

February Newsletter

Good afternoon,

Thank you for taking the time to read my newsletter this month.

Last week, I voted for an immediate ceasefire between Israel and Gaza in Parliament. I have been calling for the fighting to end for months – it is absolutely clear that the death and destruction from Israel's ground offensive in Gaza cannot be allowed to continue, and that there must be no ground invasion of Rafah. Far too many innocent lives have been lost since Hamas' appalling attacks on October 7th and it has been beyond heartbreaking to see the huge loss of civilian life and scenes of parents burying their children and families starving. That is why I voted for an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages and a political process towards a two-state solution. You can read the full motion I voted for [here](#), and I will continue to push the UK Government to adopt this position.

The last few months have sadly seen a rise in community tensions that we have not seen for a very long time. Unfortunately, I am hearing from very many constituents who are being targeted with abuse, aggression, or intimidation as a result of their faith or background. There has been a particularly large increase in incidences of antisemitism and Islamophobia. Tell Mama has found that incidents of Islamophobia have tripled in the last four months, while the Community Security Trust has found that numbers of antisemitic incidents in 2023 reached a record high. I am doing all I can to tackle this head on and have been engaging with community leaders to discuss how we can reduce the impact of this awful rise in tensions and racism, as well as working with the police, councils and others to support constituents who have been victims of hate crime and racial abuse.

This month also saw confirmation from the Office for National Statistics that the UK entered a recession at the end of 2023. For many across the country who are finding it hard to manage their finances at the moment, this will be deeply concerning news. I was glad to be able support the Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves MP in holding the Government to account over this both during her important speech at Church House in response to the confirmation of a recession and in a subsequent parliamentary debate on the topic.

I also was grateful to be invited to speak to children at two local schools this month, including about my campaign to bring Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe home. If you would like me to visit your children's school, please do ask a member of staff to get in touch with my office and I would be very happy to come along!

Please read on to hear more about my work this month, including events I have spoken at as Shadow City Minister and issues I have been taking up locally. And you can read my annual report which covers much of the work I've done in Parliament and the constituency over the last year [here](#).

Thank you again for taking the time to read this newsletter and as usual, please do get in touch at tulip.siddiq.mp@parliament.uk if you have any queries or concerns that I can help with.

All the best,

Tulip Siddiq MP

Member of Parliament for Hampstead and Kilburn

Royal Free Maternity Unit Campaign Update

This month, I have been continuing my campaign to save the Royal Free Hospital's maternity unit. As you may know, local health chiefs have made proposals to close our much beloved maternity and neonatal unit at the Royal Free. Having spoken to doctors, patients, and local people, it is clear that the closure of the unit would have a really bad impact on the local community, and I am therefore doing all I can to prevent it from going ahead.

I know many of you use the Whittington Hospital and its maternity unit, which is also under consideration for closure, and, of course, I don't want to see any reduction in the local services vital to my constituents, including at the Whittington. I believe we need an upgrade and modernisation of existing maternity and neonatal services in North London, and I am leading this campaign to save the Royal Free unit as it is in my constituency and is so heavily relied upon by many of my constituents.

I would encourage all those who share my concern about this to make a submission to the consultation, which you can do [here](#). You can find information about how to complete the form and some key arguments to reference on my [website](#), where you can also sign my petition to save the Royal Free Hospital maternity unit.



Publishing the Financial Services Review

I was incredibly proud to launch my Financial Services Review this month. Together with the Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves MP, I have been working on putting together a comprehensive review of financial services policy, covering key areas like strengthening customer protections, supporting financially vulnerable individuals and small businesses, and tackling fraud and scams head-on. As I said in an article in the [Camden New Journal](#), given that the financial services sector accounts for 12% of the UK's entire economic output, this is a really important issue to get right.

I have spent the last few months in many conversations with a huge range of experts on these issues, including a panel of ten senior figures from the sector. The Review builds on the extensive engagement we have done across industry to meet banks, insurers, fintechs, asset managers,

investors, payments providers, consumer groups, and trade associations. I spoke at Labour's Business Conference to launch my review, entitled 'Financing Growth', which you can read in full [here](#).



Launching the Flexible and Family-Friendly Working APPG

In fantastic news, this month I set up the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Flexible and Family-Friendly Working. The cross-party group, formed in partnership with the wonderful charity [Working Families](#), will sit in the House of Commons and focus on championing the benefits of access to flexible working which has the potential to do a great deal to create healthier and more family-friendly work environments.

While much progress has been made in recent years in the legislation on flexible working, there is so much more that can be done. Currently, under half of employees across the country feel comfortable formally asking their employer for flexible working arrangements, and research by the TUC shows that 3 in 10 requests to work flexibly are simply refused by employers. This APPG I am chairing with MPs from across the House will bring stakeholders, experts, and campaigners together to amplify and champion the importance of access to flexible working and promote best practice in business.



Challenging the Government on council tax increases

At a time when families across the country are finding it incredibly hard to make ends meet, I was appalled that the Government are forcing councils to raise taxes. I know from my correspondence with many of my constituents that increases like this are often the difference between just about managing and ending up in real financial trouble. Increases across the country are expected to add about £100 to a typical band D council tax bill, adding to the financial pressure on families.

I raised this directly with the Government at Treasury Questions and asked whether they believed that this was the right timing for putting this extra tax burden on families. I will always stand up for my constituents when I believe that the Government are making a decision that will actively making things worse – this is certainly an example of that.



Speaking at the launch of a report on reaching net zero

It was a pleasure to speak at the launch of the report on net zero published by the Institute for Public Policy Research and the Green Finance Institute. I want to see the financial services sector act as a catalyst for the UK to become a world leader in green finance. From my conversations with those in the sector, I understand that businesses need long-term direction, clarity and certainty to have the confidence to invest in the net-zero transition.

I am determined to work with the private sector to improve data flows on green finance from the real economy to financial firms. The reality is, we need the financial services sector to come with us if we are serious about reaching net zero at the speed that we need to.



Hosting a constituency event in Parliament

I had the joy of hosting a local campaigners from Hampstead, Kilburn, and Highgate in Parliament for a reception this month. It was fantastic to see friends old and new, and to have the opportunity to say thank you to all those who make up the fabric of my wonderful constituency. From those who have campaigned to get step-free access at West Hampstead underground station to brilliant local councillors who are supporting constituents, I was delighted to bring together such a great group of people and had such a lovely evening.



Raising failures in PIP distribution in Parliament

I had a heartbreaking exchange with a constituent who, despite being hospitalised multiple times with bipolar disorder, was deemed ineligible for Personal Independence Payment (PIP). It was only after a very difficult and lengthy tribunal that he was finally deemed eligible. I raised this appalling case with the Minister in Parliament and urged the Government to fix the system that far too often penalises those who need support.

The Big Issue found that up to 90% of initial challenges over benefit decisions are rejected, but that 68% of claimants win their case when appealing against a decision at tribunal. This is an indication that something is going seriously wrong with the system. The ordeal of going through a tribunal, especially for people who are in significantly difficult personal circumstances, can have a real impact on someone's wellbeing. The Government must ensure that vulnerable people have access to the support they need.



Community Bulletin

- The Parliamentary Education and Engagement Service will be hosting their next residential [UK Parliament Teacher Ambassador Programme, 1-3 July 2024](#). This programme offers a unique three-day course where teachers get to experience the workings of Parliament first-hand before returning to their classrooms to build their students' understanding and increase their engagement with UK Parliament. They will cover the cost of transport, accommodation, and most meals for teachers taking part and welcome applications from teachers, school/college leaders and teacher training providers working with young people aged 5-18. Please do email teachertraining@parliament.uk for any further information.
- Thales Alenia Space are organising this year's MARSBalloon scheme, a hands-on science project for primary and secondary students and aims to harness students' curiosity and creativity about the world. MARSBalloon is open to secondary and primary age children all across the UK and there is no cost to take part in the project other than that of experiment materials and postage. Further information can also be found [here](#).