



Thangam Debbonaire

Member of Parliament for Bristol West

August 2018

The political horizon is dominated by Brexit. This looming disaster is compounded by Tory government failures on other urgent matters. Mostly their own making, these include chronic underfunding of schools, particularly for children with special educational needs, a teacher shortage, crises in the NHS and social care, a housing crisis and growing inequality. These problems are not going away and Brexit will make many of them worse. Brexit will also damage our trade, jobs, ability to collaborate with foreign universities, our nuclear safety, our airline industry, our workers' rights, environmental protections and much more. For these reasons, I am opposed to Brexit and challenge the government on its failure to act.



And the Tories are not only failing here, they are also failing the UK on the global stage.

This has created an inability to address turmoil and conflict in the Middle East and North Africa, the suffering of a million Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar and the most urgent global problem of all, climate change.

As a Labour whip, it is my privilege to work with our leader Jeremy Corbyn and the rest of the Labour front bench Shadow Ministers. We are challenging the government and putting forward alternatives, pushing amendments to government legislation (with some success). This involves a great deal of work behind-the-scenes. On top of this, we also have an eye on the future, preparing to campaign for these policies in a General Election and implement them in a Labour government.

You may notice from this shorter report that August is Parliamentary recess, which gives MPs time to do more constituency work, catch up on reading and correspondence and prepare for the Parliamentary term.

However, I've still been busy preparing for the coming term. I've submitted a bundle of Written Parliamentary Questions - let me know if there is something you would like me to ask. I've also been busy arranging various events in Parliament and at Labour conference. If you're attending conference, do join my fringe events on Monday evening (refugees' right to work) and on Tuesday (drug law reform) or follow them on my [Facebook page](#). I'm also preparing lobbying on several pieces of legislation, particularly those on Brexit, immigration, asylum and the departments I am Labour whip for (Health, Environment and Women & Equalities).

As always, do ask me any questions, about what I am doing, about Labour's position, or what's happening in Parliament. You can speak to me at the Bristol West Labour meeting or by phone or email. Your help and encouragement help me do my job as a Labour whip, helping Jeremy and our Shadow Front Bench to do their jobs. Thank you!

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BREXIT AND HEALTH CARE IN BRISTOL

Theresa May's bungled and bluster-filled negotiations with the European Union is creating unacceptable uncertainty for businesses and public services across Bristol West. I'm particularly concerned about the effects of Brexit on our NHS and social care services, particularly if we crash out without a sensible deal that meets Labour's six tests. From EU nationals working in the health service, to concerns over the supplies of essential medicines, the government's lack of clarity on Brexit has real ramifications for our health service.



That's why over this summer I have written to Bristol's hospitals, GP's surgeries, university medical departments and the council's social care director to ask what preparations they are making for Brexit and to consult about what issues they want me to be raising in Parliament. I will be raising their concerns with the government and in the Shadow Health team when Parliament returns in September.

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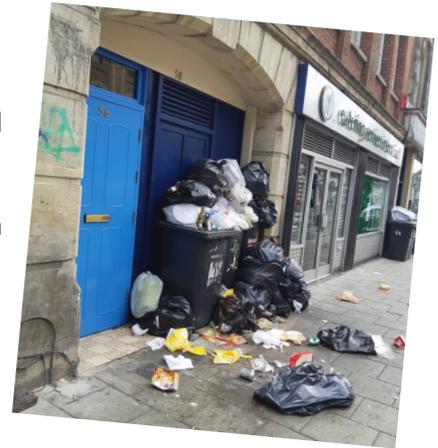
Page 3—Casework and Media roundup

IN BRISTOL (AND BEYOND!)

KEEPING BRISTOL TIDY

One of the most frequent subjects of correspondence I get on email and social media is about litter and rubbish in Bristol. Despite the great work of the Bristol Waste Company, some streets, parks and public spaces in Bristol are frequently left in an ugly state, strewn with litter and waste. Whether this is from careless littering, intentional fly tipping or animals tearing into refuse bags, the effect is unpleasant for everyone in the city – particularly in the summer heat.

I convened a meeting with concerned local residents, the Bristol Waste Company and Councillor Kye Dudd—the cabinet member with responsibility for waste collection—to discuss how we can tackle these issues in the city centre in particular. The meeting was a real success, with lots of ideas generated about how we can all help keep Bristol clean, tidy and welcoming. [See my blog for more details on the outcomes and how you can report fly tipping and littering in the city.](#)



LEAPS FORWARD IN GREEN ENERGY

Climate change is the most urgent global challenge that we face, and I consider it my responsibility as a Labour MP to encourage the government to act now.

That's why this month, [I visited the Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult in Blyth](#) where they are pioneering new renewable energy technology (I'm pictured here with the largest wind turbine blade in the world!).

All this innovation requires investment, infrastructure and – in many cases – government support. The government has given warm words to investment in green energy in their Industrial Strategy, but their recent actions tell a different story. I'll keep putting pressure on them to act and invest in truly sustainable and renewable energy.



ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY

Over the summer, the government announced their new [Rough Sleeping Strategy](#). [In my view, the measures announced do not go far enough to tackle the scale of](#)

[homelessness in Bristol](#), and I am concerned that in the whole document Bristol is mentioned only once. And much more needs to be done to deliver decent affordable housing for all.

Labour in Bristol are doing excellent work to deliver more affordable homes but the government need to do more to help tackle the affordability crisis, and to provide more support for those at risk of becoming homeless. I have therefore written to the new Housing Minister to ask him to ensure that Bristol is top of the list for funding that can help us continue to bring down the numbers of those sleeping rough in the city, and to end homelessness altogether.



CHALLENGING ISLAMOPHOBIA IN BRISTOL

This month, Muslims in Bristol and around the world celebrated the feast of Eid al-Adha. Whilst this is a wonderful celebration for the community, it takes place in a climate where many Muslims in the UK are increasingly facing racism and abuse. This is not helped by certain politicians using disgraceful and dehumanising rhetoric in the national press.

I'm proud to represent a constituency which is home to so many different faith communities. I'm determined that Bristol continues to be an open, tolerant and welcoming city. I have written to mosques in Bristol to understand better the experience of residents who have encountered unacceptable racist abuse.

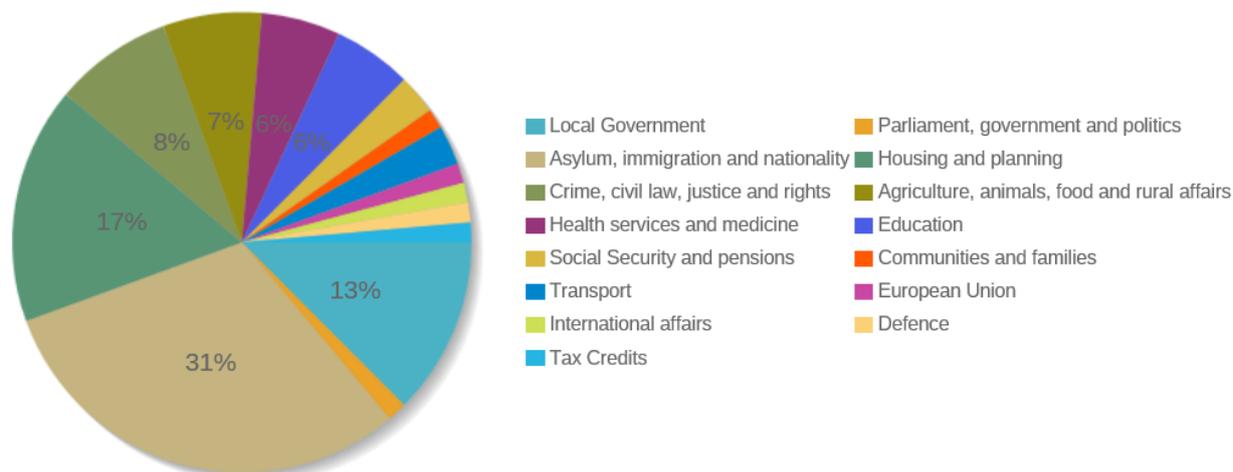
[If you have experienced or witnessed Islamophobia I would very much like to hear from you.](#) If it is appropriate to do so, please also [report the incident to the police](#), or other organisations such as Bristol-based [Stand Against Racism & Inequality](#). Please also let me know if you have received support from other organisations in dealing with this abuse, and whether your concerns have been properly addressed.



CASEWORK AND MEDIA REVIEW

AUGUST 2018

Breakdown of Cases by Type



OVERVIEW

August has been another busy month with 72 new cases opened so far. This has capped off a very busy summer, and we are managing a caseload of 251 open and active cases.

31% of this month's new cases are immigration based and 17% are housing enquiries. Local Government continues to take up a large proportion of our time as we continue to deal with parking, neighbour nuisance and repairs.

SURGERY

Thangam's August surgery was well-attended and saw constituents bringing diverse issues to Thangam's attention. They ranged from funding for research into ME, Work Capability Assessments for those with long-term degenerative conditions, and Home Office delays in making decisions on asylum applications.

SUCSESSES

Successes this month include assisting a constituent with obtaining a visit visa for their mother, securing a repayment from HMRC, helping a constituent with a letter of support who was subsequently granted asylum, obtaining a travel document, ensuring missing documentation from the Home Office was returned, and getting foliage cleared from a pavement which was blocking footpaths in Barton Hill.

MEDIA ROUND UP

Thangam spoke to [The Guardian](#) about increasing numbers of visa rejections for victims of domestic abuse.

[The Times](#) wrote about Thangam's comments about Theresa May in a recent appearance on [Core Politics' Meet the MPs](#).

[The Bristol Post](#) interviewed Thangam about her views on masculinity and violence.

Thangam's views on the People's Vote campaign were also reported in [The Bristol Post](#).

In the [Bishopston Voice](#), Thangam wrote about a recent visit to the University of Bristol's CONNECTED project.

Thangam was interviewed about veganism in Viva! Magazine.

And finally, Thangam (and her cello!) featured on the [Politics Home podcast](#), playing the Sarabande from Bach's 1st cello suite and speaking about her career as a musician and the importance of music today—"music is an international language."