



Chris Stephens MP

GLASGOW SOUTH WEST

MP newsletter covering some of my work
both in Westminster and in the Constituency

May 2023



Labour increasingly indistinguishable from Tories as it doubles down on refusal to repeal anti-protest laws

Labour frontbencher at Westminster, Lisa Nandy, has doubled down on the party's incredible refusal to get rid of Tory's anti-protest law claiming Labour isn't in the business of "wholesale repeal of legislation".

It follows Keir Starmer's mind-blowing decision to scrap his previous pledges to abolish tuition fees and his party's U-turns on Brexit, freedom of movement, electoral reform, nationalisation of rail, mail, energy and water services, and progressive taxation.

A senior figure in the Starmer regime, David Lammy, says Labour won't be "picking through all the Conservative legislation and repealing it".

The comment by Lammy has sparked widespread anger with the public, but also within the Labour ranks itself, with former MSP Neil Findlay describing Lammy as an "idiot" who is "living in cloud cuckoo land" if he believes choosing not to repeal the Tories' anti-protest legislation will help Labour win the next election.

Contrast this with the SNP. SNP's Westminster group has repeatedly called for the Tory government's draconian anti-protest laws to be repealed - warning they are "eroding the basic tenets of a free and democratic society".

That is why it beggars' belief that Keir Starmer is refusing to repeal these

anti-democratic Tory laws. So it's no wonder people are questioning the point of a vote for a pro-Brexit Labour Party that is increasingly indistinguishable from the Tories on so many issues.

Heading into the next General Election, the SNP, and its commitment to independence, will be the only party offering a natural alternative for the people of Scotland to the Tories.

People will know that by voting SNP, it is the best way to beat the Tories and Labour in Scotland and deliver a strong team of SNP MPs that will get the best deal for Scotland, including defending our democratic rights.

Working hard for everyone in Glasgow South West

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Devastating report exposes harsh realities for households of benefit sanctions

A devastating new report by the DWP has admitted the impact the cruel Tory sanctions regime is having on people on the lowest incomes.

The report found that those claiming Universal Credit who have received a sanction are more likely to take on a lower-paid job than those who have received no sanctions.

Sanctioned UC claimants, on average, earned £34 a month less than a non-sanctioned person. Young people felt the impact even harder, with people under-26 who received a sanction earning £43 a month less than an unsanctioned person in the same age group.

The devastating report, which was kept under wraps by the Tories for years, has exposed the harsh reality for households up and down the country of Tory rule in Scotland.

The sanctions regime introduced by the Tories just pushes people deeper into poverty and, as this report shows, does not help get people back into higher-paid jobs. In fact, it keeps them on Universal Credit for longer and

leads to them taking lower-paid jobs.

For years now, I have called on the UK Government to ditch the cruel benefits sanctions regime, but time and time again, they have failed to listen. Instead, the system is intentionally being set up by WM Government to force people into debt and poverty.

Previous figures revealed to my office via a written question have shown that £10 million is being deducted from Universal Credit payments in Scotland monthly; and that almost 200,000 households have an average of £59 taken from their UC in just one month. This is during a Tory cost of living crisis, where that money could have helped already struggling families who need it the most with things like food and energy.

It is time the Tories ditched this cruel sanctions regime, gave an amnesty on deductions resulting in errors from the DWP and replaced the upfront loan with grants. They also must lower the monthly cap on the rate of deductions. Only these steps would demonstrate that the UK Government was

committed to fixing the gaps in the welfare safety net.

Yet, we must be honest. There are very likely realistic expectations that the UK Government of any colour will seriously commit to fixing our welfare safety net in the UK.

It is a tale of two governments for the people of Scotland. The Scottish Government is building a social security system built on fairness, dignity and respect that provides a safety net for those on the lowest incomes and does not punish them with sanctions.

However, it continues to act with one hand tied behind its back by a Westminster system that works against the people, not for them. And things will not improve under a pro-Brexit Labour government that will not eliminate the cruel sanction regime.

Therefore, no matter if it's Labour or the Tories in Government in Westminster, The only natural way for Scotland to build a fairer, more equal country is by becoming independent.



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Community food larders save £20 on a weekly shop

WITH 12,094 visits in the last financial year to Govan Help's food pantry, community grocery shops are providing essential services in Glasgow.

Good Food Scotland larders have now opened in Linthouse, Cardonald, Nitshill (Threehills) and Kennishead, showing similar figures for demand.

Kennishead and Threehills opened in the past year, with Linthouse in the past 12 weeks and Cardonald in the past five – with new larders opening soon in Toryglen and Sandyhills.

A food larder or pantry is a community shop that runs on a membership basis and relies on food surplus similar to a food bank.

Unlike foodbanks, which provide free basic foodstuffs, larders are based on a small membership fee which gives the member access to everything from fresh fruit and vegetables to dry and tinned food, chilled and frozen food, toiletries, nappies and cleaning supplies.

Items aren't priced, they are generally colour-coded. For £2.50 per week you can get 10 items which will be worth between £10 to £15. A family can get 20 items for £5.

A single community food larder can provide average grocery savings of around £15 to £20 a week, totalling up to saving households almost £250,000 each year, with 165 tonnes of food sold to local residents.

A number of Glasgow housing associations – including Linthouse, Southside and the Wheatley Group – are supporting larders by offering rooms to operate. The Wheatley Group's vision is to open larders in communities across Glasgow and further afield.

Larders are supported and managed by steering groups comprising local community groups, community councils, churches and

religious groups. In Glasgow Southwest (GSW), they are supported by the GSW food bank.

The flagship Threehills Community Supermarket in Nitshill will open in Summer this year, with a community supermarket, cafe and community room.

Chris Stephens, MP for Glasgow South West, became keen to develop more food larders amid his work on the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Select Committee. He was invited by Frank Field MP to serve on the Feeding Britain board and then helped set up a Scottish arm – Good Food Scotland.

Proposals followed some of the work in Birkenhead – Frank's old Merseyside constituency with community supermarkets. Feeding Britain and the Independent Food Aid Network also undertake seminars looking at the causes of food poverty and finding practical solutions.

These events identified policy solutions such as moving Universal Credit to a starter payment system and ending deductions, implementing a warnings system before implementing benefit sanctions, giving asylum seekers the right to work, ending zero-hour contracts and ending short-notice shift changes.

Chris Stephens MP said: "The principle behind these projects is to help people up the ladder. The food bank is the absolute emergency, and the top of the ladder is the regular supermarket. In a cost of living crisis and with food inflation at 18.2%, people need something in the middle. The principle is to make these projects available to all in the community and make their money stretch that wee bit further.

"It provides dignity and choice and allows people to buy as much food as they wish.

"They are very popular locally and assist

people in saving money for their weekly shop – offering good food, culturally appropriate to meet the needs of our diverse Glasgow communities.

"These projects are also supported by organisations providing wrap-around services to assist with benefits, fuel support and other matters. The key task here is to end food poverty and to back up what we're doing and the principles we're applying with academic research."

There is no widely accepted definition of "food poverty". A household can broadly be defined as experiencing food poverty or "household food insecurity" if they can't acquire "an adequate quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways".

The increase in the cost of living has increased household food insecurity. In June/July 2022, of the 91% of adults in the UK who reported an increase in their cost of living, 95% saw the price of their food shopping go up, and 44% had started spending less on essentials including food.

A YouGov survey by the Food Foundation found that in April 2022, 15.5% of all UK households were food insecure – eating less or going a day without eating because they couldn't access or afford food.

According to the DWPs' Households Below Average Income survey, in 2020/21, 4.2 million people were in food insecure households. Among the 10.5 million people in relative poverty, 16% were in food insecure households, including 17% of children.

Food banks are run by charities as a temporary solution to supply emergency food; there are more than 2300 across the UK. Without doubt, food larders are providing an additional and sustainable solution to tackling food insecurity.

Article by Mike Dailly in the [Glasgow Times](https://www.glasgowtimes.co.uk), 10th April



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As the Tory party continues to constrain the ability of unions, including the unpopular and extreme strikes (minimum service levels) bill that I have spoken against several times, as well as creating and exacerbating the cost-of-living crisis, it is more important than ever to support the striking workers. Workers are feeling the devastating effect of years of real-term pay decreases and cuts to vital public services. No worker wants to go on strike and lose pay, but sometimes it is the only way they can defend their pay and conditions and maintain the staffing and safety standards of our public services.

Before becoming the MP for Glasgow South West, I worked at Glasgow City Council and was a senior Unison activist in the city, representing trade union members and acting as a lead negotiator, working on issues such as disability and discrimination, occupation pension protection and equal pay.

As I have always done, I continue to give support and solidarity to striking workers. I want to urge everyone reading this to support workers on picket lines. They deserve to be paid fairly and not have to be worrying about how they will pay their household bills.

“We need to be on the right side of this, saying enough is enough and show we are on the side of working people in Scotland.”

This is one of the gravest and most frightening crises seen in our lifetimes, and my constituents tell me they feel abandoned and ignored by the Government, whose job it is to protect them. Alas, every constituency in the UK has people struggling to get by. The system is broken. A clean getaway and a

fresh start will be the only thing to save Scotland’s workers and people.

Far too often, we hear Government Members blaming society’s problems on trade unions, although they also like to point blame in the direction of asylum seekers too. “It is the trade unions’ fault that we have so many societal problems at the moment”—what a risible argument! If the Government keep pursuing that level of tactic and introducing such rubbish legislation, such as the so-called minimum service levels legislation, it is only going to intensify the situation and make it worse. I want to hear from the Government how they are actually going to sit around the table and enter into meaningful negotiations like other Administrations do, including the Scottish Government.

We must act now and raise our voices in solidarity with trade unions and workers driven to strike action.



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SPOTLIGHT ON LOCAL ORGANISATIONS



Greater Pollok Community Hub

I was delighted to attend the Grand Opening of South West Arts & Music Project's (SWAMP) Greater Pollok Community Hub.

They have turned the former housing office on Brockburn Road into a hub for local groups and social enterprises.

The building is now a state-of-the-art multi-use space that supports all aspects of the community, including a food pantry and a community cafe.

SWAMP, an organisation "at the very heart of the community," has delivered a range of services in the area over 20 years and, during the pandemic, set up the G53 Together structure, a collective of groups, volunteers and local people in Greater Pollok.

Established in 1996, SWAMP

is a forward-thinking Community Development Trust and registered charity, using accredited training, outreach, film, music, digital technologies, gardening and the creative arts to enable and empower social change.

They strongly believe in the model of inclusion through creation, and work collaboratively with children, young people, older people and communities to achieve their aims; predominantly, but not exclusively, with vulnerable groups.

For details of what is on at the new hub and to find out more about the services they offer visit:

- www.swampglasgow.co.uk
- facebook.com/swampcreative/
- twitter.com/SWAMP_Glasgow



Working hard for everyone in Glasgow South West

chrisstephens.scot 0141 883 0875 chris.stephens.mp@parliament.co.uk



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OUT AND ABOUT IN

Glasgow South West & Westminster

I have been out and about in Glasgow South West, including during the Easter recess which gave me the ideal opportunity to catch up with all of the local organisations throughout Glasgow South West, I have also been able to attend many of the community council meetings.

I have also been talking to constituents on the doorstep and delivering my residents' surveys. If you have any matters you want to raise please get in touch at 0141 883 0875 or email chris.stephens.mp@parliament.uk

Since my newsletter in March, I have once again attended several picket lines, including Ofgem, HMRC, Cabinet Office, DWP, Passport Office and Social Security Scotland, both in Glasgow and in London, as more and more workers feel the impact of the Tory Cost of Living crisis. It is important to support those who take part in industrial action. I also attended the Glasgow Trades Council May Day march. I spoke at the Race & Racism in Scottish Sport conference this afternoon. A very informative event with brilliant speakers and conversations on how racism and racialised inequalities significantly influence people from diverse communities' access, participation, and experiences in sports.

I attended the AUOB Independence March and was pleased to see how well attended it was.

In Westminster I provided the Parliamentary Group report to the Public and Commercial Services Union National Executive Committee, I was elected Chair of both American Football APPG and Kabaddi APPG, I spoke about social housing, environmentally friendly buses, the second interim report on contaminated blood and I took the opportunity during Easter Adjournment to talk about the cost of living crisis, my work with Feeding Britain and Good Food Scotland and their amazing work providing affordable food throughout Glasgow South West and beyond.

I have also held surgeries throughout the constituency each week, plus much more!



Maslows Community Shop



Threehills Larder



Values Into Action Scotland



Include Me 2 Club in Cardonald



Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society



Breakfast club, Pollok Baptist Church



Glasgow's Helping Heroes, Govan



Cardonald Larder



Easter Walkabout, Pollok



Govan Men's Shed



Govan Men's Shed



Riverside Hall Surgery



Revive MS, Govan



St Paul's RC High School



ACVC HUB



Greater Pollok Citizens Advice Bureau



Govan Community Boxing Club



Race & Racism in Scottish Sport



COL support (Multi-ethnic food distribution)

Cardonald Larder



Linthouse Monday Club



Make Do & Grow, Govan



Linthouse Larder



HMS Birmingham in Govan



Community Networking Breakfast, Clyde Hall



Breakfast club, the Hall on Peat Road



Quarriers Epilepsy Centre



Litter Pick, Govan



Jean's Legacy Larder, Community Veterans Support



MP Residents' Surveys, Mosspark



MP Residents' Surveys Cardonald



Darnley Surgery



Independence March



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Food Support – Glasgow South West



Important - The foodbank works using a voucher referral system. In order to get help from the foodbank, you will need a voucher issued by [local agencies](#), including my office at 1612-1614 Paisley Road West, Glasgow G52 3QN.

Ibrox

Ibrox Parish Church
Clifford Street
Glasgow
G51 1QL
Mon 12:00 - 14:00

Penilee

Our Lady & St George Church
50 Sandwood Road
G52 2QE
Tue 10:30 - 12:30

Mosspark

Mosspark Baptist Church
155 Corkerhill Road
Glasgow, G52 1PG
Wed 12:00 - 14:00

Cardonald

Hillington Park Church
24 Berryknowes Rd
G52 2UD
Fri 10:00 - 12:45

Linthouse

Linthouse Housing Association
1 Cressy Street
Glasgow, G51 4RB
Tue 14:00 - 16:00



Nutritious low cost food and support to local people.

Linthouse

Linthouse Housing Association
1 Cressy Street, Glasgow G51 4RB
Thur 10:00 - 13:00

Threehills larder

415 Nitshill Road (Entrance at the side of the block of high rise flats.)
Tue 10:30 - 13:00
Wed 10:30 - 13:00

Cardonald

12 Swinton Place, Cardonald, G52 2EA
Tue 10:00 - 13:00
Thur 15:00 - 18:00

Kennishead

60 Kennishead Ave, Glasgow G46 8RN
Tues 10:00 - 13:00
Fri 10:00 - 13:00

Crookston Community Group



48 & 56 Beltrees Road, Crookston
www.ccg.scot 0141 882 4333
Mon to Fri 10:00 - 15:00

St Constantine's Hall, Uist St - Opposite Church

Uist St, Govan G51 3XW
Saturday 6 - 7PM FREE Food Parcel pickup.
10 items per bag. Drop-in, no referral required.

Govan

The Pearce Institute, 840-860 Govan Road, entrance at the war memorial side.

Wednesday 10.30 to 15:00
Thursday 10.30 to 15:00



Pollok Pantry

Located at 25-27 Brockburn Road, G53 5BG.
Monday, Tuesday and Thursdays
10.00 - 15:00, Saturday 10:00 - 14:00

Get help with the cost of living

If you don't have enough money to live on, you might be able to get to afford essentials like bills and food. This includes the Scottish Welfare Fund and cost of living payments.

You should [check](#) if you can claim benefits - you might be able to do this even if you have a job.

Telephone: 0141 881 2462

www.cas.org.uk/bureaux/
glasgow-greater-pollok-
citizens-advice-bureau



Emergency Contacts

SAFETY



Ambulance, Police, Firefighters

Emergency – 999

Non-emergencies – 101



NHS 24 – 111



womensaid.org.uk



Childline
0800 1111



www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk

0808 2000 247 – Freephone, 24-hour Helpline

FLOODING



Scottish Water
Trusted to serve Scotland

Out of Hours Customer
Helpline, 0800 077 8778

COUNCIL ISSUES



Glasgow City Council Emergency Line: 0141 287 2000

Simon Community Scotland's street team 0800 027 7466. For new presentations of homelessness, Mon – Fri (9:00am – 4:45pm; 3:45pm on Fridays), please call Social Care Connect on 0141 287 0555

UTILITIES



0800 092 9290



0345 058 0002
(Mon to Fri, 9am – 5pm)
Emergency – 105



Gas Emergency
0800 111 999



National Power
Cut Helpline 105



British Gas
0800 111 999

GOVERNMENT



Department
for Work &
Pensions

0800 169 0310 (JSA ESA)
0800 328 9344 (UC)



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

0845 850 289

ANIMALS



03000 999 999



0800 917 2509

MENTAL HEALTH



116 123



0800 83 85 87



08000 28 22 33



0808 808 1677



0800 12 44 222



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ChrisCast – Weekly Politics & Local News From a Glasgow MP

ChrisCast is our weekly podcast from Chris Stephens MP. What do you want to know about the work of an MP? Do you have a Community project you would like mentioned? You can send me your suggestions alistair.shaw@parliament.uk

 chrisstephens.scot/podcast/



Newsletter

Our regular newsletter from Chris Stephens MP is available to download from our website, or you can sign up for our newsletter. The newsletter will inform you of what I have been doing in the Glasgow South West Constituency and in Westminster.

 chrisstephens.scot/#newsletter



Constituency Work in March & April



CASES OPENED 525



EMAILS RECEIVED 2,023









CASES CLOSED 633



EMAILS SENT 1,724

Working hard for everyone in Glasgow South West

    chrisstephens.scot  0141 883 0875  chris.stephens.mp@parliament.co.uk



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Monthly Advice Surgeries

If you have a problem or require advice please contact my office to book an appointment at the surgery at the time and location which suits you best.

If you require help or advice out with surgery times please contact my office on **0141 883 0875** or email **chris.stephens.mp@parliament.uk** and we can arrange an appointment within the constituency office with one of my casework team.

To book an appointment call
0141 883 0875 or email
chris.stephens.mp@parliament.uk

Constituency Office

1612-1614 Paisley Road West
Glasgow G52 3QN
Open: Mon, Tues & Thur, Fri 9.30am-5pm
CLOSED Wednesday and weekends

First Thursday of the month

12.30 pm - 50p Church, Priesthill Rd G53 6QL

First Friday of the month

6.30 pm - Sainsbury's, 10 Darnley Mains Rd,
Glasgow G53 7RH

First Saturday of the month

10 am - Cardonald Library,
1113 Mosspark Drive G52 3BU

Second Friday of the month

11 am - Pearce Institute,
840-860 Govan Road G51 3UU

1 pm - Crookston Community Group,
56 Beltrees Road G53 5TF

Third Saturday of the month

10 am - Ibrox Library, 1 Midlock Street G51 1SL

12 noon - The Wedge,
1066 Barrhead Road G53 5AB

Fourth Friday of the month

12 noon - Corkerhill Community Hub
11 Corkerhill Place G52 1RD

2 pm - Riverside Hall,
29-31 Clydebrae Street G51 2AJ

Fourth Saturday of the month

12 noon - Tesco, Silverburn,
751 Barrhead Rd, Glasgow G53 6AG