

Kevan Jones

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Member of
Parliament for
North Durham



Newsletter

Universal Credit and Welfare Changes

On 21 June, I spoke in a debate on Universal Credit and welfare changes.

Universal Credit (UC) is the Government's flagship social security programme, and yet a recent report by the National Audit Office (NAO) has concluded that UC is a major failure of public policy. The NAO's report states that UC is failing to achieve its aims and is actually costing more to administer than the benefits system that it is replacing.

Looking at the range of claimants in areas where UC has been rolled out, there is no evidence that it is helping more people find long-term work. Delays in payments are pushing people into debt and rent arrears on such a scale that private landlords are becoming increasingly reluctant to rent to Universal Credit claimants.

The NAO report also points out that 20% of claimants are not being paid in full and on time, and more than one in 10 are not receiving payments on time. The people who are most at need from the social security system are the ones most likely to have to wait for payments. A quarter of carers, over 30% of families who need support with childcare and, most shockingly of all, two thirds of disabled people are not being paid in full and on time.

Universal Credit was supposed to offer personalised support to claimants, but stressed and overloaded staff are often failing to identify vulnerable claimants. Having visited JobCentres in Stanley and Chester-le-Street, I know the work pressures already faced by staff, but the DWP is aiming to increase the workloads of work coaches fourfold and of case managers nearly sixfold as the Government tries to cut the cost of UC further still.

Finally, people trying to find work have raised with me their fears that poor IT skills may hold them back. The Government needs to support these individuals and also to expand access to IT, following closures to libraries or the introduction of restricted hours.

To read the debate in full visit <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2018-06-21/debates/E234119F-DC84-4CB4-A814-69CC6A1441E8/UniversalCreditAndWelfareChanges>



Kevan visited South Stanley Infants and Nursery School to congratulate Class 6 on winning the Regional Premier League Primary Star's Poetry Award.



Kevan supported the Campaign to Protect British Passport jobs in Gateshead with Liz Twist MP, Phil Wilson MP, Ian Mearns MP and Helen Goodman MP.



Kevan attended a fundraising concert with Cllr Tracie Smith in support of the Saras Hope Foundation.



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Kevan visited pupils at St Bede's RCVA School in Sacriston to meet their 'Eco Warriors' and to present them with their Plastic Free School Award.



Kevan visited Nancy Jones to present her with an award for her Long Service to the Labour Party.



Kevan supported the League Against Cruel Sports Petition.

Brexit Update

Although I campaigned for the UK to stay in the EU, I do accept the result of the referendum. Whilst the UK's future now lies outside of the EU itself, I believe we need to get the best deal for the British people and our economy.

The UK Government's White Paper has provided the most detailed outline yet of what the UK Government wants the UK's economic relationship with the EU to look like after Brexit. However, the Government's position is still far from certain with regard to the UK's future relationship with the customs union and the EU, and it is clear that there are still deep divisions at the heart of Government.

From my point of view, it is vital that the UK negotiates a co-operative new future relationship with the EU, which builds on shared values and serves our economic interests both inside and outside of Europe.

On 18 October at the next key EU summit, both sides will hope to agree an outline for future relations to allow time for Parliament and the EU member-states to ratify a deal by 29 March 2019. If a deal is not reached by October, the next EU summit of 13 December is the fall back option if the two sides still want to reach an agreement. After this the Commons and Lords vote on the withdrawal treaty.

What is needed now is for the Government to set out a credible negotiating strategy which it has failed to do so far, so that both Parliament and the public can properly judge that their approach is in the best interests of the UK.

Patient Safety and Hospital Complaints

On 20 June, I spoke during the Health Secretary's statement on the findings of the Gosport Independent Panel's report on what happened at Gosport Memorial Hospital. More than 450 patients died after being given powerful painkillers inappropriately at the hospital.

During the debate, I highlighted to the Health Secretary that the legislation regulating both doctors and healthcare professionals is now 35 years old and that it is inefficient, outdated and not user-friendly for complainants.

The General Medical Council and other healthcare professionals want change and I asked the then Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt if he would guarantee that he would bring forward legislation to ensure that the system is not only effective, but effective for patients who make complaints. In response Mr Hunt acknowledged that this was an issue, but also revealed that the Government's slim majority and lack of parliamentary consensus on the issue is prohibiting change.

To read the debate in full visit

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2018-06-20/debates/053835BD-CA29-4ECB-BC7B-4B1F6894264B/GosportIndependentPanelPublicationOfReport>

NATO Debate

On 20 June, I spoke in a Commons debate on NATO.

NATO was one of the great achievements of the 1945 Labour Government. Its creation was pushed through by the tenacity and force of will of Ernie Bevin and Clem Attlee, who had both lived through two world wars—Attlee was wounded at Gallipoli. The creation of NATO was based on our party's fundamental principles of international co-operation and internationalism, and on the idea of solidarity with other nations.

NATO was put in place with the idea that by pooling resources we can ensure that nations come together and take a collective approach to defence as the way forwards. That idea has passed the test of the past 70 years.

As a member of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the body of elected legislators from each NATO member state, I firmly believe in the values of NATO. Those of us who grew up during the Cold War knew what NATO was for, but we need to re-emphasise the case for why we need it today—not as an aggressive alliance, but as a body that stands up for the values that we all cherish dearly and have fought for over many generations in this country. In line with NATO, Labour is a party that looks outwards, believes in international co-operation, is not pacifist, stands up to aggression where we see it and also works with other nations to ensure that peace and democracy, which we all take for granted, are preserved.

Shipbuilding

On 11 July, I spoke during a debate on the defence industry and shipbuilding.

As a member of the GMB union and chair of the APPG on Shipbuilding and Ship Repair I used the debate to speak about the importance of the industry to the wider UK economy. To invest in the sector, companies need stability, and the only way to get stability is to have work coming through. We cannot turn the supply of complex skills needed to build complex warships on and off like a tap. Skilled people and apprentices, trained in the shipbuilding industry, also go and work in other sectors of the economy so investment in this sector means investment in other areas of the overall economy as well.

The supply chain for naval shipbuilding, representing every UK region, is also made up of many small and medium-sized companies which need confidence to invest. However, orders for naval support ships are being tendered to overseas companies and we have no clear export strategy for UK designed warships. The Government needs to do more to support the sector and future Government policy needs to involve more co-operation with and support for the sector, which will not only have benefits for our sovereign capability, but provide a major boost to our economy, which will certainly be needed in the next few years post-Brexit.



Kevan is a Member of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.



Kevan visited the NCS at Chester-le-Street to hear about their work in the local community.



Kevan visited Dorothy Rand to congratulate her on being awarded an MBE for her services to the Community.



Kevan attended Sunderland University's Spotlight on Public Health Event.



Kevan presented Derek Bates with an Award for his Long Service to the Labour Party.

NHS Funding

On 18 June, I spoke in the Commons about NHS funding.

Whilst I welcome any new money for the NHS, I raised the point with the Health Secretary that prevention is better than cure and that Durham County Council has had its public health budget cut every single year for the last eight years.

The Health Secretary in response acknowledged the importance of adequate investment in public health, but failed to say that the Government would commit new funding.

To read the debate in full visit <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2018-06-18/debates/6FAA6047-F74C-40ED-9C01-CE7313E8B740/NHSLong-TermPlan>

Heathrow Airport

On 18 June, I spoke in the debate following the Government's announcement that it would approve a third runway for Heathrow Airport.

I support the expansion at Heathrow which will benefit Newcastle International Airport which is a vital part of the north-east economy.

There is support in the many UK regions for Heathrow expansion because of increased connectivity from airports such as Newcastle, but I urged that the Transport Secretary to publish exact details of how departure and arrivals slots from UK regional airports will be maintained.



Kevan met with Gerty Ayers to congratulate her on receiving a British Empire Medal for Services to her Community.

Monthly Advice Surgeries:

- Saturday 4 August
- Saturday 8 September (Please note this date has changed)
- Saturday 13 October (Please note this date has changed)
- Saturday 3 November
- Saturday 1 December

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



Biff with his friend Rebel.

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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