

Forward Together

Latest news from David Baines MP

Your Member of Parliament for St Helens North

Summer 2026 Edition



**Celebrating success
at Bleak Hill Rovers!**

PLUS: Buses back into public control this September... Hillsborough Law passes through Parliament... Working with our new Prime Minister to deliver change... A look back at the last Parliamentary year... AND MORE

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Welcome to my summer newsletter. It's the end of another parliamentary year so this edition also includes a look back at the last 12 months in Westminster, as well as the latest round up of my work both here and down in parliament.

Remember you can encourage your friends and family to subscribe [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.

6 free breakfast clubs becomes 9 in St Helens North

Every child deserves the best start in life, and breakfast clubs can play a part in that, helping to give a good start to every school day and helping parents and carers too.

[That's why Labour is rolling out free breakfast clubs across every primary school, including 3 more in St Helens North from this September!](#)

I am delighted to say that St James C of E Primary School, Wargrave C of E Primary School and Queen's Park CE/URC Primary School will be joining the list of schools with free breakfast clubs already up and running.

They will join Pace, Ashurst Primary School, Garswood Primary and Nursery School, The District C of E Primary School, Rectory C of E Primary School, and Carr Mill Primary School.

Labour's action to bring down expensive uniform costs is also coming into force, with new legal limits in place from September on the number of branded uniform items schools can require.

I want to thank our schools for everything they do, and I will continue to support them to give every child the best start in life.

I hope these measures – and more to come – will be a help to lots of families in St Helens North.



The latest schools will join Carr Mill (above) and Garswood (below) in providing free breakfast clubs for all pupils



The Hillsborough Law is here

In July, and in one of Keir Starmer's last acts as PM, the Hillsborough Law officially passed the latest stage in the lawmaking process.

It was a privilege to be able to take part in the debate and to put on record, again, my sincere gratitude and respect for the Hillsborough families and all those who have campaigned for truth and justice.

You can watch my speech during the debate [here](#).

This is the victory of the Hillsborough families that never gave up - and all those affected by state coverups.

I would also like to pay tribute to our former Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, for being the person to get this done during his final week in office.

He said this Labour government would deliver the Hillsborough Law in full, and that's what has been done. That will go down as his legacy.



Working with our new Prime Minister

After a hard-fought battle in the Makerfield by-election and his campaign to become Labour leader, Andy Burnham is now officially our Prime Minister.

It's fair to say he has hit the ground running: scrapping VAT on electricity bills, reintroducing the £2 bus cap for the whole country, announcing a 20% cut in business rates for pubs, clubs and music venues, and launching the brand new No10 North in Manchester.

He's also been making appointments to government and **I am delighted to confirm I have been asked to serve as one of his Parliamentary Private Secretaries.** I'm looking forward to assisting him in delivering the change St Helens North, our politics, and the country needs.



Billinge Medical Practice – Update

I have held several meetings with with Bilinge Medical Practice, representatives of the Patient Participation Group, and representatives from NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB), including Chair Sir David Henshaw to discuss the decision to move Bilinge Medical Practice to Garswood.

You can read [the longer statement and letters on my Facebook page](#).

I was firm in sharing my view that this must only be a short-term fix. I am pleased to say that the ICB have agreed to write to me to make clear they are willing to work together to pursue a long-term solution that puts a GP service back in Bilinge. However, I know they then stated it was 'permanent' at a subsequent public meeting. I have asked them for clarity on these comments and have again made my position clear – it cannot be permanent.

I asked about the problems that might be encountered by patients due to the distance, and was assured that home visits would continue for vulnerable patients.

However I am still not satisfied and I remain worried that the distance and inaccessibility for patients in Bilinge and particularly in Orrell will make it too difficult for people to easily access services.

I have already contacted Merseytravel to discuss whether more frequent bus services might be feasible and will update residents in due course.

This is a difficult situation for all involved and I would respectfully urge everyone to treat the Practice and ICB staff with kindness and respect. I will be working to secure funding for a viable and sustainable long-term solution for Bilinge, and will do all I can to work with anyone interested to make that happen.

Fireworks – Have Your Say!

Since being elected I've been sharing the concerns of people in St Helens North who have contacted me regularly on anti-social use of fireworks and I am pleased to say the government has launched an ew consultation on the issue.

Ministers want to hear your thoughts on:

- Restricting the availability of the noisiest fireworks to the general public
- Increasing the number of products that are banned due to unacceptable risk to communities
- Reviewing the wider regulatory framework for fireworks classified as 'lower risk'

You can find out more and [access the consultation to have your say here](#).

Buses come back into public control in St Helens

Public transport should be run for the public, not for profit. That's why we are bringing our buses back under public control in the Liverpool City Region, starting in St Helens in September.

So many people in St Helens North and across the country rely on our bus services every day – whether it is to get to work, see family and friends or drop the kids off at school – and people deserve affordable and reliable transport. Since Thatcher deregulated the bus network in the 1980s we've been badly let down – now that is changing. From day one of our buses being brought into public control in September, people will see:

- 2-hour services upgraded to run hourly, plus more evening & weekend routes.
- Extended routes linking directly to local hospitals, colleges, and rail stations.
- A brand-new express route straight to Liverpool John Lennon Airport.
- Brand-new, state-of-the-art, low-emission buses

For more information on the changes – including updated timetables and routes – people can find out more [here](#)

Jobs and opportunities coming to Haydock

AVK – a global leader in innovative power solutions – is investing £3 million to open a new facility in Haydock, bringing a high number of skilled jobs, apprenticeships and graduate opportunities to the area

[Not only are they creating many high-quality skilled jobs right here in our communities, they are also working together with St Helens College to ensure that exciting new opportunities are open for young people across St Helens.](#)

In my time as both a Member of Parliament and leader of St Helens Borough Council I have always argued for and supported investment in our communities – we have the talent and the infrastructure ready to go – and this is a clear vote of confidence that our area is a place where businesses know they set up and thrive, bringing the benefits of jobs and growth for local people in and around our communities.



In St Helens North

I recently received wonderful letters from the children in Year 4 at Rectory C of E Primary School. They had read *Wisp: A Story of Hope* by Zana Fraillon and had been so moved by the tale of a child refugee that they decided to write to me to say how important it is that we look after people in need with kindness and care. It was fantastic to visit the class to say thank you to all the children and their teacher Mrs Maddox for the amazing letters.

The St Helens Book Stop is one of the shining lights in our local community. and I'm proud to support them any way I can. It was great to pop in for a catch up with Barrie Pennington who is one of their trustees and who also does a huge amount for the wider local area, and manager Nik.

It was a privilege to help present the awards at Bleak Hill Rovers' end of season celebration. Thank you to the coaches Robin, Michelle and Ian for inviting me to be a part of their special day, and well done to each and every player. The club is a fantastic part of our local community, like all sport clubs – I will always do everything I can to support them to grow and thrive, and my thanks go to all the volunteers who give up so much of their time and energy to make them a success.

It was also my pleasure to attend the Rugby League Magic Weekend with Andy Burnham and Metro Mayor Steve Rotherham to discuss rugby league and how we can grow the game in our city region and beyond.

I was pleased to visit the children at Corpus Christi where I met with their Youth Council to hear about the work they have been doing throughout the year. The pupils proudly shared the positive impact they are making, showed me around and highlighted the key school improvement priorities. They are a credit to their school!

It was an emotional day at CETRA for the official installation of the new bleed control cabinet. It features a tribute to Liam Collier who was killed last year, and his loved ones were there to help unveil the kit. Thank you again to the amazing children and staff at St James who kick started this campaign, to Steve Caunce Ltd who provided the kit, and to Sharon, Dot, Jill, Margaret, Mal and all the incredible volunteers at Cetra who have made this happen.



In Westminster

Parliament is in recess, however I am delighted to see the new Prime Minister announce a range of measures to help people with their day to day living as well as a renewed focus on long term problems that need addressing.

VAT from household electricity bills to be removed from 1 October. As the [Prime Minister said in his first intervention](#), Westminster has not been working for people for too long, with families in St Helens North struggling with the cost of living. Taking immediate action to cut taxes on energy bills and put more money in people's pockets will give people some breathing space. The cutting of VAT on electricity bills is expected to take around £45 off the yearly Ofgem price cap in October. This is on top of the £150 removed from bills at the last Budget.

I'm delighted to [support the Prime Minister in his plans to fix social care](#). Fixing our social care system is something we need to face head on. Political point scoring for short term gain - egged on by some parts of the media - is why social care reform has been put in the 'Too Difficult' pile by governments for so long.

In St Helens Borough our Labour council led the way on integrating health and social care but there is much more to be done so that everyone gets the care and dignity they deserve. The Prime Minister is willing to work with other political parties to deliver change. We all need to step up.

I was pleased to see [business rates will be cut by 20%](#) for pubs, clubs, and live music venues across England from April next year. The discount will apply to nearly 32,000 hospitality businesses and is expected to save a typical pub some £1,100 annually.

I have campaigned for this for a while after speaking with local businesses that need help. We said we would protect pubs and local high streets in St Helens North - they are the beating heart of our communities - and that's what we will continue to do so.

I also welcome Andy Burnham's commitment to end rough sleeping and will support the government in that task over the coming months and years.

ANDY BURNHAM:
WE ARE
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and reforms
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ANDY BURNHAM:
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END
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Looking back at the last parliamentary year...

Another parliamentary year has come to an end – the second of this Labour government – and it's a chance to reflect on the things that the government has put through parliament that impacts people in St Helens North and across the country.

From the Employment Rights Act, The Renters Rights Act and the Budget in 2025, there is plenty to reflect on:

September 2025

The **Armed Forces Commissioner Bill** became law. With Royal Assent, we moved closer to appointing the first Armed Forces Commissioner, giving personnel and families an independent voice to champion their welfare. The new Defence Industrial Strategy announced puts skills at the heart of Labour's plans to make the country safer and boost jobs.

October 2025

Important votes on **the Sentencing Bill and the Victims and Courts Bill**. When the Labour government came into power, we inherited a prison system that was on its knees. Years of Tory neglect had left prisons overcrowded, crumbling, and dangerously close to running out of space. The changes brought by these Bills will help to address the pressures on the system while ensuring the most serious criminals are locked up.

Nearly 6,000 households who are private renting in St Helens North saw the most significant increase to their rights in a generation after the **Renters Rights Bill** achieved Royal Assent.

November 2025

It is clear that the current **SEND system** is not working and in November after spending months talking with local families and schools, I produced a SEND report which I presented to the Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson and Schools Minister https Georgia Gould.

After presenting this report to Ministers, I made sure that the voices of families in St Helens North were heard at the highest levels and helped to shape any forthcoming change,

I hope it is also informative for families in St Helens North and all those with an interest in improving outcomes for children [which you can read here](#).

Budget 2025

In the 2025 budget, the Chancellor announced a range of measures. Everyone's energy bills were cut by an average of £150 while train fares and prescription costs were frozen as was fuel duty. The minimum wage and living wage went up as did the state pension. Nearly 2,000 local businesses got lower business rates. There was guaranteed paid work placements for young people on Universal Credit, and free apprenticeship training for under-25s with small and medium-sized businesses. We invested £39billion into social and affordable housing nationally.

We invested in our NHS to lower waiting lists and increase appointments, supporting our public services, making sure the wealthiest pay their share, and investing £120billion in essential infrastructure to help grow the economy, create jobs and improve connectivity. More than 2500 children in St Helens North – most of them in working families were lifted out of poverty because of the decisions we've taken in this Budget. Alongside our increase in the provision of free school meals, this Labour government is on track to lift more children out of poverty than any other government ever. It will be a historic achievement

Last year Labour ended the Mineworkers' pension injustice, and we did the same for BCSSS members in the budget. Over 130 members of the BCSSS in St Helens North got what is rightfully theirs with around 700 former mineworkers in St Helens North in total better off as a result of our changes to these pension schemes.

Labour also published the UK's first ever **Men's Health Strategy**, This strategy recognised that real change means meeting men where they are, in workplaces, sports clubs, communities and at home. Just some of the commitments include: £3.6m over three years for suicide prevention projects, £3m for community-based men's health schemes, over £300,000 to help Rugby League Cares to better understand how to reach and engage boys and young men at risk of loneliness, and so much more. For this strategy to make a real difference, local delivery is key. We have fantastic local organisations like Dad Matters already doing amazing and important work and I continue to support them and everything they do.



January 2026

There was lots to welcome in the government's new **Road Safety Strategy** published in January, which aimed to cut deaths and serious injuries on our roads by 65% by 2035. I've been proud to support the efforts of my constituent and road safety campaigner Sue Rimaitis to call for changes around the mandatory reporting of medical conditions to the DVLA.

Following the campaign led by Mrs Rimaitis and supported by me and other MPs in Westminster, I was pleased to see that the new Road Safety Strategy includes proposals for a consultation on mandatory eyesight testing for drivers over 70.

We also saw that the **Armed Forces Bill** passed its latest stage in the Commons, which will extend the Armed Forces Covenant across all areas of central government, devolved governments and local authorities. Under the new government measures, social care providers, employment support services and other public services will be legally required to consider the unique circumstances faced by forces personnel and their families. This benefited the 6,302 serving personnel from St Helens and veterans across the borough, on top of other action taken by the government to support our Forces and veterans.

February 2026

This was the month that the government published its **Schools White Paper: Every Child Achieving** and Thriving, which sets out a new vision for our children and schools system where high standards and inclusion work together, with SEND reform as the central pillar. It's the proposals for SEND reform that understandably and rightly got most of the headlines but it should be said that the white paper covers a lot more – including support for children from disadvantaged backgrounds who currently attain lower standards at Year 1, Key Stage 2, and Key Stage 4 than other pupils, with only 44% of pupils on free school meals achieving a grade 4 pass in GCSE English and Maths, compared to over 70% of other pupils.

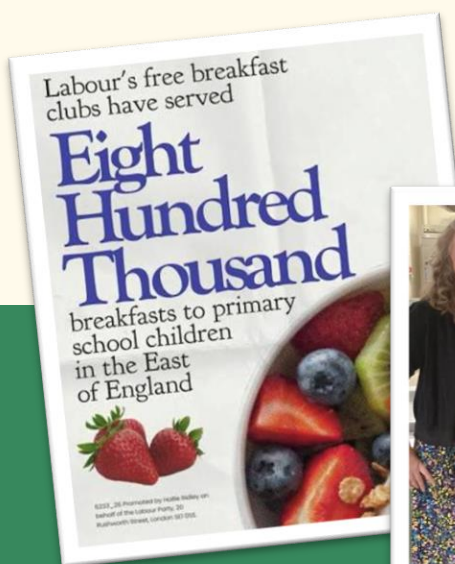


The government has set itself a target to halve the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers and will reform how disadvantage funding reaches schools. Measures to tackle child poverty such as removing the two child-limit on universal credit are also key to addressing this attainment gap.

I know from personal experience and from the work I've done as our MP that it's the SEND reforms that will be of greatest interest to a lot of families. There is a huge amount of mistrust as a result of years of conflict and chaos in the system. Too many families with SEND children have had to fight too hard, for too long. Nobody can blame them for being sceptical. I've also seen a fair bit of scaremongering and misinformation online which we all need to watch out for (and I say that as a parent more than an MP).

St Helens Borough Council received £266m as part of the **Local Government Finance Settlement**, an increase of £16m in Core Spending Power compared to 2025/26. Following weeks of discussion between myself, local leaders and government ministers since the provisional settlement was announced in December, we secured an additional grant equating to £14.7m more cash in total over the three-year period on top of the initial allocation. The Government also confirmed in February that energy bills would fall by 7% from April – saving the typical household £117 a year. Ofgem confirmed that the energy price cap will drop after the Government acted to remove an average of £150 of costs from household bills – funded by asking the wealthiest to pay their fair share in tax.

The Government announced the next wave of schools set to benefit from their **free breakfast club programme** including three more schools in St Helens North! Carr Mill Primary School, Rectory C of E Primary School in Garswood and the District C of E Primary School in Newton-le-Willows will join Ashurst Primary, Garswood Primary and PACE in getting free breakfast clubs, and it means in total more than 1100 children and their families in St Helens North will be able to access a nutritious meal at the start of the school day and save money.



These clubs came alongside a raft of measures driven forward by the government to cut the cost of living for families in St Helens North, including expanding free school meals, rolling out 30 hours of government-funded childcare, bringing down school uniform costs and securing the future of Best Start holiday clubs.

The Government announced its new **Fostering Action Plan** to expand fostering, strengthen support for carers and ensure more children can grow up in loving family homes. The strategy sets a clear ambition to create homes for 10,000 more children to grow up in foster families, backed by £88 million. Measures include a national recruitment campaign, stronger regional fostering hubs, new digital tools to support applicants, and funding to help experienced foster carers create home extensions.

I was proud to vote in favour to **scrap the two-child limit** for families in receipt of Universal Credit. Every child matters. Every child counts. Every child has a role to play in our country and its future. This will help lift around 2500 children in St Helens North out of poverty.

Watch [my speech which addresses some of the myths around this issue](#), and explains more about why I was proud to vote to scrap this damaging Tory policy

March 2026

Through the **Pride in Place Programme**, £20 million of long-term funding was announced for investment across the Borough.

Nearly one million young people are currently not in employment, education or training – a figure that rose by 250,000 between 2021 and 2024. This demands action, and Labour is delivering: building on last year's £1.5 billion youth unemployment package, we are now investing an extra £1 billion in the **Youth Guarantee** to deliver 200,000 jobs and apprenticeships, including for young people in St Helens North.



April 2026

April marked the 37th anniversary of the Hillsborough disaster, when 97 innocent men, women and children were unlawfully killed at a football match. In Parliament, I attended a special service in the Chapel to hold a minute's silence and help to read aloud and remember the names of the 97.

This month a lot of measures in Labour's **Employment Rights Act** came into force. It was the biggest upgrade in rights at work for decades. Among the measures, the Bereaved Partner's Paternity Leave Regulations will also take effect as part of wider reforms to family leave rights.

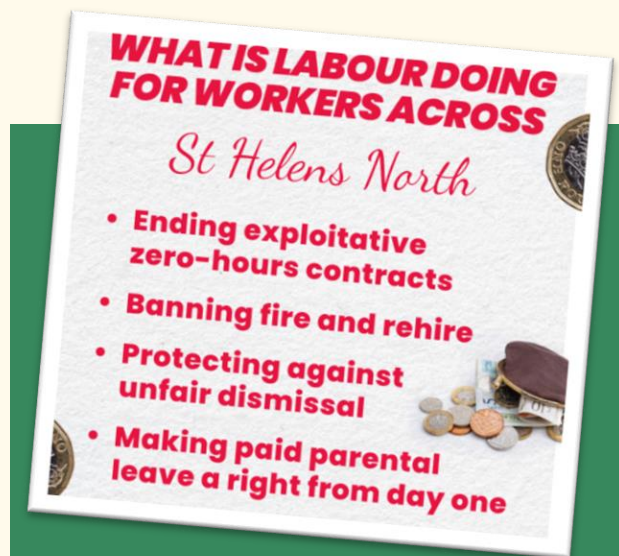
These regulations introduce a new, day one right for employees to take up to 52 weeks of unpaid leave in situations where their partner dies within a year of birth or adoption. When the worst happens, it is right that people are supported. I hope this new measure will provide bereaved parents with clearer protections, dignity, and space to grieve. This is real change for working people – strengthening rights, improving protections, and ensuring fairness is built into every workplace.

I was also delighted to see that the Labour Government is investing to modernise colleges with St Helens College set to receive over £1.3 million. This funding will help improve the learning environment for students and staff.

May 2026

For too long, private renters in St Helens North have faced insecurity, unfair rent rises and the threat of no-fault evictions. That changed in May, when Labour's Renters' Rights Act came into force – the biggest shake-up in renters' rights for 40 years – giving nearly 6,000 households in our constituency more security, stronger protections and fairer treatment. No more Section 21 evictions. Fairer rent rules. An end to bidding wars. Stronger rights for families, pet owners and those on benefits. This is Labour delivering for working people in St Helens North and across the country.

May was also a huge month with significant announcements to help people in St Helens North. Labour has launched the British Summer Savings scheme, with free bus travel for children in August and VAT cuts on attractions, cinemas, and children's meals, to help families with the cost of living.



We saw the figures in May that showed that net migration was cut by almost three quarters in the first 18 months of Labour being in office, hotel numbers have fallen, deportations are up and asylum applications went down.

The Government introduced a new Neighbourhood Guarantee to deliver cleaner streets, get more potholes filled and strengthen local services and has secured the first G7 trade deal with the Gulf Cooperation Council, expected to boost the UK economy by £3.7 billion a year and increase wages by £1.9 billion a year. There was the investment of £96 million to create tens of thousands of construction placements and tackle skills shortages and get people into skilled jobs and is supporting local business by introducing a tough new late payment regime, with new powers to fine persistent late payers

June 2026

There was great news for families and children across St Helens North. Labour introduced a £4,500 bonus to help attract and retain qualified early years teachers in our nurseries, helping give more children the best possible start in life. This investment will support local childcare providers, improve school readiness, and help more families access Labour's funded childcare offer worth up to £8,000 a year. Every child deserves the opportunity to thrive, regardless of their background.

I was also pleased to see that the Government is finally taking steps to protect children online, and I believe most parents will support the plans to ban social media for under 16s. Tech giants have had every opportunity to act responsibly, and they have consistently failed to do so. It is absolutely right that we act to create a new normal for future generations.



The days of social media companies putting profit before the safety of our children must end. There's a huge weight of evidence regarding the damage it can do to children and young people in particular, and the feedback from the major consultation that recently concluded shows most people want action.

Parliament will return in September and I will continue to fight for our area and work with the new Prime Minister to deliver the change that people demand.

Casework update

Breakdown of Cases by Type



In July my office dealt with around 400 cases addressing issues from assisted dying legislation, the Israel-Gaza conflict, Firework legislation, and SEND issues.

Road adoption issues

A constituent raised a question to us in relation to the ownership of a road which we raised to the council to secure for them clarification from the council in regards to the adoption status of the road.

ILR status

A constituent was awaiting ILR approval and asked for assistance. They then received a response from the Home Office confirming the approval of their visa as a result of our intervention.

DWP help

Assisted a constituent in receiving a reply from the DWP in relation to their query regarding their Child Benefit ensuring that the correct monies due to them were paid.

Assistance with the DVLA

Acquired an update, and a follow up, from the DVLA in relation to the long delays a constituent was facing in receiving a driver's license following a medical assessment prior to its renewal.

If you need support or have a question please do get in touch. See my contact details on the back page.

Work experience and By-election

Congratulations to Joe from Hope Academy and Luca who is currently studying at University in York for completing several days work experience in my office last week! If you are interested in work experience opportunities, find out more [here](#).

Finally for this report, I was out recently to help kick off the campaign for the Billinge and Seneley Green by-election taking place on Thursday 27th August. Stephen Owen is the fantastic Billinge and Seneley Green Labour candidate. He's a decent hardworking local resident and would be an outstanding champion for the ward in the town hall. I encourage evryone in Billinge and Seneley Green to vote for Stephen!

As ever I encourage you to get in touch at david.baines.mp@parliament.uk if you need my support or if you have a question, and please do tell me your priorities too. Thank you for reading.

Best wishes,

David

