



News from **Westminster** May/Jun 2016

No. 86



Report from Sharon Hodgson MP



State Opening of Parliament (Copyright Parliamentary Recording Unit, 2016).

This month saw the pageantry of the State Opening of Parliament roll into town again, where the Queen read out the Government's legislative agenda for the upcoming Parliamentary year.

Once again the Government announced a hot-air legislative programme which lacks vision and fails to deliver on the Tory Government's promise of being a "One Nation Government".

Instead of seeking to address the fundamental weaknesses in our economy: productivity, lack of investment in skills and infrastructure, the Government relaunched their so-called "Northern Powerhouse" initiative – which always seems to bypass us here in the North East.

The Government's own figures show that they are failing to deliver for the North - only 1 out of the top 15 infrastructure projects which receives the most public funding is based in the North. It's time this Tory Government actually recognised that the North East is in the North of England too and start delivering on their rhetoric.

It is disappointing to find that, not for the first or the last time, the North East will be missing out on the Government's proposals.

Public services have borne the brunt of this Queen's Speech as the Conservative Government have continued to starve them of proper investment while forcing through damaging and unnecessary cuts. The Tories are now trying to dismantle and ruin two of our country's greatest and most precious institutions: the NHS and the BBC.

The crisis engulfing the NHS has been ignored by the Health Secretary in this Queen's Speech. Instead of addressing the understaffing of our hospitals, waiting lists of 3.7 million people and patients struggling to get an appointment to see their GP, the Health Secretary has ignored the problems staring him in the face.

It was Nye Bevan who said, "The NHS will last as long as there are folk left with the faith to fight for it." We need to fight to protect the NHS and these words apply equally to the BBC.

The Culture Secretary is using tactics that can only be described as bullying and intimidation to make the BBC accept a new charter – which is in nobody's interests, other than those of commercial-media moguls. I will continue to oppose the Government's proposals that aim to hobble the BBC.

It is easy to understand why the Conservatives are so distracted from a radical legislative agenda, with old wounds of EU division opening up in the Tory Party and a target on Cameron's back, with a fight on to see who will succeed him.

EU Referendum - Don't forget to register to vote (deadline Tuesday 7th June, 2016), or your voice won't be heard in the EU referendum. www.gov.uk/register-to-vote If you're unable to vote at a polling station on Thurs 23rd June, you'll need to apply to vote by postal vote by 5.00pm Wed 8th June. Call 0191 520 5550. **This is the vote of a generation so it's really important that your voice is heard on this.**

Some highlights (No. 86 - May/Jun 2016)

In Westminster

SEND Two Year Review Roundtables



As Shadow Minister for Children and Families, I launched a review into local SEND provision, following analysis which reveals that children with special educational needs and disabilities are falling through the net. Over 33,000 children with SEND are on fixed-term exclusions from schools, which accounts for 70% of all permanent exclusions. Far more needs to be done to improve the attainment, outcomes and experiences of children with SEND, so that we can ensure all children and young people, regardless of need or circumstance, have a fair chance of making a fulfilling transition to adulthood. For more information on the review or how to submit evidence, visit my website.

Speaking in the Queen's Speech debate



During the third allotted day for MPs to debate the legislative programme set out in the Queen's speech, I spoke about defending two of our country's most important public services: the NHS and the BBC. You can read my speech on my website. www.sharonhodgson.org/speeches

APPG on Nursery Schools

After being e-mailed by a number of constituents, I attended an APPG meeting on Nursery Schools recently and met with some nursery school head teachers from the

constituency and the region to discuss the issues that are making our nursery schools vulnerable. Nursery schools play an important role in the North East and across the country in raising the quality of early education for the sector as a whole and I will continue to support the campaign to protect nursery schools from closure.

Nissan supply chain Parliamentary reception

It was an honour to welcome Nissan and its supply chain to Parliament recently to celebrate the achievements of the engineering industry. Nissan is such a valued employer to not only the constituency, but also the wider City of Sunderland, the North East, and the country as a whole. Nissan employs over 8,000 people directly, 6,700 of which are employed here in Sunderland, and a workforce of 40,000 in the supply chain. It was great to see some of the products built by the Nissan suppliers first-hand and celebrate their successes.

In and around the constituency

Roots of Empathy school visit



It was great to visit Carr Hill Primary School in Gateshead recently to observe a Roots of Empathy session with baby Penelope as the "little teacher". In the Roots of Empathy programme, a parent and baby from the community visit a classroom so that the children can observe the relationship between a baby and his or her parent. Research shows that Roots of Empathy programmes have a significant effect in reducing levels of aggression amongst school children while raising their social and emotional competence and increasing empathy.

Ticket Touting – Newcastle University discussion panel

I joined a discussion panel on the ticket tout industry at Newcastle University. I have campaigned tirelessly to address the rip-off actions of the secondary market as the Co-Chair of the APPG on Ticket Abuse. Last week saw the Waterson Review published. It is welcome to see recommendations in the report for an investigation by National Trading Standards and the police into the secondary market and see fans put first within the market, and not an afterthought. The Business Secretary and Culture Secretary need to act to ensure these recommendations are implemented, and I will push them to do so, as part of the cross-party campaign.

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