



Rt. Hon. Harriet Harman Q.C. M.P.

Quarterly Casework Report July—September 2016

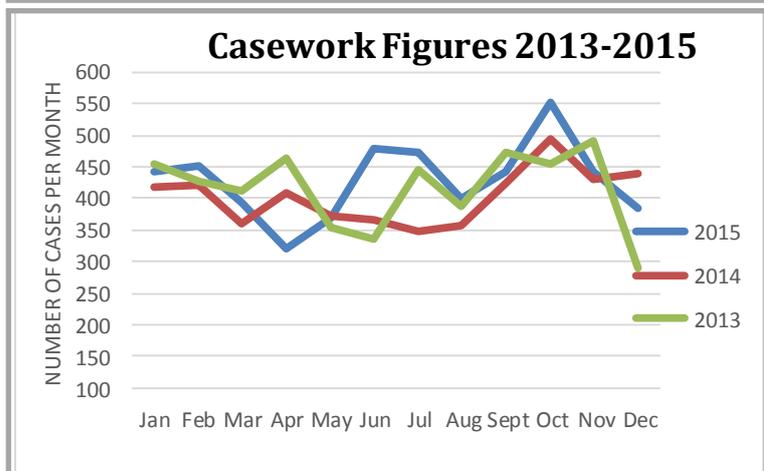
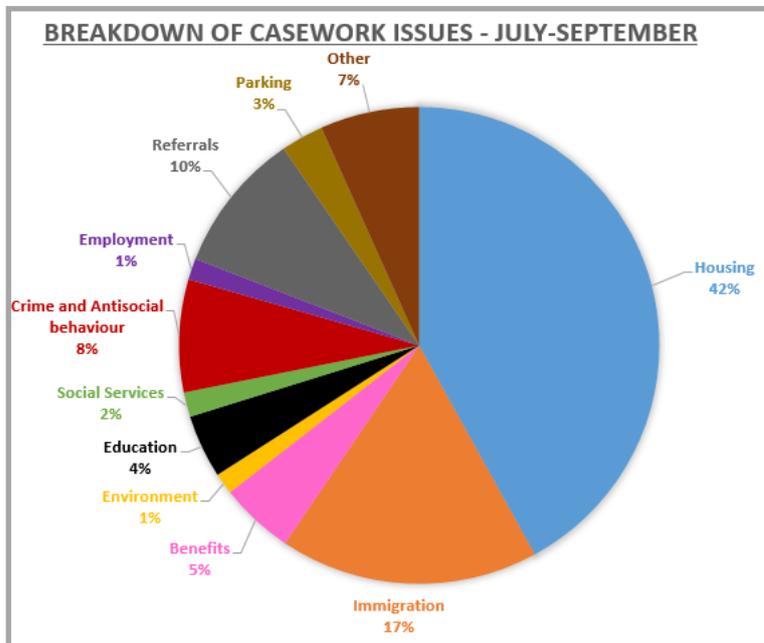
People seek my help for different reasons: their housing situation, immigration status, benefit entitlement and many other issues.

Over the years serving as the MP for Camberwell and Peckham I have helped many of my constituents to resolve a variety of different problems.

People either write to me, send me an email, telephone my office or come and see me and my team at my regular advice surgeries at Walworth Methodist Church on Camberwell Road.

Advice surgeries

If you have a casework enquiry please email me at harriet.harman.mp@parliament.uk or telephone 0207 219 4218.



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Casework Examples

Since 2015 I have dealt with problems for nearly 3,000 people living in my constituency.

Gym reviews policy to include mental health conditions

Ms F from Faraday has long term mental health issues and is currently in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance. She contacted me in August 2016 as she wanted clarification on whether or not she was eligible for the free gym and swim scheme offered by Castle Leisure Centre in partnership with Southwark Council. I wrote to David Bibby, Managing Director of Everyone Active, who run Castle Leisure Centre on her behalf and received a response in September 2016 stating that Ms F was given immediate free use of the facilities and that they were undertaking a review of their policy to incorporate mental health conditions into the eligibility criteria for the scheme.

ESA payments made

Mr T from Camberwell contacted me in September 2016 about his Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). He suffers with severe depression, anxiety and other mental health issues and was placed in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) rather than the Support Group, which he did not feel was appropriate. He successfully appealed against this decision at a Tribunal in April 2016 and was subsequently placed in the Support Group of ESA, but he had still not received the money he was owed four months after this decision. I wrote to the Director General of DWP Operations on his behalf and the DWP apologised for the delay in backdating Mr T's ESA payments and said that a sum of £2,600 would be paid to him in three working days.

Eviction stopped

Ms P informed me in August she was going to be evicted due to an accumulation of rent arrears of more than £2,000 caused by the suspension of her housing benefit claim. She was placed in temporary accommodation with her two year old son in October 2015 after being asked to leave home and her rent was being paid by housing benefit. Southwark Council asked Ms P to produce further evidence for her claim but due to the insecurity of post at her accommodation she received none of these letters. She was only made aware after the rent arrears began to jeopardise her accommodation and appealed the decision, but again was sent further letters which she did not receive. By the time the council sent a letter electronically Ms P had been served an eviction notice for 22nd August 2016. She was worried about becoming homeless with her young son and felt her case has been mishandled. I wrote to Southwark Council's Revenue and Benefits department in August 2016 and Ms P's housing benefit claim was reinstated and her eviction was stopped.

Rent rises reviewed for key workers

Mr F emailed me in July 2016 regarding the rent increase for London & Quadrant Housing Association (L&Q) tenants in his block. Mr F is a primary school teacher and lives in a building which was built in 2010 as an affordable housing scheme for key workers. The tenancies are based on an 'intermediate rent' scheme which is supposed to be 20-30% lower than market rates. On 5th July 2016, tenants were issued with two options; accept the 20% rent increase with a 12 month tenancy or find a new property within two months. For some, that is an extra £150 per month for a one bedroom flat. Residents had just eight days to consider their options and this understandably caused them distress. I wrote to David Montague CBE, Chief Executive of L&Q on 27th July 2016 and received a response stating that L&Q agreed to suspend all rent increases whilst they carry out a review of their approach.