



News
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Report from Sharon Hodgson MP



On Tues 4th Jan, 2022, Labour Leader Keir Starmer addressed the nation with his speech presenting Labour's contract with the people of Britain, committing to Security, Prosperity and Respect. (Image copyright BBC News, 2022)

New year message from Sharon Hodgson MP

I would like to wish all the communities across Washington and Sunderland West a Happy New Year. I know how lucky we are to live in a place where people don't just look after themselves, but also look out for their neighbours and friends. 2022 will no doubt be another challenging year for many of us, as this current Tory Government continues making life harder for so many in society, pursuing policies like cutting Universal Credit, putting up taxes, and making it harder for people to afford decent social care, while energy and food costs rise. It's time our country had a leader who will treat people with respect and not take them for fools. This year's set of local elections are incredibly important, so I look forward to joining Labour candidates on the doorsteps meeting people. In the meantime, I would urge everyone to get their booster jabs and test regularly. I wish everyone a healthy and peaceful 2022.

Casework annual review

As a Member of Parliament, I listen to my constituents in Washington and Sunderland West. That is why I respond to all the letters, emails, and calls from constituents that I

receive, as long as they are not abusive. These are very varied on issues such as schooling, asylum processing, help with housing and benefits, or national debates about politics where they may be asking me to vote in a particular way. Whatever it is, I and my team always listen and will try and resolve issues. Throughout 2021, I received over 6,622 emails specifically relating to casework, which created 3,534 individual cases. Naturally, the largest proportion of these were in relation to Coronavirus and health services here in the UK, which made up 27% of all correspondence received over the last year. Many constituents got in contact with me about issues relating to the Government's mishandling of this pandemic, or when they were trying to get hold of lateral flow and PCR tests during a shortage, or struggling to access vaccinations.

The single issue that the most people got in contact with me about was the Government's £20 cut to Universal Credit. 117 people emailed me about this issue and a number of constituents explained that the cuts would make their lives considerably harder. I shared your concerns with the Prime Minister, and I consistently voted against the cut.

Many of these cases take extensive work for me and my team, with a lot of back and forth between Government departments and constituents, but many bring positive results. For example, this year two constituents wrote to me following the Afghanistan crisis, explaining that they had worked with Afghan locals when they served there, whose lives were now at risk due to the Taliban takeover. I took up the Afghan nationals' cases with the Foreign Office and MOD and thankfully after three months of correspondence both of the Afghanistan citizens (and their families) were accepted on the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and are eligible to settle in the UK.

I receive hundreds of emails every week from constituents, and my team and I work hard to ensure they are all answered in a timely manner. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to email me on: sharon.hodgson.mp@parliament.uk with: your full postal address details, and concerns.

The Fire Station Auditorium launch, Sunderland



In December I was invited to visit the brand new Fire Station Auditorium as it opened its doors to the public. Through the hard work of the MAC Trust, Sunderland Culture and Sunderland City Council, it is one of the largest current cultural developments in a post-industrial UK city centre, providing a middle-sized venue which will bring a variety of live music, comedy, theatre and dance acts to Sunderland. This is combined with other fantastic developments in the area which will create a cultural quarter in the city centre, to transform the city and make it a vibrant hub that the city deserves.

Royal Mail postal delivery office visit, Albany



In the run up to Christmas, our postal workers work hard to ensure that letters, cards, gifts and packages get where they need to go. I visited Albany delivery office to see how it's done and give them my thanks. Postal workers continue to keep things moving while many of us are working from home or isolating. Come rain or shine, with their own COVID obstacles to overcome, they have stepped up to deliver vital Coronavirus testing kits, to and from labs nationwide too.

Teal Farm community carol service, Washington



It was a pleasure to head to Teal Farm for their community Carols by Candlelight in December. After the Prime Minister's disastrous mishandling of Christmas 2020, it was great to be together in festive spirit in 2021, with brass music from the marvellous Felling Band and food on offer from Street Food, at the Teal Farm Pub.

MP HERoes award nomination



It was an honour to be able to nominate Jean Ellwood & Marie Ibbitson for an MP HERoes award. This is an award run by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Women and Enterprise that celebrates fantastic women in business. Jean and Marie started **The School Outfit** as a market stall over 30 years ago. Now the business is the largest school uniform supplier in the North East, employing around 25 people. The School Outfit is a truly fantastic family-run business and has a brilliant savings club to spread out the cost of school uniforms. As part of the nomination process, I went to visit The School Outfit in-person to see the business in action.

This is such an important cause because it is part of the mission to motivate women business owners. The evidence shows, that when women see other successful women in business, they are inspired to do the same – and encouraging women in business is really good for the local economy. Advancing female entrepreneurship could add £250bn to the UK economy.

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