



**David
Baines**

Member of Parliament for
St Helens North



Newsletter January 2025

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

Dear Residents,

Welcome to my January newsletter. It promises to be another busy year for the government as we continue to implement our plan for change in St Helens North.

Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill

I take child protection and safeguarding extremely seriously – as a former teacher, as a former council leader, and as a Dad. That's why I was proud to vote for Labour's Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill at the start of January. The Bill contains the largest raft of measures to improve child protection in a generation, including:

- action to enforce the creation of 'children not in school' registers and a unique number for every child – like every adult has a national insurance number – to help end the tragedy of children vanishing from education and protect young people from exploitation and abuse;
- stronger safeguards on home education, meaning no automatic right to home educate where parents are subject to a child protection investigation or plan;
- and better protection for children inside and outside school, thanks to a new requirement to involve schools and other professionals in safeguarding decisions.

As well as these and other child protection measures the Bill will also establish free breakfast clubs at every Primary School, put a limit on the amount of branded uniform items families can be expected to buy, ensure every classroom has a qualified teacher at the front of it, and much more.

The Tories and Reform voted against all this.

I was [delighted to speak in the chamber](#) to support the bill and to stand up for children, and I have also been appointed to the Bill Committee which is now scrutinising it over the coming weeks. I am determined to do all I can to make sure every child in St Helens North get the best possible start in life



Child Sexual Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is an utterly despicable crime and we have to do all we can to prevent it. Perpetrators must be punished and victims and survivors must be protected and supported.

For too long, not enough action has been taken to prevent these crimes. I therefore support the steps the Government is taking to implement the recommendations of [the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse \(IICSA\)](#), chaired by Professor Alexis Jay. The Home Secretary announced that the details of implementation will be announced before Easter and I strongly welcome this.

The IICSA report was published in 2022. However, the previous Government had not implemented any of its 20 recommendations prior to the General Election in 2024, despite having almost two years to do so.

All this was in the news at the start of January as the Tories cynically and shamefully sought to play politics with this issue. They tabled an amendment to the Children's Wellbeing Bill which would have killed the Bill, refusing it a Second Reading, and meaning that none of the measures within it to improve child protection NOW could be implemented. The Tories, supported by Reform, tabled an amendment with objections to our school proposals and tacked on the end an ask regarding a national inquiry into grooming gangs.

I want to be clear: I have no objection whatsoever to any kind of inquiry if that's what victims want and our communities need. We should welcome anything which helps us to ensure such awful, horrific crimes don't happen again. But if there is a need for a national inquiry it doesn't need to be put in the Children's Wellbeing Bill and it needs to carefully consider the needs and views of victims as well as the wider community.

And Labour is taking action: the Home Secretary has announced that [Baroness Louise Casey will conduct a rapid audit](#) of the current scale and nature of grooming gangs across the country and make recommendations on further work needed. This piece of research will look at further evidence that was not available at the time of the previous two-year IICSA inquiry into this issue.

The rapid audit will examine data collected through new 'problem profiles' compiled by police forces. It will examine ethnicity data and the demographics of the gangs involved, as well as their victims, and will look at the cultural and societal drivers behind this appalling crime.

The Government has also announced that it will provide £5 million of additional funding to ensure much stronger national support for local inquiries to get truth and justice for victims and survivors. Legislation will shortly be presented to Parliament to make it mandatory to report child abuse. Once this legislation, which I support, is approved by MPs, it will become an offence, with professional and criminal sanctions, to either fail to report or to cover up child sexual abuse.

Despite multiple inquiries, reports and hundreds of recommendations, far too little action has been taken up to this point and shamefully little progress has been made. This Labour Government is determined to leave no stone unturned to get protection and justice for victims of these appalling crimes.

Parliamentary Update

In January I met the Prime Minister to discuss St Helens North and I also had the opportunity to meet King Charles. He was very interested in Glass Futures and our work to tackle climate change, and I extended an invitation to visit St Helens North which I hope he will be able to accept.

I was delighted to meet in Parliament St Helens resident Emma McNally who is [Chief Executive of Tourettes Action](#). She has worked tirelessly to improve access to diagnostic and treatment pathways. I offer my full support to help how I can.

In January, the government [announced a review into social care](#). Labour is determined to finally deliver on this, working with other parties and all those with a stake in the system to ensure it delivers dignity and care for all.

We also unveiled more [details of our NHS Plan for Change](#). In the Budget, Labour announced £22 billion funding for the NHS, which is the largest boost it has received since 2010 outside of Covid. Labour is determined to cut waiting times and improve access to GPs, which was something I had the chance to raise with Health Secretary Wes Streeting face to face in December.

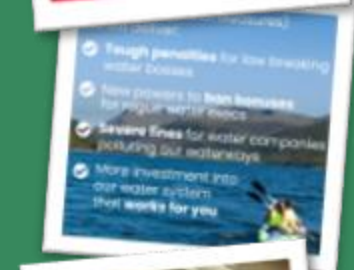
I was in the chamber to hear the [very powerful statement from the Home Secretary](#) about the horrific murder of Bebe King, Elsie Dot Stancombe and Alice Da Silva Aguiar in Southport. It is essential that the families get answers about how this terrible attack could take place and why this happened, and it is right that there is now a public inquiry.

I was [proud to vote for Labour's Renters' Rights Bill](#) this month, which will be the biggest boost for renters in a generation. It will end no fault evictions while landlords will no longer be able to ask for multiple months of rent up front. Labour has also announced that from April [working families with babies in neonatal care will be entitled to additional time off as a day one right](#).

The Tories left our rivers, lakes and seas choked by record levels of sewage. [I voted for Labour's new Water Bill](#) to clean them up by placing water companies under special measures with new powers to ban bonuses and bring criminal charges against bosses. I was also proud to support Labour's plan to support our forces with a new Armed Forces Commissioner. We are also working to fix potholes, [committing a record £1.6 billion worth of funding to fill potholes](#) and make our roads safer.



The Labour Government confirms working families with babies in neonatal care will be entitled to extra time off.



I VOTED FOR THE ARMED FORCES COMMISSIONER
This Labour Government is creating the first ever **Independent champion** for serving personnel and their families.



Holocaust Memorial Day

To mark this year's [Holocaust Memorial Day](#), I signed the book of commitment in parliament on behalf of St Helens North and had the honour of attending the extremely moving Holocaust Memorial Day event at St Helens Town Hall.

I would like to especially pay tribute to the students from Outwood Academy Haydock, Hope Academy and Mill Green who took part in the event.

After the service, it was an incredible privilege to [help unveil a plaque to honour former MP and Nazi prosecutor Lord Hartley Shawcross](#). He was MP for St Helens from 1945-1958 and in that time as Chief Prosecutor helped to bring numerous high profile Nazis to justice.

The plaque is a poignant and permanent reminder of the power of good people to stand up to hate and hold evil and intolerance to account.

I was delighted to meet Lord Shawcross' children Sir William Shawcross and Dr Joanna Shawcross who unveiled their father's plaque alongside local resident Tommy Fairclough who as a young boy campaigned for Lord Shawcross. I first met Tommy last summer on a visit to his home in Parr, and I am so pleased that he was invited to take part in this special event.

80 years ago St Helens stood up to fascism and today, with extremism on the rise here and elsewhere, we need to once again take a stand.



Casework Update

My office has helped with over 400 individual cases in January relating to a range of issues from animal welfare to social security and pensions to housing and planning. We have also helped families access social housing and healthcare, as well as helping residents access supported accommodation.



WASPI Update

I would like to thank all those who have campaigned and contacted me on this issue of 1950s born women who have suffered pension injustice.



[The government announced just before Christmas that no compensation would be provided](#), concluding that providing blanket compensation for everyone, when most women knew about the changes, simply wouldn't be right, nor would it be possible to deliver a tailored compensation scheme.

The government accepts the Ombudsman's finding of maladministration and has apologised for there being a 28-month delay in starting to send letters to 1950s-born women about the changes to State Pension age.

The government at the time clearly should have written to people informing them earlier. That would have been the right thing to do.

Unfortunately, there is not unlimited money for compensation. The Labour government has already committed to compensation for victims of the Post Office Horizon and the Infected Blood scandals, and it simply isn't possible to do everything we'd like to do. However, while blanket compensation isn't possible, I want to continue to see if a tailored approach could be found.

I will therefore continue to advocate for WASPI women and work with colleagues to seek appropriate compensation and action. [I have joined the All Party Parliamentary Group on State Pension Inequality for Women](#) (pictured) which will continue to work with campaigners to raise their issues in Parliament.

It is also vital that such failures of communication don't happen again, and I am therefore glad that the Work and Pensions Secretary, Liz Kendall, has committed to ensuring that her Department learns the lessons from this serious and complex case.

There is positive news for pensioners overall with Labour's [commitment to the pensions triple lock meaning the state pension will increase by up to £470 next April](#) and up to £1,900 over the course of this parliament. We have also delivered record funding for the NHS, new support for those caring for loved ones with the biggest ever cash increase in the earnings threshold for Carer's Allowance, and more.

I know the lack of financial compensation for WASPI women is a disappointment, and it is for me too. But I will continue to help the campaign in any way I can.

In St Helens North

The month started with horrendous weather and significant flooding in areas including Blackbrook and Rainford. My heartfelt thanks go to those councillors, council staff, voluntary organisations, churches and businesses who stepped up to help those affected. I have been in constant contact with both the council and the Environment Agency, raising concerns about a lack of information and adequate infrastructure, and will continue to press government to ensure lessons are learnt.

I had the honour of meeting St Helens resident Gill Golden, one of the authors of [a new book written by bereaved mums](#) about the loss of their children with the aim of giving hope to others suffering the same situation. Gill's son Zachary was just 20 months old when he died. It is a beautiful book, full of love, and Gill and all those involved have my admiration.

I have co-singed a letter to Ministers calling for members of the [British Coal Staff Superannuation Scheme](#) to receive pension justice, just as those in the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme. This has been raised with me by several residents and I am hopeful of a positive outcome.

I was able to help secure a meeting for Paul Draper from The Junction in Rainford with St Helens Council planning officers to discuss the ongoing issue regarding the marquee on the land at the back of the pub, and I hope a common sense solution can be found. In other meetings, it was an honour to be invited by [Valley Brass Band](#) Haydock to attend the official celebration of their King's Award for Voluntary Service. As a Yicker, it makes me extremely proud to see them getting the recognition they deserve. And it was also [a pleasure to visit Rainford High](#) to meet with Principal Mr Young and Special Educational Needs lead Miss Burgess to hear about their vital work supporting students.

I am delighted that Rachel Reeves has given her backing to the Old Trafford redevelopment which is significant for Newton-le-Willows because it means the rail freight terminal currently located in Manchester will have to move - and we want it to come to Parkside.

An [informal public consultation is already underway](#) and I have contacted Ministers to ask for a meeting to discuss how we can ensure we secure this investment for Newton-le-Willows, and I will be continuing to work with the Labour council and others in driving these plans forward. Labour has already delivered the Parkside Link Road and plans for Phase One, and now we want to secure the rail freight interchange too.

Finally, I am delighted that the Labour government has confirmed that [St Helens Borough is to receive at least £1.1m](#) to improve access to vital early years support such as pregnancy support, infant feeding advice, parenting classes and more. This is vital funding and will help to give more children in St Helens North the best start in life.



Tell me your priorities

Please do continue to get in touch with me to tell me about the local and national issues which matter to you: let me know your priorities via this survey or get in touch using the details below.

In the coming weeks I am looking forward to my next advice surgeries in Parr and Newton-le-Willows, door knocking to meet more residents face to face, more meetings and plenty of community visits.

Please remember you can stay up to date with my work on social media – search David Baines MP – and get in touch with me using the details below if you need my support.

Best wishes,

David

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