



# Harriet Harman MP

## Constituency News – Summer 1999

Camberwell and Peckham

### New Rights at Work

The Government is about to bring in new rights for parents at work. The new laws will give mothers and fathers the right to 3 months off up till the child is 8 years old. And there will be a right to take time off if you have a family emergency, such as an elderly parent suddenly being taken ill. These new rights will make a huge difference to people trying to juggle home and work responsibilities. It is vitally important that the rights are implemented properly so that they are clear and simple and everyone can take advantage of them.

In discussion with trade unions, the "Parental Leave Campaign" and employers (including South-

wark Chamber of Commerce). I have drawn up a strategy for implementation. It includes:

- The government paying low income families who take family leave through topping up their Working Family Tax Credit
- A strong new right in law backed up with the right to go to a tribunal if the employer denies it.
- Clear guidance drawn up in consultation with Trade Unions and Employers.
- Telephone advice lines for employers and employees.
- A national advertising campaign explaining the purpose of the new

rights and the new obligations on employers

•A Commission to monitor whether the new rights are taken up and whether they effect companies' ability to run their businesses smoothly. (They set up a Commission in the US when they brought in Family Leave)

I've submitted this strategy to government ministers. The new Trade Secretary, Stephen Byers has shown a strong commitment to these new rights...

...watch this space!

### Inside this issue:

Affordable, high quality Childcare for Southwark	2
Making a reality of Welfare to Work	2
Domestic Violence	3
After Stephen Lawrence	3
Surgery Times	4
Improving Public Transport	4

### Casework

I continue to have an enormous caseload of individual problems. People come to see me at my surgeries, they write to me and they phone the office.

The majority of the cases are still immigration. Many are fleeing the terrible violence in Sierra Leone.

There is still a large number of people asking me for help with their housing problems. There have been, inevitably, a number of problems from among the huge numbers re-allocated during the 5 Estates programme. The next major re-building will be on the

Aylesbury and I have had a number of people coming to see me to raise their concern that the consultation about the new housing should be as extensive as possible. I am liaising with the council about this.

### Casestudies

I have included a number of real cases of people living in my constituency who have approached me with problems recently.



For reasons of confidentiality names have been changed

## Affordable, high quality Childcare for Southwark

Under the National Childcare Strategy (which I set up when I was a Minister) each area has to form an Early Years and Childcare Development Partnership to plan and oversee the increase in pre-school and Out of School Provision. I have been elected Chair of Southwark's Early Years and Childcare Development Partnership. Over the next 12 months we will have

- 1,300 extra Out of School places (for children 5-14)
- 900 free nursery and playgroup places for 3 year olds.

• a Sure start programme on the Aylesbury estate for the 1,000 children under 3.



Childcare in Southwark will dramatically improve this year

It is vital that the local community gets involved in the work of the partnership. I want parents to have a real say in the Childcare services that they want for their children. Please let me know if you would like to get involved or want to hear more about this. Lack of affordable, high quality childcare has long been a real problem for families in Southwark and the Childcare strategy and the Childcare Tax Credit will make a huge difference.

I will be visiting all the playgroups, nurseries and out-of-school clubs in Southwark. Let me know if there's one in your neighbourhood that you'd like me to make an early visit to.

## Case Study: Mr and Mrs Baker

Mr Baker came to my surgery in early March, bringing with him two young children and a letter from his wife. It was a truly appalling story.

Mrs Baker became unwell while pregnant with her fourth child, with severe pain in her lower back and leg, vomiting and nausea.

She was diagnosed with sciatica, given painkillers, and after a two week stay in hospital sent home.

She began to experience bleeding, which she was told was piles.

Her baby was induced one week overdue, but she was forced to

have a caesarean as her bowel was blocked. She left hospital 10 days later, and was given laxatives.

It was only when she saw her GP for contraceptive advice that the practice nurse realised something was very wrong, as advised Mrs Baker to attend the hospital.

Two weeks later, after six months going undiagnosed, Mrs Baker was told she had bowel cancer.

Mr Baker had to give up work to care for his wife and children, and Mrs Baker's illness and chemotherapy meant she needed help

and support.

Mr Baker had family in Camden, who could help Mrs Baker with care of the children so that Mr Baker could return to work. They needed my help to secure a housing transfer.

With the co-operation of the two borough councils Mr Baker will be able to return to his job in the knowledge that his wife and children are cared for.

## Making a reality of Welfare to Work

With 1,900 young people unemployed and 11,000 lone parents on Income Support in Southwark, the New Deal for the Young Unemployed and the New Deal for Lone Parents is particularly important for us.

I continue to work closely with the Employment Service Lone Parent



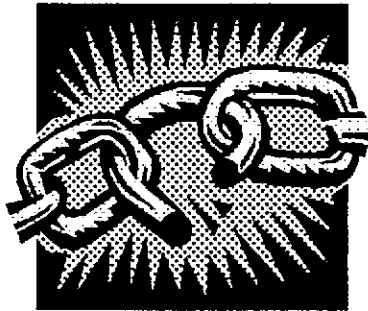
Helping people back into employment

Advisers. And I will be working to ensure that the New Deal for the Young Unemployed works properly, particularly for young black unemployed men in our borough, who are more likely to be unemployed than white men of the same age.

## Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence is a crime which can affect any woman,

regardless of age, ethnic origin or social position. Violence against women by a partner or ex-partner is a 'hidden' crime, but it has very serious consequences for women and their children.



As a minister, I made tackling violence

*'Breaking the Chain'*

against women a government priority.

Victims and perpetrators need to be

made aware that domestic violence is a crime, and it will not be accepted or tolerated.

The Southwark Domestic Violence Forum is a multi-agency body seeking to develop local services to protect and support women. I am working in consultation with representatives of

the local police, council departments, Benefits Agency and refuge workers to break down barriers women may encounter in their attempts to leave a violent relationship.

Through raising awareness, improving access and reducing financial and practical obstacles we can help women and children to live their lives without fear.

## Case Study: Mr & Mrs Edwards

Mr & Mrs Edwards are an elderly couple who had lived in the same one-bedroom flat in Southwark for 18 years, since their children left home.

In 1997 their daughter was tragically killed and they took her two small children into their care.

They applied for a 3 bedroom flat and were made an offer shortly afterwards. The offer was for a fifth floor flat, the lift was out of order, and the flat had severe damp.

Mr Edwards had a mobility problem, and rheumatism, and was concerned that the flat was not suitable, especially as they now had to consider their grandchildren aged 3 and 5 at the time. They were told that this was the only flat available and if they

refused it they would not be made another offer.

They lived with the damp and mould for 2 years before they came to me for help. Their granddaughter had developed asthma, and Mr Edwards' rheumatism had got worse.

They needed work done urgently to tackle the damp. They were unable to transfer to another property as they had rent arrears.

I contacted Southwark Council and they are now negotiating a good time for work to start.



## After Stephen Lawrence

The recent report on the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry has shown us that we still have a long way to go to tackle race hatred. At top level meetings I have discussed this with the police, councillors and

**"We must ensure that Stephen Lawrence did not die in vain"**

local organisations.

Ethnic minorities make up over 30% of Southwark's population but only 4% of its police force.

The Metropolitan police will increase and improve its recruitment drives for the purpose of recruiting police officers from ethnic minorities. The police will train and brief current police officers on race relations.

I have spoken about the lack of ethnic minority police officers in Southwark in a



*Ethnic minorities make up over 30% of Southwark's population but only 4% of its police force*

House of Commons debate.

We must make sure we have a police force that is representative of Southwark's population and that all Southwark's residents can have total confidence in.

We must ensure that Stephen Lawrence did not die in vain.

# Harriet Harman MP

## Surgery times

### May and June 1999

You can write to me at  
House of Commons  
London,  
SW1A 0AA

Phone: 0171 219 4218  
Fax: 0171 219 4877

Email:  
harmanh@parliament.uk



**If there is any part of my work you would like to see covered in this newsletter, please let me know**

Friday 7 May	10.00am	Bells Garden Community Centre
Friday 14 May	10.00am	Thurlow Lodge Tenants Hall
Friday 21 May	10.00am	Nelson T & RA Hall
Tuesday 25 May	6.00pm	Linden Grove Community Centre
Friday 4 June	10.00am	Bells Garden Community Centre
Friday 11 June	10.00am	Thurlow Lodge Tenants Hall
Friday 18 June	10.00am	Nelson T & RA Hall
Tuesday 22 June	6.00pm	Linden Grove Community Centre

#### Surgery Addresses

Bells Garden Community Centre  
Buller Close SE15

Nelson Tenants & Residents Hall  
Trafalgar House  
Bronti Close SE17

Southwark Town Hall  
Peckham Road SE5

Thurlow Lodge Tenants Hall  
Thurlow Street  
Albany Road SE15

Linden Grove Community Centre  
56 Nunhead Lane  
Nunhead SE17

### Improving Public Transport

Southwark has very little public transport and Camberwell and Peckham has no tube. Yet we have the 5th lowest car ownership in the country. I'm working with the Council, London Labour MPs, the DETR, Railtrack and Connex SouthEast and local community organisations and businesses in order to improve public transport but in particular to:

- ◆ Get a new station in Camberwell
- ◆ Get the tube to Peckham



Our existing old stations at Peckham, Queens Road, Nunhead and Denmark Hill need to be modernised so everyone can use them. With huge flights of concrete steps and no lift, it's a struggle to reach the platform if you're a mum with shopping and two kids in a double buggy. And it's impossible if you're frail, elderly or in a wheel chair.

I will be continuing to work with local groups for disabled people and for the elderly, as I keep up the campaign to improve access to our existing stations.

**Putting Camberwell and Peckham on the tube map!**