



# Thangam Debonnaire

Member of Parliament for Bristol West

January 2020

## REPORT FOR BRISTOL WEST LABOUR MEMBERS—My work in January 2019

My work in both Parliament and Bristol West has been dominated by picking up on activities delayed by the general election and on my new role as Shadow Minister for Brexit (now Shadow Minister for Europe). My team and I have been catching up on constituency surgery appointments we had to cancel and emails and other communications we had to postpone when I was not an MP during the election period. Thank you to everyone who has been patient with us and helped.



The final legislation for Brexit before leaving the European Union on 31<sup>st</sup> January was amended by Labour in the House of Lords, including amendments I proposed from the dispatch box on child refugees and on EU citizens. Unfortunately the government was able to defeat us with their large majority in the Commons. Nonetheless, I was proud to represent you from the front bench for the first time on something I know is very important to the people of Bristol West. While disappointed by the government's actions, I will not give up campaigning and representing you on this.

*Thangam Debonnaire*

## EUROPE—WHAT'S NEXT?

We are now in the transition phase or so-called 'Implementation Period' between leaving full membership and moving to the new arrangements for our relationship with the EU. Whatever the last few years have seemed like to you, the next six months will be even more complicated as the UK now has to negotiate new arrangements on a huge range of important matters – on trade, citizen's rights, security, borders, environmental rules, fisheries and farming and much more.

My new role as Shadow Europe Minister will be to coordinate, with the others in the team, scrutinising the government on their negotiations, liaising with representatives of the various sectors in the UK and in the EU and exposing the consequences of the process, offering alternatives at every stage.

I'll keep you posted on this – if you want to follow my activities on Europe, please sign up to my [Europe newsletter here](#) and/or my website [here](#).



## IN THIS REPORT...

Page 2 - Parliamentary Report

Page 3 - In Bristol

Page 4 - Casework review and Media Review

# IN PARLIAMENT

## CHALLENGING THE TORIES AS SHADOW BREXIT MINISTER

This month, [I defended](#) the five crucial Lords' Amendments to the EU Withdrawal Agreement Bill (WAB). I was determined to put up a fight, [after the government voted down our amendments](#) which included protecting child refugees and giving Parliament the ability to scrutinise government legislation in relation to our future relationship with the EU. When the Bill came back from the House of Lords, the government had a second chance to put it right.

One amendment would have brought back protections for unaccompanied child refugees to join family members in the UK, and another would have made life easier for EU citizens living here. Tragically, the government voted them down and the Withdrawal Bill became law. We left the EU on 31 January 2020 without these protections for some of the most vulnerable people. You can watch my full speech [here](#).



## OPPOSITION DAY SPEECH ON POLICING AND CRIME

During this debate, [I spoke](#) about how 10 years of Tory cuts is affecting crime prevention in Bristol.

While the government promised money which for 403 new officers over three years, the force lost 700 since 2010.

The government must acknowledge that these cuts have consequences, and urgently work to treat the resulting problems like knife crime. I called for the government to reinstate funding for other areas including mental health and youth services.



## TORY ATTACK ON FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

I was outraged to hear that journalists from some national papers and news sites were denied access to a briefing from Number 10 on the EU future relationship. Accountable political journalism is more important than ever, particularly as the government have blocked Labour amendments to allow Parliament to scrutinise them.

So during Urgent Questions, [I wanted to know](#) why they were pretending it was business-as-usual, when attacking freedom of the press is becoming a worrying trademark of this government.



## TRUMP AND PALESTINE



On 30 January, [I asked](#) Foreign Minister Andrew Morrison about the implications for water rights set out in the 'conceptual map' proposed by President Trump.

I believe that Trump's peace plan for the Middle East risks worsening, rather than solving, the conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. A solution must consider the prosperity of people on both sides, otherwise it is doomed to fail.

## DISABLED ACCESS FOR LAWRENCE HILL

Once again, [I asked](#) for funding to make Lawrence Hill station accessible. I was told to be patient by the Minister.

Once again, this is not good enough for people in Lawrence Hill who have been waiting for an access ramp for years. I will urgently write to the Minister to ensure that there are no more delays for the people of Bristol West.



# IN BRISTOL

## SCHOOLS IN BRISTOL WEST

This month, I have spent a lot of my time in the constituency working to help Bristol's schools, which are still struggling with years of Tory cuts.

Several inner-city primary schools in Bristol are struggling due to lack of students because of a changing city demographics. In some areas, families are moving out because of the high rent and lack of open space. I wrote a letter to the Education Secretary asking about the government's strategy is to support these schools. I also [raised](#) this issue in Parliament.

I also called a meeting with the Director of Education at Bristol City Council, Alison Hurley, to speak about Special Educational Needs and Disability provision (SEND) in schools. Following their SEND inspection report, they are planning improvements to their service. We spoke about the ways that I can support them to achieve this. You can also take part the ongoing consultation for parents and carers [here](#).



## CANVASSING FOR THE LOCAL ELECTIONS



This month I joined canvassing sessions for the Mayoral and local elections, which are in May 2020. This election is incredibly important for Bristol. It is vital that we keep our hardworking Labour councillors and win new seats.

Over the next couple of weeks and in the lead up to the election on 7 May, if you would like to join one of the canvassing sessions you can find the live link of location and time [here](#).

## OUTREACH PLANS FOR LOCAL AREAS

One of my missions this year is to make sure that everyone in Bristol West knows what an MP can do to help and support them. This is why my team and I have been creating plans to increase our outreach work in different communities in Bristol West.

If you have any ideas or feedback on our work please get in touch on [thangam.debbonaire.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:thangam.debbonaire.mp@parliament.uk). Watch this space!



## SCHOOL VISITS

This month I have been catching up on visiting schools in Bristol West, after the general election.

I recently visited Andalucia Academy and Evergreen Academy, both in Easton, where I gave an assembly.

In Parliament, I enjoyed meeting Barton Hill Academy on a school visit. It was wonderful for the children to get a tour and learn about the workings of our government. I want as many schools in Bristol West to have the opportunity

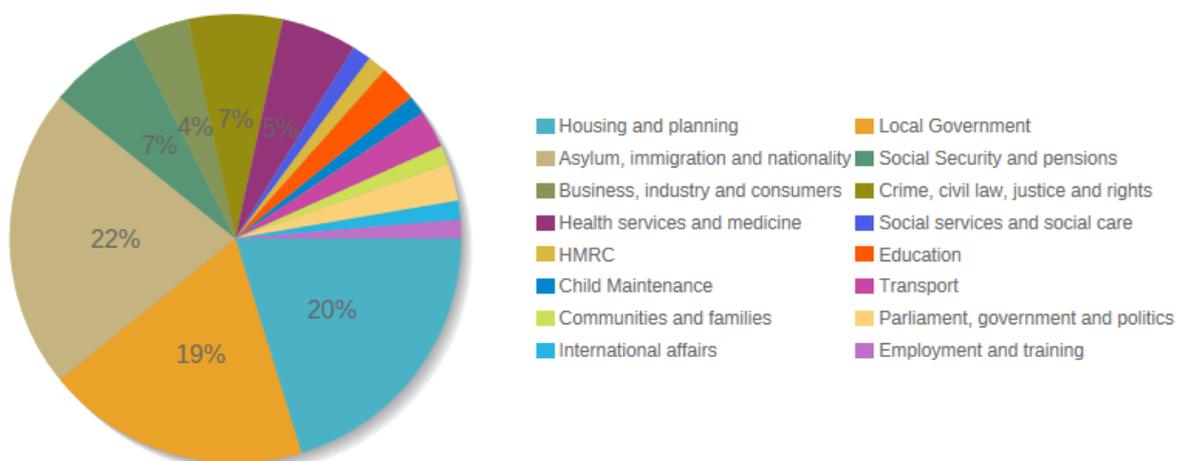


to do this—and please do get in touch if you have arranged one for your school.

# CASEWORK REVIEW

## JANUARY 2020

Breakdown of Cases by Type



### CASEWORK UPDATE

In January we saw a significant increase in casework following the general election. We opened 81 new cases and currently have 212 open cases. Immigration cases account for 22% of our cases and housing make up 20% but with a wide variety of other cases shown in the chart above.

We had to cancel surgeries during the election period and also in November because Parliament sat on a Saturday. As a result we have held 2 surgeries in February and have now been able to offer appointments to all those who needed to meet with Thangam.

We have had some excellent successes with getting responses for constituents on their immigration applications when they had been waiting for several months. We have also successfully helped constituents to obtain a bus pass for their child, improve a care package, and get responses to a request for personal data.

### MEDIA REVIEW

- My work on the EU Withdrawal Agreement Bill was covered in [The Guardian](#), [The New European](#), [The Express](#), [PoliticsHome](#), the [Express & Star](#), [BBC News](#) and [Bristol Post](#). It was also covered in international press, including [El Economista](#) (Spain), [Diário de Notícias](#) (Portugal) and [Toute l'Europe](#) (France).
- My speech in the Commons on protecting child refugees was widely reported, including in [Bristol Post](#), [PoliticsHome](#), [The New European](#), [The London Economic](#), [Metro](#), [The i](#), [The National](#) and the [The Herald](#).
- News of my promotion to the shadow Brexit team was reported in the [Bristol Post](#), [Bristol247](#) and BBC Points West.
- I took part in wide-ranging panel discussions on BBC Radio 4's [Any Questions](#) and ITV News' politics show [West Country Debate](#).
- I commented on worrying White Supremacist posters appearing in Bristol, for [BBC News](#).
- I spoke to the [Bristol Post](#) about new funding for St Werburghs Community Centre.
- On the leadership campaign, I wrote [this article for Bristol247](#). My preferences for leader and deputy leader were also covered in student paper [The Tab](#) and [New Statesman](#).
- On a lighter note, I took part in [Politics Live](#), where I explained to new Tory MP Richard Holden that Labour was not "culturally appropriating" the Durham Miner's gala (!). This exchange was subsequently covered in [The Independent](#) and [The Express](#).