



Thangam Debbonaire

Member of Parliament for Bristol West

December 2019

REPORT FOR BRISTOL WEST LABOUR MEMBERS—December 2019

First of all, thank you so much for your hard work campaigning with me and other Labour candidates in the general election. There is no denying that it is pretty dreadful facing a Tory majority government. However, with your support I'll be challenging them hard, and offering the Labour alternative at every stage.

Right now, we are dealing with the EU Withdrawal Bill. As the newly appointed Shadow Minister for Exiting the EU, I'm leading for the Labour Party on this bill on Wednesday. I'll be proposing our amendment on child refugees, Northern Ireland, parliamentary scrutiny of Brexit, and parliamentary sovereignty. If you want to have a look, it'll be on Parliament TV in the afternoon.

Thangam Debbonaire



THE CHANCE TO VOTE FOR A NEW LEADER

Over the next two months as Labour members we'll get the chance to choose the next Leader and Deputy Leader of the Labour Party. Everyone's vote is equal and the Bristol West constituency party has the option to nominate a candidate for each contest.

A special meeting for this will be arranged in due course. Do let me know if you'd like to come to this meeting, or discuss the contest in any way. The email to contact me on for this is thangam_debbonaire@labour.org.uk.



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IN PARLIAMENT

MY PRIORITIES IN 2020 AND BEYOND

Before the Christmas recess, [I was sworn in as your MP](#) and I am honoured to be serving the people of Bristol West again.

While the country did not vote for a Labour government overall, as those in Bristol did, I will continue to work hard for the objectives of my general election campaign, including an urgent response to the climate emergency, [a close relationship with the European Union](#), properly funded schools and good quality affordable housing.

I look forward to working for the people of Bristol West through 2020 and beyond. You can keep updated on my work in Parliament this year in this newsletter and on my [website blog](#).



THE QUEEN'S SPEECH DEBATE

The people of Bristol West did not vote for this government or its agenda, set out in the Queen's speech. So during the Queen's Speech debate at the end of last year, [I brought up what was missing](#). These are priorities that I know the people of Bristol West care about.

Notable absences from the speech include action on the climate emergency, the global refugee crisis, and the commitment to reverse 10 years of cuts to schools, council budgets, health services, police and fire services.

I will continue to campaign for the rights we have had as members of the European Union. For instance, [I mentioned in my speech](#) that musicians and artists must be able to continue to tour overseas in the same way they do now. We must not lose this cultural and intellectual exchange with our nearest neighbours.



MY NEW ROLE ON THE FRONT BENCH

I'm extremely pleased to have been promoted to Labour's shadow ministerial team for the Department of Exiting the European Union (DExEU).

As a shadow Brexit minister, I'll take a major role in scrutinising the Withdrawal Agreement Bill (WAB), which aims to take the UK out of the EU. This legislation is even more destructive than previous iterations of the so-called 'Brexit deal'. It falls far short of promises made by the Prime Minister and others in the 2016 referendum.

The WAB is also needlessly cruel, dropping commitments to allow unaccompanied child refugees to join their family members in the UK. I'm looking forward to leading Labour's challenge on this point. I'll be speaking at the dispatch box on Wednesday on this topic, and the other topics of parliamentary scrutiny of Brexit, Northern Ireland, and parliamentary sovereignty.



IN BRISTOL

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

After Parliament was dissolved on 5 November, I campaigned alongside other Labour party members and volunteers. It was rainy, cold, and windy – but we did it. Here are some of my favourite moments on the campaign trail. Thank you so much to everyone who supported me.

XR HUSTINGS

A highlight of the campaign was the Extinction Rebellion Hustings at Easton Community Centre. It was an important and innovative evening - discussing the drastic actions needed to take to tackle the climate emergency with a packed-out room.



YOUTH HUSTINGS

One of the best parts of the campaign was to be able to hear the views of so many young people. I attended youth hustings events at Colston Girls School, Bristol North Post 16 Centre, Creative Youth Network and Clifton High School. Thank you to all the young people who were involved!



PIEMINISTER MEETING

I was invited to speak at the regional Pieminister meeting in November. We discussed their work in striving to be a sustainable and successful independent business, particularly in today's climate.



UCU STRIKE

University staff in Bristol are on strike for fairer pensions and better working conditions. In December I went to the picket lines of the University and College Union (UCU) at the University of Bristol, to show my support.



ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

Here are a couple of my favourite photos from the campaign trail. Thank you so much to everyone who canvassed, put up a poster, delivered leaflets, called voters, offered their car on election day and many other things. [We were joined in Bishopston by Sir Keir Starmer!](#)

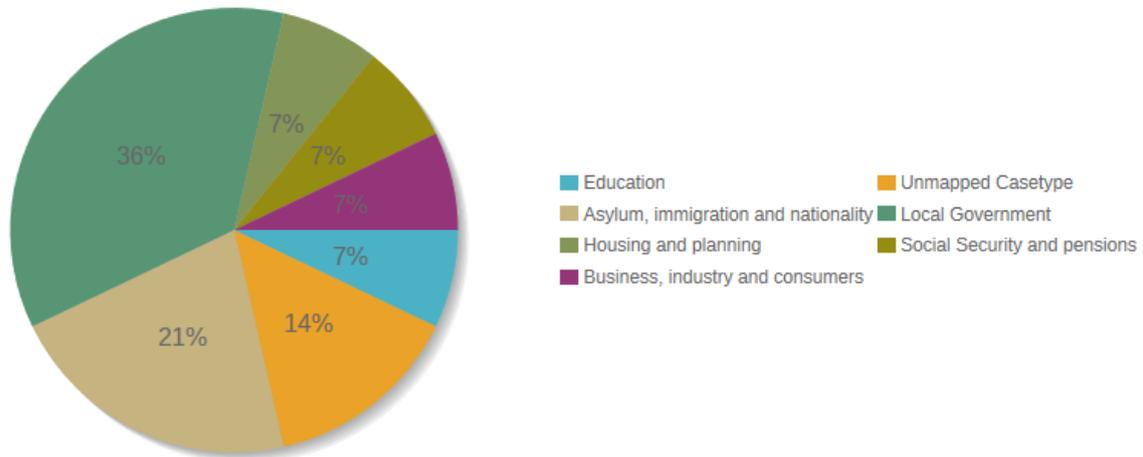
Meeting people around Bristol is one of the best parts of an election campaign. You can see a short video of some of the Labour supporters I met in the Stapleton Road area [here](#).



CASEWORK REVIEW

DECEMBER 2019

Breakdown of Cases by Type



CASEWORK UPDATE

During the election campaign the office is constrained in the help and support we can provide, although we were able to continue with open casework or take on anything really urgent.

That being said, we opened 30 cases in December. Most of these related to immigration or housing, which is consistent with the cases we are receiving this year. We are currently working on 190 open cases.

We were not able to run surgeries during the election campaign, so our first surgery this year will have additional appointments and is almost full.

MEDIA REVIEW

With Parliament dissolved, most media coverage focused on the election campaign:

- Several journalists covered my campaign, including [New Statesman](#), [The i](#), [Bristol Cable](#), [Epigram](#), [the Tab](#), [Bristol Post](#) and [taz.de](#) (in German). Bristol Post has a nice feature on door knocking [here](#).
- The College Green rally with Jeremy Corbyn and Marvin Rees was covered by numerous outlets including BBC News and Sky News. There were irreverent sketches in [The Guardian](#), [The Times](#) and [The Daily Mail](#).
- Election results in Bristol West were covered in [BBC News](#), [Bristol Post](#) (and a post-election interview [here](#)), [Epigram](#), [Bristol Cable](#) and the [Times of India](#), among others. I was also interviewed on ITV, Sky News, BBC Points West, Sunday Politics and BBC Radio Bristol.
- Beyond the election noise, I was pleased to come 28th in a [ranking of 650 MPs](#) "openness and responsiveness to their constituents", put together by Change.org.

