



MP's UPDATE FOR RESIDENTS – October 2021



You can find previous reports of my work on my web site: www.ruthcadbury.co.uk. I also report regularly on my [Facebook page](#) and via [Twitter](#) and [Instagram @RuthCadbury](#). You can see full details of my questions and speeches in Parliament, and get Regular updates about my Parliamentary activities on [TheyWorkForYou](#) in Hansard and on [YouTube](#).

I have restarted face-to-face surgeries and am also happy to meet constituents either by phone, or on-line, to discuss your concerns. For an appointment please email me on ruthcadburymp@parliament.uk with your address, a quick summary of the issue and any relevant reference numbers.

See my special [Coronavirus Web-page](#) for information on local and national services, help-lines and volunteering; and to sign up for Hounslow Council's daily updates.

Afghanistan: August is usually our quietest month in the office, when my team members are able to take holiday. However from the 16th August when the Taliban swept towards Kabul, we were inundated with over 500 separate constituents calling or writing on behalf of themselves or their family, desperate to get out of Afghanistan. They are a mix of local residents with UK citizenship, those who have worked for the UK Army or other UK organisations, and human rights, women's rights campaigners, judges and others who are in mortal danger from the Taliban. Despite working all hours taking detailed information, listening to distressing stories, and keeping the Government informed, my team and I felt we were unable to provide adequate reassurance or help. This was because the UK Government was clearly in chaos, with the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, the Home Office and the Ministry of Defence giving out unhelpful and often conflicting information about what route Afghans should follow depending on their circumstances, and providing zero information about any of our constituent's chances. The 15,000 lucky enough to get out of Kabul in those last two weeks initially arrived in quarantine hotels near Heathrow, and have now been dispersed, some with family if they have some already here, and the rest around the country with an uncertain future ahead.

Back in Parliament I questioned Dominic Raab after reports British Citizens were blocked from fleeing across land borders, while citizens of other countries were allowed to cross.

Universal Credit: Around 14,000 households in B&I are now £20 per week worse off. Many constituents have told me what this means to them; being pushed further into high-cost debt, facing the choice between heating and eating, and the need to buy school uniforms and winter coats. Almost 40% of these households are in work. Most cannot work more hours, and even if they could, would have to work an extra full day per week to make up for the £20 cut due to the special benefits taper. I spoke in Parliament about this injustice, and specifically mentioned the high cost of rent in West London which means that many on UC are having to use their "standard allowance" (meant for basics like food) to top up their rent which is so often above the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) level. I also pointed out the UC takes £15m out of the constituency's local economy, from businesses that themselves employ people and pay tax.

Of course I voted against the £20 cut, but this was pushed through anyway by the Tories in Government. Instead of avoiding the cut they are now promising a discretionary fund, administered by already overstretched Councils, funded at a fraction of the total of the UC cut. I also voted against the National Insurance rise, as that will further push low-income families further into poverty, further exacerbated by the rising cost of living.



Addressing Violence against Women & Girls: Labour's Shadow Home Secretary Nick Thomas Symonds called for a full independent inquiry following the sentencing of Sarah Everard's rapist and murderer. This appears to have forced the Home Secretary to half-heartedly announce an inquiry in her conference speech. However, it is not on a robust, statutory footing which would ensure there are no barriers in the way of getting answers. The Government should be getting on with implementing all the recommendations of the damning report from the Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services. Yet Ministers still continue to dither.

Labour will ensure that the Government brings forward legislation that should toughen laws on street harassment, increase sentences for rape and stalking, fast-track rape and serious sexual violence cases through the courts, and enshrine the rights of victims in a Victims' Law. Expecting women to take responsibility for their own safety, without dealing with these criminals in the same way that suspected terrorists and drug dealers are dealt with, is unacceptable.



Building Safety: As regular readers of my updates know, I have consistently been working with leaseholders of blocks of flats affected by building safety concerns that were exposed by the Grenfell fire. I currently sit on the Fire Safety Bill Committee where we are challenging the Government line-by-line on their Bill. As currently drafted it defines "High Risk" building as being over 18m and used for residential purposes. This is despite the fact that many lower buildings, and those used for other purposes such as hospitals, continue to pose extreme fire risks. The Government is still refusing to support leaseholders of flats built more than 15 years ago, those with fire risks other than ACM cladding, nor will it help housing associations managing social-rent flats that are high-risk.



With other colleagues I attended the leaseholders' demonstration in Parliament Square attended by campaigners from across the country demanding justice on charges for re-cladding, and also on the many other rip-off issues that facing residential leaseholders.

Elections Bill: I voted against this anti-democratic bill at its 2nd reading because it will require voters to produce photo ID – something that is not required in the UK unless you have need for a passport, a driving license, or have been given leave to remain in the UK and so have a Biometric ID card. The Electoral Reform Society say that roughly 21 million people in this country have no recognisable photo ID. The Bill also removes proportional representation in Mayoral and Assembly votes, which could give the Tories a greater chance of winning in London and other mayoral elections.



Planning Reform Bill: Following draft reforms outlined in a White paper, the long-awaited bill appeared to have been kicked into touch by Michael Gove when he was appointed to replace former Housing, Communities and Local Government Secretary, Robert Jenrick. Jenrick is now blamed for the universally unpopular-of reforms. Gove appears to also have responsibility for "inter-governmental relations", elections and of course "levelling up" whatever that means, and we don't yet know what he plans to do about the Planning System.

What we do know is that like Jenrick, Gove has benefited from donations from property developers. These are the very people who were pushing Jenrick's reforms, which involved removing local voice and democratic control, allowing volume housebuilders an almost free-rein and ignoring both the climate and the affordable housing crises.

Even though the Bill has been withdrawn, the planning system is in a real mess. Under the Tories, the use of Permitted Development Rights, allowing property owners to by-pass the planning system, has been massively extended. We have seen the growth of modern-day slums as office blocks are converted into sub-standard housing such as this block in Luton that I visited recently. And in August this "PD" right was extended to all commercial premises, which could now pose a real threat to our high streets.

As Shadow Planning Minister I will be working with our housing, local government and environment teams on a robust response to the Government's failures.

OTHER PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITY

- **Electric Car Charging:** Following our Transport Committee report on the charging infrastructure I received an email from owner-occupiers of a block flats in Brentford who were having great difficulties in getting electric power into their car-park. Ineligible for grants that street properties are entitled to, the cost is going to be high. So I raised this in the Chamber with a Transport Minister – who will now "look into it"
- **Supply Chains:** I spoke about the shortage of HGV drivers & raised concerns about how Government relaxation of driving hours and testing requirements could impact on road safety
- **Loan Charge:** The Yorkshire Post reported that former armed forces personnel who had taken up agency work were feeling suicidal as HMRC had hit them with the Loan Charge. Yet again I tackled Treasury Minister Jesse Norman on the inequity of the loan charge, and yet again I got a non-answer.



Across from Parliament I visited the extraordinary Covid-Memorial Wall, met Jo Goodman, one of the founders of the project, and joined the calls of the bereaved families for the wall to be made into a permanent memorial to those who have died during this pandemic.

COMMUNITY UPDATE



Chiswick's Lifeboat station is the RNLI's second busiest of all their stations across the UK and Ireland. At my visit I learned that sadly, attempted suicides form a significant number of their "shouts". So the RNLI is working with the NHS, Samaritans and others on a strategy to support people feeling suicidal.



Bolder Academy is the long-awaited non-faith-based mixed secondary school serving Isleworth & Brentford. It was a great pleasure to attend the formal opening of their amazing new building next to Sky, a link that will provide valuable opportunities for Bolder students now and in the future.



The Mulberry Centre supports those affected by cancer. An independent charity in the grounds of West Mid, the Mulberry Centre is now seeing far more people facing a late-stage cancer diagnosis as a result of Covid pressures on the NHS. They are having to adapt their services to the needs of these cancer patients. I am so pleased that the Centre and its 150 volunteers have been awarded a Queen's award for Voluntary Service.



West Middlesex Hospital. 100 years ago the former Brentford Workhouse Infirmary became West Middlesex Hospital, and has served the people of Hounslow and Richmond boroughs ever since. Staff, trustees, MPs and NHS figures attended a church service followed by a tea party and celebrated the wonderful hospital staff and the work they do for us all.



I also met hospital staff in September to hear their concerns about the pressures that Covid continues to have on them and all parts of the NHS. Almost all of the 25 in-patients admitted with Covid are unvaccinated people in their 30s to 60s. These numbers, plus the pressure from long waiting lists, mean there are real concerns about the bed and staffing capacity of the hospital prior to the inevitable winter rise in in-patients.

Finally! Macmillan Coffee Morning & my Marathon fundraising on 6th November



Macmillan supported my sister in her final weeks, and her family afterwards, so this national charity is close to my heart. The annual Macmillan Cake-fest was me at Brentford Dock, and then Milford Arms in Isleworth where I had the pleasure of at least 6 pieces of cake.



I had to pull out of the London Marathon due to illness so instead, on November 6th, will be running the Thames Meander marathon raising funds for two charities. One is Macmillan, and the other, local charity, Friends of Cathja, a creative workshop for adults who are vulnerable to severe and enduring mental health issues. They are based on the Cathja, a Dutch barge on the Thames in Isleworth.

If you would like to support my marathon fundraising you can!

Donate to Macmillan via my Virgin fundraising page; <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/RuthCadbury> And to Friends of Cathja's via their fundraising link; <https://connectfoundationmentalhealthenthuse.com/%23/> & add " Ruth's marathon run" in the message part

And do come and cheer me on, along the Thames path anywhere from Kingston downstream to Barnes on November 6th

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Twitter: [@RuthCadbury](https://twitter.com/RuthCadbury) Web: www.ruthcadbury.org.uk Facebook: " [RuthCadburyMP](https://www.facebook.com/RuthCadburyMP/)"

Casework: for issues to raise with me as your MP, please contact my office: ruth@ruthcadbury.org.uk Tel: 020 8581 3646 or write: Ruth Cadbury MP, House of Commons, SWA 0AA. I hold regular advice surgeries, please get in touch for an appointment. Many issues can be dealt with quickly by email or a phone call which saves waiting for the next available surgery.

Diary: I welcome the opportunity to attend community events and to meet residents or party members, concerned about issues affecting the area or specific groups of people. Please do get in touch with by emailing ruthcadburymp@parliament.uk or phone 020 7219 8590

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