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Member of Parliament for Camberwell & Peckham

Annual Report 2014



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Helping constituents with their problems

A major part of my work as MP for Camberwell and Peckham is helping constituents with a wide range of problems. I have a small, dedicated staff to assist me. Since January, I have helped over 3,500 people and last year I assisted 5,000. Many constituents will have contacted me more than once but this year over 1,400 people have been in touch for the first time.

My constituents contact me by letter, email or twitter and I hold three advice surgeries a month at Walworth Methodist Church Hall in Camberwell Road where people can come to discuss their problems. This year there have been 27 advice surgeries attended by 944 people. I then keep them informed of the progress of their case. Whether they've contacted me by letter, email or surgery visit I reply within 10 working days.

I also hold estate advice surgeries with local Tenants & Residents Associations, involving local councillors and Council housing officers. This year I've held estate advice surgeries on the Tustin, Silverlock and Bonamy and Bramcote estates.

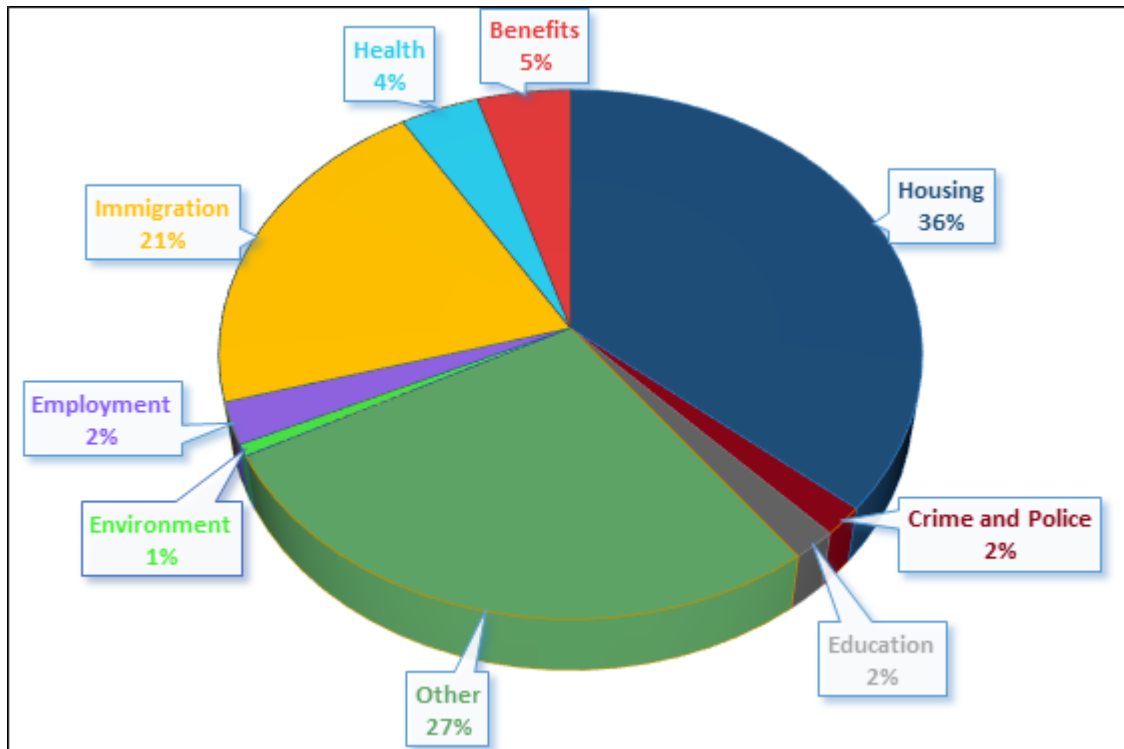
Casework enables me to help thousands of my constituents as well as keeping me in touch with the everyday, as well as the exceptional, problems they face.



Advice surgery at the Walworth Methodist Church 'Clubland' in Camberwell

Casework issues

People seek my help for many different reasons including housing problems, immigration and visa problems and benefit entitlement. Since January 2014, these are the reasons people have contacted me for help:



Often I am able to cut through red tape, challenge an injustice and make progress for a constituent. Here are a just a few examples of casework successes this year:

*A 93 year old widow from Peckham, who is partially deaf, was concerned about her garden fence which blew down in a storm and remained unrepaired weeks later. She was afraid it would make her more vulnerable to burglaries or injury. As she's a council tenant she asked the council to mend it but they advised her to pay for it herself. She felt this was unreasonable as she is on a low income and the fence is shared with three other residences. I wrote to the Council and they arranged and paid for the fence to be replaced.

*A couple from Camberwell with 3 young children contacted me about the damp in their council home which was affecting their family's health and wellbeing. For over three years, they tried to sort out the problem with the Council and even lodged a formal complaint but they did not receive any written response. I wrote to the Council who apologised for their delay and arranged for the necessary works to be completed. The Council offered them £350 compensation as a result of the trouble and inconvenience the family experienced and a further £100 for two previously missed appointments.

*A woman from Peckham was being evicted as her landlord wanted to sell the property. She was earning £95 a week working as a waitress and was suffering from depression which she felt was affecting her work. She ended up homeless and lost her job. I wrote to the Council and she obtained a council property, her health is now improving and she is looking forward to going back to her old job.

*A single man from Nunhead contacted me about delays to the payment of his disability benefits. He is 52 years old and was diagnosed with cancer last year. He had an organ transplant earlier this year but further cancers were discovered and he is now on a demanding course of chemotherapy. He applied for a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in January 2014 but had not heard back from the DWP for 9 months. In the meantime he was living on £113.50 a week in Employment Support Allowance (ESA) which was barely enough to cover all his needs including the cost of travel for frequent visits to hospital. He was relying on friends to come round and help with daily tasks and also had to borrow money from them. When I contacted the DWP, his case was fast-tracked and his application for PIP was approved. He was awarded the enhanced rate of PIP and will now receive £138 per week. He was awarded £4,639 in backdated payments for the 9 months he was waiting to be assessed.

*A single mother from Camberwell who lives with her 7 year old daughter works part time and had been claiming Child Tax Credit (CTC). Her CTC was suddenly stopped by HMRC in 2012 because of allegations that she was cohabiting with a man. She had no knowledge of the man in question and had sent them evidence that she lives alone but HMRC were slow in responding leaving her in serious financial hardship. I wrote to HMRC on her behalf who said her case had been sent to Tribunal. Once again my constituent found herself waiting months for the hearing date. I made further enquiries pressing them to prioritise this case given the length of time she had already been waiting. HMRC eventually agreed to reinstate her CTC and she received over £10,000 in backdated payments.

*A mother and her 22 year old daughter from Camberwell applied to the Home Office in 2008 for 'Indefinite Leave to Remain' in the UK. They had come to the UK from Jamaica to settle here with the rest of their family. The mother had included her daughter as a dependant in the application but due to an administrative error at the Home Office, the daughter's application was separated from her mother's application. As a result, the daughter was not granted immigration status but her mother was given 'Indefinite Leave to Remain'. The daughter was therefore unable to work and look after her young daughter, or to get a home of her own. I wrote to the Home Office a number of times and the daughter was granted 'Indefinite Leave to Remain'.

Schools which parents have confidence in

Listening to parents at the school gate

Summer is a good time to meet parents and carers at the school gate as they drop their children off and to talk to pupils and teachers. This year, together with local councillors I have done 'school gate' meetings at: Brunswick Park Primary, Camelot Primary, Hollydale Primary and John Donne Primary.



Campaigning on school choice

Many parents in my constituency are concerned that they can't get the secondary school they want for their child. It's an important issue which I report on, on an annual basis. My latest report shows that more than one third (61%) of parents in Southwark are not getting their first choice secondary school. This is unacceptable. Out of the 9 schools that serve children in Camberwell & Peckham, 7 are undersubscribed - Kingsdale, Walworth Academy, ARK All Saints, Harris Boys, Harris Girls, Harris Peckham & St Thomas the Apostle - and 2 are oversubscribed - Charter School and Sacred Heart. Of particular concern is Harris Peckham - despite good GCSE results parental first choice has fallen 12% to 27%. Together with Councillor Dora-Dixon-Fyle, I met the Minister for Education to insist that action be taken to address the concerns of parents who don't want local secondary schools that they feel aren't good enough to send their children to. You can read the report on my website: <http://www.harrietharman.org/uploads/fe121033-5214-2e74-4d49-decdbe6a8cf7.pdf>

This year, I've visited Harris Academy Peckham, Harris Boys East Dulwich, ARK All Saints Academy, St Thomas the Apostle College, Highshore Secondary School, The Charter School and Sacred Heart Catholic School.

More childcare for working parents

Families in Camberwell & Peckham are facing increasing childcare costs and there are fewer childcare places and this is having a detrimental effect on children in Camberwell & Peckham. In May 2014, I published a report - 'Childcare in Camberwell & Peckham: Two steps forward, one step back' - which looked at childcare in my constituency from 2010-2014. It is looking at and drawing on results of a survey of Camberwell & Peckham childcare providers.

It shows:

- There are more children under 5yrs old in Southwark but fewer childcare places
- Women are spending more of their income on childcare
- Because of the lack of suitable childcare women are cutting their work hours or giving up work to look after their children
- Children are suffering from a patchwork of childcare arrangements
- Together with Government cuts to Child Tax Credit, cuts to council budget's for Children's Services, and stagnating pay - it all adds to the 'Cost of living crisis'

I convened a roundtable meeting at the House of Commons with over 20 local child care providers from Camberwell & Peckham and representatives from Southwark Council to discuss the cost and availability of childcare in the constituency. A number of important issues were raised including the rising costs of childcare and the impact this is having on working parents especially those on low incomes; the recruitment, training and retention of staff; and the difficulties these small businesses face finding funding for overheads and investment. You can read the report on my website:<http://www.harrietharman.org/uploads/cbbce9b3-ea64-0854-1594-bbb4b1729bbf.pdf>



Childcare roundtable in the House of Commons

Though progress has been made on childcare in recent decades that is now slipping back under the Tory-Lib Dem Coalition Government. This is not acceptable. Despite large cuts imposed on its budget, Southwark Council is working hard to protect parents and children from the Government cuts by opening two new community nurseries and has set up a Childcare Commission chaired by Tessa Jowell MP to look at new ways to improve access to early years care.

Fighting for better health services

Challenging government failures on the NHS

The NHS is now one of people's biggest concerns. People have to struggle to get to see their GP; many are having to wait longer in Accident and Emergency; operations are being cancelled; and NHS staff are demoralised while billions of pounds are squandered on an NHS reorganisation that no one wants. This year I have challenged Nick Clegg on this issue 3 times at Deputy Prime Ministers Questions in the House of Commons.

Changes at Kings College Hospital

Kings has one of the busiest and best A&E departments in London. And they do an excellent job with the resources they have. But they have recently taken on the running of the Princess Royal University Hospital in Bromley and its A&E department, and the challenges it faces are significant. These changes mean that some constituents will have to travel further for treatment. Myself and Tessa Jowell MP meet regularly with the Chair and Chief Executive of Kings and we have voiced our concerns about the importance of transport for patients and good management of the new sites in Bromley and Farnborough, which we visited in October to see first-hand how these changes will affect our constituents.

Concerns about GP access

Local people are finding it harder to see their GP. Many constituents have contacted me directly about this and a survey at my advice surgery showed over half were not able to get an appointment on the same day and three quarters said they had to wait over 48 hours to get a GP appointment. Most worryingly, over half of the constituents surveyed said they had had to go to A&E because they couldn't see their GP when they needed to.

Casework example: A teacher from Peckham complained she had to wait over 3 weeks for an appointment that she could fit in with her work. When her symptoms worsened and she tried to get an appointment sooner. She rang first thing in the morning but all appointments for that day had already been booked by 8.10am. She was told by the receptionist to call again the next day and 'hope to be one of the lucky ones'.

The Government stopped monitoring GP access 3 years ago. I met the Chair of Southwark Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), which is responsible for planning and buying NHS services across Southwark, to convey these concerns and to insist that plans are in place to monitor and improve access to GPs in Camberwell and Peckham.

Tackling the stigma of mental health

One in four of us will suffer a mental health problem at some stage during our lives and I have helped a number of constituents who have had problems arising from mental ill health. But for too long we, as a society, haven't felt able to talk about mental illness with the same openness we talk about our physical health. Challenging taboo and stigma is important. We also need to ensure that the services for mental ill health are given as much priority as the services for physical ill health. The South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust in Camberwell is the largest provider of mental health services in the UK. The Chief Executive, Dr. Matthew Patrick, who I met in September, is determined to improve the services, changing public perceptions of mental health and pioneering new support programmes in the community.

Vital support for those with dementia in Southwark

Dementia is one of the biggest challenges facing an ageing population and our health and social care systems and I'm very supportive of increasing the funding for dementia research, as well as support for dementia services. I visited the Alzheimer Society's 'Memory Cafe' for dementia sufferers to see first-hand the vital support available in the community for both dementia sufferers and their carer's.



With local residents and their families at the 'memory café'

Improving Housing

Private rented housing

Every week people ask me for help with housing problems, and for many people the biggest concern is the cost. With over 20,000 people on Southwark's council housing waiting list, and house prices very high, many turn to the private rented sector. The percentage of people renting privately in Southwark has almost doubled since 2001 - rising from 14% to 25%. But because Southwark is so close to the centre of London and the average cost of a privately rented two bed flat is £1,500 a month, many local people are forced to move away.

Casework example: A single mother from East Dulwich with an 11 year old son faced eviction when her landlord raised their rent from £850 to £1,100 a month. She couldn't afford this increase as she works part time as a sales assistant at Argos, but she couldn't find anywhere else in the local area that she could afford. She didn't want to move away from her friends, her job and her son's school but in the end she had to. She found an affordable home in Croydon but had to uproot her family and find a new school for her son.

A number of constituents have contacted me about their difficulty in finding private accommodation to rent. Many are registered with the Council's 'Finder's Fee' scheme but tell me that they struggle to find a landlord who will accept them because they are receiving Housing Benefit even though they are working. I'm concerned that this may be a wider issue across Southwark and have asked the Council do everything it can to encourage landlords to accept tenants who are in receipt of Housing Benefit.

Casework example: A couple who have lived in their Walworth home for over 20 years face eviction as their private landlord has decided to sell the property. The couple, a student and a part time cleaner, don't know how they are going to find an affordable home with rent for a one-bedroom flat in their area as high as £1,500 a month. Their landlord has agreed to let them stay while they look for somewhere else but they will have to move away from Walworth to an area where rents are cheaper.

Southwark Leaseholders - continuing the fight for fairness

Over the past years one of the issues which I have found most unfair is Southwark Council's policy to not allow leaseholders to replace their own windows. Leaseholders have faced unreasonable charges for 'major works' (e.g. door and window replacement) and on many occasions the leaseholder is forced to pay more, when they have got a lower quote for what they regard as higher quality work.

Casework example: A couple from Camberwell, who are leaseholders, received a bill for over £25,000 for major works which were due to start in August this year. They and other leaseholders had raised a number of concerns with the Council about the charges which they felt were unreasonably high. Initially they were told they had to pay the full amount within 36 months which meant that their only option was to take out a loan or re-mortgage the flat. They also believed that the charges did not represent value for money. They had done their own research and found that they could have replaced their windows to the same specification for almost £1,000 less than the Council was charging. I wrote to the Council on several occasions to ask them to let my constituents install their own windows. The Council did not agree and my constituents have now agreed to a payment plan with the Council which will see them pay off £100 per month for the next 25 years.

The sense of grievance is exacerbated by the many different and sometimes contradictory justifications Council officers give to leaseholders for the prohibition on them doing their own work. Of course the Council must be sure that the work is done to a proper standard and must approve the design. But the current position is simply not justifiable and I think the policy should change. A number of other London councils allow leaseholders to replace their own windows. I have asked the Council to set up a process of looking in to how other councils do it, and to consider the options. I would welcome an open and transparent process which I, as well as leaseholders and tenants, could feed in to.

Challenging the Government's welfare cuts

The Government's welfare changes, including the Bedroom Tax, started to hit families in Southwark last year but the full impact is only now becoming clear.

Impact of the Bedroom Tax

In November 2013 I produced a report on the impact of the Bedroom Tax on people in Camberwell and Peckham, available on my website:
<http://www.harrietharman.org/uploads/cfd16885-01ca-5c74-b90d-33c40692e2df.pdf>

3,557 households in Southwark are paying on average £1,058 more a year for the Bedroom Tax. This means that £3.75m in total is going from low income households in Southwark to the Government. It is wrong that Simon Hughes MP voted for the Bedroom Tax which makes so many of the people he's supposed to represent worse off. The next Labour government will scrap this unfair tax. Many people are still struggling with the Bedroom Tax, living with uncertainty and not knowing if they will have to move.

Casework example: A couple from north Peckham live in a two bedroom flat. The husband recently had a stroke which affects his speech and mobility, and he also as a history of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. His wife is his carer and they have not shared a room for many years because of his medical problems. When the Bedroom Tax was introduced, they paid for the 'extra' bedroom but it soon became difficult for them to continue paying the charge. I wrote to the Council and they agreed to pay for the second bedroom using the 'discretionary housing' budget until the end of September. My constituents are still concerned however about what will happen after this payment stops.

Government delays to disability benefits payments

A number of constituents with disabilities have contacted me because they have been waiting for months to find out whether they will get the Government's new disability benefit - Personal Independence Payment (PIP) - which is for people who need help with the extra costs of living with a long term illness or disability. We read in the papers about the chaos and delays at the Department for Work and Pensions but these are more than just "administrative" delays, they cause a nightmare for people waiting for assessments and for financial support. The Government says the average waiting time for an assessment is 4 months but my constituents tell me they have been waiting on average between 10 months to 1 year. This is totally unacceptable because until you've been assessed you can't claim for other crucial benefits like a Carer's Allowance, a bus pass or help with taxi fares to hospital appointments.

Casework example: A woman from Nunhead who lives alone applied for a PIP in September 2013 but after 1 year she is still waiting to be assessed. In May 2014, she had a brain tumour removed and is still recovering from the procedure. She has a history of bad knees and recently fractured her ankle in three places and had to spend a few weeks in hospital. She currently receives £100 per week in Employment Support Allowance which pays for the essentials but she struggles to cover the extra costs of her disability such as her weekly travel to Kings and has had to cut down on food and non-essentials like buying new clothes.

Increase in evictions and homelessness

This year there has been an increase in the number of people in Camberwell and Peckham coming to me with housing problems. The range of problems is varied: rent rises, accruing rent arrears, facing eviction from the Council or their private landlord, being evicted and having to move to temporary accommodation or a B&B, and for some, as a result, becoming homeless. The cost of living crisis, high private rents, lack of affordable housing, and cuts to local government housing budgets have combined to create a 'perfect storm' of housing instability for people in Southwark.

Casework example: A single mother and her teenage daughter were evicted from their Peckham flat. She'd had many problems with the flat, including damp and mould as well as faulty electrics, and asked her landlord to deal with these problems. He didn't and instead he evicted them. They've been looking for a new home ever since but can't find anywhere they can afford. Because she works as a care assistant and her hours vary, many landlords are reluctant to let to her. They are now living in a hostel as she continues to look for a new home.

Working with tenants to improve our estates

All change on the Aylesbury

For many years there has been a bad public perception of the Aylesbury Estate despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of people living there are hard-working decent people and the Council and the tenants' representatives, supported by the Creation Trust, have done much to improve it. The estate is now being demolished and rebuilt bit by bit. It's going to be a long process and there are still thousands of families living there. I will continue to work with the Council to get a good deal for the Aylesbury residents. Earlier this year, I met with Cllr Fiona Colley and Stephen Platts, Director for Regeneration, from Southwark Council to review the plans and discuss progress on the regeneration.



Meeting with Cllr Fiona Colley and Stephen Platts, Director for Regeneration at Southwark Council to discuss new plans for the Aylesbury Estate

Casework example: An elderly, disabled and vulnerable constituent was one of the last residents in Chiltern on the Aylesbury Estate who needed to be moved to another property before the demolition of the block. She was offered a home nearby and was advised to sign a tenancy despite the necessary adaptations not being complete. She was told it would take four weeks but it took six months. During that time she accrued rent arrears on the new property and even received an eviction notice despite never having lived there. She has been receiving support from her family as well as the Creation Trust which helped her move into her new home in September 2014. The way her case was handled caused her unnecessary distress and upset and I have asked the Council to review her case and offer her compensation.



Walkabout on the Silverlock estate with David and Bonnie from the Tenant's Association, local Councillors Richard Livingstone and Evelyn Akoto, and Kate Emmanuel, Housing Officer

Campaign to change the Channel 4 ident

For over 10 years residents of the Aylesbury Estate have seen their homes badly portrayed by the iconic Channel 4 ident, The estate has never looked like the ident - the washing and rubbish was added for the filming - and it's depressing for those who live on the estate who are trying to improve their lives and they don't need Channel 4 making it worse. The Creation Trust started a campaign to #changetheident and together with Southwark based film maker Nick Street and residents of the estate, they have made a new film that they want Channel 4 to show instead. I wrote to the Chief Executive of Channel 4 to express my support for the campaign and request that they stop using the ident. The new film is available to watch on the Trust's website: <http://www.creationtrust.org/change-the-ident>

Working with Walworth Estate T&RA to improve housing for tenants

Properties owned by the former Church Commissioners in Walworth were built as housing for low income families. Since the estate was sold to a private property company in 2006, I have been working with the Chair of the T&RA, Henry Quenelle, and local councillors to ensure tenant's views are heard. Following a wave of complaints from local residents earlier this year, I summoned the landlords, Walworth Investment Properties, to the House of Commons to discuss tenants' concerns about the management of the estate. We reached agreement on key issues and I will be closely monitoring the situation to ensure that the agreements are kept.

Community Safety

Calling Met police to account on failure to investigate rape

Last year, the IPCC (police watchdog) published a report on the failures of Southwark police to properly report and investigate rape and other serious sexual offences in 2008-09. The report found that some police officers dropped cases that they thought they might not be able to bring to prosecution. This had disastrous consequences. A woman who made rape allegations against her former partner did not have her complaint investigated. He then went on to murder their two children.

Myself, Tessa Jowell & Simon Hughes as Southwark MP's summoned senior Met police officers to a meeting and we demanded that lessons be learnt and reforms be implemented. Since then we have held regular meetings to monitor police progress. In May, I met the Met Commissioner, Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe and Assistant Commissioner Mark Rowley (Specialist Crime & Operations Unit), along with Simon Hughes MP, at New Scotland Yard to insist that he commission an independent organisation to conduct interviews with sex assault complainants at the end of the process to ask how the police handled their case. The Met has agreed to this and they will be reporting back to me the findings of the victims' views at our regular meetings.



With the Met Commissioner, Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe and Assistant Commissioner Mark Rowley at New Scotland Yard

New Southwark Borough Police Commander

In March I welcomed Chief Superintendent Zander Gibson as the new Police Borough Commander for Southwark. The Borough Commander in Southwark not only has to

lead a team in a challenging part of London, but also has to work with the Council and other partners and build relations with the local community. Whilst it is important to recognise that progress has been made in cutting crime and building links between the police and the community in Southwark, there is still a long way as was evident in the riots in 2011. Southwark has had 3 new Commanders in the past few years and I am concerned about the lack of continuity. We discussed the importance of not cutting police numbers, victim confidence to report rape and serious sexual assault, race relations and recruitment, and police engagement with young people and community stakeholders.

The Future of Lakanal House

After almost four long years and several weeks of distressing testimony, the Lakanal House fire inquest finally ended last year and the Coroner made over 30 recommendations. Sceaux Gardens T&RA has worked hard to represent the views of residents prior to, and throughout, the inquest and I have been working with them and the Council to make sure residents' concerns are acted on. Agreement has now been reached on renovating the block of flats, rather than demolishing it. I have also asked the Council to refurbish the community hall and consult widely on plans for a suitable memorial for the victims. The families of those who died should be at the forefront of this process, and the views of Sceaux Gardens TRA and its residents should be taken into account during these important consultations.

Campaigning for better transport

New buses for Peckham passengers!

Last year I campaigned for a better bus service through Peckham. For some time there had been a problem with severe overcrowding on the 343 bus that goes through Peckham on its way to London Bridge. Transport for London agreed to add more buses to the route and the improved service was launched in May. This is a great result for Peckham passengers. The campaign succeeded through the hard work of local Labour councillors and Southwark Assembly Member, Val Shawcross, working with the local community to tackle the problems of the 343 bus service. The extension of the 136 service through north Peckham has helped to reduce overcrowding on the 343 especially in the morning rush hour. This is long overdue and an important step towards better bus services for people in Southwark.

Safer cycling in Southwark

Richard Muzira from Camberwell was the 6th cyclist tragically to die on London's roads in a 2 week period at the end of last year. We need action to protect cyclists and all the London authorities should be working better together on this. I called on the

Mayor of London and London Councils jointly to convene a summit on keeping London's cyclists safe. I strongly support Southwark Council's proposal for a 'safe cycling hour' during the morning and evening rush hours with no HGV's on the roads. This important proposal should be considered because it would reduce death and injury, and give people the confidence to cycle who don't now because they are worried about their safety. Safe cycling is healthy exercise, is cheaper than public transport and cuts congestion and pollution. But we cannot go on with this tragic death toll of cyclists. The House of Commons Transport Select Committee held an enquiry into cycling safety. You can read my submission on my website: <http://www.harrietharman.org/uploads/0d65f388-2625-a814-cd90-c074d30af3c7.pdf>

Campaigning to bring the Tube to Camberwell & Peckham

I have been campaigning for better transport links for Camberwell & Peckham residents for many years including the fight to save the South London Train Line and extending the East London Train Line to include Denmark hill, Peckham Rye and Queens Road. Camberwell and Peckham, and South London generally, are poorly served by public transport. These areas are attracting new residents and new housing and fundamental to the regeneration of this part of London was the promise of a new efficient transport system through the area and across the river to major transport hubs north of the river.

Transport for London is currently consulting on extending the Bakerloo Line south of the Elephant and Castle to Lewisham and beyond. It is encouraging that this is now being taken seriously and together with Southwark Council I am campaigning for this. When Londoners are benefitting from the investment in transport projects such as Thameslink, the underground upgrades and Crossrail, we must ensure that residents in Camberwell and Peckham also benefit from investment.

Backing the arts locally

We have a thriving and emerging art scene in Camberwell and Peckham. Camberwell College of Art is in the vanguard of art and design and this year I was delighted to showcase the work of their students in my office at the House of Commons. I also commissioned my own Christmas card from the College which combined cutting edge design with an image of our historic Parliament. I have drawn together a 'Creative Camberwell & Peckham Advisory Panel' so local creative people can share their views, advise me on my national brief as Shadow Secretary of State for Culture, Media & Sport, and help guide me as I support our creative sector in Southwark. This year I met with over 50 members of the local creative community at the College to hear their views on the development of the arts and creative industries in Camberwell & Peckham. We discussed the re-development of the Peckham Rye station area, the importance of inclusion and access, affordability of art space, and arts in the school curriculum.

Improving diversity and access to the arts

I'm pleased that Southwark Council included a pledge in their 2014 manifesto to award scholarships to local young people from low income backgrounds to study art foundation courses in Southwark. It is very important that we effectively support young people from the three schools closest to Camberwell College of Arts - Harris Academy Peckham, St Thomas the Apostle College and ARK All Saints - who would not otherwise be able to go, and that those awarded are representative of young people in local schools. I spoke at the launch of 'Peckham Platform', a voluntary organisation which works to increase local involvement in the arts, in support of their work with local schools including Harris Peckham.



Graduate work on display at the annual exhibition at Camberwell College of Art

The African community in Camberwell & Peckham

Camberwell and Peckham is a diverse and thriving constituency. We have the largest African diaspora in the UK with about a third of my constituents coming from Africa.

Ebola Crisis: Ensuring diaspora communities' views are heard

The Ebola outbreak in West Africa is extremely concerning especially to members of the African communities in my constituency. Southwark is home to many people from Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Liberia and Guinea. These diaspora communities, who are well established here, retain strong ties with their countries of origin. Many do business with their country back home, and many still have family and friends there. When the outbreak was first reported, I asked the Foreign Secretary to convene a meeting of the leaders of the diaspora communities. I also wrote to the Secretary of State for International Development and asked her to ensure that our government does as much as possible to help these countries protect themselves from the spread of infection. It is disappointing that the Government has not engaged with our local

diaspora communities to discuss with them the decisions our government is making about contingency plans and hear their concerns. I will continue to press the Government to step up their efforts on Ebola and involve the diaspora communities in their plans.

Campaigning to bring back the missing Nigerian school girls

In April 2014, over 200 girls were abducted from their school in northern Nigeria by a militant group called 'Boko Haram', who are against Western education and against any girl going to school. It was a privilege to meet Nigerian Finance Minister, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, when she came to speak in Parliament at a meeting convened by the UN Special Envoy for Global Education, Gordon Brown MP, on the Nigerian schoolgirls who were abducted from their school in April this year. It is essential not just for each child, but for Nigeria's economic future, that all girls in Nigeria go to school. We must keep up the pressure and support the Nigerian Government's efforts to bring all the girls home safely.



(From left to right) Nduka Obaigbena, President of the Newspapers Association of Nigeria; John Bercow MP, Speaker of the House of Commons; Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Nigerian Finance Minister; Gordon Brown MP, UN Special Envoy for Global Education

Supporting Pensioners

I've worked closely with Southwark Pensioners Centre in Camberwell over the years and I support the work they do. The Centre has hundreds of members most of whom live alone. The activities that take place there are led by older people themselves, and it provides a much needed social lifeline as well as services and facilities.

I opened its newly refurbished building in April and I met with members, the Director, Neil White, and several of the trustees. Many thanks to the Chair, Councillor Dora Dixon-Fyle, for her hard work in revitalising the Centre. I also spoke at the anniversary of the centenary of the Great War and the 70th anniversary of D-Day at a 'Party in the Park' on Camberwell Green Park hosted by Southwark pensioners.



With members of the Southwark Pensioners Centre in Camberwell

Regenerating the heart of Peckham

Peckham station re-development: Making sure local views are heard

One of the most constant complaints I get from people who live and work in and around Peckham is the need for a boost to the shopping and station area around Rye Lane. I'm strongly in favour of the redevelopment around the station which can give the area a real boost. But the redevelopment plans put forward by Network Rail earlier this year caused real dismay and I urged Southwark Council to call for a re-think and consult the local community. I met local creative and small businesses in Peckham to hear their views on the plans and on the process for consultation. I also met senior managers from Network Rail and was encouraged to hear that they and the Council supported extending the public consultation period to allow for community input through a process of 'co-design'. The Council, Network Rail and the local community are all working together now to get the right balance for Peckham. It's a great opportunity to keep the best of the past - Peckham heritage and history - and the best of the future - the diversity of the local community and the growing and dynamic arts scene.



Peckham walkabout and listening to the views of local people and businesses at the Copeland Park Industrial Estate in Peckham

Exciting plans to re-open Peckham Lido

I'm backing the work to explore the option of re-opening Peckham Lido - one of the many lido's across London closed by Margaret Thatcher in the 1980's following cutbacks in government funding to local councils. The Lido opened in 1923 but was closed in 1987. The 180ft pool - situated at the northern end of the park - was not demolished but is currently hidden under dirt, grass and trees with a blue fountain the only sign it ever existed. I'm really encouraged by the possibility of using a derelict area and restoring it to its previous purpose. So far everyone has been positive. The next steps are to form the campaign group into a formal campaign association and commission outline plans to be looked at by the Council and for further consultation with local schools, businesses and the local community. The campaign has an on-line petition on change.org and more than 2,000 people have already signed it.



Local campaigners, councillors and T&RA representatives visiting the site of the old Lido

Kieron Bryan: Freeing the Arctic 30

In September 2013, Peckham journalist Kieron Bryan was arrested, along with 29 others, by the Russian Authorities on a Greenpeace ship called the 'Arctic Sunrise'. I led a campaign in Parliament with other MP's to free Kieron from his detention in Russia. Kieron had been employed by Greenpeace to document their protest against oil drilling in the Arctic. I met with the Foreign Office Minister, the Russian Ambassador, arranged a House of Commons debate, and tabled a Parliamentary motion calling for his release. Following three months in detention he was finally released in December 2013 and returned to his family in the UK.



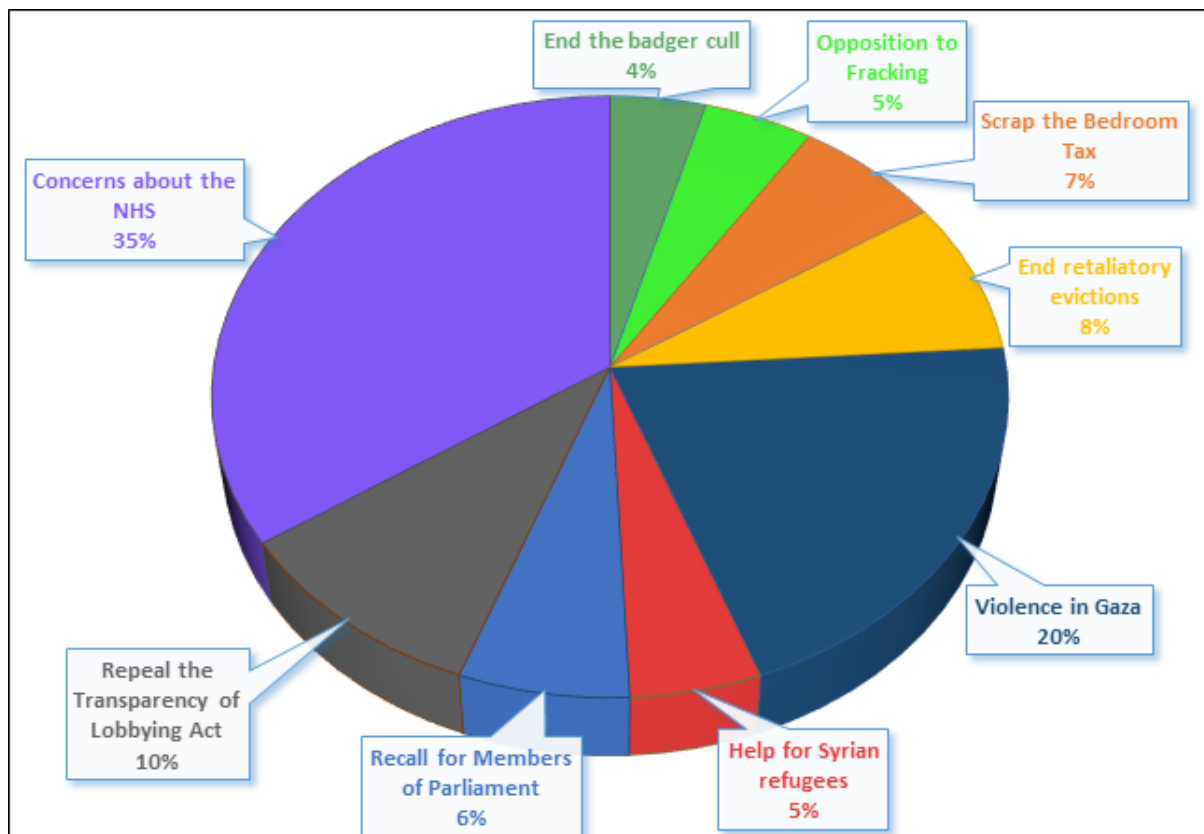
Welcoming Kieron (far right) and his family to the House of Commons for tea with Chris Bryant MP who also campaigned for his release in his role as Chair of the Parliamentary Russia Group

Parliamentary and Labour Party Roles

Representations from people in Camberwell & Peckham

The letters and emails I have received over the past year demonstrate a wide range of issues of concern from the people of Camberwell and Peckham. Since January 2014, I've received 4,700 enquiries on over 514 separate issues.

The issues this year with the highest number of queries from constituents are:



My Shadow Ministerial and Labour Party responsibilities

I'm Shadow Deputy Prime Minister, Shadow Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and Deputy Leader and Chair of the Labour Party.

As **Shadow Deputy Prime Minister** my job is to hold Nick Clegg, the Deputy Prime Minister, to account. Every six weeks we have Parliamentary Questions in the chamber of the House of Commons where I challenge the Deputy Prime Minister on the most important issues of concern. This year, I've challenged him on NHS waiting times, GP access, university tuition fees, private rented housing, the winter floods and the Bedroom Tax.



Challenging the Government at the Despatch Box

As **Shadow Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport**, I speak up for the importance of the arts, culture and sport; develop Labour's policies; and hold the Government to account.

This year I launched major Labour Party consultations on: 'Young People and the Arts' and 'More Sport for All'. I launched the 'Labour Arts Alliance' (<http://www.labourartsalliance.org.uk>), a new Labour grouping of Arts supporters, continued my work leading the network of Creative Councillors supporting the arts in local government, and gave several major speeches.

As **Deputy Leader and Chair of the Labour Party**, I am involved in campaigning with members all around the country, attend regional conferences and join by-election campaigns.

This year I've campaigned in Swindon, Cowdenbeath, Wythenshawe and Sale East, Suffolk Coastal, Carlisle, Bermondsey and Old Southwark, Milton Keynes, Thurrock, Great Yarmouth, Newark, Brighton, Heywood and Middleton and Clacton-on-Sea; in Redbridge for the launch of Labour's local election campaign; and in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Paisley for the referendum in Scotland. I attended party conferences and policy forums in Scotland, Wales, Milton Keynes (National Policy Forum), Crawley (South East regional Conference), Bradford (Labour Youth Conference) and Watford (Progress Annual Conference); delivered a speech in Ealing on 'The Choice' between Labour and the Conservatives; and I gave the Speaker of the House of Commons lecture on Parliament and Equality in July.



Better Together: Campaigning in the independence referendum

I stood in for Ed Miliband twice at Prime Minister's Questions in Parliament.

I attended 56 engagements at this year's Labour Party Annual Conference in Manchester starting with Women's Conference of over 1000 women attending.

On International Women's day this year I launched Amplify - a new website highlighting the role of women in the Labour Party, working to ensure further progress towards equality. Amplify brings together women from across the Labour movement - members and supporters, trade unionists, politicians, feminists and community campaigners. <http://www.labourwomen.org.uk/>

I continue to Chair the Older Women's Commission which was established to examine the issues that affect women over 50. In events across the country older women have told us they are overlooked - in the media, the workplace and as they look after their families. The Commission aims to ensure public policy properly considers the lives of women in their fifties and onwards, many of whom are balancing work with caring responsibilities across the generations within their families. <http://www.yourbritain.org.uk/agenda-2015/policy-review/commission-on-older-women>

In June I began my monthly radio phone-ins with Iain Dale on LBC radio, taking calls from across the country on the topics currently leading Britain's conversation.

Campaigning locally in Camberwell & Peckham

I remain totally committed to my role as Member of Parliament for Camberwell and Peckham. It is a privilege to represent this constituency. I'm proud to be standing again and thank you for your support.

I'd like to thank all our CLP and branch officers and councillors for the hard work that they do arranging branch meetings and making sure that we are knocking on doors throughout the year and despite the weather! Thanks to:

- CLP Officers: Jane Bevis (Chair), Gareth Myton (Fundraising), Peter Babudu (Membership), Johanna Baxter (Secretary), Chris Cooper (Treasurer), Ellen Sutcliffe (Equalities), Ellie Cumbo (Campaigns), Chloe Forbes (IT/Training), Jasmine Ali (Women), and Jamille Mohammed and Tony Squires (Auditors)
- Cllrs Barrie Hargrove, Cleo Soanes and Johnson Situ in Peckham
- Cllrs Dan Garfield, Lorraine Lauder and Paul Fleming in Faraday
- Cllrs Dora Dixon-Fyle, Tom Flynn and Kieron Williams in Camberwell Green
- Cllrs Richard Livingstone, Michael Situ and Evelyn Akoto in Livesey
- Cllrs Fiona Colley, Sunil Chopra and Sandra Rhule in Nunhead
- Cllrs Ian Wingfield, Radha Burgess and Mark Williams in Brunswick Park
- Cllrs Peter John, Sarah King and Chris Gonde in South Camberwell
- Cllrs Jasmine Ali, Nick Dolezal and Jamille Mohammed in The Lane
- Cllrs Gavin Edwards, Renata Hamvas and Vikki Mills in Peckham Rye



Campaigning with Camberwell & Peckham CLP members