



**David  
Baines MP**  
Member of Parliament for  
St Helens North

Newsletter  
**March 2025**

Representing Billinge and Seneley Green, Blackbrook, Haydock, Moss Bank,  
Newton-le-Willows, Parr, Rainford and Windle

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Visits to local schools including Birchley St Mary's in Billinge
- Statement on the government's welfare reform plans
- Progress on tackling NHS waiting lists



**And more, including:**

**"Fix the system, not the kids"**

Campaigning for education reform  
and dyslexia support with Jamie Oliver



Dear Residents,

Welcome to my March newsletter which you can now encourage your friends and family to subscribe to [via this sign-up form on my website](#).

I hope you find it interesting and please do feel free to contact me anytime using the details on the back page if you need my support.

## Tackling anti-social behaviour in St Helens North

Like most people, I've been shocked by the recent incidents of antisocial behaviour in Blackbrook around the Chain Lane area. Some young people have been targeting buses and shops, even causing some buses to be diverted.

It is a minority – I know most young people will be just as appalled at this sort of behaviour as most people of any age – but it is totally unacceptable. I asked to meet with police and council officials on Chain Lane recently to discuss the ASB and the action being taken to tackle it, and I was pleased to hear they're going into local schools and increasing their patrols and presence in the area.

People in St Helens North deserve and demand to feel safe. At a recent Age UK event at the Mansion House in Windle, I spoke with older residents who shared their concerns about safety, particularly at night. The new Crime and Policing Bill contains many steps in the right direction to give police more powers and make sure that those responsible face the consequences of their actions.

One type of crime which for too long has been seen as low level and effectively decriminalised is shoplifting and violence against shopworkers. This is what Labour's new Crime and Policing Bill will address and [I was proud to vote for it and speak in favour of it in the House of Commons](#). I also wrote about it in a [column for the St Helens Star](#).

It is the biggest upgrade to law and order in a generation with new measures to tackle child sexual exploitation, antisocial behaviour, knife crime, violence against women and girls, violence against shopworkers and more. The Tory benches were mostly empty for the debate and not a single Reform MP turned up.



# Parliamentary Update

For too long, our public transport system has suffered from underinvestment, holding St Helens North and the wider region back. Forty years after Thatcher's failed bus deregulation experiment, we're finally bringing services back into public control. But the fight doesn't stop there—we need fair investment to ensure all our rail stations, including Garswood and Earlestown, are fully accessible to everyone.

I was [proud to speak up for our community and push for the changes we need](#) during a debate in Westminster Hall.

This month, [I voted and spoke in favour of Labour's Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill](#), which will deliver the biggest upgrade to child protection laws in a generation. Our children deserve the best start in life, and this bill is a crucial step forward.

I also welcome the news that Defra will provide [£108,000 in funding for flood defences at West End Road in Blackbrook](#)—an important investment in protecting our community from the increasing threat of flooding.

I had the [pleasure of meeting Jamie Oliver](#) to discuss the urgent need for reform in our school system to better support children with dyslexia. As someone with personal experience of dyslexia, and from my years as a teacher, I know how critical it is to get this right for our children. As Vice Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Dyslexia, I'll continue working to drive the change we need. No child should be left behind—we must fix the system, not the kids.

In Parliament, [I met with POTS UK to learn more about this often-overlooked condition](#) and discuss what can be done to improve awareness and access to treatment. I have since written to the Health Secretary, urging action to end the postcode lottery that leaves too many without the care they need.

I also met with Marie Curie UK and their ambassador, actor Larry Lamb, to highlight the urgent need for investment in end of life care, and I met [representatives from the Batten Disease Family Association](#) and their ambassador, Lord Ian Botham, to discuss the uncertainty families face due to ongoing discussions about treatment access. I've written to NICE to express my support for affected families and will continue to fight to ensure every child who needs this treatment can access it.



# The Chancellor's Spring Statement

The [Government's Spring Statement](#) has confirmed some important changes that will directly benefit many people here in St Helens North. Here are some headlines:

- **Building to boost the economy** – Major planning reforms will boost investment, help to create more jobs, and drive local growth
- **Putting more money in your pocket** – From next month, the National Minimum Wage is going up, giving millions a well-deserved pay rise including more than 5000 people in St Helens North. At the same time, the State Pension is increasing.
- **Investment in training and skills to get England building** – Labour is committing £625 million in England over four years to boost existing training routes, delivering up to 60,000 additional skilled construction workers this Parliament, and providing an additional £100 million to support 35,000 construction-focused skills bootcamp places with a further £40 million for up to 10,000 additional places on new construction Foundation Apprenticeships.
- **More Investment in Defence & Security** – An extra £2.2 billion for defence next year, protecting our national security and also supporting jobs and industries that rely on defence contracts, benefiting workers and businesses across the UK.

I know there is some concern about the welfare changes proposed, and you can read more about that over the page.

## Delivering for the NHS

[Labour is taking action to fix the NHS after years of Tory mismanagement.](#) Since July, we've delivered 2 million extra appointments—seven months ahead of schedule, we've cut waiting lists by 193,000, ended junior doctor strikes, recruited 1,000 more GPs, and launched the biggest NHS consultation in history.

We're investing in hospices, increasing carers' support, improving mental health care, expanding dental appointments, and trialing AI to detect breast cancer earlier. Our reforms prioritise patients, scrapping NHS England, fixing GP access, and tackling waiting lists. The Tories broke it. Reform would kill it. Labour will fix it.



# Pathways to Work: Statement on welfare reform plans

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Liz Kendall has published the government's plans to reform welfare in a Green Paper titled 'Pathways to Work', which you [can read here](#). Some of the proposals will be consulted on, and some will be legislated. You can [view the consultation here](#).

We need a welfare system that works for all of us. Those who can work, should. Those who need adjustments in the workplace should get them. And importantly, those who cannot work should always be properly supported.

There is no doubt that the current system is failing. Too many people are stuck on benefits with not enough support to get into work, and too many young people are not in education, employment or training – about 1 in 8 nationally, which is around 1 million young people.

I welcome a lot of what the government has announced including £1billion for employment support, scrapping Work Capability Assessments, increasing Universal Credit above inflation, introducing a 'Right to Try' so people can have a go at working and return to their benefits without a reassessment if it doesn't work out, and giving more support for those severely disabled who will sadly never be able to work.

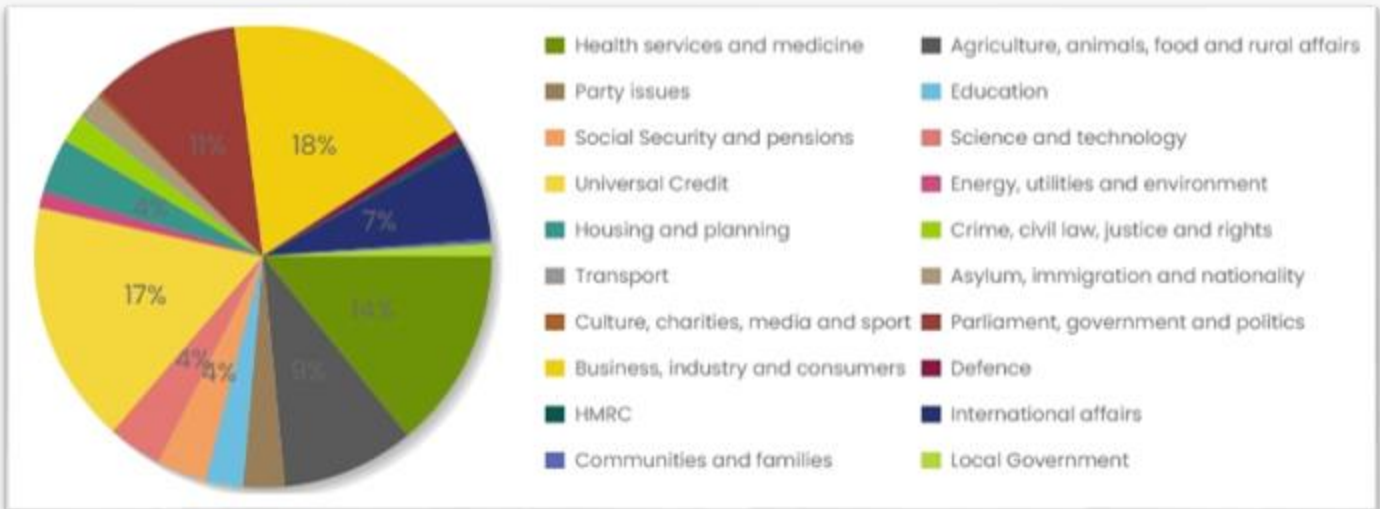
However I am concerned about proposals to raise the threshold for the Personal Independence Payment Daily Living payment, and I am worried too about the idea of increasing the age for young people to qualify for the Universal Credit Health element to 22.

Key reforms to try and make the system fairer and more sustainable include:

- Rebalancing Universal Credit by increasing the standard allowance above inflation for the first time ever, with a £775 per year cash boost by 2029/30, while adjusting the health top-up for new claims from 2026, alongside new support to help people back to health and work.
- Removing barriers to work by ensuring that trying a job will never lead to a reassessment. This 'right to try' will give people confidence to take on employment without the fear of losing support if it doesn't work out
- Exploring a new unemployment insurance scheme to provide a higher rate of benefit for those who lose work, helping them get back on track faster.
- Protecting those most in need by maintaining the health top-up for existing Universal Credit claimants and proposing an additional premium for those who will never be able to work, ensuring they never have to face repeated reassessments.

It is important to note that none of the reforms announced by the government will result in any immediate changes to anyone's benefits. I want to reassure all my constituents that my office and I will continue to be available to help people access benefits or advice.

# Helping people in St Helens North



**We've dealt with over 300 individual cases in March relating to a range of issues including Universal Credit, business support and the NHS. Some examples include:**

## ✓ HMRC Error Resolved

A local resident faced serious financial stress after HMRC wrongly pursued them for someone else's tax debt. Because of our intervention, HMRC corrected the error before the new financial year, updating their records and giving them peace of mind.

## 🏥 NHS Support

A constituent was facing delays to vital surgery, putting their job at risk. Thanks to our intervention, the operation was brought forward, with a promise of an earlier slot if one becomes available. They can now focus on recovery and returning to work, free from pain.

## 💡 DWP Appeal Success

A resident struggling to get a fair response to their Work Capability Assessment contacted me and my team. With our help, the appeal was upheld – resulting in a rebate, compensation, and proper support moving forward.

## 👥 Tackling Fly-Tipping

A constituent reported persistent fly-tipping in the community with no action being taken. We raised the issue directly – the landlord is now clearing the site, sending a clear message that fly-tipping won't be tolerated.

## 🌳 Post-Storm Help for Local Resident

Following January's storms, a resident was bounced between agencies after a tree fell in her garden with no one stepping forward to fix. After our involvement, St Helens Council and Torus agreed a plan – the stump is being removed, the ground repaired, and the garden restored.

## In St Helens North

It was a real privilege to meet local resident Richard Staples at my recent advice surgery in Newton. He is doing incredible voluntary work refurbishing old computers for children in Ukraine. He also told me about the dedicated volunteers knitting blankets and baby clothes to send over. I'll be working with Richard to support this effort.

I took part in an event at Age UK MidMersey at the Mansion House in Windle, answering questions from service users and volunteers about the issues that matter to them, and my team and I attended two community events at Park Farm in Moss Bank, [speaking with residents](#) and other organisations showcasing the support and advice available in our local area. My team and I were on hand to talk about how an MP can help.

Thank you to Headteacher Lisa Houghton and Chair of Governors Chris Forrest for [inviting me to Ashurst Primary School](#). Ashurst is one of three schools in St Helens North selected for Labour's new free breakfast club programme, launching in April and helping ensure more children start the day ready to learn.

It was also wonderful to visit [Birchley St Mary's Catholic Primary School in Billinge](#). A massive thank you to Headteacher Ruth Martin, the staff, and all the amazing children who shared their ideas on improving schools and asked fantastic questions about my role as an MP. They're a credit to their school and their families!

It was great to catch up with Jim Housley, [who is preparing to walk the Camino De Santiago](#) to raise money for The Steve Prescott Foundation, Sam's Diamonds Cancer Support, and the Northwest Miners Heritage Association. I'm sponsoring him and I wish him the best of luck on this incredible journey!

It was an honour to [take part in the St Patrick's Day Mass](#) and Parade in Ashton, organised by the Brian Boru Club which is the oldest Irish club in the UK and a cornerstone of our local Catholic community.

And finally, it is brilliant news that [The Junction pub has secured planning permission](#) for its marquee! I was delighted to be able to play a small part in securing this outcome and send my huge congratulations to Paul and the team—here's to a bright future for this fantastic community pub!



# Tell me your priorities

I've been out in recent weeks speaking with residents about their local and national priorities including in Sutton South East ward, part of which is in St Helens North. April will be another busy month please do follow my social media for updates.

Please do continue to get in touch with me to tell me about the things that matter to you: let me know your priorities [via this survey](#) or get in touch using the details below. You can also follow what I am doing as your Member of Parliament [via the dedicated news page on my website](#).

In the coming weeks I am looking forward to my next advice surgery to meet more residents face to face, more meetings and plenty of community visits.

Best wishes,

David



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**Labour Member of Parliament for St Helens North**

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