

BELL RIBEIRO-ADDY MP

Monthly Report, Feb/March 2021

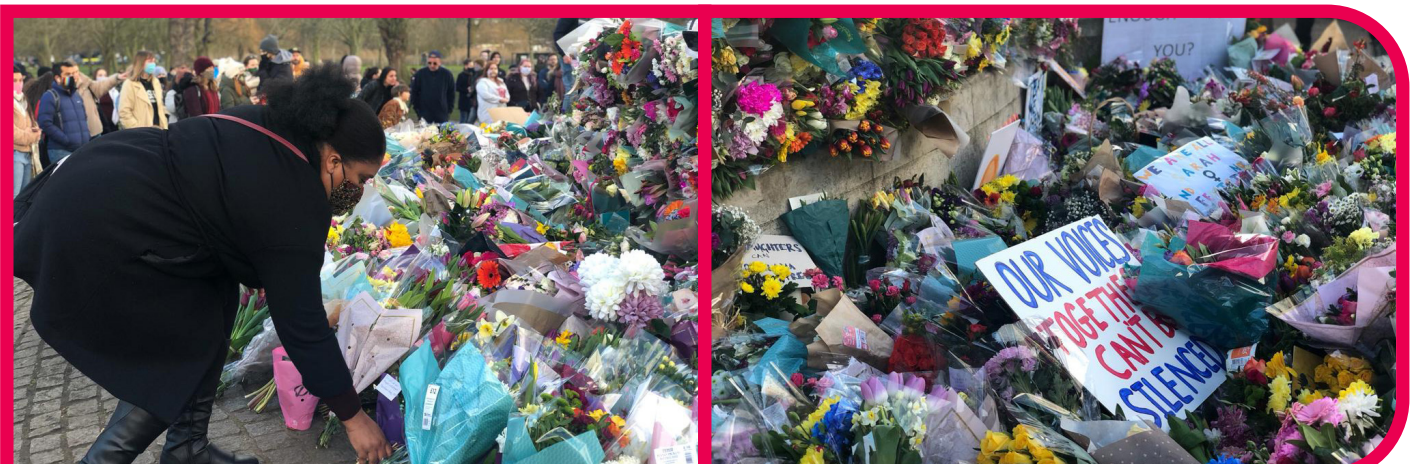


Reclaim These Streets

Our community has been deeply disturbed by the abduction of Sarah Everard. In response to Sarah's disappearance, thousands of women planned to hold a peaceful, socially distanced vigil in Clapham Common Park to remember her and the thousands of women who have been victims of male violence.

The organisers of this event, Reclaim the Streets, had secured the support of Lambeth Council and local police to hold a covid-secure event that would allow attendees to safely pay their respects. Unfortunately, just a day before the date, the Met Police decided to pull their support and Reclaim the Streets were forced to cancel the event, even though it was clear that hundreds of women would still attend.

This reflects a troubling situation where the Government has left police to arbitrate over whether or not protests should go ahead under the Coronavirus Act without explicitly giving them the power to put a blanket ban on protests during the pandemic.



I wrote about the vigil for [Labour List](#)

The women who were present at the vigil came to pay their respects to Sarah and, in many cases, to process their own past trauma and raise their voices about ongoing gender violence. The vigil took place in an open-air space, with every effort made to keep a social distance and a majority of those in attendance wearing face masks. In spite of this, the police decided to adopt a heavy-handed approach towards attendees which resulted in the shocking scenes of police brutality against mourning women.

Whilst I accept that there is a balance to be struck between public safety and public assembly during a pandemic, the police's handling of this event just left everyone less safe. The explanation I got from the officer in charge when I spoke to them on the scene about their handling was, "they started giving left-wing speeches" and "criticising the police". The police exist to keep the peace and keep us safe, not to police what we say and think.

The way this event was handled has quite clearly eroded public confidence in the police in our area on top of already strained relations. I have been vocal in my disapproval of the police response and the Government's ongoing attempt to crack down on the right to protest.



Sadly, the report into the handling of the vigil - which justified heavy-handed police tactics as appropriate - will only heighten the impression that the police are not listening to women or respecting the right to protest. The police exist to keep the peace and keep us safe. The way the vigil was handled did neither of these things.

In the Constituency

Schools

As pupils have gradually returned to schools, I've been in regular contact with school leadership teams.

I met with the heads of Dunraven School to discuss the issue of siblings having to share devices as well as the demands that remote learning is putting on their students.

My Laptops for Learning initiative – delivered alongside Lambeth Tech Aid – has also continued, now surpassing the £10,000 fundraising mark. Since I last reported, I have also been able to deliver 11 new Chromebooks to Bishop Thomas Grant School, 5 to Julian's Primary School and 12 to Livity School.

After meeting with the head of Hitherfield Primary, I raised a question with the Department of Education about school funding and what schools could claim for. I also discussed the challenges of remote learning and funding with the head of Iqra Primary School, who are having difficulties accessing funding to maintain the upkeep of their building.



A number of schools have also raised the issue of prioritising teachers for vaccination, something which I have previously advocated for and continue to raise with the relevant ministers.

Thank you also to Lambeth NEU, who invited me to contribute to their discussion on ensuring a safe return to schools. I'm really concerned that the Government's big bang reopening of schools and eagerness for wider reopenings might end up driving towards lockdown, particularly given the new variant of the virus.

School cleaners' strike

Grassroots unions like United Voices of the World (UVW) have gone from strength to strength during the pandemic. I'm delighted to hear that cleaners at La Retraite have won their fight for a living wage, full sick pay, improvements to health and safety and backdated wages for their Section 44 walk-out earlier this year. This is another victory that reminds us there are opportunities, as well as challenges, for unions as we come out of the pandemic. There is power in a union!



Meeting with Chestnut Nursery

Early years education is vital to children's development and I am saddened by reports of the unfortunate circumstances the childcare sector is currently in. The coronavirus pandemic has not only shown how vital access to Early Years education is, but it has also exposed the damaged financial health of many providers after years of underfunding.

'I share the concerns of parents and educators about the recent announcement that Chestnut Nursery will be closing its doors for good on the 31st March as a result of the provider reneging on their lease and unsafe conditions. This situation leaves parents in a difficult position as many of them struggle to find last-minute affordable childcare. In addition, the closure of the nursery places staff in a very vulnerable position, particularly during the ongoing pandemic.' Lambeth Council have been able to find places for most children and support for staff looking for new jobs.

Meeting with Da'aro Youth

Da'aro Youth, a community lead charity operating out of Knight's Youth Centre invited me to speak about the mental health needs and care of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young adults. Asylum processing times have increased exponentially with the advent of the Tories' Hostile Environment. This reflects an immigration system which does more to re-traumatise individuals than it does to help them.

Eight teenagers from Eritrea and Ethiopia have committed suicide in the UK since 2016. This is unacceptable. As well as advocating for an immigration system that prioritises human rights over arbitrary caps on migration, I have also agreed to advocate on behalf of young

Hondo Tower

The original application from Hondo Enterprises to build the tower in Pope's Road, Brixton, was approved in November 2020 and given the go-ahead by Sadiq Khan in December. He has subsequently announced that the planning process should start again as he had not received all the relevant information regarding opposition to the tower.

Correspondence to my office has reflected the overwhelming opposition to the Hondo Tower development from people in our area so I'm glad that there is another opportunity for people to be heard. Local planning decisions should always reflect the views of the local community.

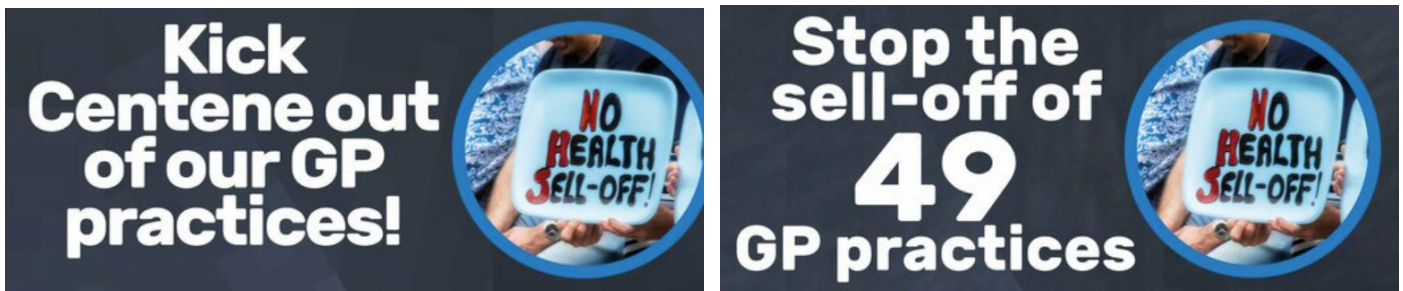
Ending Violence Against Women and Girls

In the wake of the tragic murder of Sarah Everard, I met with a number of local stakeholders, including Tulse Hill Women's Forum, New Vision 4 Women and several local schools. I also addressed a London Labour-wide International Women's Day event looking at the gendered impacts of the pandemic and discussed the impact of the Policing Bill.

The events of the past month have ignited a conversation about women's safety and male violence against women. A recent YouGov survey found that 97% of women aged 18-24 have been sexually harassed and 80% of women of all ages have experienced sexual harassment in a public space.

These statistics are shocking, disgraceful and completely unacceptable. Women do not deserve to live in fear of their personal safety and urgent action must be taken to address the serious flaws in our society. This action must go beyond telling women to make "safer choices", or wear "conservative clothing".

The narrative must change. Male violence against women is not a female issue, it is a male issue, and it is the behaviours of men that must be addressed. The onus should not fall on women to change their behaviour to prevent becoming victims of an attack. Going forwards, I will push for solutions that address the deep social causes and political failings that allow gender-based violence to exist.



Stop the sell-off of our GP surgeries

I was concerned to hear that three GP surgeries in Streatham (Edith Cavell Surgery, Streatham Place Surgery, and Streatham High Practice) have been taken over by US health insurance giant, Centene, as part of a move that will place 49 London practices under its UK subsidiary, Operose Healthcare.

This is yet another reminder that the privatisation of the NHS is not some far-off threat. It's happening right here, right now, right under our noses. During the pandemic, we've seen just how damaging outsourcing important contracts to profit-hungry companies can be.

From the total failure of our privatised Test and Trace system to the nutritionally inadequate Free School Meals provided to children, it's clearer than ever that we need an end to outsourcing and privatisation, not more of the same.

It would be disastrous to leave the quality of patient care at our GP surgeries in the hands of a company whose first duty is to US shareholders, not to the UK public. That's why I'm supporting We Own It's campaign to challenge this decision and stop the sell-off of our GP surgeries.

You can sign We Own It's petition [here](#)

The Cladding Scandal

At the start of February, Labour used an Opposition Day to highlight the ongoing UK cladding scandal. Since the Grenfell tragedy in 2017, Ministers have promised to take action to get dangerous cladding off buildings no less than seventeen times.

But so far, they have left the people who own the buildings to foot the bill for this rather than the developers and cladding companies responsible for these design flaws. Labour put forward a proposal to kickstart remediation work and pursue developers for the costs of the cladding scandal.

It took the Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick less than 24 hours to intervene and get approval for a Conservative donor's £1 billion development. Almost four years on from Grenfell, there are up to 11 million people living in homes with unsafe or unsuitable cladding. He didn't even show up to vote or discuss this at our Opposition Day debate.

The Government must provide upfront funding to make these homes safe and be clear that neither interim or remediation costs will fall on leaseholders.



The situation in Streatham

There are an estimated 12,000 people across Lambeth trapped in homes with unsafe and unsuitable cladding and likely thousands in the constituency. After Labour's Opposition Day, I joined Councillor Adrian Garden to meet leaseholders at Courtenay House in Brixton Hill and discuss this injustice, which I will continue to raise in Parliament.

I've also pledged to contact leaseholders in Streatham to encourage them to form a buildings group so they can better consult and campaign on the issue.

Watch my [video explainer](#) on the Cladding Scandal

The local vaccination drive

Baldry Gardens Health Centre

It was great to visit Baldry Gardens Health Centre in Streatham earlier this month, where I met people excited to get their first dose of the vaccine. The successful rollout of the vaccine is testament to what we can achieve when we put the NHS in charge of delivering big projects.

Fighting misinformation

I've been doing my part to encourage uptake of the vaccine and fight misinformation within the local community. Over the last couple of months, I joined a panel event at the Shree Swaminarayan Temple, and visited the South London Islamic Centre's pop-up vaccine clinic, where 200 people were vaccinated on a single Saturday.

I'm also going to be involved in a number of other vaccination meetings in the coming weeks, including with the East African Association, who I've been in touch with this month, and Apoyo Comunitario Sur de Londres, a local Latin American community group.

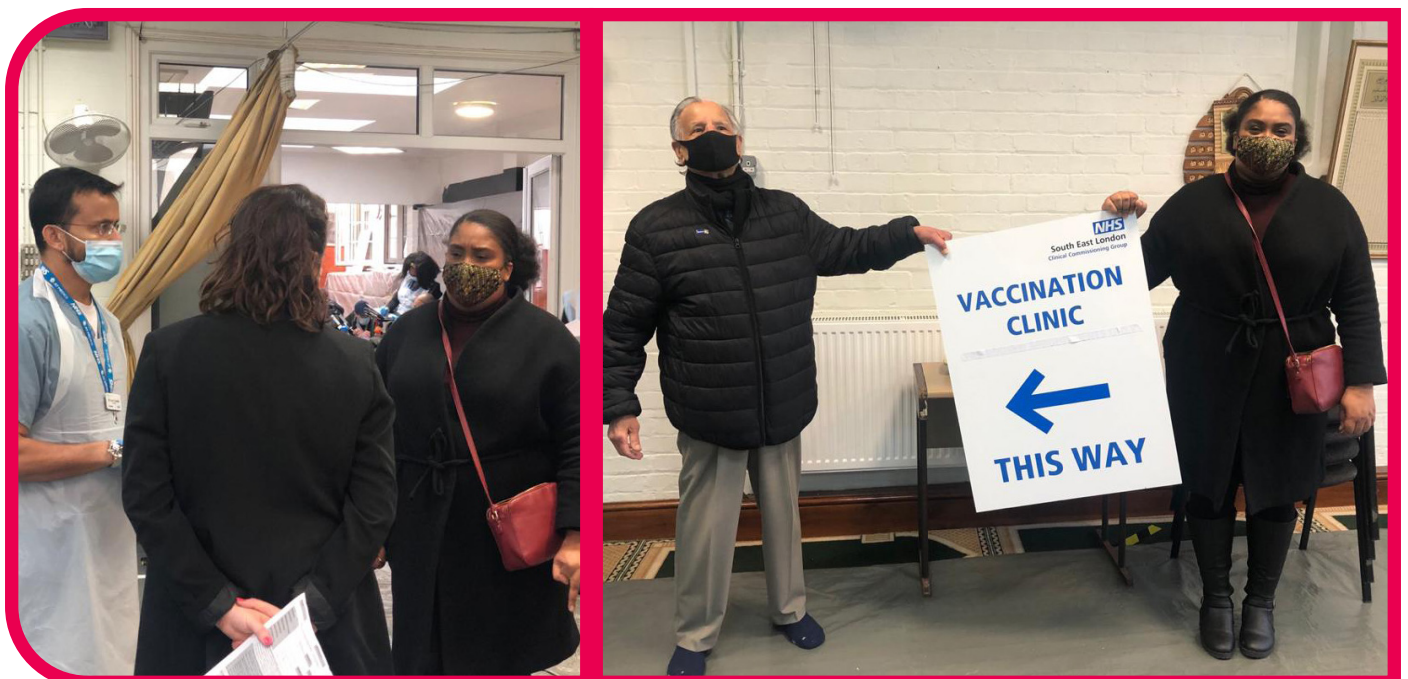
Rapid testing

Ahead of my visit to the vaccination centre, I took a rapid coronavirus test. It was easy, safe, and I got my results in under an hour. Around 1 in 3 people with Covid-19 don't display any symptoms. If you still have to go out and about, getting a lateral flow test is really important to make sure you're not passing on the virus.

There are four rapid testing sites up and running in Streatham now:

- Lambeth Town Hall: 9am - 4.20pm
- Brockwell Park: 9am - 3.30pm
- Streatham Library: 3pm - 7.20pm (Wed to Sun)
- Lilian Baylis Technology School: 3pm - 7.30pm

To book a test, just head over to Lambeth Council's website: <https://beta.lambeth.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/book-rapid-covid-19-test-if-you-have-no-symptoms>

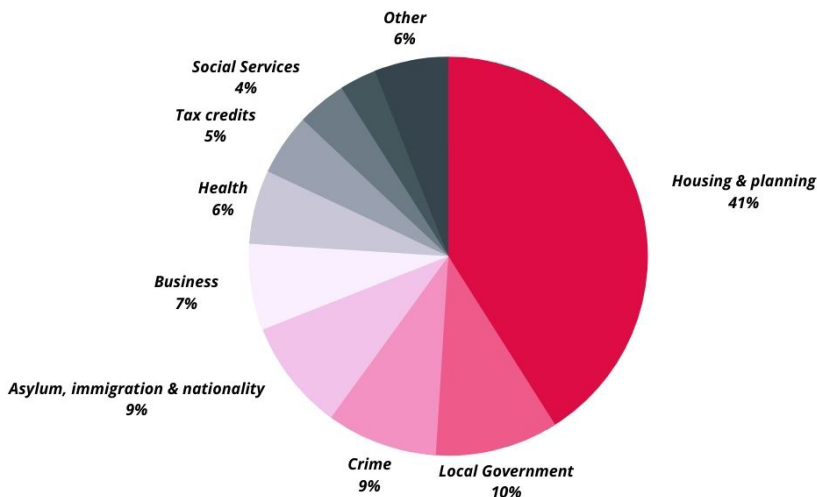


Casework

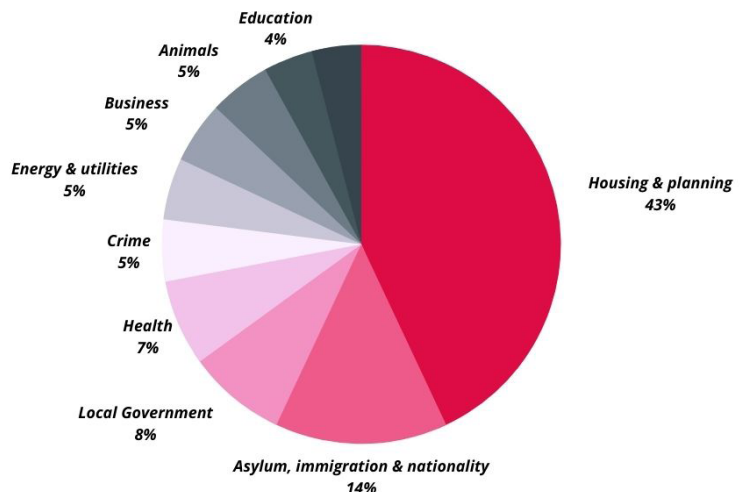
I opened 100 cases in February, 69 of which were closed by the end of the month. A large portion of these cases have been in relation to housing issues, immigration and reports of crime. I have also seen a recent increase in cases regarding tax credit.

March saw a notable increase in the amount of casework coming into my office with 130 new cases being opened. Though housing casework often makes up the majority of the cases that I raise, this month has seen a serious increase, with nearly 60% of cases relating to housing issues.

February Statistics



March Statistics



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 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.

[Bell.ribeiroaddy.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:bell.ribeiroaddy.mp@parliament.uk)

In Parliament

PMQ on citizenship fees

This month, I was drawn for my first ever Prime Minister's Question and had the opportunity to push Boris Johnson on the issue of high citizenship fees. There are hundreds of thousands of children like the Prime Minister (born abroad (born abroad but have lived in the UK their whole lives) or like me (born in the UK to Ghanaian parents), who are entitled to British citizenship but priced out by high fees – £1012 at the time of writing.

As a consequence of this, these children face barriers to getting a job, going to university, renting a home, using the NHS and opening a bank account. Since 1983, these fees have risen at ten times the rate of inflation. With two High Court rulings against these extortionate fees and the Home Office making at least a 60% mark-up, we must look to reduce these fees or even get rid of them all together.

When I met with Lambeth Citizens in the General Election of 2019, we discussed the issue of citizenship fees and I promised to raise this in Parliament. I'm delighted I was able to follow through on this and look forwards to following up on the Prime Minister's commitment to look into this.



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Cost to register a child as a citizen:

	£216
	£172
	£156
	£135
	£130
	£52-87
	£44
	£15-130
	£0
	£0
	£0

£1022

Children in the UK are being priced out of citizenship by high fees, which were recently found unlawful.

How can the Government justify this?



Holding the Tories to account over dodgy contracts

The Tories have given £500m of PPE contracts to their own donors and consistently failed to publish the details of other contracts in the way they are supposed to. The Government's own advisers suggested this was unlawful and the courts have subsequently agreed. In spite of this, nobody has been held accountable. In Cabinet Office questions, I had the opportunity to push them on this. I asked Michael Gove if he agreed that this lack of transparency and accountability has damaged confidence and trust in the Government. Predictably, he obsequiously defended the Government's completely corrupt procurement process.

I wrote about how children are being **priced out of UK citizenship** for the South London Press

Police Crackdown Bill

This month, the Government brought forward their Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, for its Second Reading. There are several points in this Bill that raise alarm, including restrictions on civil liberties and the right to protest. The Bill would also increase legal restrictions against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

On the 16th March, I led a cross party amendment which set out opposition to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill because it contained a number of measures that, taken together, constitute a significant reduction in established civil liberties and risks exacerbating the racial and gendered disparities in the Criminal Justice System by increasing police powers and sentencing whilst reducing accountability. Unfortunately, the Conservatives seemed to see no issue with this and passed the Bill regardless of these issues.

While the protest movements that have sparked up in response to this Bill have led the Government delaying its progression, I am under no illusions that they will try to bring it back and push it through Parliament. I will continue to oppose this legislation and any future legislation that seeks to restrict our rights and freedoms.

The renewal of the Coronavirus Act

Last March, when the Coronavirus Act was introduced, human rights organisations warned that the powers that it contained were loosely drafted, giving too much discretion to the Home Secretary and leaving too much room for confusion. The vigil in Clapham Common to remember Sarah Everard shows exactly what this meant: the decision to stop women exercising their civil liberties and expressing their anger and grief actually left everyone less safe. The police should never have been in a position to do that, but they cited this Act as their legal right to do so. It has also been used to fine nurses protesting the disgraceful 1% pay rise and GMB workers picketing the disgraceful fire and rehire practices.

Members of Parliament were not given the opportunity to scrutinise or amend measures to better serve our constituents. We simply asked to vote yes or no on the Act's renewal. A vote against the Act's renewal would have granted 21 days to review and debate the measures in the Bill, that is why I decided to vote against it.

The Fire Safety Bill

The Fire Safety Bill is the first piece of fire safety legislation introduced since the Grenfell tragedy. It presents a clear opportunity to protect leaseholders from incurring extortionate costs as well as provide the legislative framework to implement recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's phase one report. Unfortunately, the three amendments that would have introduced these measures were voted down by the Government and the Bill passed unamended.

The Government claims that the Fire Safety Bill was not the correct piece of legislation to bring forth leaseholder protections and that the Building Safety Bill will be the correct place to do this. When this Bill is presented before MPs, I intend to ensure that full protections for leaseholders are included.

I wrote for [Labour Outlook](#) on the need to resist the Government's continued slide into authoritarianism.

International Women's Day Debate

This year's International Women's Day debate was overshadowed by the sad circumstances surrounding it. In a week that is supposed to be all about elevating women, we had to spend most of our energy confronting the realities of harassment, abuse and violence, calling out selective allyship and even justifying our right to raise our voices about these injustices. Change cannot come soon enough

In my debate speech, I condemned some of the craven victim-shaming that came in the wake of Sarah Everard's abduction and called for an intersectional feminism that recognises the extra hurdles faced by Black women, rather than discounting the racism we experience.

I also shared my own experiences of racialisation in maternity care and praised the efforts of campaign group Five X More, who seek to raise awareness around Black maternal mortality in the UK. I'm glad Parliament will be debating their petition on Black maternal mortality next month: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/301079>



[Click here](#) to see my contribution to the debate.

Commonwealth Day Debate

In this month's Commonwealth Day debate, I spoke about the need to listen to former Commonwealth countries and raised the worrying trend of LGBTQ-based discrimination in Commonwealth countries and celebrated the work of UK Black Pride and Kaleidoscope Trust in combatting it.

I highlighted the situation in Ghana, where colonial era laws mean people can still be imprisoned for the crime of "unnatural carnal knowledge". I recently joined prominent British-Ghanaians to express our concerns about the closure of the LGBTQ centre in Accra and call on the country to create a pathway for allyship and protection for this marginalised community. We must stand with persecuted LGBTQ+ communities across the globe and support their struggle for liberation.



KALEIDOSCOPE
INTERNATIONAL TRUST



Budget 2021: "You don't praise an arsonist for calling the fire brigade"

The pandemic has shown how a decade of austerity eroded the foundations of our economy and our society. The budget was a missed opportunity to launch a green, equitable recovery to put people on a secure footing and address a decade of debilitating inequality.

But rather than addressing the structural weaknesses that allowed Covid-19 to run rampant through the UK, from overcrowded housing to chronically low sick pay, the Government chose to retrench and go back to doing some of the same things that left us in such a weak position to start with.

From a £25bn tax giveaway to businesses like Amazon to another real terms pay cuts for NHS workers, it's clear that the spending taps may have been turned on during the pandemic but we're dealing with the same old enemy.

In my speech, I pointed out that the Government's failure to recognise that the best economic solution was a public health solution has exacerbated the difficulties we are now facing. I also highlighted their deep loathing of equality. This is written into our laws but is frequently disregarded, as is shown by the decision not to publish an equality impact assessment alongside the Budget Resolutions.

[Click here](#) to watch my response to the budget.

CEE Bill

I'm delighted to be one of the first 100 MPs to have signed the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill. As we come out of the coronavirus crisis, we need to put the environment at the heart of everything we do. After decades of putting the climate emergency on the back burner, a little bit of green investment won't cut it. With COP26 coming up in November, we have to do everything we can to drag the Government into taking action that is commensurate with the scale of the single biggest disaster facing humanity.

Protect Everyone

Ahead of the renewal of the Coronavirus Act, I joined MPs from across Parliament to table an alternative bill prioritising human rights and public health. Voting down the Coronavirus Act would have given us 21 days to adopt new legislation that truly kept everyone safe, using Liberty's Protect Everyone Bill as the basis.

I also helped Liberty organise a briefing for Labour MPs to consider the measures put forwards in this Bill, from increasing statutory sick pay to scrapping social care easements, ending the Hostile Environment, making workplaces safe, protecting our data, and preventing evictions.

I believe the wide-ranging impacts of the pandemic make the case for universalism clearer than ever. Nobody is safe until everyone is. I will keep pushing for a public health approach to the pandemic that gives people the resources they need to stay safe during the pandemic rather than punishing them when they don't.

Campaigns



Covid Inquiry

I continue to echo the calls of bereaved families for a full public inquiry into the Conservatives' handling of the pandemic. This needs to examine everything from preparedness to delayed lockdowns and the out-sourcing of vital public health contracts.

The very least the Government can do is to listen to those who have lost family members and close friends and examine why we have had such a high death toll compared to other countries.

Help the Excluded

Ahead of the Budget, I added my name to a letter to the Chancellor from Excluded UK, calling on him to finally address all those Excluded from support so far. This a substantial section of the workforce and they need support to get through this crisis – people who were furthering their careers by starting a new job, those in between jobs, those who for whatever reason were denied furlough, those who took the plunge to set up a new business, freelancers, those jugglinh PAYE and self-employment, those whose maternity or parental leave fell at a certain time, people excluded due to pensions, bereavement payments, carer's allowance, redundancy, shielding and more.

The Government's ongoing refusal to help the Excluded, who account for up to 10% of the UK workforce, is bad for business and even worse for the individuals concerned.

National HIV testing week

National HIV Testing Week took place on the 1st - 7th February 2021. This came just two months after the publication of the HIV Commission's report which provided a blueprint to end new cases of HIV within the decade. The main message from the Commission was "test, test, test". This message is crucial to find the 6,700 people who are living with HIV in the UK but remain undiagnosed. In typical fashion, Government has said the right things, issuing warm words about increasing HIV testing, but has yet to take action.

I tabled EDM #1398 - Access to PrEP for Black communities and EDM #1334 - PrEP and National HIV Testing Week 2021 calling for better access to Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) in efforts to stop new UK cases.

I wrote for the Voice on the importance of HIV testing

Five X More

We need to talk about the number of Black women dying in childbirth. In England, the maternal mortality rate for white women is 8 per 100,000 live births. For Black women, this rises to 34 per 100,000 live births. Black women are more than four times likely to die in childbirth.

The Government has been aware of this disparity since at least 2013 and has done next to nothing. A Joint Human Rights Committee Report highlighted this fact and noted that the NHS "acknowledge and regret this disparity but has no plan to end it". This is scandalous.

I met with Five X More this month, who have been raising awareness about the issue for a number of years and pushing for change.

**BLACK WOMEN IN THE
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TO A WHITE WOMAN**



UN Anti-Racism Day

On UN World Racism Day, I spoke about the need for a new normal. Before the pandemic, "normal" meant rising levels of racism and inequality across the world and across UK society. We must come together to stamp this out.

Sadly, the Tories' whitewashed Race Report was not the kind of new normal I was hoping for. However much of a foregone conclusion the report's rejection of the existence of institutional racism was, it's truly worrying to see decades of good work towards racial equality being undermined in this way.

The first step towards addressing a problem is acknowledging that it exists, then taking action to understand why it exists. Sadly, this Government refuses to take even the smallest step towards ending racism, resisting change across society, whether it's teaching the history of slavery and empire in schools or examining institutional forms of discrimination in UK policing. As we rebuild from the pandemic, it's going to be even more important to make the case that they are depriving us of the fairer society we all deserve.

Justice for Christopher Kapessa

Christopher Kapessa, a black child, died after being pushed into the River Cynon in South Wales on 1 July 2019. His family are appalled by the way the case has been handled. The Crown Prosecution Service deciding it was not in the public interest to seek a prosecution despite their own admission that sufficient evidence did exist to bring a charge of manslaughter.

I joined the launch of the Justice for Christopher Kapessa campaign to talk about the family's struggle for justice. It's absolutely vital that we recommit to learning the lessons from the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry and to challenge and root out systemic and structural racism within the criminal justice system.

**JUSTICE
FOR**
CHRISTOPHER
KAPESSA
FAMILY CAMPAIGN

KILLED & THEN
FAILED BY

**STATE
RACISM**

#JusticeForChristopherKapessa



Close the Barracks

The Government's treatment of asylum seekers has reached new lows during the pandemic. They continue to hold people who have fled war and persecution in disused military barracks unfit for human habitation.

At its height, Napier Barracks in Kent held as many as 400 asylum seekers in dormitories of over 20 people. The Home Office was warned by Public Health England that the site was not Covid-secure. As a consequence of their failure to action basic health advice, we saw a significant Covid-19 outbreak.

On March 19th, I joined a day of action organised by migrant justice campaigners to call on Priti Patel to close Napier Barracks, house asylum seekers in the community and open safe and legal routes for refugees to give people the chance to rebuild their lives here.



Justice for Belly Mujinga

March 21st marked one year since the spitting incident which may have led to the death of transport worker Belly Mujinga. I reiterated the family's call for an inquest into her death and a full public inquiry into the circumstances surrounding her death. We need to find out what happened and how, so that we can prevent the same thing from ever happening again.

Fighting local government cuts

I joined trade unionists from across our movement to talk about how we can resist the imposition of further cuts on local authorities. The government must fund local councils properly for the first time in more than a decade in order to keep communities safe and rebuild the country after the pandemic. Unless ministers fix the current funding shortfall – estimated to be in the region of £10bn – there could be tens of thousands of job losses and catastrophic cuts to local services in England. Many of the people providing essential services throughout the pandemic, from social care to waste collection and environmental health workers – could soon be out of work, despite councils having a central role in keeping people safe in the months ahead.

FSCC Pay Fair for Care Day

Over the last year, the average care worker earns just £8.50 per hour to do one of the most difficult jobs in the country. Our care workers have been overworked and undervalued for too long. I supported the Future Social Care Coalition's Pay Fair for Care Day of Action. The Government's repeated failure to deliver a long-term plan for social care jeopardises the sector's recovery after the pandemic.

Covid has exposed the crisis in social care yet again. There are more than 1.5 million people in the UK with unmet care needs and 112,000 vacancies in the sector. On top of this the sector is likely to see more staff departures this year, with one third currently considering a career move. We simply cannot afford to leave the social care unaddressed any longer. This starts with paying all our care workers a real living wage.



When the Clapping Stops: EU Care Workers

Whilst many EU citizens have successfully secured status through the EU Settlement Scheme, if even 1% of the estimated 4 million EU residents are unable to apply on time, this will leave tens of thousands without status or rights overnight.

The Government's commitment to arbitrary net migration targets risks savaging individual rights and many key sectors of the UK, especially social care. Research has shown that as many as 1 in 7 care workers are unaware they have to apply to regularise their status by June.

With the EUSS deadline just months away and the UK in the grip of the third wave of the coronavirus pandemic, the situation couldn't be more urgent. I'm backing the call from the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) to lift the deadline now, before it is too late.

Stop the British Gas Fire

British Gas's refusal to remove the threat of fire and rehire left engineers with no option but to strike to protect pay and conditions. Disgracefully, even 40 days of industrial action was insufficient to change minds at Centrica, British Gas's parent company. This reflects a deeply unfair status quo where employers are able to push their workers onto reduced terms and conditions in an attempt to safeguard profits for shareholders.

This will have a devastating impact on the wider workforce. If one company is able to fire its entire workforce and push them onto reduced pay and longer hours, this will lower the wage floor across the sector. With fire and rehire still ripping through workplaces, we need to keep up pressure on the Government and MPs to legislate to end it.



[Click here](#) to find out why British Gas engineers are on strike

Defending the right to protest

Ahead of the Second Reading of the Government's deeply divisive Policing Bill, more accurately dubbed "The Police Crackdown Bill", I joined three of my colleagues at the Sisters Uncut protest in Parliament Square.

Even from a Government that brought in the Overseas Operations Bill and the CHIS Bill (better known as the Spy Cops Bill) – which effectively decriminalise acts of murder, rape and torture conducted by state agents including police and military personnel – this is a drastic attack on human rights, made all the more worrying by the wide application of its provisions: stricter sentences for defacing statues than the majority of rape offenders currently receive, new stop and search powers to use against protestors, making “serious annoyance” a convictable offence, criminalising trespass and introducing measures which expressly target Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

I'm gladdened by the strength of the opposition developing to fight these attacks on the right to protest. As I told protesters outside Parliament, the role of the police is to keep the peace and to keep us safe, not to tell us what to think.

Rather than cracking down on the genuine injustices raised by protesters – from gender-based violence to institutional racism and the climate emergency – this Government has shown time and again that they would rather crack down on the protesters themselves.

But protests over the last month or so have given the Tories a taste of what they can reasonably expect when they try to police and criminalise protest out of existence. Until they do something about the things people are raising their voices about, the people are just going to keep coming.



Standing up for Streatham, Standing up for London

Labour's local and regional election campaigns have kicked off in earnest, with different types of election campaigning slowly coming back onto the list of permitted actions. The Tories' decision to field a candidate whose values are so out of step with Londoners shows they're not serious about winning here. Even so, we must never take Labour voters for granted.

At his campaign launch event, Sadiq Khan highlighted the need for a 1945 moment that is commensurate with the scale of the challenges we face as we rebuild. Over the coming years, London needs to light the way with a transformative agenda in the wake of the pandemic that offers people hope of real change.

It was great to get back out on the campaign trail with Clapham Common members for a Saturday morning leaflet drop to get our Labour Mayor re-elected alongside Marina Ahmad, our London Assembly candidate. I'll be hosting the official Streatham Labour launch event on Thursday 8th of April, so be sure to join us then.

Our Campaigns Officers have also scheduled a series of phone banks starting every Monday from the 12th April at 6:30pm.



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