



Report from Sharon Hodgson MP



***Pictured:** Sharon opens the new Unipres Training Academy at Washington Business Centre, alongside Cllr Harry Trueman, Deputy Leader of Sunderland City Council and John Cruddace, Director at Unipres UK, Sunderland (details overleaf).*

Attack on Parliament, 22nd of March.

After the recent events of the last few weeks, it is only right to start my monthly report by remembering the victims of the horrific Westminster attack, especially PC Keith Palmer and his grieving family.

As always in times like this, our thanks must go to the emergency services who quickly secured Parliament and swiftly dealt with the terrorist, before any others fell victim. Thankfully, both myself, my staff and all inside Parliament were safe during this terrible event.

In the coming days and weeks ahead, there will be reflection on what happened on the day and there will be questions to answer, but time will come for that. Currently Parliament is undergoing two security reviews, and as that goes on, the most important thing to be doing right now is to remember those who fell victim to this barbaric attack.

However hard it may be, life must continue as normal. This is not about forgetting what happened, but showing a

display of defiance to all those who wish to inflict evil upon us. We must maintain our resolve to uphold our freedoms by not giving in to those who wish to destroy our way of life, because not doing so will allow terrorists to win and we can never let that happen.

The Brexit curtain

Last week, Theresa May finally triggered Article 50 and began the formal process of leaving the EU – almost 9 months after the referendum result. Brexit has taken up much of the headlines and time here in Parliament, but that doesn't mean there aren't many other issues going on in the country to hold the Government to account on.

Currently, the Government are overseeing deeply damaging cuts to our education system through the funding formulas from nursery schools all the way up to secondary schools. Maintained nursery schools are the jewel in crown of our education system, but they are under threat which will undermine the social mobility we desperately need here in the UK. This won't be helped by the damaging cuts to schools, which here in Sunderland is expected to be a total of over £14 million cut from school budgets.

Equally, the NHS is suffering with an ongoing crisis, following the struggle during the winter months. Recently, NHS England published their *Five Year Forward View Refresh* which lays bare the challenges facing our health services after years of Tory neglect and underinvestment. There are some positives around mental health and cancer care, but reading between the lines confirms that Theresa May's Government has broken its promise by failing to give the NHS the funding it needs and seen public health reduced to a cost-saving measure, rather than the radical upgrade we were promised 5 years ago. Labour will not allow the NHS to be run down by the Tories.

Brexit may dominate in the years to come, but we cannot allow our public services to be run into the ground due to Tory neglect. Improving our public services is a priority we must not see fall by the wayside.

In and Around the Constituency

Teach First's 5th year anniversary celebration event

I was honoured to speak at the 5-year anniversary celebrations of Teach First in the North East at Ramside Hall. I spoke about the impact of child poverty on education and how it is important that we do more to address child poverty so that children are not held back by circumstances out of their control. You can read my speech here: <http://www.sharonhodgson.org/speeches>



Meeting with NAHT on school cuts



As I mentioned on the front page, the changes to the Schools Funding Formula will see millions of pounds cut from school budgets. That is why NAHT Regional Officer Dave Marshall organised for me to meet with the head teachers and governors from schools across Sunderland to discuss the impact of these cuts and what it will mean for our children's education. Lots was discussed, including issues around the apprenticeship levy which is seeing over-stretched local authorities pass on the costs of the levy to schools.

Unipres Training Academy opening (pictured front)

I was honoured to open Unipres' new Training Academy during National Apprenticeship Week in March. High-quality apprenticeships are vital to helping young people take their first steps into working life. This investment by Unipres is yet another sign of their commitment to our local area and their dedication to seeing our workforce become highly skilled. I hope to see the new Training

Academy go from strength to strength in the coming years and showcase the high-class manufacturing and engineering skills here in the North East.

In Parliament

Shadow-Ministerial speeches

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It was a busy month here in Parliament for my Shadow Ministerial brief. This included debates on: antibiotic resistance and the need to raise public awareness of this issue; along with debates to push the Government to draw up an implementation plan for the UK's Rare Diseases Strategy (which the Government accepted responsibility for during the debate); and the worrying trend of decommissioning and cuts to local HIV services - which could create a public health crisis if not addressed comprehensively by the Government.



Budget speech

Following the new Chancellor's first Budget, I spoke in the Budget debate on Education and Skills, due to the importance of improving the skills of the workforce here in our region, at all times but especially as we leave the EU. I focused on the need to boost skills and productivity in automotive manufacturing; with one way of doing this being through the creation of a materials catapult which would see investment in materials, such as plastics, ceramics & steel, which all contribute to the manufacturing of cars and could seriously boost jobs within Nissan's supply chain, both here in the North East and right across the country also.

NICE/Kadcyla meeting



As Co-Chair of the APPG on Breast Cancer, I chaired a meeting with senior figures from NHS England, the CEO of NICE, and the General Managers of Pfizer and Roche, following the debate on *Kadcyla* back in January, to discuss what more could be done to address the growing issue of patients struggling to gain access to life-saving and life-extending cancer drugs.

Sharon Hodgson MP, Washington & Sunderland West Constituency
Units 1 & 1A, Vermont House, Vermont Road, Concord, Washington,
Tyne & Wear NE37 2SQ

Tel. 417 2000

Website: www.sharonhodgson.org

E-mail: [info\(a\)sharonhodgson.org](mailto:info(a)sharonhodgson.org)

Twitter: @SharonHodgsonMP