



# News from Westminster

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## Report from Sharon Hodgson MP



*Sharon Hodgson MP with Jimmy Atkinson, pictured here at the Mayor's fundraiser event in Sunderland - July, 2021*

### Jimmy Atkinson

It is with great sadness that I must mention the passing of Jimmy Atkinson, our former CLP secretary. He was 95. Jimmy's funeral was very well attended, with a strong contingent from the CLP, including the Mayor of Sunderland Cllr Harry Trueman. Jimmy started work as an apprentice at the Glebe Colliery, followed by an amazing career in the RAF. Jimmy's commitment to the Labour Party and his love of Washington was an inspiration.

### Murder of Sir David Amess

The murder of Sir David Amess MP sent shockwaves around the country. David's family and friends are in our thoughts. A man typified by principle and decency, he long campaigned to have Southend made into a city, so I am glad the Prime Minister has committed that will happen. Like Jo Cox in 2016, David was attacked during a constituency surgery, where MPs meet with members of the public to hear their concerns. I wish to reach across the political divide and recognise the hurt that all Conservatives are feeling. David's murder reminds us that our democracy is fragile; political violence of all kinds must be prevented and stopped.

### The Leamside Line

As many of you will be aware, the recent bid (which I co-sponsored) for funding from the 'Restoring Your Railway' programme for the Leamside rail line was rejected for a third time. This is a vital project which would improve the connectivity capacity for our region to address the socio-economic inequality that continues to grow, as well as providing the extra capacity for the national East Coast Main Line, which is urgently and desperately needed. While it is disheartening that the bid was unsuccessful, and could suggest that the Government is not serious about its levelling-up agenda, it was not the only pathway and in fact would only account for 12.5% of the feasibility study cost. Wider studies on the Leamside line are already underway and political weight is behind it as we await the Integrated Rail Plan. The case for Leamside therefore remains on the table and I've written to the Government alongside Paul Howell MP to ask that Leamside be considered again .

### Fire and Rehire Private Members Bill, Commons

Following several months of passionate campaigning from Labour's Barry Gardiner MP and my question to the Prime Minister (PMQ) on the 16th December 2020, the Employment and Trade Union Rights (Dismissal and Re-engagement) Bill was finally brought before Parliament on the 22nd October. The bill would have ended the shameful corporate practice of forcefully firing employees and rehiring them on worse contracts in the name of profit making. Even the PM called the practice "unacceptable" and the Business Secretary says it's "bully-boy tactics". Unfortunately, the Conservatives were too afraid to be seen actually voting against the bill and decided to filibuster it out on a technicality. The bill is therefore unlikely to pass.



### UN WFP School Food Event, London



I was delighted to attend an event run by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) at which we discussed how to improve school food both in the UK and around the world. My thanks go to my fellow speakers Dev Sharma MYP and Christina Adane, as well as the amazing contribution WFP makes to fighting hunger worldwide.

### APPG School Food Meeting

It's been a busy month for the School Food APPG. We've been working across party lines to promote access to healthy school food alongside charities and schools. Firstly, I'd like to congratulate Jacquie Blake for her new appointment as LACA chair. The APPG recently heard the findings of The Food Foundation. Most notably, the three key recommendations to government: The DoE's Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) should continue; eligibility should be expanded beyond just those with Free School Meal status and finally, the continued provision of tasty and varied meals should remain a key part of HAF. Amid the HGV driver shortage, I wrote an open letter to the new Secretary of State for Education, Nadhim Zahawi MP. This letter sought to ensure that the supply line breakdowns would not impact upon the supply of school meals. Next week we look forward to National School Meals Week (NSMW) 8th – 12th November 2021.

### Black History Month Reception

October was Black History Month, a celebration of the African diaspora. Across the Labour Party, events were held to commemorate the occasion. I attended a brilliant reception with our Leader Sir Keir Starmer. We met with black leaders from across the country including councillors, mayors, MPs, business people, and community figures to show that Labour stands in solidarity with black people in the UK and overseas.

### Public Meeting in St Anne's Ward on antisocial behaviour



Residents of South Hylton met with Northumbria Police & Crime Commissioner Kim McGuinness and myself last month. We heard that Stagecoach conclude their bus services to the area at 7PM. It was felt that this early ceasing of service is dangerous and prevents the elderly or disabled from fully enjoying access to their city. Residents were frustrated by the lack of disciplinary action against those who ride motorcycles illegally, though they did call for a protected space for such motorcycles to be ridden legally. Additionally, residents expressed a desire for more CCTV in the area to prevent crime and antisocial behaviour. I have written to the relevant bodies to raise these concerns, remaining in close contact with NEXUS and the police. Kim continues to monitor the issues of the area with great skill and a fine eye for detail.

### Eid Reception, Labour Party HQ

Eid Mubarak! I attended an Eid celebration this month at Labour HQ in London. Though invited, unfortunately Keir Starmer could not attend due to his positive COVID test result that week. As Keir's PPS, I was able to step in on his behalf. Also attending were David Evans, the General Secretary of Labour and Shokat Ali, Chairman of British Muslim Friends of Labour. It was a lovely evening, honouring the immense value our Muslim members bring to Labour and our movement. I am proud to show my support for Muslim communities.



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