

# BELL RIBEIRO-ADDY MP

## Monthly Report, December 2020



### Why I opposed the Tories' sham Brexit vote

Thank you to all those of you who shared your thoughts with me on the Brexit Deal. Whilst it was clear that people in Streatham were worried about the possibility of a No Deal, it was also clear that the prospect of a hard Brexit was equally repellent.

In the event, I cast my vote against in the division lobby. Nobody wanted a deal which fails to protect the NHS, workers' rights, migrants, environmental standards and security. But the problem with this rotten Brexit deal goes much deeper.

It is bad enough that MPs were given just five hours to debate a 1,200 page document that will determine the future of generations to come. What is even worse is that Parliament didn't actually get a meaningful vote on the deal itself, just on whether or not to give the Government a wide-ranging set of powers to implement it.

To be clear, the deal would have been implemented however Parliament voted on it. When the Government stood up and declaimed that voting against their deal was voting for No Deal, they were straightforwardly lying about this.

We know that for the elite who steered the project from start to finish, Brexit was never about democracy. Its predictable ending was a far cry from the arguments about parliamentary sovereignty and accountability used by those who argued for it in the first place.

Left with a deal which will inflict damage on jobs and the economy, drive down living standards and erode workers' rights in the name of competition, our priority must now be opposing the inevitable race to the bottom that will follow.

**As the Government closes schools to try and rein in the runaway infection rate, I'm raising money with Lambeth TechAid to get laptops to children in need.**

**[Click here](#) to donate.**



**#Laptops4  
Learning**

BELL RIBEIRO-ADDY MP  
STANDING UP FOR STREATHAM

# Small Business Saturday

The first weekend of December marked Small Business Saturday. Small independent businesses are a big part of what makes Streatham Streatham and I was pleased to pay a visit to several of them to talk to owners and staff about the big challenges facing them.

Streatham has about 4,400 small businesses across the constituency. Before Christmas, Labour analysis suggested that 650 were unlikely to survive the next three months, 860 have seen turnover fall by more than half and 1,680 have less than three months of cash reserves remaining. As we head into another lockdown without adequate support in-place, I am really concerned for the survival of local businesses and the effect this will have on the makeup of our high street.

The current crisis has been a reminder that small independent businesses are not just the lifeblood of our local economy, they're the lifeblood of our community. Small businesses have backed us over the course of the pandemic with independent cafes giving out free coffee for NHS workers, computer repair specialists offering to repair laptops at no cost and one local firm laser-cutting PPE for care homes. As Government support for businesses fails to keep pace with new measures and declining footfall, I'll keep fighting for the things they need to thrive and survive as well.



Coverage of my push for better small business support at [Brixton Buzz](#)

# Getting Devices to Streatham's Schools

## My partnership with Lambeth TechAid

I'm now launching my Laptops for Learning initiative in partnership with Lambeth TechAid in order to supply as many families in our area with the technology they need to carry out home schooling and distance learning over the coming weeks.

Now I'm asking you for your support again at a pivotal moment for our children's education.

As we head into another full national lockdown (possibly until mid-February) families across the country are coping with the challenges of school closures at extremely short notice. This means all students in our secondary and primary schools, except for those of critical workers, will be expected to carry on their education via distance learning. Make no mistake, closing schools is a last-ditch attempt to bring down rampant infection rates. It signals the Government's failure to keep the virus under control and prevent the NHS running beyond capacity.

For children without access to devices and internet, school closures will mean a virtual halt to their education. Across the country, Ofcom estimates there are up to 1.78 million children without access to a laptop, tablet or desktop device and 880,000 children living in households with only a mobile internet connection.

Throughout the pandemic, I've worked with local schools to deliver laptops, tablets and other devices to school pupils who would otherwise struggle to access them at home. Thanks to the support of our community, I've been able to distribute over 100 donated devices to five primary schools in Streatham: Jubilee, Sunnyhill, Richard Atkins, Holy Trinity and Woodmansterne.

**You can donate over on the Lambeth TechAid website (just click the Laptops for Learning in Streatham option: <https://opencollective.com/lambeth-techaid>.**

**TechAid are also taking donations of old devices: <https://app.techaid.ju.ma/donate-device>**

## Lambeth TechAid

### Recycling technology back into our community

Did you scoop a great tech bargain in the sales recently? Or did you receive a tech upgrade for Christmas? Lambeth TechAid collects computers, tablets and phones that you no longer use or need, removing all data and ensuring that they work, and then delivering them to local residents who really need them. TechAid distribute via local schools, women's aid groups, disability, refugee and other community organisations – if you're upgrading your own computers, tablets or phones, you could add a great boost of festive joy to someone in real need. Please consider donating your old equipment to help someone else out here.



## Laptops for Learning

**BELL RIBEIRO-ADDY MP  
STANDING UP FOR STREATHAM**

Head over to my website to **[find out more](#)**



# Christmas in the Constituency

## Brixton Chamber Orchestra's Concert on St Matthew's Estate

St Matthew's Estate held a lovely socially distanced Christmas concert with music brought to us by the fantastic Brixton Chamber Orchestra. These festive classical renditions did well to fill us with festive cheer and chase away the December chill. It's always a pleasure to see Streatham's musical talent on display and whilst the concert had to be scaled down to comply with COVID restrictions, it was still a fun-filled event. I look forward to attending the events for Christmas 2021 which I hope will be back to its usual grandeur.



## Lambeth Council's Christmas Present Project

The festive period is underpinned by the spirit of giving. But while many of us were busy with buying gifts, hundreds of families were making the difficult decision between paying the rent or the heating bill. For many households, Christmas is not a fun filled time of year and many parents struggle to purchase small gifts for their children.

Lambeth Council's Christmas Present Project is the perfect way to spread some Christmas cheer to these families and deliver gifts to those less fortunate. I was glad to be able to join Cllr Anna Birley, Cllr Nanda Manley-Browne, Cllr Iain Simpson, Cllr Ben Kind, and Umar Mahmood from the Ash Shahada Housing Association to help with some gift wrapping.



# Streatham Christmas Card Competition

As you may know, this year I launched a Christmas card design competition open all children under the age of 18. We received many fantastic entries, all of them brilliant and telling of the artistic talents we have here in Streatham. It was incredibly difficult for me to pick a winner but after much deliberation, I was incredibly pleased to choose 11-year-old Alice from Dunraven as my overall winner. After the year that we all have had, I thought we could all use our own "jar of Christmas" and I hope you enjoyed yours.



Ethan McVea,  
Age 5-7 winner



Reha Palihawadana,  
Age 12-18 winner



Jacob Orr-Mapp,  
Age 8-11 winner



## STREATHAM CHRISTMAS CARD COMPETITION 2020



BELL RIBEIRO-ADDY MP | STANDING UP FOR STREATHAM



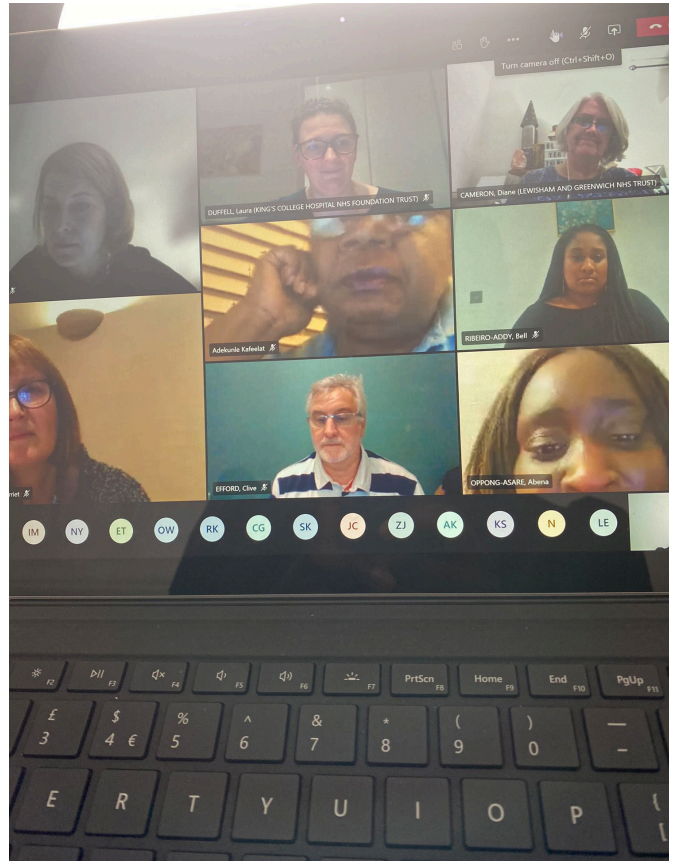
## MPs' Call with the Royal College of Nursing

Prior to the pandemic, it was very clear that nurses were getting a raw deal. Stagnating wages, poor working hours and cuts to the NHS were making their jobs a nightmare. But things have only gotten worse as the pandemic wreaks havoc on the NHS and makes the working conditions of nurses worse.

I was pleased to have the opportunity to meet with the Royal College of Nursing along with other South London MPs, but it was incredibly sad to hear nurses express their exhaustion and feelings of underappreciation.

Our NHS nurses are understaffed, underpaid, underequipped and underappreciated. Yet despite this, they continue to work on the frontline of this pandemic and lead our fight against the virus. And despite their handwork, the Government took the rather disgraceful decision

to exclude them from the public sector pay rise. Our long-suffering nurses deserve a pay rise, a properly funded NHS and better working conditions.



## Meeting with the Streatham Society and the Clapham Society

It was great to meet with Mark Bery of the Streatham Society and Martin Pratt and Mark Leffler of the Clapham Society this month. These two groups do brilliant work celebrating the things that make our area unique, so it was good to discuss how I can support them with this.

We talked about the ongoing Royal Mail postal delay issue being experienced across Streatham. Last month I told you that I had written to Royal Mail regarding this issue. Despite Royal Mail's assurance that they will be investigating and aiming to address the issue, the problem persists. I will be raising this issue once again and trying to ensure usual service is resumed.

Meeting with the Clapham Society, we also talked about the deleterious impact of COVID-19 on the nighttime economy. As many of you will know, Clapham has a buzzing nightlife scene with a range of bars, clubs and pub. The standstill fomented by repeated lockdowns means many of the establishments we know and love are uncertain of their survival. I am continuing to lobby the Government to offer some meaningful support to these establishments.

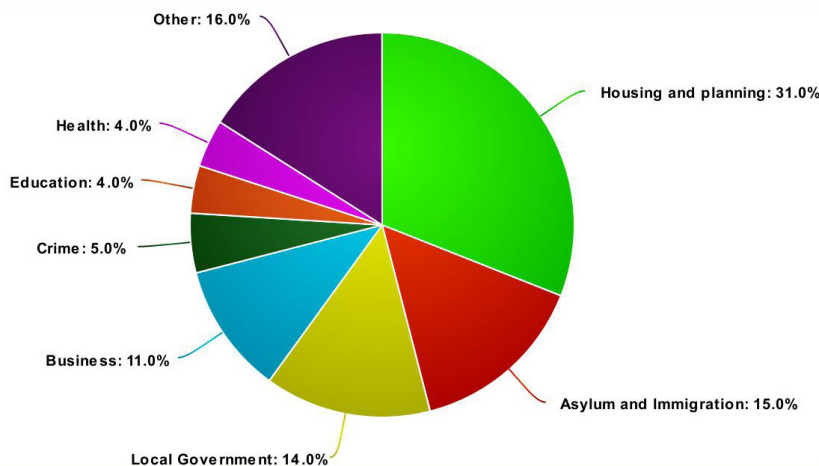
## High Road Heroes

As you may have seen, I've been supporting Streatham BID's High Road Heroes campaign, encouraging people to shop locally amidst the downturn. The pandemic has been a reminder that small independent businesses play a vital role in our local community as well as our local economy. The new lockdown is another devastating blow for local businesses, so I urge you to do your best to support shops in our area wherever you can.



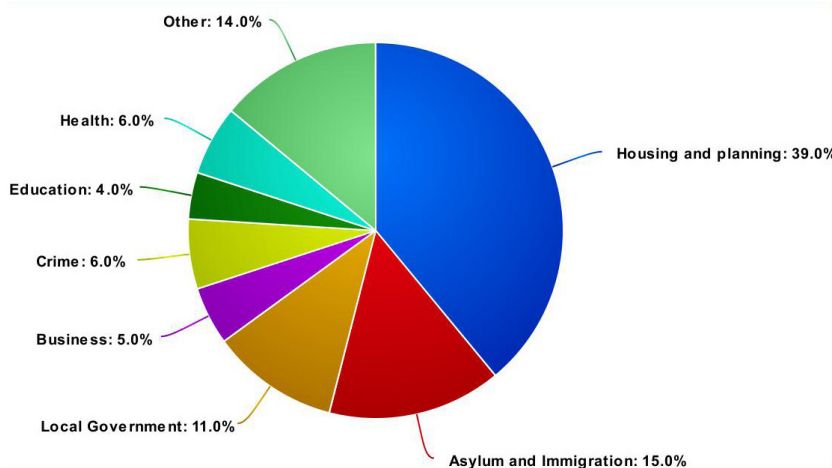
# Casework

This month I opened 131 new casework cases. 88 of them were completed but with the Christmas break and services being temporarily closed, a few of them have carried over to this year. Many of the cases I have raised have been on housing and disrepair issues. A large number have been regarding immigration and asylum issues as well as business issues and reports of crime.



## December Statistics

Throughout the whole year, my team and I have opened a sum total of 1,433 cases, 831 have been closed. I've received thousands of casework emails from constituents, 8110 to be exact, and have sent 4,855 emails to constituents and organisations to help resolve these cases.



## Annual Statistics

### Meeting councillors

It was great to have virtual meetings with ward Councillors from Thornton, Streatham Hill, Streatham South and Tulse Hill. It's always great to check-in with the local Councillors and see what issues have been cropping up that I may be able to help with. During my meeting with the Tulse Hill Councillors, the issue of county lines activity in the constituency was raised to me.

This is a serious problem effecting our young people and I met with Councillor Jacqui Dyer, Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills and Community Safety and Kristian Aspinall, Strategic Lead, Crime and Disorder, to discuss how we might tackle this issue. I will continue to liaise with the Council about this matter and hope to attend Lambeth Made Safer meetings in the coming months.

## A word on correspondence

As we approached the end of the Brexit transition period, it was of no surprise that the main policy issue constituents emailed me about was Brexit. Despite the Prime Minister telling the British public in 2019 that we would have an 'oven-ready' deal, one didn't manifest until the final days of 2020. Over the past year, I have had hundreds of emails from constituents, calling for an extension of the transition period, offering their opinions on the deal, and airing the concerns they have about a post-Brexit Britain. We have now left the EU and now our priority must on be helping people and businesses to weather a recession deepened by the pandemic and a hard Brexit.

Another matter that dominated our lives this year has been the pandemic and the Government's failure to provide us with a clearer, more coherent plan to tackle this pandemic. My thoughts are with those who have been impacted by this pandemic and lost a loved one this year. Throughout the year, I have called on this Government to act in the interest of the public's health as well as the introduction for more financial support packages for those who need it. As we enter the new year, I will not stop calling for this until this Government listens.



## A word on lockdown

As we entered the new year, many of us were likely making wishes of a fresh start and new beginnings. Yet, because of this Government's consistently poor handling of the virus, 2021 seems little different to 2020. The cycle of endless lockdowns continues, and the Government has now announced another national lockdown beginning on the 5th January. Under these new restrictions, people must stay in their homes unless they are travelling to and from work, buying essential items, meeting members of your support bubble, escaping harm or exercising. You can view details of the new restrictions here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home#summary-what-you-can-and-cannot-do-during-the-national-lockdown>

I do believe that this lockdown is necessary, but I also believe that it could have been avoided. The Government has repeatedly made reckless decisions and gone against the science, putting people's lives unnecessarily at risk. Lockdown measures must be coupled with financial support for those who need it and provision of online access for all children who do not have this at home. I have repeatedly called for more support measures to be introduced to ensure that no one is left struggling through this lockdown and will continue to advocate for this until the Government helps all those who need it.

If you have an issue that you need help with, or know someone else in the constituency who may benefit from having their MP fight their corner, please email me at [bell.ribeiroaddy.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:bell.ribeiroaddy.mp@parliament.uk) with your full name, postcode and a brief outline of the problem you are experiencing. My team and I will be happy to try and assist you as best we can.

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# In Parliament

## Lockdown 3.0

At the start of December, MPs voted to once more adopt the Government's tier system of restrictions. I voted against these measures, pointing to the scientific evidence that showed the ineffectiveness of the tier system to date and the increasing likelihood of a third wave without a proper lockdown and more comprehensive measures to get the infection rate down.



The subsequent failure of these measures is an indictment of the Government's whole strategy, which has been maximum risk for minimum reward. The half-measures they brought forwards were always going to be ineffective, especially when they rested on such half-hearted financial support and a privatised Test and Trace system which has never functioned at the necessary capacity.

As London moved from Tiers 2, 3 and 4 in less than 2 weeks, the infection rate in our borough just kept soaring higher. Now we find ourselves in yet another lockdown with the UK now officially the single worst infected country per capita in the world. The Government's attempt to run the NHS as close to physical capacity as possible has been well and truly discredited by the evolution of new, more infectious variants of the disease. It could not be any clearer that we need a Zero Covid strategy.

The advent of the vaccine is positive news but with full immunisation of even our most vulnerable months away, it's not a silver bullet. If the Government is going to get lockdown working again, it needs to overhaul its lockdown strategy, rebuild trust and start giving everyone the economic support they need to stay at home. No small task. It starts with fixing Test and Trace, rolling out the vaccine faster than they've managed anything else, getting remote learning technology to school children, increasing sick pay, and making furlough work for parents and carers.

## Coronavirus contract cronyism

If there is one thing this Government does well, it is dishing out lucrative deals to their nearest and dearest at the expense of thousands of lives. I was able to speak at a debate on the Government's procurement during the COVID-19 pandemic and the National Audit Office's investigation damning report which shone a light on the Government's absurd outsourcing strategy. While I understand that that no nation was prepared for a pandemic of this scale, we cannot ignore the fact that few governments have made as much of a mess of it as ours. The failure to put trust and money in the public sector resulted in millions of pounds being wasted on corner-cutting private contractors, some of whom have no proven track record in the area they're working in.

## Women & Equalities committee

This month, the Women and Equalities committee covered a range of issues; we evidence sessions on the Changing the perfect picture: an inquiry into body image whereby we as a committee heard from a range of people and organisations on body image and how people's body image is impacted by companies, adverts, social media and Government policy. In addition to this, we began planning for our inquiry into the reforming the Gender Recognition Act.

# Campaigns

Lockdown restrictions mean I haven't been able to show my support for campaigns in the usual way, but I've been working with several campaigns to protect our public services and the people who keep them running.



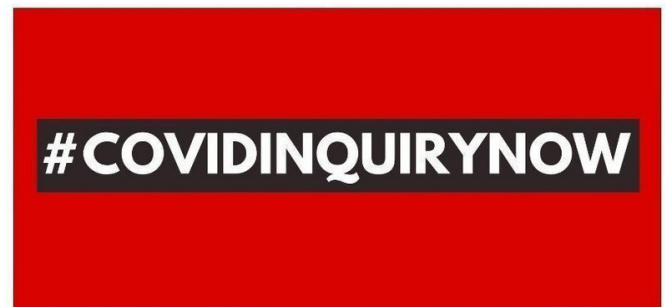
On the 16th December, I added my name to a letter of MPs across Parliament's political parties, calling on Centrica CEO Chris O'Shea to stop threatening British Gas workers with disgraceful fire and rehire tactics. I express my full solidarity to British Gas engineers for being the subject of disgraceful practices at Centrica, and I support GMB Union's call for strike action in January. Far too many employers have used the Coronavirus pandemic cynically, as an opportunity to worsen conditions for their workers. This cannot go unchallenged.



Throughout the pandemic, I have expressed my views on the dire state of statutory sick pay in this country, where it only covers 29% of the average wage and 2 million low-paid workers in the UK are ineligible for even this pittance. With our mandatory level of sick pay now officially the lowest in the OECD, I was one of 30 Labour MPs calling on the Government to increase Statutory Sick Pay and extend it to all workers in the Chancellor's spending review. Proper sick pay helps slow the spread of coronavirus and we must ensure everyone can afford to self-isolate.



In my maiden speech, I spoke about addressing the historic injustice of the British Empire and tackling the injustice that I and many other people in this country face daily. A part of this is reparations which could start today with simple things like returning items that do not belong to us. Yet, current laws make it difficult for museums to do so and that is why I support calls to amend the British Museum Act 1963 to allow the Trustees of the British Museum to consider and potentially facilitate their repatriation.



My thoughts and prayers go out to the friends and families who have lost someone during this pandemic. Week after week, we hear the Government boast about the success of their efforts and pride in its record, but the statistics show that there's nothing to be proud of. The Coronavirus pandemic has claimed thousands of lives in our country, with 80,868 deaths to date. A loss of life on this scale was not inevitable, it was the result of the repeated refusal to put public health ahead of the opinions of their backbenchers and the interests of their donors. The COVID Justice UK petition was created to hold the Government to account for this lethal complacency.



# Happy New Year



It's hard to believe that it's been more than a year since the people of Streatham put their faith in me and elected a Labour MP to represent them once more.

I simply wouldn't be here without the dedication of local members who pounded the pavements to share our vision of a better society for the many. Thank you again for all your work over the last year. We must never forget that the Labour Party's biggest asset is the individuals who put in their time and energy to try and make the world a better place.

The events of recent days have been another reminder that the platform we put forward at the last election remains as relevant and vital as ever. From ensuring everyone is paid a real living wage to rolling out free broadband, embarking on a mass house building programme, putting mental health expenditure on a par with physical health and taxing big polluters to help finance a Green New Deal worthy of the name, it's really important that we make the case for the action that people need over the coming decades.

As we head into 2021, I'd like to wish all of you a healthy and happy New Year!

*Bell Ribeiro-Addy*

## Contact Me



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