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I hope you had a good bank holiday weekend. Below you will find a summary of some of things I have been up to in Parliament and the constituency across the last month.

The Government must end the housing crisis

Since entering Parliament one of my main priorities has been campaigning to end the housing crisis. I know that too many of my constituents are at the sharp end of this crisis – whether they are stuck in sub-standard social housing, paying sky-high rents in the private rented sector, struggling to buy a property in their local area, or affected by the leaseholder scandal.

I recently took part in a debate on housing in the House of Commons. During this debate, I said that leaseholders were trapped in dangerous flats and that the Government was letting them down. I said that the Building Safety Bill is yet another missed opportunity to help hundreds of thousands of leaseholders, who are being forced to pay to correct a problem that is not their fault. I called on the Government to introduce new legislation to end the leaseholder scandal for good.

I also criticised the Government's new Planning Bill which will take power away from local communities and hinder efforts to build more council homes. The Government must think again.

Finally, I called on the Government to build more council homes and make safety a priority for all, to end the leaseholder scandal, and to properly regulate the private rental market. You can read my speech [here](#) or watch it [here](#).



Epilepsy Society Safe Mum, Safe Baby Roundtable

I recently took part first ever virtual Round Table Baby Shower organised by the Epilepsy Society. Young women with epilepsy, including one [my constituent Yasmin Golding](#), described the challenges they face in choosing between medications that will control their seizures but risk harming their babies during pregnancy, or medication that is safer during pregnancy but may leave them with uncontrolled seizures.

The charity has launched a [petition](#) urging the government to invest more money into vital research that could lead to a better understanding of the risks associated with some epilepsy drugs during pregnancy. This could help to identify which women would be at greatest risk and ensure that they have the safest treatment possible.

The campaign for safer medicines for pregnant women with epilepsy has my full backing.

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My Response to the Queens' Speech

The Queen's Speech last month set out the Government's agenda for the new session of Parliament.

Even before the pandemic, we needed to transform Britain – we had 5.7 million people in low-paid or insecure work and 4.2 million children growing up in poverty, class sizes were at their highest for 20 years, one in seven adults were unable to get the social care that they need, and we had one of the worst levels of regional inequality in Europe. Shockingly, life expectancy had also stalled, for the first time in a century. Coronavirus has only further exposed the consequences of Government decisions over the last ten years.

We therefore needed a Queen's Speech that rose to the scale of the challenge of rebuilding our economy and society. Unfortunately, I believe the one we got only papers over the cracks.

Instead of a plan for jobs and better work, for example, we see different parts of the country pitted against each other for limited funds, too little investment in infrastructure and no sign of the Employment Bill repeatedly promised by the Government.

The Queen's Speech should also have included a clear long-term recovery plan for our NHS. But with waiting lists at a record high of 4.7 million, what we heard on Tuesday will come nowhere near the scale of the change needed. In addition, long after the Prime Minister said on the steps of Downing Street that he had a clear plan to fix the crisis in social care, there was still no such plan in the Government's agenda for this session of Parliament.

funding, legislation or action.

On democracy, meanwhile, instead of rebuilding trust, the Government is introducing a Bill that will make it harder for people to vote, undermine civil liberties and disproportionately impact ethnic minorities.

Disability roundtable

I recently brought together a group of local disability advocacy and support groups to raise concerns about the operation of the benefits system on people with disabilities with Justin Tomlinson, the Minister for Disabled People, Work and Health.

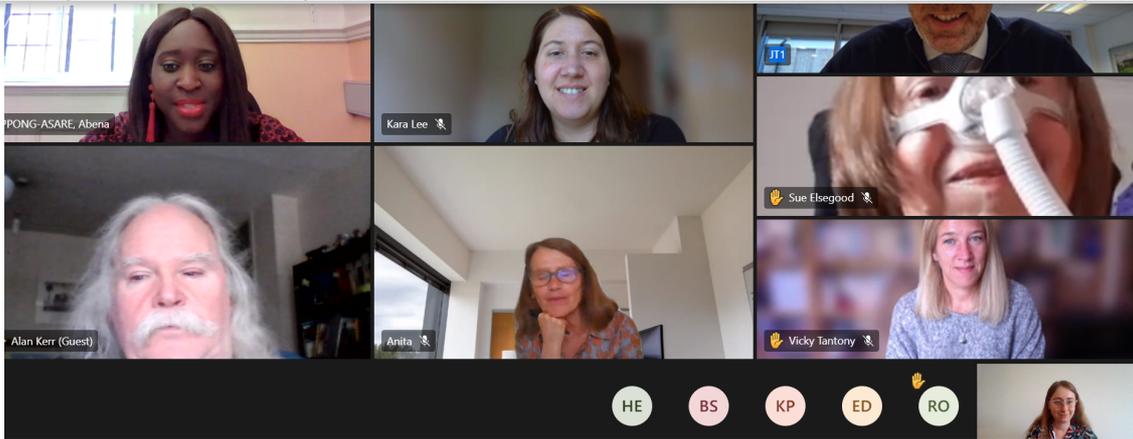
Earlier this year I met with the Minister to raise concerns about how the pandemic had affected people with disabilities and the failure of the DWP to meet the needs of disabled people. The Minister agreed to take part in a roundtable with local organisations working on the frontline with disabled people.

Key issues raised at the roundtable included a failure to provide accessible information to disabled people, the problems people with learning difficulties face accessing PIP, the impact of benefit assessments on claimants mental health, and the lack of appropriate training for assessors.

Participants also raised problems with disabled people accessing Universal Credit and the problems some people face due to the increasingly online-only system. The roundtable discussion will feed into the Green Paper on health and disability which is due to be published shortly.

I urge local organisations and individuals to contribute to the consultation process once it is open.

I am determined that nobody is left behind in Erith and Thamesmead, and this means that disabled people need better treatment from the Government.

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Campaigning Summer School

I'm delighted to announce that applications are open for my new online *Campaigning Summer School* which will be taking place this August.

At this jam-packed 3-day summer school, young people aged between 16 and 21 will have the opportunity to gain the skills needed to make a real difference in our community.

This won't be a series of dry lectures: it'll be a hands-on, first-hand insight into the exciting world of political and social campaigning – bringing together the expertise of veteran political activists and partner organisations.

I know from my own experience that whether you're dealing with environmental issues, crime, or education, effective campaigning is the key to influencing and challenging those in power. So, I am determined to do all I can to empower our young people to be the change they want to see in the world.

Over the course of 3 days, attendees will design their very own local campaigns. What's more – **I will personally help action the best ideas into real campaigns to benefit our residents.**

For attendees, this will be a unique opportunity to see their ideas turned into action and to learn how they can make their voice heard in our democracy.

The school itself will be held online from **Monday 16th August to Wednesday 18th August**, however attendees will be invited to an in-person BBQ that weekend to meet, connect, and celebrate their 'graduation'.

If you're interested, then please don't hesitate to apply, and do share this with anyone who you think might benefit from this programme.

To apply just fill in the sign-up form [here](#) before **Friday 2nd July**. Applications are welcomed from anyone aged between 16 and 21, though priority will be given to



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