

Kevan Jones

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Member of
Parliament for
North Durham



Newsletter

Speaking Out on Mental Health

The Government should do more for those experiencing a mental health crisis.

On 27 February, I spoke in an Urgent Question on the Care Quality Commission's report, "Monitoring the Mental Health Act in 2016/17".

The CQC report found that too many patients subject to the Mental Health Act continue to experience care that does not fully protect their rights or ensure their wellbeing.

The CQC's report also shows no improvement in key areas of concern raised by the commission in previous years.

In June 2012, I spoke in Parliament about my own personal experiences of mental illness and since then have argued that mental health and mental wellbeing should be hardwired into policy-making.

In the debate, I asked the Health and Social Care Minister, Jackie Doyle-Price MP:

"I welcome the Government's outlawing of the use of police cells for those experiencing a mental health crisis, and I do not question the Minister's commitment to improving the service, but the system is fragmented.

"There have been local authority cuts, including cuts in community services. The Health and Social Care Act 2012 leaves local commissioners to decide where the money goes, which has led to a confusing local picture and fragmentation.

"Do we not need to give people clear pathways out of hospital, and to ensure not only that the money goes to the right places, but that individuals know their rights and that local agencies know their responsibilities?"

Earlier in the month, as part of the Fabian Health Group's new Fabian Perspectives on Mental Health project, I wrote an article arguing that mental health policy needs to be at the heart of all government decision making:

<https://fabians.org.uk/we-need-to-hardwire-mental-health-into-policy-making/>



Kevan attended a Memorial Service at the North Durham Academy to commemorate the West Stanley Pit Disaster.



Kevan visited University Hospital North Durham to meet staff and patients.



Kevan visited Rhythm Not Blues in Chester-le-Street to present them with their cheque from The Heritage Lottery Fund.

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Kevan visited the Just for Women Centre in Stanley.



Kevan attended a Special Board Meeting of Prince Bishops Community Bank, who have agreed to merge with NE First Credit Union.

Police funding

On 7 February, speaking in the House of Commons, I spoke against the Government's Motion to approve the Police Grant Report (England and Wales).

This is how Parliament approves the central police funding allocation for each police force.

The main source of income for the 43 geographic police forces is a central government grant made available through the annual Home Office Police Grant Report. Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) can also raise additional revenue funding, but only through council tax precepts.

Between 2010 and 2015, when Theresa May was Home Secretary, the police budget from central Government was reduced 5% every single year.

Durham's Police Grant has faced years of cuts with 350 Police officers lost since 2010.

The Government's offering of a flat cash increase in the Police Grant is a cut in Police Funding, meaning local tax payers will have to make up the difference to protect local Policing.

The proposal is for a flat increase in the precept of £12 a year across band D properties. The Government argue that that is fair, but for Durham it is completely unfair.

Durham relies on a central Government grant for 75% of its funding, so because of the makeup of council tax bands for properties in Durham, a £1 increase would increase expenditure by £46 per head of population. In Thames Valley, the figure would be £60, and in Surrey, it would be nearly £90. If the system is reliant on local council tax bands, the local precept that the police and crime commissioner can raise in some areas is severely limited.

If Durham Police and Crime Commissioner, Ron Hogg, increases the precept by the maximum, in order to raise £2 million, £800,000 of this will come from band A properties. However, just £62,000 of which will come from band H properties. This is fundamentally unfair and the system means that those who are least able to pay will end up paying more.

The Government is pushing paying for policing on to local taxpayers and in some cases on to the poorest in our society, who cannot afford to pay.

Full speech and the rest of the debate available online here: <https://goo.gl/o9pRVC>



Kevan met Michelle Cooper, the new Chief Executive of the County Durham Community Foundation.

Carillion collapse

On 15 January, I asked Ministers what action they were taking to support subcontractors affected by Carrillion's demise.

The construction and outsourcing giant was a major employer in the North East and was notorious within the region's sub-contracting industry for paying its bills late.

In the Commons, I asked David Liddington, Minister for the Cabinet Office, what support the Government intended to give to small businesses in the north-east and elsewhere that are still waiting to be paid.

In his reply, the Minister could not say that any support would be available and that companies in non-Government contracts, not involved in the provision of public services, would become creditors of Carillion. The Federation of Master Builders has said that Carillion's demise could be disastrous for small businesses, some of which are owed hundreds of thousands of pounds.

The full debate is available online at <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2018-01-15/debates/306F27F3-1475-4270-9CC6-4777601ECD57/Carillion#contribution-1340221F-FB4B-4C50-BF47-951DDD008767>

Personal Independence Payments (PIP)

On 31 January, I spoke in a Westminster Hall debate on Personal Independence Payments, saying that the system does not treat people fairly.

At my advice surgeries, I see many people after they have been refused PIP.

The system has been fundamentally ill-conceived, and is making all the same mistakes as the work capability assessments did.

During my speech, I said that I wanted to nail the idea that people on PIP are shirkers, and the lazy of society.

I suggested to the DWP Minister attending the debate that we need a system that works properly for everyone, especially those with mental health issues, and that assessments should be conducted by professionals who are properly qualified.

I spoke about how people who claim PIP do not choose to be in that position and said that anyone could end up on the benefit if they had a serious illness or accident.

The way to judge a society's fairness is by how it treats its most vulnerable, but the system we have in the UK is simply not up to measure.

The full debate is available online at <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2018-01-31/debates/FAE81085-3621-4CB4-A4C5-B400F898F340/PersonalIndependencePayments#contribution-CB3A8AFD-F7D8-4216-A8E2-169FA0D9CBF5>

Defence funding crisis

On Monday 26 February, I spoke in a House of Commons debate on defence funding.

The Conservative Government's failure to invest adequate funding into the armed forces has become ever more apparent, and I do not think that anyone who follows the defence world and the way that the MoD has conducted itself over the past few years would conclude that the situation is anything other than dire.

Speaking in the debate I said that it is clear that the mess that the defence budget is in today is a direct result of policies taken by the Coalition Government and the present Conservative Government. Seven years of ill-thought-out, rushed cuts and, on occasion, very bad decisions are now coming home to roost.

In 2010, the new Conservative-led Government implemented a series of deep cuts to the armed forces. The justification for this as claimed by the then Defence Secretary, Liam Fox, was that he had inherited a so-called '£38 billion black hole' in the MoD budget from the previous Labour government.

As a defence minister in the previous Labour Government, I reminded the House that was simply not the case, and that Liam Fox's 2010 claim of a £38 billion black hole has never been properly justified, even when the National Audit Office and House of Commons Defence Committee tried to check it.

The National Audit Office recently released a damning report which said the Government's Equipment Plan for new military equipment is unaffordable. The NAO also highlighted the alarming fact that the MoD has not accounted for £9.6 billion of forecast costs in its plan, nor has it included the £1.3 billion required to buy five Type 31e frigates.

I have written the following article on defence spending:

<https://www.politicshome.com/news/uk/defence/defence-funding/opinion/house-commons/92514/kevan-jones-mp-how-tories-created>



Kevan visited Durham Stickmakers at Fencehouses Community Centre. This is a project that he has supported through his County Durham Community Foundation Fund.



Kevan held a Special Advice Surgery in Chester-le-Street in partnership with LEASE.

Please visit my new website at
www.kevanjonesmp.org.uk

Local Government Finance: County Durham's settlement is a scandal

On 7 February, I spoke in the Local Government Finance debate.

Each year, levels of central government grant, and the distribution of business rate revenue, for local authorities in England are decided via the annual Local Government Finance Settlement.

Since 2010, Durham County Council has had its expenditure cut by £224 million and the root cause of this is the austerity during the last seven years.

Yet, this year alone, Durham County Council faces pay inflation of £4.8 million and general inflation of £3.2 million. The impact of the national living wage increase of 4.4% means another £3 million will be added to payroll costs. There is a £3 million cost relating to the demographics of elderly people, and an additional £5 million due to pressures on children's services.

Government ministers have made much about their so-called fairer funding formula, but speaking in the Commons, I told the Communities and Local Government Secretary that I think it should get done under the Trade Descriptions Act. Put simply, all it does is reward councils in the areas that vote for the Conservatives.

In terms of core spending power, the average increase for County Councils for 2018-19 is 2.1%, but for County Durham, it is just 1.4%.

This Government has been doing this for seven years, dressing up pork barrel spending as a fairer funding formula, and ignoring the pressures faced in areas like County Durham. Unless the Government goes back to the drawing board, this scandal will continue.

My full speech and the rest of the debate available online here: <https://goo.gl/VpGLBt>

Monthly Advice Surgeries:

- Saturday 7 April
- Saturday 5 May
- Saturday 2 June
- Saturday 7 July
- Saturday 4 August

For more information about Kevan's Advice Surgeries please see Kevan's website at www.kevanjonesmp.org.uk



Biff relaxing by the fire.

GET IN TOUCH

Please feel free to contact me about any issue, and I'm always happy to arrange tours of the Palace of Westminster.

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