

Climate Change



Climate change is perhaps the gravest single issue we face as a country and as a planet. The Copenhagen climate change conference in December is our best chance to tackle the problem and ensure the planet's temperature doesn't rise by more than two degrees. Tackling climate change requires action at every level from international agreement to the local grassroots action. That's why over the last year I have:

- Hosted climate change seminars in Parliament with Ed Miliband, the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, where local residents could ask questions and let the government know the strength of their feelings on the issue.
- Signed up to the 10:10 campaign to cut carbon emissions by 10% in 2010.
- Launched a local 'Big Deal' campaign and petition with Oxfam to help build popular support for what will be important changes in policy and behaviour following on from a deal in Copenhagen.

What does an MP do all day?

I am often asked what a typical day is like - but the truth is, every day seems to be different. I usually start the morning in the local office, reading the post and e-mails (I receive 1,500 calls, letters and e-mails a week). Afternoons and evenings in Parliament can involve Select and Bill Committees, All Party groups, meetings with Ministers and taking part in debates or questions. I also fit in regular meetings with the police, council, NHS and others, so I can hear what they have to say, and feed back what I hear from constituents. The day in Parliament finishes around 10.30 pm.

I hold advice surgeries on Fridays (40 this year). Since 1997 I have taken up complaints and problems on behalf of over 30,000 constituents with their problems. Of course, I am not always able to get the result people want, but my small team and I do our best for everyone.

I have held a series of regular coffee mornings in schools, and Saturday sessions in community centres, children's centres and many other venues all over the constituency where I met residents informally to hear about their concerns. I get out and about as much as possible, with 'estate

walkabouts' in the Mozart, Lisson Green, Warwick, Avenue Gardens, Wessex Gardens, Little Venice, Ada Court and Dora House. I have also made visits to, or have held surgeries in schools, including at St Saviours, Gateway, and St Stephen's.

Thousands of people and hundreds of organisations give their time and effort over the last year to make this a better place to live. I do my best to support and celebrate their work. This includes everything from visiting to supporting finding applications to hosting events in Parliament. Just some of the groups I have visited or worked with this year are: London Tigers, All Stars Boxing Club, Samba Soccer, St John's Wood Society Annual meeting, Lisson Green Residents Association, Al-Manaar Cultural Heritage centre, Queen's Park Bangladeshi Association, Westminster Pre-School Learning Alliance, Paddington Law centre, Dalgarno Estate Regeneration Partnership, St John's Wood Adventure Playground, Westminster Children's Society, Newpin and many more...

Of course, there are plenty of other demands too - like radio and TV appearances, speaking at conferences and so on... it is certainly never, ever, dull.

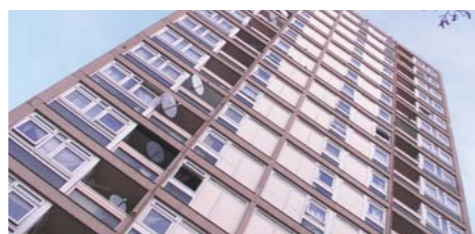
Money Matters

When money is tight, people can get into serious difficulties. Money worries can also lead to physical and mental health problems. These are just a few of the reasons that issues like debt, financial advice, and the regulation of bailiff powers are important to me.

That's why, on top of trying to support individuals with their unique problems (like the mother of four who received a warning notice of repossession for £89 worth of rent arrears!) I make this a policy priority:

- I chair the All party parliamentary group on Citizens Advice
- This year I set up the first Parliamentary group on Legal Aid
- I introduced a Parliamentary Bill to regulate the ability of bailiffs to force entry into homes
- I supported the launch of a multi-advice service in Church Street

Fighting for leaseholders



Hundreds of council leaseholders - people who bought flats previously owned by the Council - face huge bills for Major Works which many will struggle to pay. The situation is worse in Westminster than almost anywhere in the country, since the long overdue 'Decent Homes Initiative', under which thousand on homes have been modernised, came after many years in which no improvements were made.

Worse still, far too many lessees complain about the quality and management of the works, and the lack of clear information on their bills.

I have continued to fight their cause with the Council and government, and have had extensive coverage of this story in the media, including on the BBC and in 'The Times' newspaper. I welcome contact from any leaseholders who want to share information with me, to help build and strengthen my campaign.



www.karenbuck.org.uk

Karen Buck MP

Regent's Park and Kensington North



Dear Resident,

It has been an exceptionally bad year for Parliament and politics. With a global recession hitting Britain hard, when all our focus should be on tackling local, national and international problems, the MPs expenses scandal has damaged confidence hugely. Even though, as an inner London MP, I neither claim nor receive any expenses for living costs, I hear and understand how angry people have been. We have to get this cleaned up quickly, and for good.

However, I am equally clear that my job as your representative is to work on your behalf locally and in Parliament. I hope that this latest annual report gives you a flavour of the kind of things I have been doing in the last year.

Yours sincerely,
Karen Buck

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Building Safer Communities



Maida Hill Market

Crime and anti-social behaviour top many people's list of concerns and so continue to be a priority for me.

A crime-free world may never be a possibility, and every crime is one too many, but there have been real improvements in neighbourhoods all over Westminster thanks to our Safer Neighbourhood Teams, and better partnership working.

The Harrow Road area around the Prince of Wales junction has long been one of the most stressed neighbourhoods in the area, and I have been working very closely with residents and others for many years.

As a result of all these efforts, we now have:

- A dedicated police team for this area
- Extra police for the Safer Neighbourhood Police teams for Westbourne, Harrow Road and Queen's Park,
- Huge improvements to the design and of the area
- The new market

Lots of people and organisations have come together to help improve this area, from the Harrow Road Partnership to the police, Council and housing providers. This just shows what can be done when people power is backed by the resources they need to bring about changes.

Getting in Early

Everyone agrees that early investment is worthwhile. It can stop small problems becoming big ones and help give children a better chance in life. It is these principles which are behind the Sure Start and the Children's centres now in action in Westbourne, Queen's Park, Maida Vale and Church Street.

When I formally opened Westbourne Children's Centre in the spring, I saw for myself the excellent work being done to support families and their very young children.

Westminster has also benefited from an £800,000 grant to offer intensive help to some of the families with the most chronic and multiple problems including drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, and criminal behaviour. I was really struck by one project in Little Venice where I talked to parents and saw how this kind of support has stopped them starting on a downward spiral.



Karen with a local pupil

What issues would you like Karen to champion in Parliament?

Your name: _____

Your address: _____

Your phone/mobile: _____

Your email address: _____

How do you rate Karen as your MP?

Excellent Good Poor Don't know

A Working Future for All



Women Like Us event

Not only is unemployment devastating for the individuals it affects, it also damages the wider economy. We must do everything we can to reduce its impact. I have been doing a number of things locally to help make this happen.

I have been discussing the Government's Future Jobs Fund (part of a job guarantee for young people) scheme with Westminster Council, Paddington Development Trust and Jobcentre Plus, and have made proposals to extend the scheme to offer local young people introductory work in the field of sports and leisure. This last idea could also help get more kids and young people involved with sport and so help reduce anti-social behaviour.

I went along to Westminster Academy's launch of the London Apprenticeship Scheme this spring. We discussed how to increase still further the number of apprenticeships on offer to young people.

I launched the local partnership with 'Women Like Us' - a voluntary organisation that works with parents looking to find ways back into work. There is lots that Government can do but we also need charities and voluntary organisations to play a part.

I was also asked to make recommendations to the Department of Work and Pensions on how to help Londoners off benefits and into work. Key problems include the cost of child-care, high housing costs and a shortage of decent well-paid part-time work. As a member of the London Child Poverty Commission and Chair of the Fair Pay Network, I am passionate about helping people back into work without actually making families worse off. It is appalling that half of all children who live below the poverty line have at least one parent in work so I am clear that badly paid, insecure jobs are not the answer to the challenges we face.

Expenses



The disclosure of MPs expense claims and the highly publicised cases of misguided spending from second home allowances has badly damaged the reputation of parliament and parliamentarians.

This is sad because many MPs, including myself, have used their allowances solely on staff, office, and administrative costs in order to improve their work as representatives. That's why I immediately invited all local journalists to come to my office to examine my expense claims for themselves.

My expenses breakdown:

• As a central London MP who has lived in the constituency I represent for the last twenty five years I do not receive anything under the so-called 'Additional Costs allowance,' which covers mortgage interest or rent, utility bills, council tax or furnishings.

• My only travel claim is for public transport.

• I make no claims for food, taxis, or for entertaining guests at Parliament or elsewhere. The only direct claim I make is for my mobile phone bills (but not my home phone, although this is used extensively for work).

• The allowances I have drawn on - incidental expenses and communications - have been spent solely on employing staff; paying their National Insurance contributions, office rent/rates and maintenance, phone bills, printing and distribution costs (such as for my annual report), and sundry items such as printer cartridges, paper, and some out-of pocket expenses incurred by interns and volunteers.

• You can find a full breakdown of my expenses by visiting the House of Commons website here:

<http://mpsallowances.parliament.uk/mps/ordsandoffices/hocallowances/allowances-by-mp/>

Your health

I met with the Chief Executive of the Imperial Hospital Group to discuss plans to bring new specialist stroke and trauma services to St Mary's, and the CE of NHS Westminster to discuss the 18 week waiting target for hospital treatment, and new GP practices in Queen's Park and St John's Wood.



Middle East

In a globalised world, it is impossible to separate the local from the international. In a diverse area such as ours, where so many people started their journey in another part of the world, this is even more the case. Of all the important issues raised with me by constituents, alongside concerns for the well-being of our troops in Afghanistan, Palestine ranks highest. Following the visit I made to the West Bank and Gaza I continue to raise this most important issue. Earlier this year I had a meeting with the Prime Minister to press him to take a lead on this complex and tragic conflict.

Neighbourhoods in Partnership

Neighbourhoods with lots of different housing managers can be very hard to run and residents sometimes don't know where to turn. For the last three years I have jointly chaired a partnership of all the agencies involved in the Dalgarno area in North Kensington and seen how many improvements have been made as a result.

Housing

On top of trying to help hundreds of local people with housing problems, I have continued my campaigns to tackle over-crowding and to help leaseholders facing huge Major Works bills, often for sub-standard work. More complaints come in about housing than any other issue and so I make housing one of my top priorities.

Select Committees are one of the strengths of our parliamentary system. They allow MPs to question Ministers and Officials in real depth and produce reports which often enjoy cross-party support. I take my work on the Home Affairs Committee - which covers policing, immigration and crime amongst others issues - extremely seriously and dedicate a lot of time to it.

This year we have produced important reports on the new Points based system of immigration control, Operation Contest (the government's counter terrorism policy), the policing of the G20 protests and knife crime. During our inquiry into knife crime, we organised a seminar for local young people and youth organisations, organised by the UNCUT project, where young people came to Parliament to tell us their views and experiences.

You can follow the work of this and other Parliamentary committees by visiting the House of Commons website at this address:

http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/home_affairs_committee.cfm

Home Affairs Select Committee



Karen in Parliament

Parliamentary Round-up

Over and above the work of the Home Affairs Select Committee and the Child Poverty Bill Committee, I have made an above average number of contributions to Parliamentary debates and questions, covering issues raising from the conflict in Gaza and settlement building in the West Bank to crime and anti-social behaviour; housing, welfare reform and climate change. In questions to the Prime Minister I have pressed for action on bank lending, repossessions and the failure of energy companies to pass on price reduction to consumers. (You can always track my work in Parliament through the official website, which includes a record of all speeches and questions as well as by checking my website for updates).

I also try and bring as many local people and organisations into Parliament as possible - from schools to charities and voluntary groups, and we have held many successful meetings on issues such a climate change, as well as hosting the local branch of Amnesty International.

Schools on the up

It was a particular pleasure to join St George's school in Maida Vale for their awards ceremony this summer, confirming how far the school has come over the years. I try and keep contact with as many schools as possible during what has been a very busy time for them with the £152 million Building Schools for the Future programme, the major re-development planned for Quintin Kynaston, and the three new academy schools (Westminster, Paddington and King Solomon's) settling down and improving their results.

