



Kate Osborne MP  
Monthly Newsletter  
December 2022

Dear Constituent,

This has been my fourth Christmas as Jarrow MP and I'm proud to have represented you over these last three years. I will continue to do all I can to support my wonderful Jarrow constituents.

[In my final column for the Shields Gazette for 2022](#) – I paid tribute to everyone who has supported our communities during this busy festive period, remembering those who work at this time of year to ensure we are looked after, safe, and catered for.

I am writing to you today with an update of my work in Parliament and around the constituency in December. I would also like to take this as an opportunity to wish you and your loved ones a peaceful, prosperous, and happy 2023.

### **Christmas Card competition**

I ran another of my Annual Christmas Card Competition's this year – giving our Primary Schools the opportunity to design my Christmas Card that has been sent out across the constituency. This year's theme was Shipbuilding, focussing on our constituency's industrial history.

I received so many excellent submissions, but this year's winner was Aurora from Simonside Primary School. I was really glad to visit Aurora to hand deliver her card and her prize for winning.



### **Small Business Saturday**

The cost-of-living crisis continues to hit us all hard. Small businesses are suffering as a result of huge hikes in energy bills and the looming recession – they need more support from this Government.

On Small Business Saturday I dropped into a few shops and businesses in Hebburn, including Thanks A Bunch and Gifted. Small businesses really are the backbone of our communities, providing jobs, training, services and building our local economy – all in the face of unfair business rates, supply chain issues and mounting costs.



Our brilliant constituency has so many amazing small businesses, including Bridge Referrals, a new and independent veterinary hospital in Boldon. I was really glad to give them a shout out in the Chamber recently. Watch [here](#).



### **Hebburn Town Centre:**

As you may be aware, around each of the wards in the constituency I have hosted a series of street stalls over the past few months. The top issue raised at my Hebburn street stall was the cleanliness of the town centre and anti-social behaviour.

After raising residents' concerns, I went on a walkabout in Hebburn Town Centre with the Leader of South Tyneside Council, Tracey Dixon, Lead Member for Transport and Neighbourhoods, Councillor Ernest Gibson, and council officers.

I have contacted the private owner of the Mountbatten Centre on numerous occasions raising both my concerns and those of my constituents, who have been in touch from the Hebburn community.

I'm pleased that South Tyneside Council are planning to clean up the Centre in the near future to make it more attractive for both businesses and visitors, and I will be pressing the private owner to improve its current state.

I will be contacting them to raise my concerns and ask for immediate action once again.



### **Tackling Damp and Mould**

After the tragic news of the death of Awaab Ishak, the two-year-old boy who died as a result of damp and black mould in his family's social housing flat in Rochdale, it was unsurprising that I was contacted by a number of Jarrow residents living in council and social housing who were concerned about their own health due to the existence of mould.



We cannot have another person fall ill or die because of inadequate housing. We need urgent action now – Kate Osborne MP

© 14th December 2022 Housing, Housing Crisis, Kate Osborne

I spoke about the issue on BBC Look North and in a feature on Politics North.

I also wrote to the Housing Secretary Michael Gove to call for urgent Government action to ensure that private landlords and local authorities respond swiftly to reports of mould and that the Government does more to insulate homes and ensure that households are not cold this winter.

My letter to Michael Gove can be read below.



Subsequently, I also wrote to Housing Associations with properties in Jarrow asking them what actions they were taking to tackle the underlying problem of mould. I wrote about Jarrow constituents' concerns in my Shields Gazette column, highlighting the case of Lawrence in particular. You can read my column [here](#).

I also wrote an article on this for [Labour Outlook](#).

**Kate Osborne MP**  
Member of Parliament for the Jarrow constituency



House of Commons  
London, SW1A 0AA



The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP  
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities  
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

30<sup>th</sup> November 2022

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing today in relation to the issue of damp and mould in housing stock across the UK and in my Jarrow constituency.

Like so many people across the nation, I was shocked and saddened to hear of the death of Awaab Ishak, a two year old who died of a respiratory condition caused by exposure to mould in his family's flat in Rochdale.

There was a tragic failure in the case of the death of Awaab Ishak, one which never should have happened and was entirely preventable, however exposure to damp and mould within a property is common place and like many other MP's, I have had constituents get in touch asking for help to resolve similar housing situations to young Awaab and we have seen countless stories in the media with horrific photos of people living surrounded in damp and mould.

According to the latest English Housing Survey, 5 million occupied homes did not meet the Decent Homes Standard in 2020; 2.2 million had at least one category one hazard – such as black mould – and 941,000 had serious damp.

With the cost of living crisis meaning families are cutting back on their heating, the impact will be that a greater number of families will be living in cold and damp homes. I am extremely concerned about the impact of this on children's long term health and excess deaths in the elderly. We also know that lower-income households are more likely to live with damp and mould and less likely to be able to keep their home warm in winter.

The Government must urgently intervene regardless of whether a renter's landlord is a private entity, agency, housing association or local council. All renters must be protected this winter. A suggestion that private sector reform proposals may come in 2023 will be too late for many.

As Housing Minister, you have acknowledged that the housing crisis is a public health issue, therefore it was also disappointing that the planning reforms were driven out of Parliament by Government backbenchers.

**Kate Osborne MP**  
Member of Parliament for the Jarrow constituency



House of Commons  
London, SW1A 0AA



We need action now to ensure that landlords and local authorities respond swiftly to reports of mould and the Government must do more to insulate homes and ensure that households are not going cold this winter.

We need a commitment from the Government for a fully new decent homes standard enforceable in law. This should be a defining moment in housing policy where change is made, as we know there are systemic problems currently. New regulation is important and needed for both social housing and for private renters.

There is also a clear need for the funding crisis for local authorities, who need to both invest in their social housing stock and invest in enforcement teams to tackle landlords and housing associations who are refusing to carry out remedial works.

Local authorities need the funding to retrofit and insulate older housing stock so that less cases of damp and mould occur. This is even more crucial in a time where there is a cost of living crisis, and many people will struggle to be able to afford to put their heating on.

I therefore ask you as Secretary of State the following;

- What is the timetable for the private rental sector reform paper?
- What action are you taking now to ensure families living in these damp squalid conditions receive immediate support?
- What are you doing to assist investment in social housing, enforcement capacity, and legal help to end this scandal once and for all?
- Will you bring a fully new decent homes standard enforceable in law?
- Will you re-evaluate each local authorities funding so they have the resources needed to tackle this issue?
- Will you confirm what steps your department is taking to retrofit and insulate older social housing stock to make homes cheaper to heat?

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Kate Osborne MP  
Member of Parliament for the Jarrow constituency

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### **Monkton Village Association**

It was great to join residents at the Monkton Village Association Christmas meeting to thank them for their wonderful work keeping the area so attractive with flowers, hearing more about the famous Monkton Leek Show and discussing important issues like traffic and housing. I am hugely looking forward to working more closely with Gerry Fionda and the MVA next year.



Following on from this meeting, which took place in The Lord Nelson, a few days later I was pleased to return to drop off a bag of toys to go towards their donation to Sunderland Hospital children's ward. It is always excellent to see first hand how generous our community is!





### Hebburn Helps – Surgery

I have continued hosting regular advice surgeries at Hebburn Helps. I have met with constituents and discussed a huge range of issues. This month I was pleased to bring Sami and Amanda along with me – two students from Newcastle University who, as part of their course, are doing work experience in my constituency office. They saw first-hand the incredible work that the Hebburn Helps team do to ensure the most vulnerable in our community are supported.



I was also extremely happy to meet with the Hebburn Helps team in Westminster before they visited the Christmas Carol Service with the Royal Family.





## Felling Food Network

The Felling Food Network was set up to provide an emergency food distribution point for people experiencing food poverty in Felling and the Gateshead area. They rely on donations in order to be able to provide this.

Well done Heather Maddison, from the Pelaw and Heworth ward, for coordinating this and thank you everyone for donating. If you can, please do support the Felling Food Network – <https://www.thefellingfoodnetwork.org.uk/donate/>

## Nissan Pension Scheme

I have been contacted by multiple constituents about issues with Nissan's Pension Scheme – after making some initial enquiries, I was extremely happy to sign this North East Labour MP letter regarding ongoing concerns with the administration of this pension scheme which has been brought to the attention of multiple MP's. Thank you to Ian Mearns MP (Gateshead) for coordinating this letter. You can read the letter in full [here](#).

## Cost of Living Roadshows

I hosted my first two cost of living roadshows this month, joined by 21 organisations and charities who all provide services and advice to those who need it.

I was delighted with the fantastic feedback I received from the local community and the organisations who were present at my two cost-of-living roadshows – at Heworth Leisure Centre in Gateshead and Perth Green Community Centre in Jarrow – in early December.

Our community is being hit hard and these roadshows were a great help in enabling residents to gain more knowledge about the advice and support available to them from a number of organisations based in our communities.



[My website](#) has more information about the roadshows and the advice available.



### Jarrow Boxers

I tabled an Early Day Motion in Parliament congratulating the fine achievements of young Jarrow boxers Robbie Colman and Ewan Mackenzie, while recognising the hugely important influence that Bilton Hall Amateur Boxing Club has had in keeping young people on the right track.

I wish Robbie and Ewan every success in their boxing careers.

## Bilton Hall Amateur Boxing Club, Robbie Colman and Ewan Mackenzie

**EDM 701: tabled on 13 December 2022**

### Motion text

That this House congratulates Jarrow constituent Robbie Colman on winning his debut professional boxing fight at the Hilton Hotel in Gateshead on Sunday 11 December; further notes that Robbie's win shortly follows another brilliant success by another Jarrow constituent Ewan Mackenzie, who won his sixth boxing fight on a prestigious evening at Newcastle's Utilita Arena; recognises the important influence that Bilton Hall Amateur Boxing Club has had in Robbie and Ewan's success and the role it plays in keeping youngsters on the right track; acknowledges the part that famous boxing faces, including former world champions Sugar Ray Leonard and Ricky Hatton, have played in visiting the club in the past, passing on their knowledge to young boxers; further recognises the important role that boxing both historically had and continues to have in the local community; and wishes Robbie and Ewan well for their future careers in boxing.

### BT Late Payment Charges

Millions of people, most of them elderly or vulnerable, still receive household bills in paper format and pay them by cheque through the post. It appears that many received a letter from BT warning them they could be charged a late payment fee due to the upcoming postal

strikes. They were advised to move onto online, paperless billing and payments as a result. For many, this simply isn't possible or desirable.

A worried constituent contacted me about this and I [immediately wrote to BT, ministers and Ofcom](#) to express my disgust at the threat of late payment charges being added to BT customers' bills due to postal delays that were entirely beyond their control.

I am pleased to report that BT replied admitting they were wrong to suggest people would face a late payment charge if bills were delayed in the post. Ofcom has also confirmed that the letter was in breach of its code of practice and that it would be speaking to BT about this.

While this is a significant step, I am now waiting for confirmation as to what clarification will be going out to those who received the letter to reassure them, they will not be fined for late payments due to on-going postal strikes.

### **Jarrow Hall Yule Day**

I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to Jarrow Hall for Yule Day, there was story telling, battle re-enactments, crafts and lovely hot chocolate!





### RMT Picket Line

I was proud to have joined RMT members at their picket line at Victoria Station in London this month with some of my brilliant comrades. The Government and media are trying to demonise and vilify hard working people who are standing up for their jobs, pay, and passengers.

It will not work – together we will win.



### Derwentside Immigration Removal Centre

As part of my work on the Women and Equalities Select Committee in Parliament, I visited Derwentside IRC.

Many of the women being held at Derwentside IRC are fleeing war and persecution yet they are being isolated and detained. Very few have criminal records. It is appalling that women are locked up and denied human rights, isolated, and unable to access face-to-face legal advice. I spoke to BBC Look North about this – you can watch the segment [here](#).

Detention should never be a part of someone's asylum or immigration journey. This centre should never have been opened. Read more [here](#)

I wrote to the Home Secretary after my visit calling for a public inquiry into the historic abuse at the site, and for the women being held there to be released. Read my letter [here](#)

I will provide an update on the response to that letter in the New Year.



## Puppy Smuggling

I fully support the [Dogs Trust](#) campaign to tackle Puppy Smuggling and called for a return of the Kept Animals Bill to Parliament.

As the cost-of-living crisis worsens, increasing numbers of dogs are being abandoned - yet the illegal importation of puppies continues. I was pleased to put my name to the campaign. Read the letter in full [here](#)



## Bin the Wipe Campaign

I was delighted to support [Northumbrian Water's](#) Bin the Wipe campaign to raise awareness of what can happen when wet wipes are flushed down the toilet. Help protect homes from flooding and environment from being polluted [#BinTheWipe](#)



## Free School Meals for All

A shocking one million children are living in poverty and don't get free school meals. The UK is still one of the richest countries in the world and child hunger is a political choice that this government keeps on making.

It's not too much to ask that our kids don't go hungry, but when I challenged the Deputy Prime Minister on this, he insisted that controlling inflation was the priority!

I joined the National Education Union's Free School Meals for All Bill event in Parliament. Find out more [here](#)



## Cost of Food

Directly linked to the Free School Meals for All campaign is the Cost of Food campaign. Ian Byrne, one of my Labour colleagues in the House of Commons, secured a debate on the issue just before the recess. You can read my contribution [here](#)





## Increasing Rape Prosecutions

Each day, in the UK there are around 300 rapes - 190 of which are reported. Of those, only three rapists will see the inside of a courtroom, never mind a prison cell.

In Attorney General questions I asked what the Government is doing to ensure cases reported are actually prosecuted. Watch me [here](#)



## NHS Workers

I was proud to speak outside Downing Street alongside our nurses, paramedics, ambulance drivers and others to give my solidarity to all NHS workers taking strike action. The Prime Minister claims 4% is a fair pay offer – it is not. Claps don't pay the bills. NHS workers taking strike action have my full support.

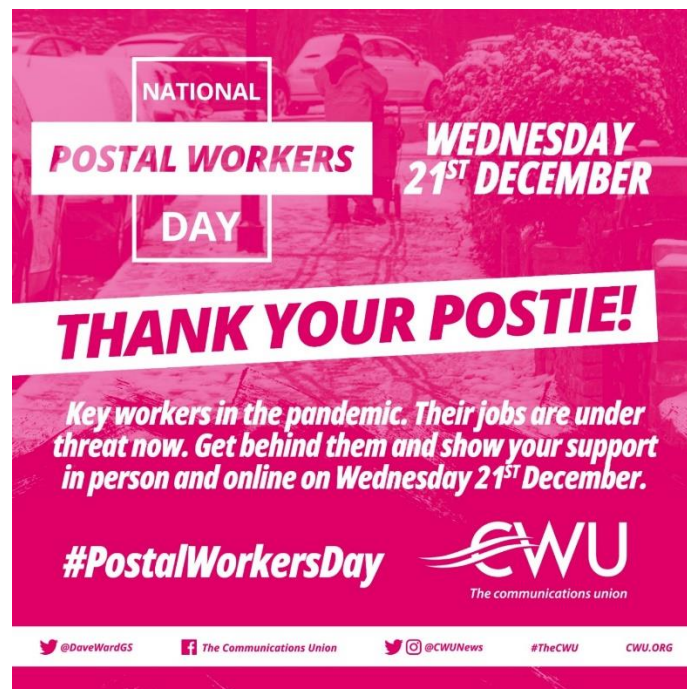


## National Postal Workers' Day

On National [#PostalWorkersDay](#), I was proud to support our posties who are currently fighting for their livelihoods and to preserve this essential public service. I have called on Royal Mail to do the right thing and abandon plans to cut jobs and services and attack [The Communication Workers Union](#).

It really is deplorable that Royal Mail is attacking staff instead of attempting to resolve this dispute.

Next month I will be leading a debate in Parliament on the Future of Royal Mail and the Universal Service Obligation.



## Jeremy Clarkson

I spoke on Good Morning Britain about Jeremy Clarkson's awful comments about Meghan Markle being paraded naked through the streets in his article in the s\*n. They were dangerous and inexcusable.

This is how misogyny is normalised – Clarkson's words go a step further promoting it - saying it's okay to use violent misogynistic language and that there won't be any consequences.

Saying this should not have been published and condemning his words is not an attack on free speech.

His article was inciting hatred and fuelling violence against women. This sort of language has no place in our country, and it is unacceptable that it was allowed to be published in a mainstream newspaper.

Women and girls face harassment and abuse in their daily lives. A woman is killed every three days. There are more rape, domestic abuse, and sexual offences than ever before, but the



action against dangerous perpetrators has plummeted. The overwhelming majority of rape victims will never see justice.

This is what vile comments and articles like Clarkson's fuel - that both him and the s\*n think it's permissible to say and publish is appalling.

Read my article on this in [full](#).

#### Devolution deal:

### North East devolution deal no 'cure-all' but brings much needed investment into our region



This morning the Government announced a £1.4bn devolution deal for the North East which will now go through a public consultation if agreed by Councils and Cabinet.

This deal includes both South Tyneside and Gateshead Councils who are in my constituency of Jarrow. I have had regular discussions with council leader's and officers on the bid and what is needed for our constituency.

This devolution deal will bring much needed investment into our region - a region that has been left behind by successive Conservative Governments.

While this funding will not be a cure-all for decades of underfunding, the investment into transport will hugely benefit my constituents with a £900 million package of investment to transform our transport system, with £563m from the 'city regional sustainable transport fund' on top of funding previously announced for our buses and metro system.

The investment in housing, education and transport sectors will allow our communities to start to rebuild, and the deal proposes giving our local authorities greater autonomy to act in the best interest of our residents, communities and local economy. It will help ensure that vital decisions that will have an impact on our region will be made in the North East and not in Westminster.

If successful, this funding will provide our region with a much-needed boost but we shouldn't forget that we are so desperate for investment due to a decade of underfunding from successive Tory governments.

Our communities rely on councils for safeguarding, social care, housing and so much more.

Over the last decade Council budgets have been cut by 60% and the gap in regional inequality between London and the North East has more than doubled in the past year.

While I am pleased that we may be getting one of the biggest devolution deals, we must remember - this Government has attempted to destroy the fabric of our communities and now wants praise for undoing some of the damage done as a result of their policies.



KATEOSBORNEMP

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**Advice Surgeries:**

As always, please keep an eye on my social media channels for up to date announcements about my latest advice surgeries. My next surgery will be taking place on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> January. If you would like an appointment, please email me at [kate.osborne.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:kate.osborne.mp@parliament.uk).

I hope you have had a lovely Christmas break and I wish you all the best for 2023. Lets continue working together to better our amazing community.

**General Election Fighting Fund:**

You can help with our General election plans by making a donation online here: [https://actionnetwork.org/fundraising/keep-jarrows-red-flag-flying-2?source=direct\\_link&](https://actionnetwork.org/fundraising/keep-jarrows-red-flag-flying-2?source=direct_link&) Donations will go towards the next general election campaign - 10% of all donations will go to our local foodbanks. (Donation policy can be read in full via my website)

**Stay up to date with my work via my social media channels:**

Website: [www.kate-osborne.co.uk](http://www.kate-osborne.co.uk)

Twitter: @[KateOsborneMP](https://twitter.com/KateOsborneMP)

Facebook: @[KateOsborneMP](https://www.facebook.com/KateOsborneMP)

Instagram: @[KateOsborneMP](https://www.instagram.com/KateOsborneMP)

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If you need assistance with anything, please don't hesitate to contact me via [kate.osborne.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:kate.osborne.mp@parliament.uk) or by calling my office on 0191 466 1509.

Yours sincerely,

Kate Osborne MP