



News from **Westminster** Jan/Feb 2018



No. 101



Report from Sharon Hodgson MP



Above: Sharon speaking in a Westminster Hall debate, called by Labour's Laura Pidcock MP (left), concerning constituents' personal traumatic experiences of the Tories rollout of PIP.

Carillion

Like many, I was deeply concerned by the collapse of Carillion earlier this month and by the Government's own failure to recognise the very clear warning signs.

Despite three profit warnings issued by Carillion over the last six months, the Government gambled the jobs, wages and pensions of the 20,000-strong Carillion workforce away, and granted three separate contracts to Carillion just months ago, worth nearly £2billion of tax payers' money.

Unsurprisingly, it didn't make the problem go away and now it is the Carillion workforce who will bear the brunt of this Government's recklessness.

The Government have failed to make any assurances on the security of the Carillion workforce jobs, wages and pensions, leaving many families up and down the country in uncertainty. Now we are seeing profit warnings from Capita, who have had to announce restructuring in recent days.

Carillion has failed in its duty to meet its pensions obligations

to many thousands of people while at the same time paying out huge dividends and pay to shareholders and executives.

It is now time for the Government to take their head out of the sand and accept some responsibility for this matter and recognise the need to bring public sector contracts back in-house – as Labour has called for – to protect public services and serve the public rather than private profit.

The Carillion workforce deserve assurances on the status of their jobs, wages and pensions, and the UK electorate deserve a

Labour administration that cares about them and not private profits.

School Holidays (Meal and Activities) Bill

As the Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on School Food, I have campaigned for holiday hunger provisions for children from families on benefits or low incomes, so that they are able to have access to healthy food over the school break and return to school fit, healthy and ready to learn. I was therefore pleased to hear, that as a result of my Labour colleague Frank Field's Private Member's Bill, the Government will commit to researching the issue and prevalence of holiday hunger and introduce pilot schemes to help gather such evidence.

There is still a lot to do, but this is a great step forward in achieving a healthier generation. I look forward to ensuring the Government follows through on this commitment.

Presidents Dinner

I was pleased to add my name to a cross-party letter recently to the Charity Commission regarding shocking revelations about the Presidents Club fundraising dinner. I hope that the incidents at the dinner are fully investigated and send a clear message to everyone that objectifying women and sexual harassment has no place in 2018.

Some highlights (No. 101 - Jan/Feb 2018)

In Parliament

NHS Smokefree Pledge launch event



As Shadow Minister for Public Health, I recently joined smoking cessation groups and a host of NHS professionals to launch the NHS Smokefree Pledge. This is a welcomed step forward to securing a smokefree generation, as NHS organisations who sign the Pledge are making a commitment to help smokers in their care to quit and to create smokefree environments that support them to do so.

Westminster Hall Debates

This month I responded to two important debates in Westminster Hall as Shadow Minister for Public Health; on junk food advertising and blood cancer. I also contributed to a Westminster Hall debate on claimants' experiences of Personal Independence Payments.

Junk Food Advertising & Childhood Obesity

We are bombarded with junk food advertising every day, which has a negative effect on obesity rates in the UK – which are some of the highest in Europe. The Minister assured me that the Government have ruled nothing out and will continue to keep everything under review when it comes to reducing obesity.

NHS Blood Cancer Care

Blood cancer is the third biggest cancer killer in the UK, and the fifth most common cancer, with more than 230,000 people living with the disease. I called on the Minister to improve the treatment and support on offer for blood cancer patients and their families.

Claimants' Experiences of Personal Independence Payments assessments (pictured overleaf)

Almost every day a constituent will contact me about their experience with PIP assessments. That is why I raised some of their cases in the debate to make the Minister aware of the real human consequences the Tory's cruel welfare system is having on our society.

Drawn Together creative industries event

The creative industries in the UK are worth £87.4bn to our economy and create thousands of jobs, which is why I was pleased to join cross-party colleagues recently to celebrate this successful sector but also to call on the Government to allow for those working in the creative sector to continue to travel, work and trade freely in the EU post-Brexit. This is crucial if our creative industries are to continue their fantastic work in the UK and around the world which contributes so much to our economy.

In and around the Constituency

Drinkaware alcohol awareness stand, ASDA Washington



After the festive period and with New Year's resolutions taking hold, including Dry January for me, I was pleased to support the local Drinkaware campaign in Asda Washington, who were helping customers make better-informed choices about drinking alcohol by raising awareness of the harms of alcohol and the health benefits of cutting down.

Sunderland and District Keep our NHS Public launch

It was great to speak at the launch of Sunderland and District KONP recently about the NHS winter crisis, followed by a Q&A on many issues facing the NHS, especially increasing privatisation. There was a very good turnout, showing just how strongly people feel about our NHS and its future. I look forward to working with them over the coming months to raise awareness amongst local people about our NHS and engage residents in defending our NHS.



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