

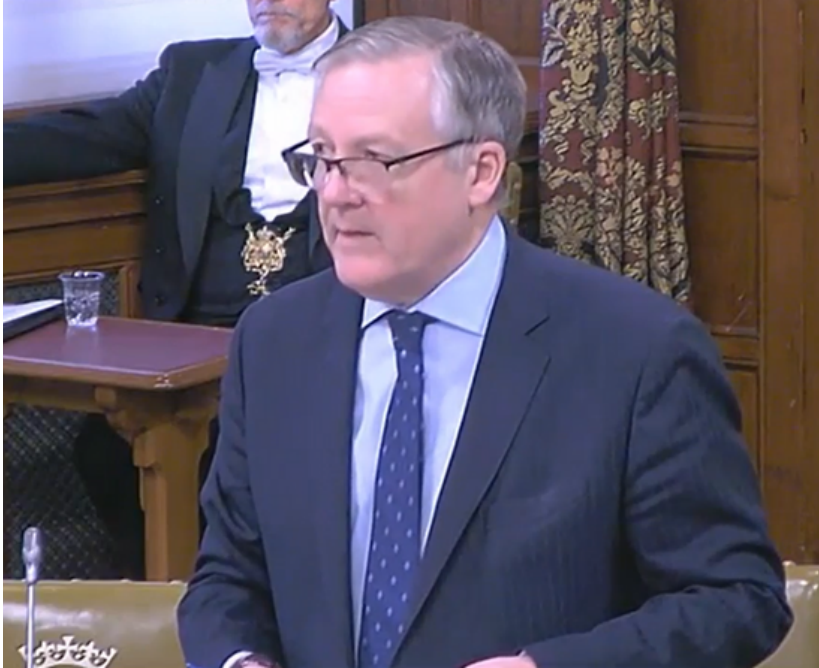
Kevan Jones MP

Member of Parliament for North Durham



Parliamentary Update

March 2023



Mental health Westminster Hall debate

On 15 March, I led a debate in Westminster Hall to challenge the Government on its decision to scrap a dedicated 10-year mental health and wellbeing plan.

The plan was announced last year and widely welcomed but it was quietly scrapped in January. The Government says mental health will now be dealt with in a much larger strategy, which covers cancer, dementia and other major physical health issues.

I am worried this will mean many aspects relating to mental health and wellbeing, including specific issues relating to children and young people, will fall through the cracks.

You can watch the speech here: fb.com/KevanJonesMP

Refugee Plans

MPs voted on the Illegal Migration Bill on 13 March. While I believe we need urgent action to stop the dangerous boat crossings that are putting lives at risk and undermining our border security, I do not believe this Bill will help.

It will not stop the criminal gangs or dangerous crossings. It will not help clear the asylum backlog. It will not help us secure returns agreements with other countries.

I therefore voted against the Bill on 13 March, as I believe it is nothing more than a cruel gimmick.

I want to see fast-tracked decisions and returns to clear the backlog, new agreements on returns and family reunion and a new Cross-Border Police Unit to tackle the smuggling gangs at source.

Windsor Framework

On 22 March, MPs voted on the Stormont brake, a part of the new Windsor Framework with the EU that aims to ease border checks on goods travelling from Britain to Northern Ireland.

The Stormont brake would allow members of the Northern Ireland Assembly to formally flag concerns about the imposition of new EU laws. Although this deal is not perfect, it is an improvement, so in the interests of Northern Ireland and the rest of our country I voted for it.



Compensation for postmasters

On 23 March, the GLO Compensation Scheme for postmasters impacted by the Post Office Horizon scandal opened for applications. I have been campaigning on this issue for over a decade and it is vital that compensation payments are made speedily.

It was also announced that the advisory board on which I sit will oversee two other compensation schemes relating to this scandal. I will be pressing the Government to ensure that those who have already received compensation are not taxed or liable to bankruptcy clawback.

The Budget

Families are facing the biggest hit to living standards since records began. Yet the only surprise announcement in the Budget on 15 March made was a tax giveaway for the richest 1% of pension savers. I believe this is the wrong priority at the wrong time and I will support efforts to reverse it.

I welcome that the Budget included several measures I have been calling for, such as ending the premium paid by people on prepayment energy meters, preventing the fuel duty increase, and better childcare provision for working parents.

I also welcome the freeze in energy prices but I continue to believe it is wrong that the Government has once again left billions of pounds on the table from oil and gas companies which could be supporting families and businesses during the cost-of-living crisis.

Independent public advocate

On 1 March, the Government announced plans for a public advocate to put victims and the bereaved at the heart of responses to large-scale public disasters.

However, I am concerned the plans are too weak to prevent future cover-ups, such as that which happened with Hillsborough.

The public advocate needs to be a fully independent, accountable and permanent figure, not a panel of advisers appointed by the Government. It should also have full power to access all communications and documents it needs.

I hope the Government will reconsider and establish a fully independent public advocate.

I hope this parliamentary update has been of interest.

Best wishes,

Rt Hon Kevan Jones MP



Get in touch

If you are a constituent and need help or would like to arrange an appointment, please contact me.

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