### In 2018 my constituency priority is the NHS

#### Action to tackle delays and overcrowding at local stations

For too long people in Camberwell and Peckham have put up with dangerous overcrowding and unacceptable delays at Denmark Hill and Peckham Rye stations, and Helen Hayes MP and I have been demanding the Rail Minister, Jo Johnson MP, works with Network Rail and Thameslink to make the stations safe. After months of pressure on 9th October Jo Johnson MP wrote to us to tell us that Denmark Hill station has been made a ‘high priority’ for urgent work to address overcrowding. Network Rail have started work into how to provide additional capacity at the station and this is due to complete in March 2019. Helen and I are seeking a meeting with Network Rail to discuss plans for the improved Denmark Hill and Peckham Rye stations and will keep you updated.

#### Shocking treatment of young people in detention

The Joint Committee on Human Rights, which I chair, is undertaking an inquiry into how to protect the human rights of children and young people who are detained by the state, in particular in mental health hospitals and youth offending institutions. Serious concerns have been raised by inspectors, lawyers and doctors about how often children are put in solitary confinement, which increases the risk of self-harm and long term mental health problems, and the use of restraint techniques which involve deliberately inflicting pain. We heard first-hand from a young woman who experienced restraint and isolation whilst detained in a mental hospital. She described her isolation as “very dehumanising. It felt like I was in a cage.” She told us the hospital was so understaffed she was unable to leave her room for days because there was no one to safely escort her. The government claims that children are not held in solitary confinement, but the Children’s Commissioner Anne Longfield told the JCHR that due to government cuts to prison and young offending budgets there has been an increase in the number of times children are isolated and some children spend weeks in isolation. There is currently no effective system of redress. If the most that can happen is a line manager talks to staff about it or staff have to apologise to the child, there is impunity. The JCHR will be putting this to Justice Minister Edward Argar MP and seeking legal change to ensure there is not just accountability but real redress to protect children from what otherwise might be an abuse of power that has become part of the system.

#### The Battle Against Inequality - Anthony Crosland Memorial Lecture, Grimsby

It was a great honour to be invited by Melanie Onn, Labour MP for Great Grimsby, to deliver the Anthony Crosland Memorial Lecture on 11th October. Crosland was a huge figure in Grimsby and the Labour Party. I spoke about one of the driving reasons we need to get back into government—the scourge of inequality. Theresa May, in her first speech as prime minister on the steps of Downing Street, said she was determined to tackle what she called the “burning injustice” of inequality. But under her government, as always happens with a Tory government, it is getting worse—the possibility of those born at the bottom to rise up the ladder is becoming more remote. Class trumps ability—by the age of 7 the bright working class child is overtaken by the less able middle class child. The opportunities for a young person should not be greater for someone from a wealthy family and fewer for a young person from a low income family. As well as being unfair for the individual, inequality holds back an economy, reduces our talent pool and leaves society divided. Before Labour got into government in 1997 the gap between the top and the bottom was growing. When we got in we succeeded in halting that gap growing, but more needed to be done if we were to begin to narrow the gap. So we drafted, as the first clause of the Equality Act, a new law to propel action against inequality rooted in class background. What Clause One says is that every public authority must, in every decision they make, consider whether it would widen or narrow the gap and take action to narrow the gap. It was to apply to every government department, every council, every university, and all our health and education services. It would have made the Treasury be clear about how each budget would help narrow the gap. It would make the Transport Department ensure that infrastructure narrowed the equality gap. It would stop the Department of Communities and Local Government cutting funds to councils in deprived areas while sparing councils in wealthy parts. It would have made all decisions by every Council, on housing, planning, or children’s services, part of a huge drive to make the public sector an engine to tackle class inequality. It would narrow the divisive gap between rich and poor. But we lost the election in 2010 and one of the first things David Cameron did was to say that he would not bring Clause One into force. So it’s there, on the statute book, but not implemented. My challenge to the prime minister is, if she wants to tackle inequality then she has to implement Clause One of the Equality Act. Otherwise her words on social injustice were “just crocodile tears”. You can read my full speech [here](https://www.parliament.uk/business/speaking-in-parliament/public-lecture-speeches/2018-09-11-the-battle-against-inequality-anthony-crosland-memorial-lecture-grimsby/).
Helping constituents with their problems

In June/July 2018 I reported that I had taken up the case of a disabled leaseholder from Peckham who was due to lose her home as she owed £4,335.80 in unpaid service charge. The DWP made an error when migrating her from Incapacity Benefit to ESA in 2014, which meant she did not receive the financial assistance she was eligible for. She has now received £13,783.79 from the DWP and will get £100 more each week.

In May/June 2018 I reported that I had taken up the case of a young woman with learning disabilities and schizophrenia who was going to be evicted from her sheltered housing association flat due to rent arrears of £9,000, which accumulated as a result of an official error made by the DWP. The DWP has now agreed to wipe the entire debt.

A family man from Old Kent Road contacted me as he made an application for further leave to remain in the UK in October 2017 and it had yet to be considered. He was unable to work and provide for his family during this time. I made an enquiry with the Home Office on his behalf and he has now been granted a further 2 ½ years leave.

Three brothers, originally from Nigeria, contacted me as their entry into the world of work after university had been hindered by delays in the consideration of their application for leave to remain in the UK. I made an enquiry with the Home Office on their behalf and they have now been granted leave to remain until March 2021.

Policy issues update

In September 485 Camberwell & Peckham residents wrote to me about policy issues. The top 3 concerns raised were:

1. Back a people’s vote on the final Brexit deal.
2. Oppose fracking to extract shale gas.
3. Stop the Department for Work & Pensions scrapping the Pensions Dashboard where people keep their pensions information in one place.

Read my position on these issues and more on the ‘Policy Issues’ & Letters to Ministers pages on my website.

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Thanks to Brandon Tenants’ Associations

On 17th October Brandon Tenants’ Association reps Joy Allan-Baker, June Lewis and Eileen Piper came to Parliament so I could thank them for all their hard work on behalf of residents in the difficult days and months following the tragic killings of Rhyhiem Barton and Siddique Kamara. We discussed how I can further back them in their demands to increase youth activities on the estate, CCTV and local police. When an estate is in a state of shock it is so important to have the constant voice and presence of dedicated tenants reps. We are all indebted to Joy, June and Eileen and all TRA chairs and secretaries who do an enormous amount of work for residents.

Rye Lane Campaigning

Great turnout for the borough-wide, all women Labour campaign session in Rye Lane on Saturday 13th October!

Thanks to Cllr Jasmine Ali for organising and to all councillors and members who came out to talk to local people about the issues affecting them.