

BELL RIBEIRO-ADDY MP

Monthly Report

August 2020



Back to school but no lessons learned by this Government

As schools return, I'd like to wish everyone a safe start to the new term. Thank you to those of you in particular who have worked to keep our children and young people learning safely during the most difficult circumstances. The safety of children, school staff and parents will remain my top priority going forwards.

Unfortunately, as the new academic year begins, it seems no lessons have been learned by our fail-prone Government. Its eleventh-hour decision to allow mask-wearing in schools (and make it mandatory in areas with heightened infection) was also its eleventh U-turn since late May. It's difficult for people to have confidence in what the government is doing when it's so obvious that they're making it up as they go along. Still less so when this incompetence has left us with the worst of both worlds: the highest case mortality rate in the world and the biggest economic shock of any OECD nation.

I know many people in Streatham are still struggling. During the summer recess, I had more time to go out into the constituency and get involved with the community response to coronavirus, talking to residents, checking in with local businesses and visiting the local charities who plug the service gaps left in day-to-day government after a decade of cuts.

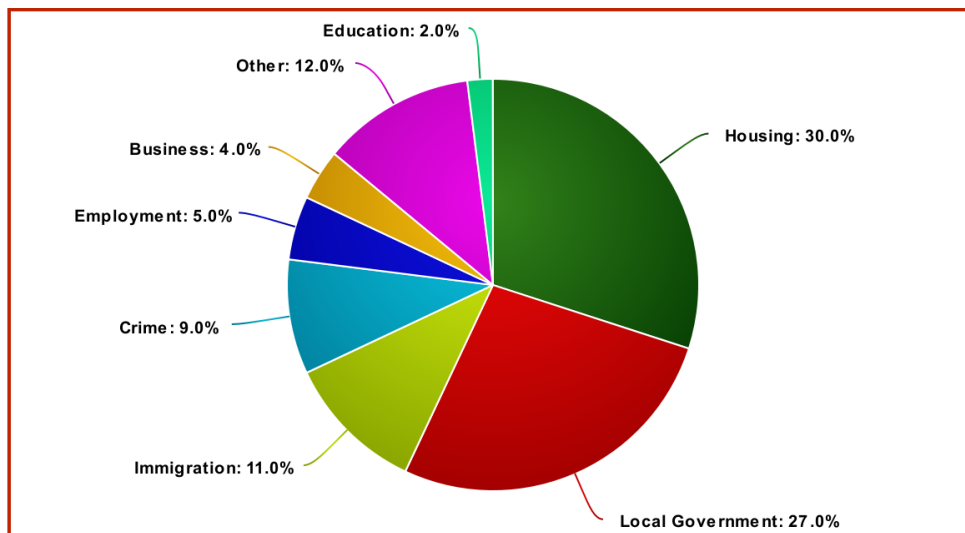
I'm ready to take these experiences back into Parliament and amplify the issues that matter to my constituents. To this effect, I've also put out a summer survey to help identify local issues and policy priorities as Parliament returns.

Complete my summer survey [here](#)

Casework

As usual, my team and I have received a steady stream of emails regarding housing. Asylum and immigration-related issues also remain a focal point of our casework. This month's increase in local government issues can be attributed to an issue brought to my attention regarding bin collections on Clapham Common South Side. I am pleased to see that the Council were receptive to the concerns of residents and that a meeting has been arranged.

Several constituents wrote to me about the need for the 2021 census to accurately record ethnicity, something I've taken up and hope to raise in Parliament. Many also wrote to me to express their anger over the Government's abysmal handling of exams this year. A number of people also raised environmental concerns about supertrawlers and the decline of Hen Harriers.



August Statistics

My constituency office is reopening in September: 218 Brixton Hill, SW2 1HE

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me via email if you require assistance with an issue: bell.ribeiroaddy.mp@parliament.uk

Supporting A-level students with University places

The Government's A-levels fiasco was another crisis that was months in the making. Despite repeated warnings (including a letter from me), the Department for Education doubled down on a shoddy algorithm that automated the prejudices and biases of our class-bound education system. Gavin Williamson, the Minister responsible, even took a holiday the week before results day.

All power to the young people who protested and forced a U-turn on yet another disastrous policy. Sadly, many of the students who were initially downgraded found their university places had been given away through clearing. I have been in touch with several universities on behalf of young constituents to try to help them get a place at their first-choice university. If you know anyone who is still having trouble getting into university because of the results scandal, please do email my office as soon as possible and I will do all I can to help them.

In the Constituency



Touring the Ace of Clubs garden



At South London Refugee Association

Rising Homelessness in Streatham

Ace of Clubs helps homeless people get back on a stable footing, providing shelter, food, clothing, laundry and showers

With the impending avalanche of redundancies and evictions, they're getting ready for a busy winter. Before the pandemic, rough sleeping had more than doubled in the ten years since the Conservatives came to power and implemented austerity policies that vastly increased the number of homeless people and cutting the services that supported them back to the bone.

Their Everyone In scheme was a reminder of how comparatively little money and effort it takes to get people off the streets and into shelter. Rising homelessness is a symptom of a system where housing is seen as an asset rather than a human right. This must change if we're going to eliminate homelessness.

South London Refugee Association

The South London Refugee Association does fantastic work supporting migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in our area.

They help people who've fled desperate circumstances to navigate our complex immigration system and make sure they're not left to fend for themselves.

Helping with everything from basic provisions to technological support and legal advice, they urgently need donations of food, clothing, toiletries and technology (laptops, tablets and smartphones).

Please reach out if you're able to help them with any donations:

<https://www.slr-a.org.uk/contact>

Keep up with all my constituency work on my website:

<https://bellribeiroaddy.com/streatham/>

Streatham Space Project

It was great to catch up with the team at Streatham Space Project earlier this month, who are making the best of a very difficult situation. They're opening their doors for live performance in mid-September under strict social distancing conditions.

It's no secret that the arts have been hit hard by coronavirus. Theatres, and especially small independent ones, face real uncertainty at the moment, so it's important we do all we can to support them. While it's good to see live productions starting up again, there's still a need for further Government support for an industry brought to a screeching halt by coronavirus.

One-third of our creative workforce is self-employed with many ineligible for the self-employment income support scheme and we've seen more than 5000 job losses in the theatre industry alone already. It's a good case study in why the Government is wrong to withdraw furlough support from sectors that are unable to go back to business.



Clapham Park Holiday Play

Playschemes have been hit hard during the ongoing crisis, receiving very little financial help from the Government and finding their services and provisions restricted by the crisis.

I met with organisers of the Elevating Success and Vital Meals which operate as part of the Clapham Park Holiday Play Scheme. They've provided vital meals for over 1000 people during the lockdown, providing food nutrition education to children. Elevating Success hold topical talks and debates with young people, and I was pleased to join them and talk about the Black Lives Matter movement and the impacts of stop and search on the Black community.



Best Small Shop in Streatham

Last month, I called on Streatham's small shops to put themselves forwards for the Best Small Shops national prize. If you know a local shopkeeper, get them to nominate their business. Let's show everyone that Streatham doesn't just have the longest High Street in Europe but also the best!

Nominations are open until the 11th September 2020: <https://bellribeiroaddy.com/best-small-shop-in-streatham/>

Streatham Leisure Centre

It's been great to see Streatham Leisure Centre safely opening again, with our beloved ice rink open to the public once again. Public leisure facilities play a vital role in supporting local communities but long closures during lockdown have taken their toll. When the Government instructed them to close their doors in late March, most lost their income overnight.

Since then, most have consistently fallen through the gaps in the government's support packages. Estimates show 67% of public leisure providers are currently facing the risk of permanent closure in the next nine to twelve months. We can't afford to let this happen.

Supporting Local Residents

Meeting with Tenants' and Residents' Associations

This past month, I arranged to meet with the several TRA's that we have here in the constituency. I met with the Mountearl and Adare Residents' Association and the Palace Road Residents' Association to check in with the residents.

The Mountearl and Adare Resident's Association and Palace Road TRA discussed with me the troubles presented by the lack of provisions for young people in the area. For many young people, being cooped up indoors has been a real difficulty. Many have no access to a balcony or garden and so have relied on local provisions to keep them entertained, particularly when lockdown has been eased but schools remained closed. However, the lack of these provisions is still a real problem for young people, making the lockdown that much harder.

St Martin's TRA

During a zoom call with the Tulse Hill Councillors, it was brought to my attention that the residents of St Martin's Estate have been experiencing a number of issues, which their housing association has been slow to address.

The main issue affecting the estate is a longstanding issue with damp. In many flats, there is mould extending up the walls and ceilings, which poses a threat to residents' health as well as causing structural damage to the building. Unfortunately, the housing associations have not taken the concerns of the residents onboard and are yet to address the matter. After visiting to see the problem and meet with the tenants' association, I have written to the CEO of each of the housing associations that manage the estate and have raised the seriousness of the issue.

Litter Picking in Brockwell Park



Lockdown has been another reminder of how important it is to have access to high-quality local green spaces (which we have a lot of in Streatham). I had the chance to join my first community litter pick in Brockwell Park. Unfortunately, more footfall has meant more litter in our shared spaces since the outbreak of coronavirus.

We all have a duty to look after the common spaces we share and leave them as we'd like to find them. In the wake of COVID-19, the need to make our neighbourhoods cleaner, greener and healthier has never been clearer.

Another big thank you to the team that regularly organises this and keeps it looking fresh. Let's all do our bit to keep Streatham looking green and clean.

**More on this over at
[Brixton Blog](#)**

Campaigns

UCU Rally

The financial strain being placed on Universities has resulted in hundreds of University staff across the UK being forced into redundancy, with BAME and women staff bearing the brunt of this as usual. I joined an online rally of around 200 participants which included UCU activists and students participating in two physically distanced protests. The pandemic has worsened universities' pre-existing financial issues. The government must intervene to save these jobs and to urgently provide funding for further and higher education.

BAME maternity deaths

We have long known that Black, Asian and those from minoritized backgrounds experience poorer health than the overall population which is evidenced by the COVID-19 outbreak which disproportionately affected BAME communities. Research from Oxford University shows that 55% of the pregnant women admitted to hospital with COVID-19 are from a BAME background. Immediate action is required to help reduce mortality rates.

This month I wrote to the Health Secretary calling for an immediate plan to reduce maternal deaths for BAME Women and I hope to have the opportunity to raise this matter in the House over the coming weeks.

Let asylum seekers work

I am deeply concerned about the treatment of asylum seekers in the UK and internationally. I believe those fleeing war, persecution or unsafe environment should not be denied their basic human rights but be offered the tools to live safely in their new homes with the assurance that they are protected. The Government's hostile environment policies have prevented access to the basics - especially during the Coronavirus outbreak.

A key part of this is giving them the opportunity to work. Allowing asylum seekers to work during the six months it takes to prove their claim would give the economy an estimated £97.8 million boost, improve community cohesion and mean more key workers. That's why I'm backing the campaign to lift the ban.

One company which has decided to follow in British Airway's detestable footsteps is Centrica – the parent organisation of British Gas, Spirit Energy, Direct Energy, and several other energy companies. British Gas workers have rightly been praised for the work they have done with the Trussell Trust to deliver food parcels to those in need during the lockdown - including here in Streatham. They deserve nothing short of praise and admiration for their efforts, not poorer contracts. I have written to the CEO of Centrica, Chris O'Shea, expressing my disappointment in these plans and calling on him to withdraw the redundancy notices.

Labour Against Racism and Fascism (LARAF) Conference

This month Labour Against Racism and Fascism held their summer conference, the theme of which was "Challenging State Violence". I was pleased to join the conference and speak on the issues that the black community in particular have faced with stop and search and deaths in custody. It was great to join socialist academics, activists and politicians to explore what a world would look like with reformed policing, from our detention system through to education, mental health and social services.



Let Black people identify as British on the 2021 census

A constituent wrote to me this month to share their petition highlighting a gross oversight on the England and Wales Census. As it appeared in 2011, the Census allows only for those who are ethnically white to select the option of “British”, however, this option does not appear for other ethnic groups.

While the formal categories are not intentionally exclusionary, only the “white” section gives “British” as an option to select. The other sections do include “British” in the section heading but do not permit one to identify as ‘British’, e.g. there is no option on the census to formally identify as Black British.

By excluding the option of “British” from non-white ethnic categories, people of colour are being told that they are unable to identify as British and can only identify by the heritage of their parents, grandparents or great grandparents. For some this heritage might be several generations back. Many may also have varied Black heritage.

We are calling for this to change in the upcoming census and you can sign the petition here: <https://bit.ly/3jgvsar>

Indefinite Leave to Remain for Care Workers

I wrote to the Government calling for indefinite leave to remain for care workers like Anugwom Goodluck, who was stripped of the right to work and told to leave the country during the pandemic.

His case encapsulates the zero-sum game of our current immigration policy, which deprives carers of their income whilst depriving the care system of much-needed staff. Of course, it was all but impossible for people to leave at the height of lockdown (although this didn’t stop the Home Office attempting to press ahead with several deportation flights).

Telling workers in devastated care homes to leave the country during a pandemic isn’t the “more compassionate” Home Office we were promised by Priti Patel earlier this summer. We should instead grant migrant key workers indefinite leave to remain and let them focus on their indispensable work.



House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP,
Secretary of State for the Home
Department
2 Marsham Street
Westminster
London
SW1P 4DF

Our Ref: BRA/OC/030
4th August 2020

Dear Home Secretary,

I write on behalf of my constituents, who are calling on you to ensure migrant care workers can remain in the UK and continue with their vital work in the UK’s vastly understaffed social care sector.

Working under incredibly difficult conditions, migrant care workers have been a vital part of the UK’s efforts to deal with the coronavirus pandemic. It was therefore disappointing to see them excluded from the Government’s new “health and care” visa scheme. One in six of our care workers come from abroad, with many of them now facing uncertainty about their futures in this country.

The coronavirus crisis has thrown the situation in social care into stark relief. As you will be aware, the UK care sector faces a longstanding staffing shortage, currently estimated at around 122,000 (77,000 of which are care worker vacancies). It’s impossible to envisage a functioning social care sector that refuses to draw on the broadest possible pool of talent, less still one that fails to retain existing staff.

The case of 30-year-old Anugwom Izuchukwu Goodluck underscores the need for a drastic shift in policy. Working hard in a Brighton care home at the start of the crisis, Anugwom was told in March (at the start of the pandemic) that he needed to leave the UK, where all his family reside, and return to Nigeria. His new status left him unable to work and forced to move in with his mother. His case highlights the contradictory cruelty of the current situation. Sending care workers like Anugwom away makes no sense, given current staffing shortages and the likely second wave of coronavirus cases during flu season.

I was pleased to hear your recent commitment to a more “fair, humane, compassionate and outward-looking Home Office”. As part of this, I hope you will consider offering indefinite leave to remain to care workers like Anugwom, who have propped up our devastated social care sector during the current crisis.

Yours sincerely,

Bell Ribeiro-Addy, Labour MP for Streatham

I also wrote a piece for **Politics Home** about the Government’s dereliction of duty towards refugees.

Refugees welcome

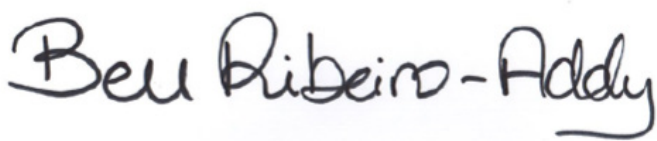
Over the past month, the news has been flooded with reports of refugees crossing the Channel to reach the UK. How convenient for the Government that this story reached a fever pitch in the same week that it published its catastrophic unemployment data.

Clearly, the Government and its cheerleaders in the right-wing press would rather stir up anti-migrant sentiment than answering the uncomfortable questions about who the real beneficiaries of state support have been during the pandemic: the tax-dodging companies receiving no-strings bailouts and the close friends of government being awarded multimillion-pound procurement contracts despite their demonstrable lack of experience in procuring anything.

Make no mistake, this is another Tory Government in crisis and the more it flounders, the more it lashes out. Whether it's stripping back refugee children's rights, extending the Hostile Environment to EU citizens or refusing to allow key workers to apply for new visas, this Government's shown us one thing: it's willing to go one step further than its predecessors to appear tough on immigration.

The UK has played a historic role in creating the current devastation driving people to our shores: whether it's war, famine or natural disasters caused by climate breakdown. As well as welcoming those who wash up here, now's the time to address our role in creating the conditions that drive people out of their homes in the first place.

As humanitarians, as internationalists, as socialists, the Labour Party must always say loud and clear that refugees are welcome in the UK.



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