

BELL RIBEIRO-ADDY MP

Monthly Report, July 2021

**Stop the sell-off
of our NHS**



It will come as no surprise to anyone that the Tories have been using the pandemic as another excuse to privatise essential services. From PPE shortages to the failure of our privatised test and trace system, we've seen what happens when essential health services are sold off to companies for private gain during a national emergency.

However, the quiet sell-off of local GP surgeries to an American health insurance giant is brazen even by their standards. It comes (alongside their Corporate Takeover NHS Bill) as a harsh reminder that life and health are just products to be turned into sale for them.

US health conglomerate Centene acquired London's largest healthcare provider AT Medics in October last year, taking over 49 GP surgeries and more than 370,000 patients in London. Three of these surgeries are in our constituency: Edith Cavell Surgery, Streatham Place Surgery and Streatham High Practice.

Just last month, Centene was forced to pay \$143m to the states of Mississippi and Ohio for overcharging patients. Local surgeries are never going to be safe in the hands of US conglomerates, whose responsibility to shareholders will always come before the needs of patients. Operose Health, the company's UK subsidiary has openly stated that its market strategy is to exit NHS contracts that do not make a profit. In practice, this will mean corner-cutting and could mean disruption to services.

The Tories have never liked the NHS very much. They voted against it no less than 22 times at its inception. As they look to chip away at our country's most successful socialist institution, I'll keep highlighting these attacks and making the case for a publicly funded, publicly owned National Health Service run for the benefit of all, not the benefit of a few. The money we put into our NHS (and all our public services) must go into the running of those services, not into the pockets of wealthy shareholders.

Watch my video opposing the sell-off of local surgeries

In the Constituency

Standing up for Streatham's schools

Back in March I visited Iqra Primary School, where school leaders brought the parlous state of the school's roof to my attention. Chronic underfunding and cuts to our school budgets mean this is an all too common situation in Streatham and throughout the country. Even before the start of the pandemic, schools in Streatham shouldered real terms per pupil cuts of £688.



I wrote to the Secretary of State for Education on behalf of Iqra Primary and was delighted to hear that they will be given priority funding to refurbish their building as part of the Government's ten-year School Rebuilding Programme last year.



Youth provision in Tulse Hill

It was good to meet with Tulse Hill Estate Tenants and Residents' Association to discuss local youth provision this month. It is so important to ensure that young people in our area have the facilities, activities and opportunities to help them thrive.

With local government shouldering the burden of austerity, local councils have seen their budgets slashed considerably since the Conservatives first took power in 2010. Their 70% cuts to the youth budget has seen more than 750 youth centres close over the last decade. I will continue to raise these service cuts in Parliament and call on the Government to reverse them.

As part of the effort to help our young people flourish, Lambeth Council have also organised an extensive programme of meals and activities for children and young people from Streatham and across our borough during the summer holidays.

Constituents' Lobby from Palestine Solidarity Campaign

It is clear that Palestinian rights remains a deeply important issue for my constituents. I have received more emails about the clearance of Sheikh Jarrah and the subsequent bombardment of Gaza than any other issue over the last twelve months. This month, I met with constituents who wanted to discuss these issues with me in more detail at an MPs' lobby organised by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. Hundreds of thousands of people joined the recent demonstrations across the country calling for action and a just and lasting peace, starting with an end illegal occupation, settlements and evictions. I've been proud to see our constituency, our city, and others across the country, standing in solidarity with the people of Palestine, whose rights have been disregarded for too long.

Discussing Digital Exclusion

We Rise is a Brixton based community business launched in 2017 to empower young people to create successful futures. They run innovative work experience projects for teams of young people to deliver real work commissioned by organisations.

As those of you who are regular readers of my report will know, I'm passionate about highlighting the digital exclusion now faced by people in our area and across our society. It was great to hear from young people from Streatham about the impact this has had on our community during the pandemic. They raised everything from disruption to their own learning to the challenges for older people and the lack of ESOL provision.

When Labour put forwards its free broadband policy, this was met with ridicule from the Tories and mainstream print and broadcast media. But the pandemic has forced us to reconsider what is truly essential to our society. As we emerge from Covid, it's clear that there is a new generation demanding internet access as a basic right. I'll do my part to fight for this.



A very important interview with Streatham Hill Scouts

A big thank you to the Second Streatham Hill Scout Group, who invited me for an interview them as part of their Media Relations and Marketing Activity Badge. I did a short Q and A session about my role as an MP, responding to a range of very good questions on everything from lowering the voting age to teaching Black history in schools and digital exclusion during lockdown. Wishing them all the best luck for their future scouting journey.





Careers Week at Lambeth Academy

In July, I visited Lambeth Academy to discuss with students their ambitions and my journey into Parliament, as part of their careers week. The theme of the day was “Making London a better place”. It was great to talk to them about my own journey, their job ambitions, and what they’d been getting up to during careers week. This ranged from managing air pollution, to improving mental health support and increasing opportunities for young people locally.

I'm always impressed and inspired by our young people's strong sense of compassion and social justice. In a system where so many young people don't have a vote and many others feel disenfranchised from politics, it's crucial that we listen to the voices of the young. As a Member of Parliament, it's my duty to make it clear that they have power as citizens and encourage participation in the democratic process.

Local Labour roundup

It's always great to meet local members and get involved with Streatham Labour campaigning, especially while the sun's shining. This month, I spoke at Streatham South's ward meeting to give them an update on what I've been getting up to in Parliament.

I made it out onto the doorstep with our Clapham Common councillors and branch members to listen to residents talking about the issues that matter to them. Our campaigning is open and accessible to all members - there is something for everyone and we also run regular training sessions. Please email organiserlambeth@gmail.com if you'd like to find out more about campaigning.



I had my regular meetings with Councillor Claire Holland and our London Assembly Member, Marina Ahmad and made it along to the online coffee morning to meet prospective council candidates for next year's local elections.

I joined Streatham CLP Women's Forum to speak to local women's charities the Gaia Centre and Little Village, to talk about what local members can do to support their work.

And finally, I addressed London Labour's regional conference on the topic of racial justice.

Streatham Food Festival 2021



The Streatham Food Festival, organised by Streatham BID, was just what we needed coming out of lockdown, bringing us together and encouraging people to put money into small independent businesses in our local economy.

I did my bit, collecting plenty of stamps over the week festival and heading on a big food crawl with friends on the final day. Over the course of the week, I sampled:

summer rolls and salad from Tam, a vegan chickpea curry from

Tribe, nachos and tacos from El Chico's, jerked chicken at the White Lion, an amazing shrimp burger at Hood Streatham, pizza and fizz at Perfect Blend, Waffle Genie's Oreo extravaganza, and ice cream with dessert wine from Streatham Wine House.

It was a privilege, as ever, to confirm Streatham's status as the culinary centre of South London. There are so many fantastic independent businesses in Streatham making and selling amazing local produce. Many of them have faced real challenges during the pandemic: from declining footfall to the increased costs and blue tape of Tory Brexit.





Supporting small businesses as they recover from Covid

At the beginning of the month, I visited Marjorie, who runs zero waste food store Healthier Without on Streatham High Road. As well as being a sustainable business, they make some of the best peanut butter you've ever tasted.

We celebrated her success in winning a free window makeover for her business from Facebook Small Business, who are offering a range of mentoring programmes and training sessions to small businesses in our area. A welcome effort to help small businesses adapt to the digital and physical challenges as we look to rebuild from Covid.

Update on the cladding scandal

There are an estimated 12,000 people across Lambeth caught up in the cladding scandal. I've been working with affected residents to amplify their voice and put pressure on the Government to provide the upfront funding to make these homes safe without hitting victims with massive bills.

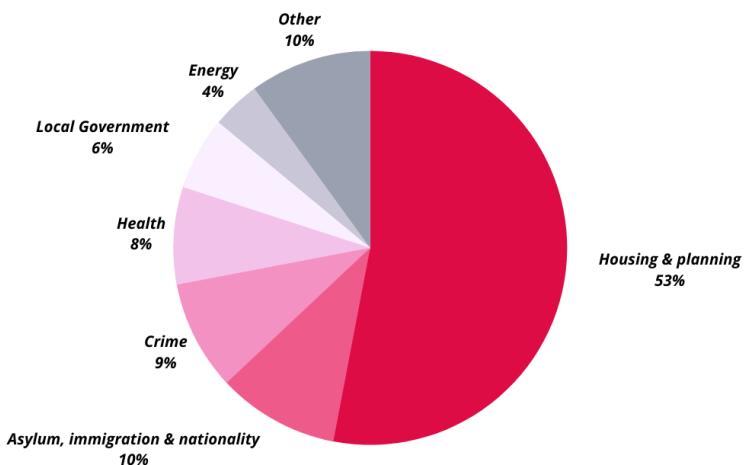
Since visiting Courtenay House earlier this year, I've encouraged residents to form a working group to confront issues around cladding and building management together. This month, I facilitated a meeting between St Martin's Tenants and Residents Association and residents of Courtenay House. St Martin's outlined the practicalities and challenges of setting up a Tenants and Residents Association. I'm hoping that I'll be able to organise a round table during recess to encourage wider TRA membership.



[Click here to find out more about the Cladding Scandal](#)

Casework

The majority of last month's casework was focused on housing and planning (disrepairs, suitability of housing, social housing allocation) with a considerable number of cases. This month also saw a high number of immigration-based issues where there have been prolonged delays from the Home Office for constituents' biometric residence permits (BRP) and settled status applications. Finally, there were a number of constituent casework issues regarding local crime, anti-social behaviour and delays in the DVLA.



July Statistics

Correspondence

As Parliament prepared to break for summer recess, the Government saw this as an opportunity to push through some more disastrous legislation at the eleventh hour. I received several emails from constituents calling for me to vote against the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, the Nationality and Borders Bill and the Health and Care Bill. In addition, several constituents emailed to raise their concerns about the restriction easing on the 19th July and the potential implementation of vaccine passports.

Meeting with London Southside Chamber of Commerce

I was honoured to be invited to be the Honorary President of London Southside Chamber of Commerce (LSCC) this month, which covers areas of Lambeth, Southwark and Wandsworth. LSCC supports members with a business interest in south London to build success locally and internationally.

They run local, informal events like breakfast meetings for members to get together and catch up with news as well as international trade missions that provide insight into potential overseas supply bases and markets.

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



[Click here to watch my **PMQ on the NHS**](#)

Prime Minister's Question: celebrating the 73rd birthday of our NHS

To complete my recent hat-trick of PMQs, I highlighted NHS workers protesting the Tories' Health and Care Bill in the run-up to our health service's 73rd birthday. Thousands of nurses, doctors, hospital porters and admin staff took to the streets ahead of the 5th of July to protest the mismanagement of our health service and call for an end to privatisation and chronic underfunding and understaffing.

I echoed their demands, calling on the Prime Minister to commit to keeping our health service publicly owned and properly funded. At this difficult time, every penny that we spend on the NHS should be going into the essential health services we all rely on. Enriching corporate shareholders and Tory party donors in the way they have during the pandemic comes at everyone's expense and is an unsustainable way to run our public services.

Health and Care Bill

I voted against the Health and Care Bill at its second reading. Now more than ever, the money we spend on the NHS must go into the essential health services we all rely on, not into the pockets of corporate shareholders and Tory party donors. After a decade of austerity, cuts and privatisation, the last thing the NHS needs is more of the same medicine.

This is a Corporate Takeover Bill that will only normalise the corrupt contracting we have seen during the pandemic from this Government. Introduced in the same week as the NHS's 73rd birthday, this Bill would roll out the red carpet for private companies to gain market access to our health service. As it deals with record waiting lists and a big bang reopening that is pushing Covid hospitalisations up, more privatisation is the last thing our NHS needs.

[Watch my speech opposing the **Health and Care Bill**](#)

Using the current emergency to ram through another round of privatisation is just kicking it when it's already down. Forcing NHS staff to implement another top-down Tory reorganisation will take people away from the tasks of tackling growing treatment lists and coping with rapidly rising Covid cases. I will continue to oppose this Bill as it passes through Parliament.

Give gig economy workers the rights they deserve

In February, the Supreme Court ruled that Uber drivers are not self-employed and are therefore entitled to basic workers rights like holiday pay and a guaranteed minimum wage. This was a momentous ruling for workers in the gig economy but one which the Government has subsequently refused to put into law.

The pandemic has highlighted the lack of workplace security for a huge swathe of UK workers. In the UK, almost a quarter of the workforce is reliant on Statutory Sick Pay, which isn't enough to live on. This means there's intense financial pressure on gig economy workers to go in, even if they do get sick. During Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Questions I called on the Government to think again, enshrine this ruling in law, and guarantee basic rights to the five million workers in the UK gig economy.

Incels: challenging violence against women in online forums

During Women and Equalities Questions, I asked the Government what plans they have to legislate against the rising threat of violence against women from involuntary celibates, more commonly known as "Incels". These men constitute an online subculture, defining themselves by their inability to find a romantic or sexual partner despite desiring one.

Eradicating violence against women will require social, political and cultural change. We need substantive action to address the deeper social causes and political failures that perpetuate it. Above all, we need to change the wider culture of misogyny that still prevails: from street-based harassment to online forums.

Windrush Day Debate

In this month's Windrush Day debate, I spoke about the need to celebrate the extraordinary contribution of the Windrush generation, take steps to tackle the ongoing racism and injustices they and their descendants face, and create a society that treats everyone fairly, no matter where they come from.

Echoing Arthur Torrington of the Windrush Foundation, I called on the Government to listen to the Windrush generation and give them the final say on where the Windrush Memorial is situated. I praised local schools and community organisations in Streatham and Lambeth for their own efforts to commemorate and celebrate the generation of people that came over to the UK to help rebuild after the Second World War. Finally, I raised the ongoing injustice of the Windrush compensation scheme, which has become a scandal in itself, with the vast majority of the estimated 11,500 victims still not receiving a penny of justice.

When the Windrush scandal broke, the Government issued a public apology. If they stand true to the apology that they made years ago, they must take stock of these criticisms, remove the Windrush compensation scheme from the Home Office so it can be managed properly, listen to the Windrush generation about where they would like to have their memorial, and take active steps to acknowledge institutional racism in the immigration system and across society.

Watch my contribution to the Windrush Day debate

The Tories are more interested in cracking down than levelling up

Three Bills brought forwards over the month paint a grim picture of the Tories' future plans. Rather than accepting we have a responsibility to host our fair share of the world's refugees, they're cracking down on migrants. Rather than acknowledging the autonomy of student unions, they're cracking down on their right to choose who speaks at their events. Rather than addressing the growing injustices of our time, they are choosing to silence the people raising them. These Bills are part of an ongoing authoritarian Tory agenda that seeks to stop anyone from challenging them.

Police Crackdown Bill

This month, the Government voted its draconian Police Crackdown Bill (Policing, Crime, Courts and Sentencing Bill) through the House of Commons. Not a single Tory MP voted against it. The decision to put through a Bill criminalising the act of protest and infringing the right to free assembly is an insult to everyone who wants to build a better future. During the pandemic, we saw the damaging effect of the decision to break up protests that the Government disagreed with and giving Police ill-defined powers to break up protest. The Police don't need more powers, they need accountability for the ones they already have.

Ahead of the Bill's third reading in the Commons, I hosted a briefing for Labour MPs in tandem with Liberty. I also joined colleagues from Labour and the Liberal Democrats to table amendments looking to limit the damage of this Bill. After the event, I joined Open Democracy's discussion about how we can resist this Bill in future.

Hate Speech Protection Bill

The Tories' Higher Education (Free Speech) Bill is nothing of the sort. It tramples on students unions' autonomy, overturns long-standing no-platform policies, narrows the legal definition of academic freedoms and fails to address real threats to campus free speech: the ever-failing Prevent duty, casualised employment, insecure research funding and, of course, the Government itself.

Giving Holocaust deniers, anti-vaxxers and conspiracy theorists the avenue to take legal action against higher education organisations that denied them a platform to air their views can only be an attempt to pull the political gravity of campus politics to the right. By bringing this Bill forwards, the Government did more to protect hate speech this month than to protect people on the receiving end.

The right to live free from hate is not up for debate and it never should be. And the biggest threat to free speech on university campuses is not student societies' no-platform policies, it is the Tories threatening student societies' freedom to choose who speaks at their events and their ability to keep students safe. I voted against these attempts to protect hate speech.

Another Anti-Refugee Bill

I voted to throw out the Government's Nationality and Borders Bill this month. Rather than creating a fair and humane asylum system, the Tories are punishing people who come here seeking safety and exposing them to further risk of exploitation and human rights violations.

I wrote about the [Police Crackdown Bill](#) for Labour List

This Bill does nothing to create safe routes for refugees, nothing to end the hostile environment, nothing to end the danger of unsafe asylum accommodation and nothing to address the bureaucratic hurdles leaving people without documentation through no fault of their own.

Instead, the Government has put forwards a plan that rolls back our commitment to the 1951 Refugee Convention. Their Nationality and Borders Bill would create a two-tier asylum system which differentiates between those entering by resettlement, and those arriving spontaneously or having passed through countries deemed safe. We shouldn't be creating arbitrary divisions between people who are all worthy of our support.

The Bill also includes clauses that would normalise the barracks-style accommodation we've seen at Napier and Penally. They plan to lower the bar even further by incorporating offshore detention for processing asylum seekers. Outsourcing asylum accommodation to other countries would mean moving people out of the UK without a fair hearing. It would also mean housing them away from public scrutiny in likely even worse conditions than at present.

Plans to give border agents new powers to stop and divert vessels and dish out harsher sentences for people who steer boats across the Channel won't stop people smugglers. These proposals ignore the valid reasons why asylum seekers might need to enter the country via the Channel. For instance, people stranded in France and desperate to reach loved ones or family members in the UK.

As the Government very well knows, the people smugglers are not the ones driving the boats; they're much higher up the chain of command. They will be laughing at these plans which do nothing to reduce the market of desperate people hoping to reach safety in the UK. If the Government was serious about putting people smugglers out of business in the Channel, there's an easy solution: opening up safe routes for people to claim asylum here in the UK and ending the market.

We should be doing our bit to help the small number of refugees and asylum seekers who reach the UK. So often, the UK has been complicit in creating the circumstances that displaced them in the first place: whether through our outsized contribution to climate breakdown, our historic exploitation of former colonies or our support for destructive wars.

The only thing separating us from the people crossing in dinghies is an accident of birth. We have a moral obligation to create a fair asylum system that helps refugees rebuild their lives within our communities. These plans will only subject them to further criminalisation, upheaval and trauma. Ahead of the Bill's Second Reading, I also spoke at Stand Up to Racism's event discussing how we can beat the Tories' racist new plans for immigration.

Debate on the Northern Ireland Protocol

The Prime Minister personally negotiated the Northern Ireland Protocol. Now the Government is threatening to tear it up. If they continue to try to have their cake and eat it on the protocol, they will come up against opposition from many quarters.

In a debate this week, I pointed out how large parts of the 23-year-old Good Friday Agreement remain unimplemented: from the Bill of rights to the ECHR's incorporation into UK law and the language Act. Opponents of the protocol also seem keen to rip out one phrase of the Good Friday agreement: the part stating that the constitutional position cannot be changed without consent. The Government's determination to implement a disastrous Brexit position clearly ran counter to the will of the people of Northern Ireland, who voted clearly to remain in the European Union.

The Tories can't keep flouting solemn and binding international Treaties like this. For the sake of the Good Friday Agreement and peace, they must drop the reckless rhetoric and make it work. I will continue to hold them to account for their disregard for the Northern Ireland protocol.

Debate on human rights abuses in Colombia

Last month, I spoke to Saint Gabriel's students from South London's Colombian community about the brutal state crackdown on protesters currently going on in the country. This month, I had the opportunity to raise their concerns about Colombia human rights abuses in a Westminster Hall Debate, echoing their clear call for action from our Government.

This crackdown comes as Colombians took to the streets in massive numbers to oppose a neoliberal tax programme that would have seen low- and middle-income people shouldering the costs of Covid damage. The state response was brutal, with Human Rights Watch reporting that 63 protesters have now been killed, with thousands injured and dozens disappeared across the country.

I reiterated students' call for the UK Government to put pressure on Colombia to demilitarise its cities, review its training of Colombian Police, suspend the sale of riot control materials and review arms exports to Colombia. As pen holders for the Colombian peace process at the UN Security Council, our Government must challenge the current President's attempts to roll back on the Peace Accord and push for reform of the Colombian security services.

I also met with Justice for Colombia in the run-up to this debate, an organisation working to promote solidarity between British and Irish trade unions and organisations in Colombia. Colombia has long been recognised as the most dangerous country in the world for trade unionists, accounting for 63.12% of the trade unionists murdered in the world between 2000 and 2010.

Launching the Black Maternal Health APPG

As highlighted in the recent Dispatches documentary "The Black Maternity Scandal", Black women are four times more likely to die in pregnancy and childbirth. Further to this, Black children have a 121% increased risk of being stillborn and a 50% increased risk of neonatal death. A report from the Joint Human Rights Committee, released in November 2020, reported that whilst the NHS "regrets" this disparity it "has no target" to end it. The colour of a mother's skin should have no impact on her or her baby's health. To keep campaigning on this issue, I'm proud to announce that I have now founded the APPG on Black Maternal Health Outcomes to raise awareness around the issue and push for solutions to address the staggering racial disparities in maternity care.

Women and Equalities Select Committee

Unfortunately, this month the Committee were unable to hold several of our scheduled evidence sessions due to hold as a result of lack of witnesses. This has mainly affected sessions where Government ministers have been called as witnesses for our inquiries. As a result, this has meant that our follow up session on our covid reports and our session on "The role of the GEO" – which is an inquiry that is integral to the functioning of the Women and Equalities Select Committee - could not go ahead. Our chair, Caroline Nokes MP, has raised the Committee's concerns regarding the lack of engagement we have received from the GEO, and we are hoping to see a higher rate of attendance to our sessions going forward.

We did, however, have the opportunity to continue our inquiry into "Gender Sensitive Parliament" and I used this opportunity to pose questions to the Leader and Deputy Leader of the House of Commons on steps to tackle harassment of female MPs. You can view the responses I received during this session here: <https://committees.parliament.uk/event/5213/formal-meeting-oral-evidence-session/>.

Campaigns

Standing with Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities

After the passage of the Government's disgraceful Police Crackdown Bill, I was proud to stand in solidarity with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities facing further persecution under this dreadful legislation.



Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities are among the most persecuted groups in the world. The Government should be ensuring they have safe places to go and protecting them from hate crimes. Instead, they are introducing legislation that outlaws their way of life.

Along with colleagues in the Labour Party, I supported amendments to investigate rising hate crimes against GRT communities, review the Bill's impact on GRT communities and train public bodies to better engage with them.

An injury to one is an injury to all. Let's keep standing together to protect each other and face down this disgraceful legislation.



Not Guilty by Association - calling for a review of joint enterprise

Ahead of the Policing, Crime, Courts and Sentencing Bill, I stood with JENGbA (Joint Enterprise Not Guilty by Association) to support their Joint Enterprise (Appeal) Bill. We need a total overhaul of joint enterprise convictions, which disproportionately affect black, brown and white working-class people. Too often, joint enterprise is used as an expedient to convict, such as in the case of Osime Brown, who faced

the double punishment of deportation on top of a dubious prosecution. Reviewing this centuries-old legal doctrine is a matter of social justice.

Meeting with UNJUST

UNJUST focuses on challenging policing practices and policies that disproportionately impact Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority communities. A recent report from the Home Affairs Select Committee revealed that Black people are now nine times more likely to be stopped and searched. This level of disproportionality is doing more harm than good and alienating people who have done nothing wrong. Instead of giving the police even more stop and search powers, the Government should be looking into the disproportionalities experienced by people of colour across a range of policing areas: from use of police force, mental health and policing, technology and data-driven harms, drug law enforcement and policing in schools. I will continue working with UNJUST to raise these issues.



GREEN JOBS REVOLUTION

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.

I was glad to hear Keir Starmer restate his commitment to Labour's 2019 manifesto position on the climate emergency, which would see the UK aiming to reduce the overwhelming majority of our greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. A Green New Deal without this isn't anything of the kind. Only rapid, radical action to cut global carbon emissions is going to ensure the long-term survival of our planet.

Unite's Collective Voice - Show Racism the Red Card

I spoke at Unite's Collective Voice event, highlighting the work of Show Racism the Red Card. It was an honour to join some footballing stalwarts (Shaka Hislop, Leroy Rosenior and Curtis Fleming) to talk about football, racism, politics, leadership and the meaning of solidarity.

Win or lose, the current England team is the best I've watched in my lifetime both on and off the pitch. During Euro 2020, England footballers inspired us not only with their football prowess, but with their collective and principled bravery in taking the knee.

The racism experienced by players of colour in the wake of the Euro 2020 final was sanctioned from the very top of this Tory Government. For too long, they have relied on whipping up division to distract from their own failures. It's heartening to see the footballing community and the trade union movement coming together to campaign on an anti-racist platform.

Zero Covid: No Freedom Day for the Virus

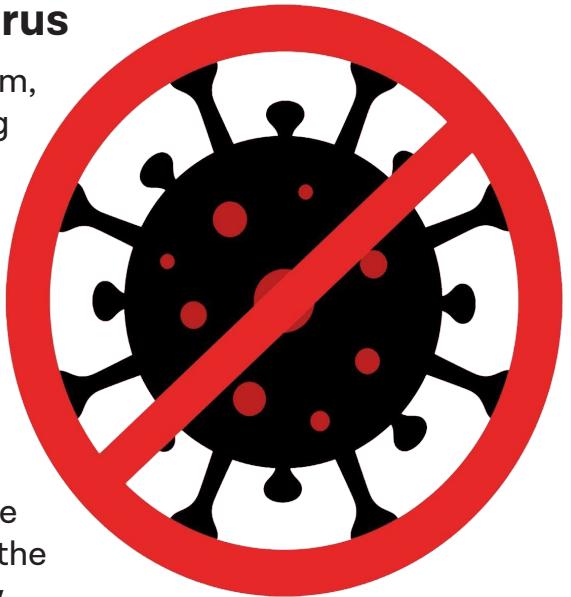
July's bonfire of restrictions is the opposite of freedom, needlessly exposing more people to Covid by scrapping even baseline measures like mask-wearing. The more the virus circulates, the more likely we are to see new vaccine-resistant variants emerging. Ending mask mandates is pure ideology. It's about making the management of the pandemic a matter of individual choices and sloughing off responsibility.

I joined the Zero Covid Coalition this month as a speaker to discuss the Government's reckless unlocking strategy. We heard from scientists from the Independent SAGE group, as well as the new head of the Universities and Colleges Union, Global Justice Now and Status Now.

While vaccines offer us real hope, our Government is one of several standing in the way of global plans to force patent holders to share life-saving technology and produce enough shots to vaccinate the world. The cost of this decision will be measured in lost lives. Right now, we're all breathing a welcome sigh of relief as the protection of the vaccines seems to be preventing the shocking mortality rates of earlier stages of the pandemic and infections level off. But taken together, these decisions suggest the Government is determined to ensure the virus's control over our lives for years to come.

Meeting with Mermaids service users

I met with representatives from Mermaids, akt, TransActual, Hidayah and Spectra to get a better understanding of the issues facing young trans people. To live in a truly free society, we must choose love and address the diverse needs of all our communities. Our liberation is incomplete without the liberation of all LGBTQ+ individuals. I'm proud to stand with the trans community and all LGBTQ+ individuals in the fight for true equality. I look forward to keeping in touch with these LGBTQ+ charities, so that we can keep the dialogue going, especially with the Women and Equalities Committee's ongoing work around amending the Gender Recognition Act.



ZERO COVID





Keep Our NHS Public

US health conglomerate Centene acquired London's largest healthcare provider AT Medics in October last year, taking over 49 GP surgeries and more than 370,000 patients in London. Three of these surgeries are in our constituency: Edith Cavell Surgery, Streatham Place Surgery and Streatham High Practice. On the NHS's birthday, after asking my Prime Minister's Question, I joined campaigners from Streatham and across London outside the Department for Health to say no to the Government's sell-off of local GP surgeries. Putting our practices in the hands of unaccountable corporations is a recipe for disaster and a sign of things to come. The money we put into our public services must go into running those services, not into the pockets of far-removed shareholders.

NHS Pay 15

In the wake of the Government's reluctantly awarded "pay rise" for NHS workers, I joined GMB Southern to discuss how we can fight back against this paltry pay offer. Since the Tories came to power in 2010 and unleashed austerity, Band 5 nurses have seen a 9% real terms pay cut. A 3% pay rise is nowhere near enough to make up for a decade of lost pay or everything the Government has put NHS workers through over the last year. Especially when some analysts are forecasting that inflation could soar to 4% (making it a real terms pay cut).

I stand with GMB in their campaign for a 15% pay rise. NHS workers considering strike action over the Government's insulting pay offer have my full support. It's time the Tories started listening to the people who have got us through this pandemic.

Lambeth Stop the War Coalition launches

It was exciting to chair the launch of the Stop the War Coalition's Lambeth branch this month. Stop The War (STW) was founded in September 2001 in response to then-President Bush's 'war on terror' which signalled the military intervention in Afghanistan and the Middle East that was to come. On their 20th anniversary, STW is still going strong with many local groups across Britain. Speakers discussed the dire need to end the UK's complicity in the occupation of Palestine and put pressure on the UK government to end arms sales to countries which routinely violate international law.



Stop Asian Hate

Stop Asian Hate UK (SAHUK) is a grassroots anti-racism movement devoted to advocating for equality. Their aim is to uplift and celebrate the East and South East Asian community, whilst raising awareness of the rise in anti-Asian hate and demanding change. I joined them for their Stop Asian Hate rally in Parliament Square this month to demand action against one of the most invisibilised forms of racism in the UK.

From what is said in the House of Commons, you wouldn't know that since the start of the pandemic, there has been a 300% increase in hate crime against Asian people. Just last month, Jacob Rees-Mogg was forced to apologise for using the term "yellow peril" in Parliament, claiming he did not know the implications of this term and suggesting it was "out of ignorance". When we have a situation where Tory frontbenchers are casually tossing off racial slurs, it shows how pervasive and normalised anti-Asian sentiment is.



I made the point that often, the Government's criticism of China has sailed into dangerous territory. It's one thing to criticise a country but it's important to do this in a responsible way, which does not heap blame onto the people who come from there (or those who are misidentified as coming from there). I will continue to stand in solidarity with the East and South East Asian community and raise awareness around anti-Asian hate crime.

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