

AUGUST UPDATE FROM GARETH THOMAS MP

Dear Friend,

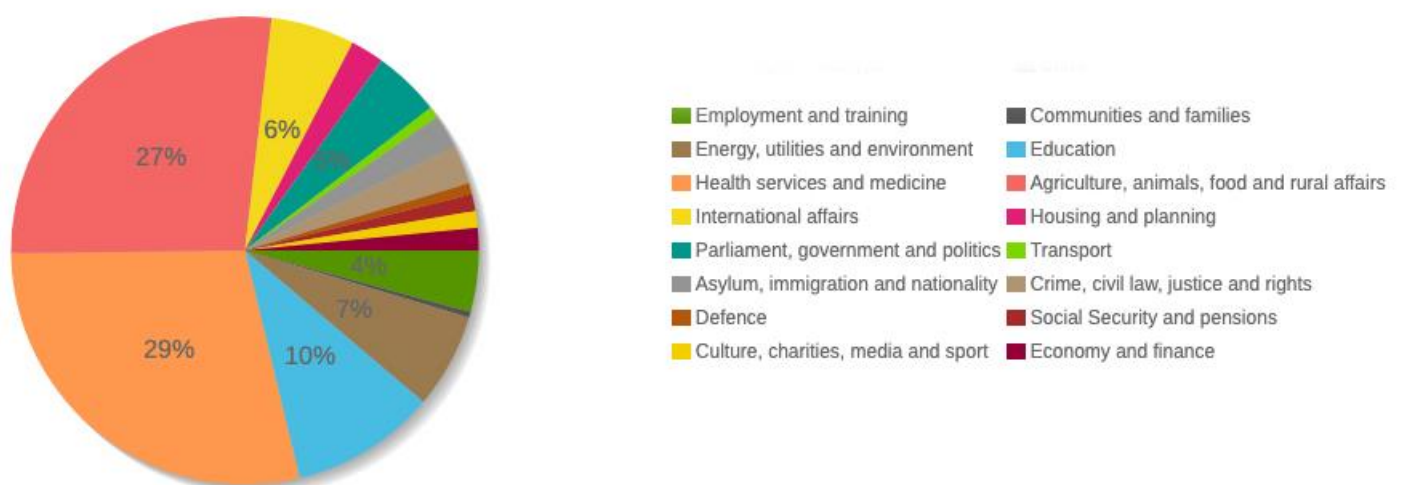
Welcome to my August update,

Over the past month I hope you have been able to take a moment to slow down. I'm sure there's no routine that has returned back to normal completely but for the majority of us, September will bring about shorter days, longer nights and busier schedules.

Parliament has been in recess this month but as with any recess, the work does not stop. For the purpose of transparency, below are two pie charts that showcase the issues dominating my inbox at this time. As you can see, my team and I are handling a large proportion of housing and planning casework issues, while over fifty per cent of my Policy e-mails have been in response to campaigns calling for a pay-rise for NHS staff and for a ban on 'supertrawlers' and other destructive fishing in UK Marine Protected Areas.

As I've reassured Harrow West constituents reaching out to me on these issues, I will continue to press Ministers to recognise NHS and care staff for the skill and selfless dedication they bring to their jobs, including an overdue pay rise. I have also outlined my support for amendments to this week's Fisheries Bill that will prevent supertrawlers from fishing in Marine Protected Areas, as well as an amendment for a National Landing Requirement, so that at least 50% of fish caught in British waters are landed in the UK.

Policy



Casework



While lockdown measures have been eased, it is still important to recognise that over 65,000 people have lost their lives. My thoughts continue to be with the loved ones of those who have sadly died, and with those who have contracted the virus. Across London, including in Harrow, we have seen rises in the number of positive cases of Covid-19. As young people return to school and more people return to work, we must all play our part in helping reduce the spread of Covid. I hope readers continue to stay safe, socially distance and regularly check in on loved ones.

The response to Coronavirus is being directed by Government centrally working with Public Health England, the Government's advice is [available here](#). Government assistance specifically for businesses is [available here](#).

As always, if you need to get in touch about the issues covered here – or anything else – please contact my office on **0207 219 4243** or e-mail me at gareth.thomas.mp@parliament.uk. Please bear with us, as we have received over 5 times our usual weekly amount of correspondence. My team and I are working hard to respond as promptly as possible. Although we have had to cancel face to face surgery appointments, we are now scheduling regular Zoom surgeries and phone calls with Harrow West constituents.

Play your part in helping us keep Harrow safe – get tested for Covid-19 even if have only one of the symptoms. Anyone suffering from a new, continuous cough, a high temperature or a loss of taste or smell can be tested at a testing centre or with a home testing kit.

Get tested now nhs.uk/coronavirus or call 119

Join my Careers Fair



Last year, my Careers Fair in collaboration with Rooks Heath College was the only event in Harrow's calendar to bring together pupils from local state schools and over 20 companies and institutions, from the British Film Institute and Heathrow, to the NHS and the Met Police, to a CV and cover letter workshop from Google.

This year, due to the COVID pandemic, instead of the large gathering in a school hall, I'll be organising a virtual Careers Fair. Students from across Harrow will be able to tune in and have discussions with a wide selection of workers discussing their career paths.

I want you to get involved and share exactly what brought you to your career path. You can join from the comfort of your own living room – all we want is someone that is willing to talk with Harrow's brightest lights about the career path they have taken. If you can offer any support yourself or can provide more contacts – **please** send me an e-mail with the subject **Careers Fair** to gareth.thomas.mp@parliament.uk

[Read more here](#)

Parliament



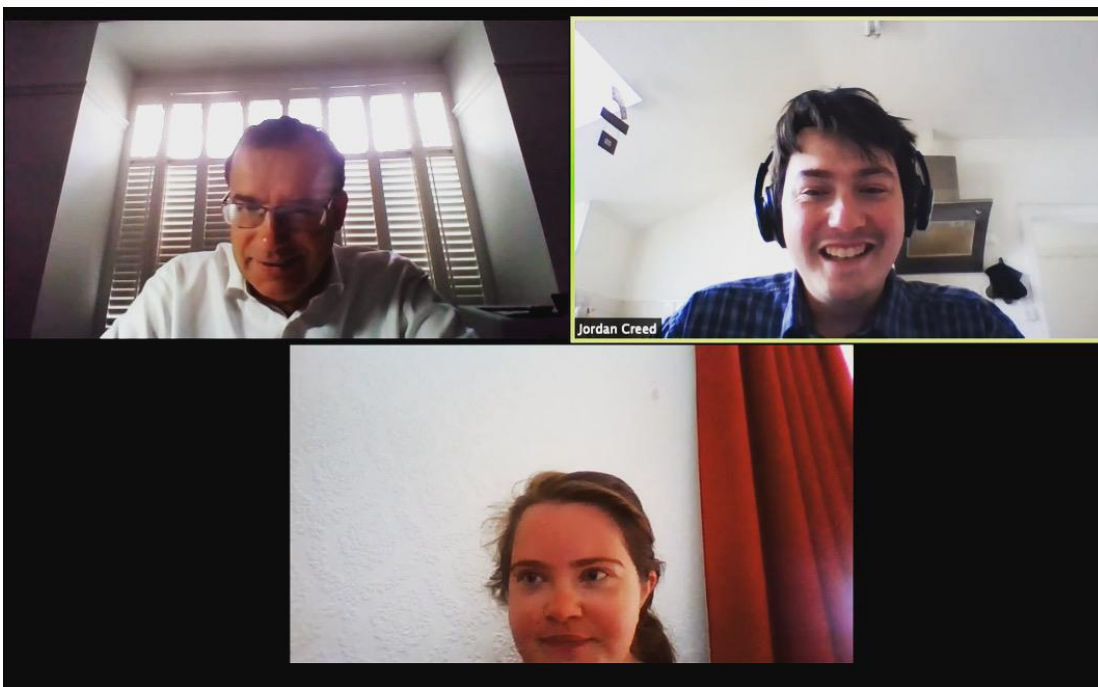
Regular readers of this Newsletter will recall, as a member of the Shadow International Trade team alongside Emily Thornberry, Bill Esterson, Matt Western, Charlotte Nichols and Fleur Anderson, my role has been to provide a detailed line by line examination of the Trade Bill. Just before recess, the Shadow

International Trade team worked around the clock to ensure important amendments were added and supported in the Trade Bill

Disappointingly, in the last big Parliamentary debate before the Summer recess, Government backbenchers voted to stop amendments being added to the Trade Bill that would protect the NHS from further privatisation and drug price hikes. *“The Harrow West MP and Shadow International Trade Minister wrote and co-authored changes to the Trade Bill to stop for example a UK-US deal allowing big American pharmaceutical corporations forcing up the prices for drugs used in the NHS, or to prevent further privatisation. While New Clause 17’ would have prevented any future trade deal from including the NHS, ‘New Clause 4’ would have prevented trade deals from being signed unless they were approved by parliament.”*

[Read more about the Trade Bill vote here](#)

NHS



Earlier this summer, I was proud to join Harrow Mencap’s campaign calling for another dedicated disability nurse at Northwick Park Hospital. The campaign was a success and the Trust have now announced that they will create another Learning Disability nurse post at Northwick Park. Last month I tabled a Parliamentary Question and wrote to the Trustees at London North West University Healthcare Trust, this complemented the excellent report set out by the team at Harrow Mencap and the petition signed by hundreds of Harrow residents calling for another dedicated disability nurse. The current disability nurse has been split between five hospitals and as we get out of lockdown and begin to deal with a second wave, it’s clear the health service will be under greater pressure. With a 134% increase in deaths of people with learning disabilities between April-May this year, a doubling from this period in 2019 – Harrow Mencap’s campaign has been incredibly important and will now ensure that the hospital has another dedicated learning disability nurse to support those who need it.

Harrow Council

The council has a webpage covering their own response to the coronavirus pandemic, [this is regularly being updated and is available here](#). From October, parking restrictions will return to ensure residents with permits can park in spaces near their homes – [read more here](#).

Headstone Manor Museum – Everyone’s favourite local heritage site reopened its doors this month. Visiting times: **11AM – 3PM Thursday – Saturday**. During the closure period the team have been working on reopening plans, taking all advice and guidance from the Council and Government to ensure the site is ready and safe for public return. Delve into Harrow’s history, relax in the grounds or in the café. [What to expect](#) - and there are still [online activities](#), too.

English Lessons - Harrow Council recently secured a successful bid to help fund lessons and activities for those with little or no written or spoken English, either in Covid-secure community settings or online. Cllr Sue Anderson, cabinet member for Community Engagement and Accessibility, said: *“Lack of English skills can be a barrier to social and economic mobility in Harrow. Some people find a more formal learning environment challenging, whereas this type of community-based tuition is shown to reach the people who are in greatest need, helping them fulfil their potential.”* Call **020 8901 2691** or email learnharrow@harrow.gov.uk to find out more, or visit learnharrow.ac.uk to find available courses.

Counselling services and mental health support

- [Relate Family Mediation](#) - a service fully geared up to supporting families through the crisis. Tel: 0300 0032324 or email info.LNVWH@relate.org.uk.
- [DAWN](#) - provide a counselling service to the local community of Harrow and its neighbouring boroughs. Tel: 020 8427 6796 or email: yakeendawn@yahoo.co.uk
- [Need To Talk](#) - offering 1 to 1 counselling supporting their clients or any client by telephone or webcam. Tel: call/ text on 07427548559 or email info@needtotalk.london
- [Ignite Trust](#) - During these challenging and uncertain times, Ignite Trust is working hard to ensure they continue to provide support to the boroughs most vulnerable and at-risk young people. Email office@ignitetrust.org.uk.
- [Every Mind Matters](#) - Expert advice and practical tips to help you look after your mental health and wellbeing.

Coronavirus Hotline

The council continues to operate a hotline telephone number during weekends in order to provide support to those in need of assistance in Harrow - if you are in need of support due to Covid please give the hotline a call - **0208 901 2698**

TFL



TFL's School Services will help free up non-school services for other customers. However, journeys for other customers may take longer during school travel times (generally 07:30 to 09:30 and 14:30 to 16:30) due to these planned changes. TFL encourage other customers using the bus network to plan your journey in advance, travel at quiet times and outside of school travel times if you can, and allow more time to complete your journey.

Schoolchildren travelling without adults should travel on the designated school services where these are provided, to help provide space for other customers on regular services. Customers who are not schoolchildren but who need to travel at school travel times are strongly encouraged to use the regular services. Regular services will continue to have lower capacity limits to support social distancing, in line with Government guidelines.

Customers over the age of 11 are required to wear a face covering when using public transport services (including school services) or stations, or taxi and private hire services, unless they are exempt on health or equality grounds. TFL advise anyone exempt from wearing a face covering to carry an exemption card. For more details please see <https://tfl.gov.uk/campaign/face-coverings>. We're also asking people to carry hand sanitiser and wash their hands before and after they travel.

TFL say there will be no changes to fares and ticketing for children in September. While the Government has asked TFL to temporarily suspend free travel for 11-17 year olds as part of our funding agreement with them. The implementation of this is being discussed with the Government and London's boroughs and full details, including the effective date of changes, will be widely communicated once finalised.

[Young campaigners are speaking out against the Government's disgraceful decision to take free travel away from Under 18s in London. Please join them in telling the Tory Government #DontZaptheZip.](#)

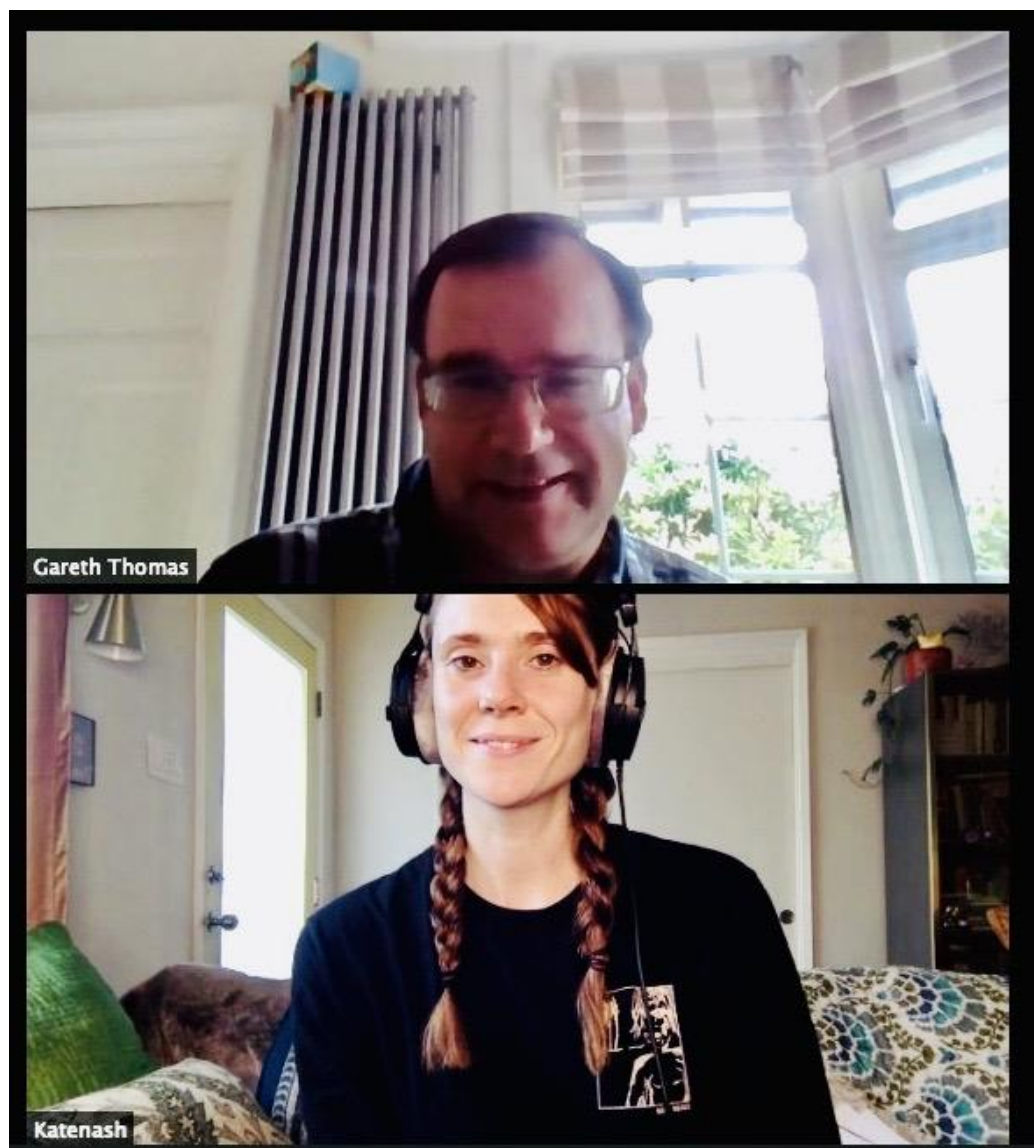
Finding Support

Do you have a medical condition that makes you vulnerable? Please register.

A reminder, if you think you fall into a category that makes you vulnerable to coronavirus – [register with the Government here](#). For example, you'll be able to ask for help getting deliveries of essential supplies like food.

If you're not sure whether your medical condition makes you extremely vulnerable, register anyway. This service is free. [You can register yourself, or on behalf of someone else](#).

Help from me



I appreciate that whilst this outbreak of Covid-19 is currently dominating a lot of our thoughts, other concerns and problems do not disappear. However, to help reduce the spread of infection, I am asking members of the public who need to contact my office to do so by phone or email rather than in person and further, I will continue to hold surgery appointments exclusively by telephone and Zoom video conferencing. This is a temporary measure and a sensible precaution to protect vulnerable people. Please be assured we continue to offer a full service of advice and support to members of the public who need it.

As always, my office can be contacted on gareth.thomas.mp@parliament.uk or by telephone on **0207 219 4243** (Monday-Friday).

Best wishes,

Gareth