken at an earlier date and received confirmation two days later that an electrician had attended the property and had restored the lighting.
- A Peckham resident living in a Hexagon Housing Association property wrote to tell me that her family had been without heating and hot water for over 10 days due to a faulty boiler. I wrote to Hexagon to ask that the heating and hot water be fixed as a matter of urgency. Hexagon fitted a new boiler my constituent's property and my constituent has confirmed that her new heating system is now working.
- A 76 year old woman living a council property in Peckham Rye contacted me because she had been without heating for 3 months and her water bill for the month had risen significantly following a leak from her newly fitted water tank. I urgently wrote to Southwark Council asking for a full report and for the necessary repairs be carried out as soon as possible. Following my enquiry my constituent contacted me again to tell me that the Council had contacted her directly following my enquiry, that engineers had fixed her heating and that the council had sent her a £75 payment to cover her increased water bill.
- A Camberwell woman wrote to me about the poor internet connection at her address which was affecting her ability to work from home. She had copied in Hyperoptic LTD who then also sent me an email reassuring me that full fibre broadband was 'live' in my constituent's area but they were waiting for permission from the freeholder of my constituent's block, Peabody Housing Association, to enable internet access. I wrote to Peabody to request a report into this situation and received a response confirming they were in the process of liaising with the broadband provider. I shared this response with my constituent who let me know that Peabody are now expediting her case to ensure she has internet access before Christmas.
- I was contacted by a woman from Peckham who needed to return urgently to Ghana for her mother's funeral but was unable to leave the UK as she was awaiting a decision on her application for Leave to Remain which had been submitted over a year earlier. I urgently wrote to the Home Office to ask for a report into the progress of her application and to request that the application be expedited on compassionate grounds and received a response stating that this case would be prioritised. I shared this response with my constituent, but she wrote to me again a few weeks later to inform me that she had still not received her Biometric Residence Permit (BRP). I made further enquiries to the Home Office about the status of her BRP and received confirmation that the permit had been sent shortly after my enquiry. I shared this update with my constituent who wrote to me later that week to let me know that she had received the BRP and would be able to travel.

- A man from East Dulwich contacted me because he was having problems trying to apply for a provisional driving licence. He had accidentally provided an incorrect postcode due to a typo when trying to apply for a provisional licence in 2020 and had been unable to get a provisional licence since then due to the discrepancy on his file with the DVLA. The DVLA had told him they were unable to correct this due to issues of data protection, as he could not confirm the postcode he had previously provided them with due to the typo. I wrote to the DVLA on his behalf to ask them to sort this out and as a result the DVLA sent him a form they need him to complete to resolve this and have waived the £20 fee they would usually charge. I shared this information with my constituent who is happy that this matter is finally progressing.

In November I received **2,890** emails from constituents on policy issues including:

- Conflict between Israel and Hamas – I have serious concerns about the deteriorating conditions in the West Bank and we must keep working towards the release of all hostages and a cessation of fighting as quickly as possible. See my statement [here](#).
- Protect the right to strike and repeal the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill – I opposed the Bill throughout its passage through Parliament and will support efforts to repeal it as soon as the opportunity arises.
- Urge the government to introduce an Emergency Energy Tariff – I support calls to bring in a proper windfall tax on oil and gas giants to help tackle the cost-of-living crisis and I agree that we need rapid action on retrofitting housing.
- Reform the Dangerous Dogs Act – I support the decision to update the list of dangerous dogs to include the American XL Bully.
- Limit the sale of fireworks and reduce at-home backyard firework displays – I share concerns about the stress and anxiety the misuse of fireworks can cause to smaller children, older people and those who suffer from mental health issues, as well as to pets and livestock. I will continue to monitor developments on this issue.

## RIP Glenys Kinnock

On 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2023 we heard the sad news the Glenys Kinnock, former MEP for Wales and former Minister for Europe and Minister of State with responsibility for Africa, the Caribbean, Central America and the UN, had died at her home.

Glenys was a joyous, clever, caring, dynamic, vivacious woman. She made change from the very local to the international. Glenys was fundamental in pushing forward the role of women in the Labour Party. She was fierce for us. Nowhere in the world - or at home - would she settle for women being in second place! My thoughts are with her husband Neil, her children Stephen and Rachel and all her family.





## Joint Committee on Human Rights

On Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> December ahead of the Rwanda vote, the Joint Committee on Human Rights, which I chair, published a Briefing Paper setting out human rights concerns raised by the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum & Immigration) Bill. You can read this [here](#).

On Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> December, the Joint Committee on Human Rights, questioned the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, Alex Chalk MP, over the Government's Rwanda policy and its commitment to the European Convention of Human Rights.

I questioned him on whether he would accept amendments to the Bill that would seek to make it harder for individuals to challenge their removal to Rwanda on the basis of their individual circumstances, and amendments that would require ministers to ignore interim measures issued by the European Court of Human Rights related to flights to Rwanda. You can view the proceedings [here](#).



## Mr Speaker's peace vigil for the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights



On 10<sup>th</sup> December was it the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Human Rights day. On 11<sup>th</sup> December joined with Mr Speaker and colleagues from across the house to mark this important day with a candlelit vigil.



Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> November was the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and it was White Ribbon Day, which marks the beginning of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence which runs until International Human Rights day on 10<sup>th</sup> December.

The news this week that Emma Pattison, the Epsom College headteacher, and her 7-year-old daughter Lettie, who were tragically killed by Emma's husband were preparing to leave him is sadly an all too familiar story.

I was struck by the chilling words of Cheryl Giovannoni, chief executive of the Girls' Day School Trust, when paying tribute to Emma, she said "it doesn't matter how successful or accomplished or brilliant you are as a woman. You are only as safe as your male partner allows you to be".

In every room and every engagement where domestic violence is discussed, there will be women there who have themselves experienced coercive control or male violence. When we talk about violence against women and girls, we are not talking about 'other people', we are talking about our friends, colleagues, and it can happen to women at any time of their life. It doesn't matter whether you are rich or poor, it doesn't matter what age you are, and it affects women of all ethnicities and backgrounds. And too many women and girls here in Southwark live in fear, with Southwark being ranked the 15<sup>th</sup> highest borough in terms of domestic abuse offences in 2021/22.

This is why it is right that we reflect on men's responsibility in tackling male violence against women and girls. It shouldn't be solely down to us women to take the responsibility when it is men who are the perpetrators of this violence. We need male political and cultural leadership to take this forward and for men to take responsibility. Not to shut women out of the discussion, but for men to do some of the heavy lifting to bring about change and to share the obligation to end male violence against women and girls. I commend Leader of Southwark Council, Kieron Williams, for the initiatives Southwark Council have taken to raise awareness amongst young boys on how to respect women and not resort to violence.

We've made a great deal of progress. Now everyone agrees that domestic violence is wrong. But only Labour will take the action required to ensure women's safety and end male violence.

Under the Tories, too little has been done to tackle the root causes of violence against women and girls with recent figures showing that 1.6 million women aged 16 to 74 years in England and Wales suffered domestic abuse and over 600,000 women have been sexually assaulted. As we look ahead to the general election, Labour will commit to using all the levers of Government to deliver on its mission to halve the level of violence against women and girls in a decade. We will put specialists into the court system and the policing system and will tackle misogyny as the root cause of violence against women and girls online and in schools. But we need our male allies to work with us to deliver effective and permanent change.

## The Committee on Standards

The Committee on Standards, which I chair, in the past month published two reports into the conduct of MPs.

On 30<sup>th</sup> November we published our report on the conduct of Stephen Flynn MP, which you can read [here](#). Stephen was not recommended to receive a formal sanction.



House of Commons  
Committee on Standards

### Stephen Flynn

First Report of Session 2023–24

*Report, together with formal minutes relating to the report*

Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed 30 November 2023

On 14<sup>th</sup> December we published our report on the conduct of Scott Benton MP, which you can read [here](#). The Committee found that Scott had committed a very serious breach of parliamentary rules and recommended a sanction of 35 days suspension from the House of Commons. The House will now vote on whether to agree to this sanction.

You can read more about the work of the committee [here](#).



House of Commons  
Committee on Standards

### Scott Benton

Second Report of Session 2023–24

*Report, together with formal minutes relating to the report*

Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed 14 December 2023

## Independent Expert Panel recommends suspending Peter Bone MP for bullying and sexual misconduct

16 October 2023



The Independent Expert Panel (IEP) has today published a [report](#) which finds that Mr Peter Bone MP “committed many varied acts of bullying and one act of sexual misconduct” against a member of his staff in 2012 and 2013. It has recommended that he is suspended from the House for six weeks. A suspension of this length triggers the Recall of MPs Act 2015.

The complainant made his complaint to the [Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme \(ICGS\)](#) in October 2021, having first complained to the Conservative Party in 2017. The ICGS investigation began in September 2022 after the complainant withdrew from the Conservative Party process which had not yet concluded.

Following an investigation by an independent investigator appointed by the ICGS, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards upheld five allegations of bullying and one of sexual misconduct. Mr Bone appealed this decision to the IEP. That appeal was dismissed by the IEP sub-panel appointed to consider that case as having raised no substantive grounds.

The sub-panel then determined that Mr Bone should be suspended for six weeks. It stated that:

*This is a serious case of misconduct. [...] The bullying involved violence, shouting and swearing, mocking, belittling and humiliating behaviour, and ostracism. [...]*

*This wilful pattern of bullying also included an unwanted incident of sexual misconduct, when the complainant was trapped in a room with the respondent in a hotel in Madrid, [...]. This was a deliberate and conscious abuse of power using a sexual mechanism: indecent exposure.*

Mr Bone appealed the sanction to a fresh IEP sub-panel. They dismissed his appeal, and confirmed the original decision.

If confirmed by the House the suspension will trigger a recall petition under the Recall of MPs Act 2015.



## The Safety of Rwanda Bill

On Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> December the Tories brought their shameful Safety of Rwanda Bill to the house for MPs to vote on whether to give the bill a second reading. I voted against this Bill on the basis that it won't deter human traffickers or the desperate people they exploit and that it breaches the UK's commitments on Human Rights. Unfortunately, the Bill has passed to the next stage.

On Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> December, the Joint Committee on Human Rights, which I chair, questioned the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, Alex Chalk MP, over the Government's Rwanda policy and its commitment to the European Convention of Human Rights.

Human Rights are, by their very nature, universal, based on the recognition of the inherent dignity and inalienable rights of all members of the human race. It is exactly that concept that this country has done so much to promote in the past. But this Bill seeks to restrict human rights for one particular category of people, namely migrants.

In this way the Bill undermines our commitment to the very concept of the universality of human rights. Once human rights are only for some people but not for others, the concept is destroyed.

The Home Secretary recently said in a statement to the House of Commons that the provisions of the Bill are compatible with the rights in the European Convention on Human Rights. Yet on the face of the Bill is written a statement under the Human Rights Act from the Home Secretary which says, "I am unable to make a statement that, in my view, the provisions of the safety of Rwanda (asylum and Immigration) Bill are compatible with the Convention rights, but the government nevertheless wishes the House to proceed with the Bill."

The Bill would alter domestic law but it does not legislate away the obligations that the UK has signed up to in international law or our continued commitment to the European Convention on Human Rights. Under this Bill, our own courts, including the Supreme Court, would be prevented from adjudicating on whether Rwanda is safe. But there will be no such inhibition for the European Court of Human Rights. The irony is that this Bill would replace decision-making by our own courts with decision making by the court in Strasbourg.

People take to small boats because they are desperate, so desperate that they are prepared to risk their lives. So far this year over 27,000 have risked the perilous journey despite the fact that in the last 3 years at least 79 people have died.

The idea that they will risk death but not risk being one of a small number sent to Rwanda would be laughable were it not so depressing.

There are so very many and such fundamental flaws in this Bill that the only conclusion you can draw is that this is performative legislation designed only to send a signal. You can only wonder what has happened to the Tory party that they would do this to send a signal to their rebellious backbenches and in the hope of attracting voters.

In Southwark we celebrate our diversity as our biggest strength. The people of Southwark are a rich mix of those who have come here to make a better life and contribute to our communities. Labour has promised that if we get into government we will repeal the Bill.

In all my over 40 years of being an MP this is the most woeful piece of legislation I've seen and I will continue to oppose it at every stage.



## **Recording a podcast with the Institute for Government about the transition from opposition to government**

On Monday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023 I recorded a podcast with the Institute for Government as part of a series that they are making about the experience of the transition from being in opposition to in government.



## **Help and Support**

### **Concerned about rising cost of living? Finding support in Southwark:**

If you, or someone you are supporting is struggling financially, there are lots of organisations in Southwark that can help. Southwark Council's Cost of Living support can all be found on their [website](#).

Residents who receive certain benefits and need urgent financial support can apply to the Southwark Emergency and Hardship Support, found [here](#).

Find out what further government support you might be able to get to help with your living costs [here](#).

Information about grants and other financial support can be found [here](#).

Cost of living support for businesses can be found [here](#).

### **Free confidential advice:**

- [Citizens Advice Southwark](#)

Citizens Advice Southwark provide free, confidential, independent and impartial advice to help people resolve their problems with money, housing, employment, legal issues, and more.

Advice line: 080 8278 7849

Drop-in sessions from 10.00 am to 2.00 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

### **Domestic abuse 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](mailto:advice@solacewomensaid.org)

- [National Domestic Abuse Helpline](#)

The freephone, 24-hour Helpline: 0808 2000 247

### **Support for victims of crime:**

- [Victim Support South London](#)

South London Victim Assessment and Referral Service on freephone: 0808 168 9291, then dial 3

Lines are open 8am-8pm Monday to Friday and 9am-5pm on Saturdays.

If you need support outside of open hours, call the Supportline on freephone 0808 1689 111

### **Mental health help and support:**

- [Lambeth and Southwark Mind](#)

020 8159 8355 - 8am to 3pm Monday, Tuesday and Thursday

- [Samaritans](#) - 116 123 - 24/7

- [The Nest](#) - 020 8138 1805

### **Support for older people:**

- [Southwark Pensioners](#)

Open Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

020 7708 4556 [info@southwarkpensioners.org.uk](mailto:info@southwarkpensioners.org.uk)

- [Age UK Lewisham and Southwark](#)

020 7701 9700 phone line open 10am to 4pm Tuesday to Friday

### **Legal advice:**

- [Southwark Law Centre](#)

- [Migrant Legal Action](#)

53 Addington Square, London. SE5 7LB

Opening hours: Monday- Friday, 9:00am-5:00pm. Appointment only.

Reception: 0207 701 0141

Advice Line: 0203 150 1470 (2:00pm to 4:00pm)

Email: [info@migrantlegalaction.org.uk](mailto:info@migrantlegalaction.org.uk)

- [Cambridge House Law Centre](#)

Provides legal advice and advocacy services by way of appointment for individuals and families dealing specifically with housing, employment, benefits, and community care issues.

Printworks, Unit F, 22 Amelia Street, London SE17 3BZ

Telephone: 020 7358 7025

Email: [lawcentre@ch1889.org](mailto:lawcentre@ch1889.org)

- [Disability Law Service](#)

Provides free legal advice to disabled people, their families and carers. For issues of employment and discrimination at work, or welfare benefits:

Advice Line: 0207 791 9800

Opening hours: Monday-Friday, 10am – 1pm, 2pm – 5pm

### **Food and essentials:**

- [Southwark Food Action Alliance](#)

Southwark Food Action Alliance is a group of local organisations that care about good food for all in the borough. Many of its members provide food support to Southwark residents. The SFAA website has information on low-cost recipes and maps showing where you can learn to grow food and where food support services are located in Southwark. Some food support services are only for specific groups, such as older adults. So do check who the service is for before visiting.

- [Pecan foodbank](#)

Peckham Methodist Church, 2 Wood's Rd, SE15 2PX. Monday and Thurs 1pm to 3pm (by appointment only).

Pecan foodbanks work using a voucher referral system. In order to get help from Pecan, people need a voucher issued by a local agency before arriving at a centre. For more information email [foodbank.support@pecan.org.uk](mailto:foodbank.support@pecan.org.uk) or call 020 7732 0007.

Pecan also run [Peckham Pantry](#). Members of Peckham Pantry pay £4.50 per shop, which gives access to fresh fruit and veg and store cupboard favourites – to the value of £15 or more. For further information please contact [pantry@pecan.org.uk](mailto:pantry@pecan.org.uk) or 020 7277 7075.

- [Spring Community Hub Foodbank](#)

Spring Community Hub, 1 Wilson Road, Modular Building, SE5 8LU. Thursday and Friday 10am to 1pm. Spring Community Hub Foodbanks also work on a referral system. For more information email [office@springcommunityhub.org](mailto:office@springcommunityhub.org) or call 07901 617 189.

## **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](mailto:ukraine@freemovement.org.uk)

Find further information from [Ukraine Advice Project UK.](#)

## **Concerned about British and non-British nationals who have been affected by the situation in Afghanistan?**

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](#)



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