



Annual Report (2021)

Reflections on 2021

2021 has been quite a year! It began, like much of 2020, in a national lockdown due to the threat posed to us by the Coronavirus pandemic. This year, however, things have been different, and we have been able to be together in-person a little more, thanks to the success of the UK's vaccine rollout. I have so loved being able to be back out there and meet people — and we have both science and our amazing NHS to thank for that.

The pandemic has challenged the assumptions of so many. **Do we have our values right?** If our society relies on them so much, why are key workers paid so badly? Whether it's the NHS, schools, the courts or local authority services — do we think it is right to have public services so stripped back that the only way that they've been able to survive through the pandemic is through the resilience and commitment of the staff? Just how much longer will we be able to avert our eyes from the crisis of social care?

During the pandemic, I have received a huge amount of casework from my constituents, which offers an insight into the lives of people in Islington South and Finsbury during these difficult times.

We gave advice to people on obtaining loans and grants on retail and hospitality, and on the Universal Credit uplift before it was taken away.

In 2021, my office and I dealt with a growing backlog of overcrowded **housing** and maintenance issues, as people found themselves unable to move because of the pandemic. Constituents got in touch with me outlining their concerns about **remote learning** for their children, their access to the **NHS** as service provision came increasingly under strain, and **disputes with their neighbours** that were exacerbated by everybody having to be at home more often than they normally would be.



On top of this, there was the crisis in **Afghanistan** over the summer, which was extremely difficult to deal with. Hundreds of desperate people contacted my office and, I have to say, the advice and support we received from the Home and Foreign Office was disappointing and unhelpful. I deal with a lot of immigration cases in Islington South and Finsbury and 2021 was no exception. However, the responses we received from the Home Office on Afghan cases were even poorer than those we usually receive on our immigration cases.

In 2021, I was very busy in Parliament as the representative for Islington South and Finsbury, Labour's Shadow International Trade Secretary, and later as the Shadow Attorney General. You can find out all about my parliamentary work in this report, as well as what I have been up to in my constituency.



Campaigning in Hartlepool and Harrow! Wherever I campaigned in 2021, the rain soon followed...



Labour Party Conference



Labour Party Conference returned to Brighton for the first time in person since before the pandemic. I had a busy Conference. As Labour's Shadow International Trade Secretary, I proudly made the case for an international trade policy that prioritises the rights of workers, the climate crisis, and puts human rights at its heart.

It was an excellent first in-person Conference for Keir, complete with a principled and positive speech.

At the Conference, Labour announced new policies from housing to high streets, schools to mental health, relating to the real problems facing our communities. We made it clear that Labour is standing up for our nurses, our teachers and our factory workers, but is also equally on the side of business, our armed forces, our police and our farmers.



It was wonderful to get back out there, meeting with friends old and new. Thank you to everyone who came over to say hello.

National COVID Memorial Wall



On 2 April, [I visited the National COVID Memorial Wall](#) across from Parliament, stretching from Westminster Bridge to Lambeth Bridge. The memorial was organised by the bereaved who didn't want to wait for others to decide how our national trauma should be marked. I found my visit profoundly moving.

Workers' Rights and Trade



On 28 May, I co-hosted the 'Building a Workers' Trade Agenda' Conference with the TUC, where we heard some really valuable contributions outlining why we must build a trade policy which upholds the rights and freedom of workers throughout the world.

Following on from this, on 12 September, I published a report entitled 'Labour's Trade Policy: Putting Workers First', at a TUC Fringe event, setting out the ways in which a future Labour government would promote the interests of working people in the UK and protect workers' rights abroad as central priorities of our trade policy. You can read the document and the background to it [here](#).

LABOUR'S TRADE POLICY: PUTTING WORKERS FIRST

September 2021

Emily Thornberry

The Rt Hon Emily Thornberry MP
Shadow Secretary of State for International Trade



Human Rights and Trade



At the Labour Party Conference in Brighton in September, [I announced](#) a future Labour government will impose the same legal controls on the provision of military and police training to overseas forces as are currently applied to the export of arms, and **published a new report, entitled 'Force for Good'**, which you can read [here](#).

In Parliament

January: Global Britain — On 11 January, during a [General Debate on Global Britain](#), I outlined Labour's position on good and fair trade, that no matter how desperate the government gets, they should not be allowed to do deals at the cost of workers and the planet.

Trade Bill — On 19 January, the [Trade Bill](#) returned to the House of Commons with Lords amendments, the most notable of which was the so-called 'genocide amendment', designed to ensure that the UK does not sign future trade deals with countries committing acts of genocide, which came within 11 votes of passing; one of the largest Tory rebellions in recent history.

February: Later, on [9 February](#), the government played procedural games and MPs were denied a straight vote on this amendment.

March: On 22 March, after three long years, the Trade Bill was debated for the final time. I was proud to lead the fight until the very end.

April: CPTPP — On 7 April, I wrote a [letter to Liz Truss with some 238 questions](#) about the implications of the UK joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. I did not receive any answers... Later, on 24 June, I was proud to speak in the House of Commons in a [General Debate](#) on the UK's accession to the CPTPP.

Fur trade — On 21 April, my Labour colleague Taiwo Owatemi presented a Ten Minute Rule Bill to ban the trade in fur, which I proudly co-sponsored. Without swift action, we run the risk of a proposed fur ban being compromised by future trade negotiations with fur-producing nations, prolonging the suffering of animals overseas farmed and trapped for their fur to serve a trade the majority of British people oppose.

May: Freeports — On 9 May, I wrote [a letter to Liz Truss](#) exposing the catastrophic negotiating blunder that risks leaving manufacturers in the UK's new generation of freeports shut out of £35bn in export markets. When Ministers were negotiating rollover deals after Brexit, they failed to remove 'prohibition clauses' from 23 of those deals, which stop manufacturers who don't pay duty on their imports from getting lower tariffs on their exports.

Vaccinating the world — On 20 May, my Labour Shadow Cabinet colleagues and I pressed the government and [set out a 10-point plan](#), designed to produce enough vaccines for the whole world,

win the battle against the Coronavirus, and put in place the tools we need to fight future pandemics.

UK-Australia trade deal — On 27 May, I asked Liz Truss an Urgent Question on the proposed UK-Australia trade deal, and its elimination of tariffs and quotas on all Australian agricultural exports to the UK, irrespective of standards.

June: The UK-Australia trade deal was agreed in broad terms on 15 June. On 17 June, Liz Truss made a [Statement](#), after which I challenged the hypocrisy of a government which said it would not allow British farmers to be undermined by cheap imports produced to lower standards of animal welfare and environmental protection, but did exactly that in its deal with Australia.

G7 summit — This year's summit was held in sunny Cornwall between 11 June and 13 June. World leaders came together to discuss pressing issues, such as global inequalities, climate change, and the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. I headed over to Cornwall myself. While the optics of the summit were great, I fear we did not do enough on vaccines and we did not step up to the challenges of climate change.

The summit was marred by tensions over the Northern Ireland protocol, which unfortunately continue today. In response, I was pleased to announce Labour's support for a veterinary agreement to cut checks and paperwork between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Steel — On 21 June, during an [Opposition Day Debate on Steel](#), I set out the choice between a Labour Party which wanted to give our steel industry the safeguards they need to build for the future, and a Tory Party which was willing to let them sink or swim in a flood of cheap imports from China. We later welcomed the government's U-turn on this issue, and their decision to retain steel safeguards.

November: Visits to businesses — During the November recess, I visited businesses across the country to discuss issues relating to trade, including shoemakers Sanders and Sanders in Earls Barton, Medicom's new factory in Northampton, RB Organics in Peterborough, and the Cheshire Cheese Company in Macclesfield. I enjoyed getting out there and speaking to businesses face-to-face.

In Parliament

COP26 — In Glasgow on 1 November, I spoke at 'Women Leading the Way in Green Trade', an event organised by the British Chambers of Commerce. I shared the final section of my speech on my Facebook page [here](#). Overall, the outcome of COP26 was disappointing and we have left the summit miles away from where we need to be to halve global emissions this decade.

Shadow Attorney General — On 29 November, Keir Starmer announced his new Shadow Cabinet. After spending nineteen hard months exposing the blunders, lies and betrayals of Tory trade policy, and the continuing act of economic self-harm that is their botched Brexit deal, I have moved on to the next good fight as Shadow Attorney General.

I have already got stuck into holding this government to account on its appalling track record when it comes to the law, particularly in light of the parties held in No 10 in 2020 when the rest of us were abiding by lockdown restrictions.



'Women Leading the Way in Green Trade' at COP26, 1 November

January: My first Attorney General Questions Oral Questions took place on 6 January, when [I asked Suella Braverman](#) to accept that our nation's magistrates will find themselves in an impossible position if the Coronavirus laws that the government is asking them to enforce are not applied equally to individuals working for the government itself.

In the Constituency



Checking in with my constituents on what life has been like for them during the pandemic, 27 February

January: Cladding crisis — Since the Grenfell tragedy, I have been pressing Ministers to resolve the cladding crisis, to no avail. In 2021, I wrote to the Housing Secretary in [January](#), [May](#) and November, making it clear that more government money is needed to renew cladding and to make flat blocks safe. Leaseholders and Housing Associations cannot be left to foot this bill. My office put together resident testimonies [here](#), which illustrate the scale of this problem in Islington. Over 400 people have contacted me from 30 different buildings, and I am still hearing from new people every week.

February: Coronavirus — On 5 February, I visited my local COVID vaccination centre in Islington, the Bingfield Primary Care Centre. It was a joy to meet the staff and volunteers

working on the vaccine rollout in our community. The centre was highly organised, safe and caring. I spoke to health staff during my visit who were honest about how profoundly tired they were, but determined to defeat the virus.

On **27 February**, I called constituents with local councillors and volunteers on behalf of the Labour Party, to talk politics and to hear stories about living under the pandemic in Islington.

March: International Women's Day — On **8 March**, I took part in CARE International's virtual **#March4Women**; a celebration of the power and potential of women and girls around the world, and a global movement for gender equality. [I spoke to my constituent, Harriet](#), who was concerned about the impact of the climate crisis on women and girls.



Visiting my local COVID vaccination centre, 5 February

In the Constituency

March: Local and Mayoral Elections — From March to May, I had the pleasure of canvassing in-person for the Local and Mayoral Elections. I was so happy to be out on doorsteps, speaking to constituents face-to-face — in these strange times, behind masks and in small groups of six. We spoke to tens of thousands of people in Islington South and Finsbury about hope, equality and change, and how Labour can make a difference to people's lives. It was an extraordinary and challenging election, and through it Islington gained five fantastic new councillors.



Pulling pints at the Three Kings! 26 July

Proposed Boundary Changes

On 8 June, the Boundary Commission published its 2023 review, which would see Islington South and Finsbury become the City of London and Islington South. Thousands and thousands of people who live in Islington are excluded from the constituency count just because they can't join, or haven't yet joined, the Electoral Register, which I do not understand. You can read my statement to the Islington Gazette on this [here](#).

Get in touch

I am always interested to hear from my constituents on policy issues and always happy to do what I can to help people resolve their problems via:

Email: emilythornberryp@parliament.uk

By post: Rt Hon Emily Thornberry MP, House of Commons, SW1A 0AA, London

By phone: My constituency advice line is open between 2 - 5pm on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. The advice line number is: 0207 697 9307.

Advice Surgery: I hold two constituency surgeries a month, one by appointment and a walk-in surgery at Islington Town Hall on the second Saturday of every month. If you want to make an appointment, please ring our advice line.



Remembrance Sunday Parade, 14 November

Constituency surgeries and events — Throughout the year, my constituency surgeries slowly but surely returned, first by appointment and then at the Town Hall. But throughout the pandemic, I have continued to provide my constituents with the advice they need, whether it's in person or via email, by letter or over the phone.

During the summer recess, I also got back out into the constituency, visiting the newly refurbished Three Kings Pub in Clerkenwell, attending St Luke's for a Thank You event for staff and volunteers, helping out at Formula Fun at Exmouth Market, and visiting the Whittington for the unveiling of a statue dedicated to Windrush and Commonwealth nurses and midwives.

October: Mehri Jafari — Mehri Jafari was a much-loved member of our Labour community in Islington South who very sadly died over the summer whilst mountaineering in Kyrgyzstan. On 22 October, I was honoured to attend an evening of poetry reading in her memory, which I was honoured to attend. The most powerful poems I heard were read by Mehri's friends and family from Iran. The emotion I could hear being expressed by them was so very powerful.

November: Remembrance Sunday — On 14 November, I joined the Remembrance Parade to Islington Green and Spa Green, remembering all those who left our community in order to protect it and never came back.

December: Small Business Saturday — On Small Business Saturday on 4 December, I went out and visited some of my favourite small businesses in Islington South and Finsbury, including Gail's Florist, Pistachio and Pickle, Fantasy Nails on The Cally, and Nourished Communities. Small businesses give Islington so much of its character; we are so lucky to have so many on our doorstep.