

BELL RIBEIRO-ADDY MP

Monthly Report, August 2021



Remembering Maxine James



Our Constituency Labour Party Chair, Maxine James, tragically passed away at King's College Hospital earlier this month, after a short illness. She was 64.

Maxine was a devoted activist and active Streatham Labour member for more than 20 years. Her sudden passing has been sorely felt by all of us in the local party and across the wider Party and Black community as a whole.

In all the years I knew her, Maxine

made it her life's work to challenge racial inequality. Born in Kingston, Jamaica, she joined her family in England at the age of 12, living in Birmingham and attending school there before moving to work in London. In 1983, she co-founded Equinox Consulting, a management consultancy set up to promote economic, social, and political advancement for people of Black African and Black Caribbean descent.

As well as serving as the Chair of Streatham Labour (the first Black woman to do so) and of Streatham Wells branch, she was recently elected to the London Regional Board and also intended to run as a council candidate next year.

Maxine gave so much and still had so much more to give. Her sudden death is a devastating loss for our local party, but most of all for her partner William and daughter Tayo. Streatham CLP officers organised a moving memorial to Maxine on 9th September at Streatham Common with contributions from right across the Labour family.

You can also [pay your respects](#) to Maxine online.

In the Constituency



Results Day 2021

Well done to all those who received their A-Level, GCSE and B-Tech results over the last month. Our young people's achievements are even greater in what has been a very difficult year for pupils, and particularly for those educated at state schools.

At A-level, the attainment gap has widened by 11% between private and state schools with top grades awarded to private schools at a 50% higher rate than in state schools. I'm concerned to hear from local students who lost out on university places as a result of these disparities.

It's a well-recognised phenomenon that stereotypes around working-class pupils and Black, Asian and ethnic minority working pupils often mean these pupils will receive lower predicted grades, which they ultimately go on to out-perform in exams. Research has shown that the poorest students receive lower A-level predictions than their more privileged peers.

Attainment should not be linked to your ability to pay for your education and your grades shouldn't be dependent on the area you live in or the school you go to. These results are a reminder we have to redouble our push for a National Education Recovery Plan worthy of the name and better state school funding.

CEF Lyncx

It was great to visit Community Education Foundation & Lyncx (CEF Lyncx) to see how they're helping children in our area to keep healthy and active over the summer holidays.

It's so important to ensure that all children and young people have opportunities and can access local outlets to have fun, develop skills and stay safe year-round. During the pandemic, they've been providing local families with trusted health information and offering extracurricular support to kids in Streatham.



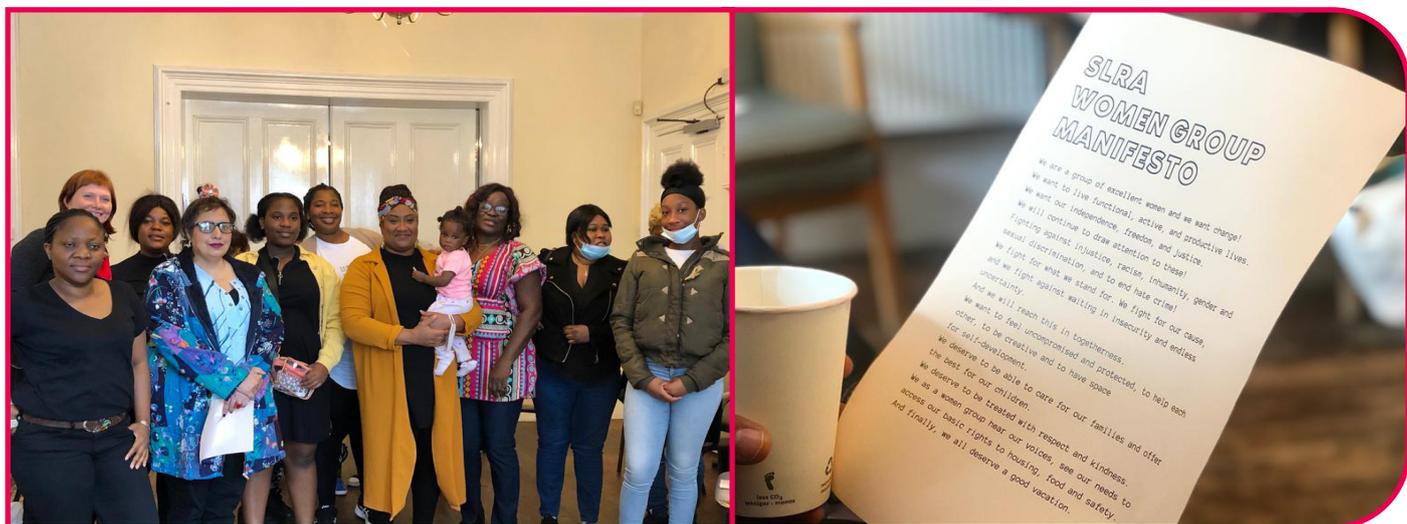
Standing up for Refugees in Streatham

This month, I joined the South London Refugee Association (SLRA) for their monthly women's group meeting. Throughout the pandemic, this has been a lifeline for local refugee women, moving online with the advent of lockdown.

SLRA have also very kindly agreed to work on Streatham's contribution to the Parliamentary Covid Memorial Quilt, a project to commemorate all those who have died from the virus. I reached out to them after seeing their beautiful and powerful quilt artwork on show at the Woodfield Project.

It's really important to recognise the contribution that this invisibilised community has made to our society and the heightened difficulties they have faced during the pandemic. We discussed the hardships of temporary housing and no recourse to public funds during the pandemic and talked about their hopes for the future.

I'm glad that Lambeth Council has made a stand against enforcing Home Office rules that would see people deported for rough sleeping and has pledged to ensure no child in the borough is denied free school meals because of their immigration status.



Annual Community Fun Day - New Park Road Baptist Church

A big thank you to New Park Road Baptist Church for inviting me to their annual community fun day. Every year, they throw their doors open to welcome people in the Clapham Park area. It was lovely to get involved and see people coming together to celebrate the diversity of our area through food, music, games, and other activities.



Summer surgeries: Here to Help

I've been getting out into the constituency this summer, hosting pop-up surgeries across Streatham and encouraging constituents to pop along to raise casework issues. It's important that people in our area know that they have a Labour MP who is on their side and ready to help them.

So far, I've been out in Streatham Wells, Brixton Hill, Streatham Hill and Tulse Hill. I've also organised pop-up surgeries at Windmill Gardens (4th September), Streatham Common GP Practice (7th September) and St Leonard's at the South London Islamic Centre (11th September).

Help spread the word that I'm here to help: <https://bellribeiroaddy.com/here-to-help-late-summer-pop-up-mp-surgeries-in-streatham/>



Supporting young people into employment

It was good to pay a visit to Lambeth College's Youth Hub, which works in tandem with Job Centre Plus to offer employment support to 16-24 year olds in our area. They offer CV help, interview practice and advice on job searches among other things as well as offering English and maths support alongside housing and mental health information.

Young people are getting a raw deal under the Conservatives. There's so much more work to be done if we're going to ensure everyone can find fulfilling work opportunities that help them unlock their potential.

Destiny Kids Nursery Grand opening

This month, it was also a pleasure to cut the ribbon at Destiny Kids Nursery on Brixton Hill, just down the road from my office. I wish them the very best of luck with their new endeavour!



Levelling up with Community Tech Aid

It was an honour to present Community Tech Aid with their Levelling Up Award for Closing the Digital Divide. Founded by Streatham Labour's very own former Women's Officer, Linda Heiden, Community Tech Aid delivered a total of 650 devices in their first year of existence, supporting 136 organisations and connecting 36 homes in the process. Through our joint Laptops for Learning initiative, we raised over £10,000 to supply hundreds of children in our area with devices for remote learning to use during lockdown.

The pandemic has been a reminder of the huge impact of digital exclusion in the UK and the clear need to improve connectivity. It's not just that everyone deserves internet access; it's that without it, you can't access most of the things you need to function in the 21st century.

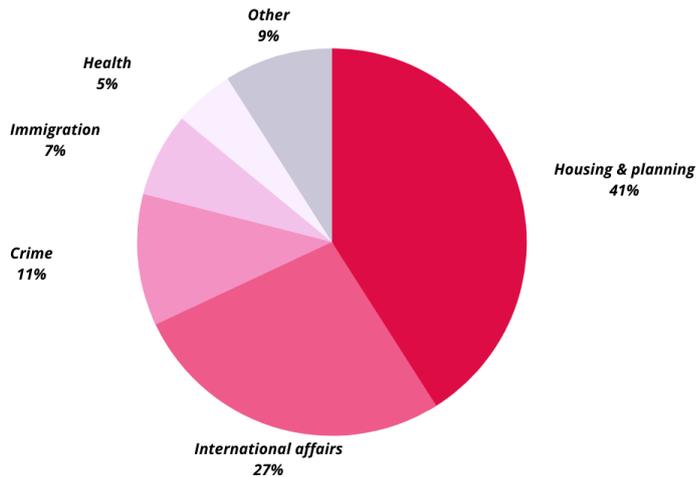
It's good to see local grassroots organisations (especially ones with Labour connections) springing up to address unmet social need but we need stronger action to compliment this from the top. Ensuring old and young alike have the things they need to get online should be a top priority for any serious government. That means doing everything to make it easier for people to learn and maintain digital skills throughout their lives; whether by alleviating household poverty, funding better digital provision in schools, stopping companies from destroying unsold technology and introducing a right to repair.



Community Tech Aid are always on the lookout for **volunteers** and **donations**. Can you help?

Casework

Last month's casework saw a majority of cases dealing with housing and planning, where we assisted constituents with issues of disrepair, suitability of housing (overcrowding) and requests for housing and accommodation. July also saw a number of ongoing cases regarding delays in constituent applications for biometric residence permits and other applications to the Home Office. Other ongoing backlogs in departments such as the DVLA have been flagged to us and we have assisted constituents in ensuring their issues regarding vehicle registration and licences were resolved.



August Statistics

Correspondence

The past month has seen the majority of casework dedicated to constituents with family members who have been affected by the upheaval in Afghanistan. In this desperate time for constituents and their loved ones, my team has worked diligently to raise all cases as a matter of urgency to the Foreign and Home Offices and ensure that they will be assisted to evacuate the country safely amidst the current unrest. Other casework issues included housing and planning issues for constituents, where residents required assistance with disrepair, temporary accommodation and bidding for local council housing.

Russell's Footpath clean-up

It was nice to get involved with Streatham Wells councillors' cleanup of Russell's footpath. After meeting local residents, I wrote to Lambeth Council asking them to take steps to address the drug dealing and anti-social behaviour, which sadly often occurs in plain sight here during daylight hours.



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



Afghanistan

I was inundated with emails from constituents this month regarding the end of western military action in Afghanistan and the subsequent fall of the Afghan Government. I was unable to speak in the debate but my thoughts are with the Afghan people, who have endured decades of violence and the consequences of a twenty-year long failed military invasion and intervention, with no end to the uncertainty and danger in sight.

Streatham is home to a sizeable Afghan community. My team and I spent a large proportion of the last month interceding on behalf of constituents with loved ones left stranded in Afghanistan. By the time the UK's official evacuation efforts were called to an end, we had not received a single reply from the Home Office, the Foreign Office, or the Ministry of Defence. It later emerged that many urgent cases raised with the Government by MPs were sitting in inboxes unopened.

The Government's failure to properly resource our evacuation efforts and their shocking lack of preparation is unforgivable. I am now concerned that they are taking a similar attitude towards the unfolding refugee crisis in the region, shirking their moral obligation to everyone left displaced by the war and the collapse of the government.

Over six million people were forced from their homes in the twenty years the UK was in Afghanistan. More Afghans have been denied asylum or deported than will be offered safety under the Government's resettlement scheme.

We must play our part in welcoming people seeking safety, and work with our neighbours to develop a multinational plan to help refugees, rather than tightening borders as is currently taking place across Europe. The Government could show leadership by granting refugee status to the 3,000 Afghan asylum seekers currently stuck in limbo, fast-tracking the asylum application process and increasing the measly resettlement scheme.

As well as resettling refugees, I would like to see the UK play its part in a robust diplomatic effort that engages regional powers to ensure stability. This will need to cover humanitarian support, a response to rising poverty, respect for human, democratic and civil rights especially those of women and girls, and the right to self-determination for the people of Afghanistan.

Campaigns

Learning the Lessons of Afghanistan

On the 18th August, I joined Stop the War Coalition and demonstrators outside Parliament to call on the Government to accept its responsibility for the situation in Afghanistan, create safe routes and take our fair share of refugees. I have consistently opposed the war in Afghanistan. You do not build democracies with bullets and bombs.

It is clear that the “War on Terror” has not been able to deal with the complex political issues at hand and has had profound human costs. There needs to be an honest review of the connections between wars the UK Government has supported or fought in other countries and terrorism at home.

In my view, invasions and occupations are not only wrong and violate the right to sovereignty, they also do not deliver viable and sustainable political settlements. I oppose attacks on civilian populations in any circumstances, whether it is the indiscriminate launching of rockets and mortars against population centres or a military campaign directly attacking and bombing civilians and residential areas.

I note with concern that British armed forces were committed to fight in Afghanistan despite there not being a proper vote in Parliament until a decade after the initial action. Right now, our top priority must be getting people to safety. But we must also take action to prevent a repeat run of a war that cost billions and failed to create democracy in Afghanistan or prevent the spread of terrorism.



Click here to [watch my speech](#)

Kill the Bill

With the Policing, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill back before the Lords next month, I joined campaigners trying to stop this Bill in its tracks. This Police Crackdown Bill is the Government’s reaction against recent mass demonstrations and direct action, particularly the Black Lives Matter protests of last summer and the Extinction Rebellion uprising that helped pressure Parliament into declaring a climate emergency. These mass mobilisations show how protest and direct action have become important levers in a political system where progressive social movements have been increasingly cut off from meaningful decision-making.

As one former superintendent of protest policing pointed out: “Once a lower threshold for police intervention is provided in law, there will be an expectation, not least at the political level, for the police to exercise that power, which may lead to conflict”.

This Bill also contains measures which not only fail to address the injustices raised by the Black Lives Matter movement but would actively make the harms of our policing and judicial system even worse. Key provisions include new and harsher sentences for protest offences, criminalising Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities’ way of life, creating a Prevent-style duty on knife crime and new stop and search powers to use on protesters.

The Police should exist to keep the peace and keep people safe. The Police Crackdown Bill will help them do neither of those things. Whilst it has now cleared its final hurdle in the Commons, we’ve not seen the end of this. I will continue to oppose this Bill in as it continues its course through Parliament. But this is ultimately a contest that will be won in the streets with people power and mass support, not in the chambers of Parliament.





Labour for a Green New Deal's conference motion

It was great to meet with Labour for a Green New Deal this month to discuss their important Green Jobs Revolution conference motion, which seeks to address the twin economic and ecological emergencies we face coming out of Covid. They have my full support.

The Tories are completely in thrall to sectors of the economy that refuse to bear the costs of the climate emergency. Boris Johnson's disgraceful praise of Thatcher's attack on the miners show how little regard his Government's policies will have for workers during climate breakdown. We need a just transition with retraining and support for workers, not another assault on working class communities.

Their 2050 net zero target is like calling the fire brigade after the house has burned down. It's absolutely vital that Labour keeps working to put climate breakdown at the top of the political agenda and makes it clear who the Tories are asking to pay for it. We can solve the unemployment crisis and rapidly decarbonise with a socialist Green New Deal that has public ownership of industries including energy, water, transport, mail, telecommunications.

RMT Union's Annual Reparations Conference

It was great to join the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union this year for a panel discussion on the Black Lives Matters movement's contribution to the Reparations campaign. The trade union struggle and the struggle for reparations are closely connected. Reparations are about recognising the injustice of stolen labour and organising to address this.

The UK has not once offered reparations to its former colonies. People see reparations as handing over large sums of money, but we could start today with simple things like fairer trade, returning items that do not belong to us, and cancelling debts that have been paid to us over and over again. The UK cannot begin to move forwards to a future of racial equality without confronting the legacy of slavery and colonialism and making efforts to address the inequalities that endure because of them.

Supporting unaccompanied refugees

At least 11 unaccompanied teenagers from Afghanistan, Eritrea and Ethiopia have committed suicide in the UK asylum system since 2016. I support local charity Daaro Youth's call for an inquiry into these deaths. As the number of displaced people in these regions increases, the UK must surely do its part to meet the increased demand for resettlement. We desperately need a fair and humane asylum system that treats people with compassion and helps refugees realise their full potential.

Labour Campaign for Drug Policy Reform

Last month saw a 3.8% increase in drug poisoning deaths in England and Wales, with 4,561 people losing their lives to addiction. Just a week ago, I attended a Gold Command Meeting with Lambeth Met after cases of drug poisoning in Brixton and Streatham. The status quo has led to increased violence and racial injustices. If we're going to change this, we need to end the failed war on drugs and bring in evidence-based policies that prioritise harm reduction and health.

Polling shows the public are in favour of a health-based approach to drugs and favour cannabis legalisation. As well as exploring decriminalisation and legalisation and a shift from punishment to public health, I'd like to see greater investment in harm reduction measures like prevention facilities, needle and syringe programmes, non-abstinence-based housing. We should also be putting greater investment into treatments like talking therapies to address underlying mental health issues and substitute prescribing.

Miscarriage support

It's unacceptable that women currently have to endure miscarriage three times before receiving any NHS support. One in four pregnancies currently ends in miscarriage. This is an issue that disproportionately affects Black women in the UK, who face a 40% increased likelihood of miscarriage.

Research by maternity care charity Tommy's showed that 20% of women who have had a miscarriage will go on to experience clinical PTSD, 16%-18% will suffer from anxiety and depression, and the risk of suicide is quadrupled.

I will continue to call for better maternity support and meaningful targets for improvement. We must ensure every woman gets the help they need to face the pain and trauma of every miscarriage, regardless of the colour of their skin. The Government must invest in miscarriage prevention and treatment, as well as mental health support, in its upcoming women's health strategy.

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