

HAVERING **FABIAN** SOCIETY

HAVERING FABIAN

Volume 2 Edition 61 July 2025

**Havering
Fabian Society
covering the
April meeting
with Chris
Purnell on
Havering
Secondary
schools,
Councillor Jane
Keane on
Havering
Council's VAWG
strategy and Ken
Clark on his time
as a union official
in Fleet Street.**

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VOLUME 2 EDITION 61 July 2025

Introduction

Welcome to the new edition of the Havering Fabian Newsletter. The return of President Trump means new twists and turns in public policy daily and presents a challenge to the Starmer Government. With an election in Germany, and President Macron of France weakened by the growth of the far right, these are challenging times for the UK Government.

The difficult domestic agenda continues, and locally, Havering Council struggles to achieve a balanced budget.

We also cover our recent meetings. In April former Havering Councillor Chris Purnell spoke on Havering Secondary Schools. In May, current Havering Councillor Jane Keane spoke on Havering Council's Strategy on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). In June former Havering and Newham Councillor Ken Clark spoke on his time as a union official in Fleet Street.

We now have 1,356 followers on X (previously twitter). This number is slowly going down as people leave the site. Keep up to date at our X site **@haveringfabians** for the latest news.

Some of our followers have left or moved to Bluesky. **So, we have a new Bluesky account @haveringfabians.bsky.social** We have 112 followers already, including some who were not following us before.

We have a blog now as well as our website

<https://haveringsfabians.org/posts/> You will need to follow us to get updates. **We have recently added an Instagram account so follow us on there as well!**

We are affiliated to the four local Labour Parties and will do all we can to support their campaigns. As opinions are the lifeblood of politics, we welcome a reply to any of the articles. The Fabian Society exists to promote political debate, both within and outside the Labour Party. Progressive politics extends beyond the Labour Party and contributions from the Labour Movement are welcome. Our website address is <http://haveringsfabians.org>

As you are no doubt aware, GDPR means we need to keep our mailing list up to date. If you are not on our mailing list (we use Mailchimp – **please check your spam folders!**) contact us via the website or email and we will add you in.

Chris Purnell - Are Havering's Secondary schools fit for purpose?

Former Havering Councilor Chris Purnell was the speaker at our April meeting. He regularly publishes a blog on Havering Politics, which often covers Education in the Borough. The following is an unedited version of his talk.



Figure 1 Keith Darvill and Chris Purnell as the meeting starts

HAVERING'S SCHOOLS

The government analysis of GCSE results are calibrated into five categories Well Above Average; Above Average; Average; Below

Average; and Well Below Average. Assessments are based on extrapolating achievements of children when aged eleven. ‘Well Above Average’ is when a school adds significant added value to that score. In brief, if the children attain significantly better results at 16 than could be reasonably expected at age 11.

The score is known as *Progress 8* and covers eight subject areas. Havering has three schools in the top category. Redbridge has six from their eighteen schools.

Havering is mediocre. No schools are academically excellent and none are dreadful.

The purpose of schooling has been reduced to getting children successfully through GCSEs and A levels. GCSEs are now a type of currency. Do well and cash in.

This produces an Olympic Games for GCSE. Winners and losers are those with GCSE grades 8 and 9. These are gold medal results. These results go on the front page of school websites. Grades 1 to 3 are discreetly buried.

Worse, schools run a two-tier system. Havering’s schools do not provide a level playing field for every child. Disadvantaged children are routinely failed. It is almost as if children are blamed for their poor results.

The 2025 model of schooling fails to produce an educated skilled workforce.

THE COVID EPIDEMIC AND TECHNOLOGY

Distance learning was enforced with lock-down but.... Schools discovered some pupils were so poor they did not have either home computers or internet connections.

Poor children were, therefore, denied access to Zoom lessons when distance learning was introduced. Poverty went front and central and destroyed the assumptions of our middle-class society.

However, children cannot be excluded from school because of poverty. When lock-down denied poor children access to education it caused panic.

The panic resulted in the mass distribution of laptops to poor students. The digital divide revealed by Covid destroyed the myth of Havering as a rich outer-London borough. It was as painful as the revelations of Dickens novel, *Oliver Twist*, in 1838.



Figure 2 Keith Darvill (left) and Chris Purnell about to take questions from the audience.

INSTITUTIONALISED LOW ACHIEVEMENT.

Two-tier schooling kicks in for disadvantaged children who then, inevitably, under-achieve.

‘Disadvantaged children’ are those that are eligible for Free School meals or are In Care. There absolutely is not a level playing field for the disadvantaged in Havering’s schools. The disadvantaged are an educational underclass.

GCSE outcomes for disadvantaged children are horrendous.

In Havering and in virtually every British school the disadvantaged are **expected** to fail. Nationally 25.2% got Gold Standard passes. A Gold Standard pass is grade 5+ in English and Math’s. 52.4% of the non-disadvantaged achieve this result.

The Coopers’ Company and Coborn school had ten disadvantaged children in Year 11 in 2024. Just three achieved the GCSE gold standard. This is a 70% fail rate.

Coopers is a top 2% state school.

Unless tech investments are introduced for every poor child the digital divide will accelerate. This would be a minor expenditure in relation to fighting housing poverty, which is what really matters. But it would be a start.

The chances of investment of that magnitude for *disadvantaged children* is nil. We only need to cast our mind back to Marcus Rashford’s intervention to prevent hunger for the disadvantaged to see that this is true. They have been written off. Both government and schools invest in winners.

HAVERING'S GCSE RESULTS

After 5 years of teaching both teachers and children are tested by GCSE examinations. It is not normal to think of teachers as being tested by GCSE. There is not a list of the success rates of different teachers unlike surgeons operating in NHS hospitals.

GCSE results should be a diagnostic tool. What worked and what did not? Lessons to be learned and so on. Havering's schools are not learning organisations. They do not critique their performance. The performance table for 2019 is very similar to that of 2024.

Searching questions should be posed every Autumn. Why are *our* children failing where other schools succeed? What needs to be done differently? Obviously, successful techniques should be disseminated but all of Havering's academies are independent of the borough and so cannot be led.

EXAMINATION RESULTS

Some of Havering's schools make their GCSE results unavailable to parents, children, and other stakeholders. The only access to information is via a government website. This website is user-unfriendly for anyone but the initiated.

Collectively Havering's 18 schools achieved a 52% Gold Standard outcome for Grade 5+ English and Math's. Or, less kindly, a 48% failure rate. The top pass rates were achieved by Coopers and Sacred Heart of Mary with 70+%.

Redbridge, our sister borough, achieved a 64.5% Gold Standard pass rate across all their schools. Their top school had a 98% pass rate.

Havering had 3065 children in the 2024 cohort. If Havering had achieved Redbridge's Gold Standard another 410 children would have achieved Grade 5 English and Maths.

It cannot be over-stated that the Gold Standard has critical importance for the life-chances of the 16+. Any child who does not achieve that result is an educational crime if it was feasible that they could have done so in a different setting.

Obfuscating exam results means schools remain in denial.

Schools *need* constructive criticism.

SCHOOL UNIFORM

Havering's schools are unanimous. School uniform is very, very important. Children are sent home or excluded from lessons for breaches of policy.

All 3065 Year 11 children in 2024 wore school uniform for five years at a cost of tens of thousands of pounds. Forty-eight percent of them did not achieve the Gold Standard despite diligently wearing uniforms.

School is compulsory. School Uniform is compulsory. It is a tax on learning.

School uniforms promote control freakery and micro-management without adding any educational value. Uniforms generate pettiness and hostility.

ACADEMIES

All 18 of Havering's schools are academies. So what? It is how well they perform that is important.

Harris Academy in Rainham is a top three school but Rainham is a poor area. Twenty-five percent of their intake is disadvantaged. Their children achieved 40% Gold Standard passes.

Coopers is a standalone academy with 5% disadvantaged children and got worse results than the Harris Academy.

Havering's secondary schools are mediocre. They are not dreadful like some of those in Middlesbrough, which should be avoided by any child with any aspirations.

OFSTED is interesting in what they chose not to notice or comment on. The effectiveness of Pupil Premium payments is not analysed. These payments can be significant as they are £1050 per disadvantaged child BUT that need not be spent exclusively on them.

OFSTED almost never remark directly on the achievement of the disadvantaged. Schools can be Outstanding and fail their disadvantaged children. OFSTED has off written disadvantaged children as a lost cause.

SUMMARY

Havering's secondary schools are not in a death spiral. However, it should be noted that they fail two significant groups of children. Those groups are those that in a different situation would achieve the Gold Standard in GCSE. They are having their lifetime opportunities unduly restricted by the failures of their school. The second group are failed throughout England and Wales. They are the disadvantaged. Their results are a scandal. Successive governments have promoted benefit policies which make things worse. Those benefit policies are deepening a chasm of failure, which very few schools understand how to successfully battle.

On balance Havering's schools are not fit for purpose.

Jane Keane - Havering Council's violence against women strategy

Jane was speaker at our May meeting. She covered Havering Council's VAWG Strategy. She provided her speech which is reproduced below with some tables added.



Figure 3 Jane Keane, Dave Baldock and passing London Bus waiting for the meeting to start

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for coming to listen to my brief talk on Havering Council's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2025 – 2029.

For those who don't know me. I am a mother and stepmother to four girls. I have 4 granddaughters and 5 grandsons growing up locally. I want them to be safe and in loving relationships. Eliminating and reducing violence is therefore especially important to me.

I want to do four things at the outset: -

Reflect on the loss of those who have died at the hands of violent men or been hurt by them

Pay tribute to the resilience of survivors – some of you may be in the room.

Thank those working on behalf of those women and children (and men).

And of course I will refer to the Council's Strategy throughout this talk.

DOMESTIC ABUSE

I won't presume that everyone here knows the difference between Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls.

Domestic Abuse includes any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse: -

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional

The definition of controlling behaviour includes a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour. Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten the victim.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Violence against Women and Girls however covers a much wider range of serious violent crimes. Violence against Women and Girls encompasses Domestic Abuse, Female Genital Mutilation, Forced, Marriage, Honour Based Violence, Prostitution and Trafficking, Sexual Violence including Rape, Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Harassment, Stalking and Faith Based Abuse. With the exception of Domestic Abuse, which nationally is defined as those 16 and over, this work is aimed at all age groups. It should be noted that Honour Based Violence, Female Genital Mutilation, Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation predominantly affect young people.

HAVERING'S VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS' STRATEGY

Havering's strategy is aligned with the Mayor of London's Strategy. The local vision is for the [Prevention and Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls](#).

https://consultation.havering.gov.uk/neighbourhoods/havering-vawg-strategy/supporting_documents/FINAL%20DRAFT%20VAWG%20strategy%2020252029.docx

The strategy has four aims: -

1. Preventing and reducing VAWG
2. Supporting all victims and survivors
3. Holding perpetrators to account
4. Building trust and confidence

Havering's strategy was produced for the Havering Community Safety Partnership. I have been a councillor nearly four years. Last week I attended my first Community Safety Partnership in Havering. It is a carefully choreographed and controlled Partnership.

At this point I will stop. I think it is important to root this talk about the strategy in my case work so want to begin by sharing with you the story of J.

CASEWORK – J'S STOREY

J came to my attention at a surgery. An employer was concerned about her. J was not born in the UK. She joined her husband who had been living in East London for some time. J had two boys by her husband. Both in their teens. It soon became apparent to J when she came here that

her husband had not revealed his status as husband and father to any of his friends. To them she didn't exist. He was in and out of other relationships with other women which played out on face book. J was allowed to work but was not allowed to go out anywhere else without her son accompanying her. When J tried to assert her right to be treated with respect she was punched in the head and threatened with her life. They lived in private rented accommodation. J had very little English and very little trust in any public protection system. She was very frightened about calling the police. Her son would call the police. J loved her husband but knew she was not safe and knew that her eldest boy was endangered by her husband's violence. She was very isolated. Eventually things reached a peak. Telephone calls were made to Women's Aid who cautioned that places in refuges in London were scarce. Refuges which would take in mothers with teenage boys were even more scarce. No place could be found that day but even if it had we were advised that it was unlikely that J could be offered a place because of her sons. J would not leave her sons. J went back home. J failed to show up for work. Wages were not collected. A request was made for a welfare check. Responsibility for making welfare checks no longer lies with the Police.

J's situation is common in Havering. A Reverend told me about the vulnerable women his workers had contact with, women on spousal visas with no security. I was able to put him in touch with our Violence Against Women and Girls Co-ordinator. The contact proved serendipitous as the co-ordinator had been looking for a venue where professionals could share best practice. The Reverend therefore kindly hosted the event.

It was this particular case that lay behind the motion which was put to Council which is discussed below. Having had the benefit of a stay in a

women's refuge run by Women's Aid I understood that there is no safer place to be for a women and children than in a refuge designed around the needs of vulnerable women and children. Not only do they have the best protection on offer, a secure place to be, they have the daily support of women who understand the very particular needs of women whose love and financial/emotional dependency on a violent spouse or partner puts their lives at risk. Women's Aid run two refuges in Havering. Women's Aid are mentioned in the strategy under the heading Resources.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan accompanying the VAWG strategy is split into the **four themes** already mentioned above (Preventing and reducing VAWG, Supporting all victims and survivors, Holding perpetrators to account and Building trust and confidence). Each theme is split again into Action and Theme for example, Preventing and reducing VAWG, is further subdivided into:-

1. Education and Awareness,
2. Policy and Framework,
3. Support and resources,
4. Community engagement,
5. Safety initiatives, programs/initiatives



Figure 4 Jane waits for questions as Dave looks on...

REFUGE FACILTIES AND THE LACK OF THEM

Refuge facilities, the accommodation needed by J and her sons appear in the action plan under Support and Resources,

a) Safe Accommodation - ensure that the LA continue to provide refuge accommodation and other forms of safe accommodation to ensure victims with priority need are offered safe accommodation

Havering has two refuges. These properties whose location must not be shared provide accommodation for women and children in self-contained flats. I visited. I was really impressed with the facilities. They were a far cry from the facilities that I spent months in. What also differed was the amount of time a family might spend in this accommodation. What did not differ was the support, which is empowering, holistic, tailored support enabling services users to stay safe from harm. And that is why refuge facilities are so very important. And that is why I drafted the motion. After a few tweaks, the motion put forward by the Labour Party was published on the Council Agenda.

“This Council condemns violence against women and children and recognises the particular challenges of finding emergency refuge accommodation for mothers with boys over the age of 12 years old. This Council calls upon the Administration to work with refuge organisations to find solutions to the lack of available refuge places.”

The motion put by the Labour Party referenced Violence Against Women and Girls. I put the motion and spoke about violence against women and children and the lack of places for boys. An HRA spokesperson addressed the issue of refuge provision London wide, a Conservative spokesperson talked about violence against men which missed the gendered nature of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls. It was an important debate. All perspectives were relevant. It is important to note that Women’s Aid also run Mendas which is a dedicated telephone helpline for men who are victims of Domestic Abuse. Predictably given party politics our Labour Motion was defeated by another carried by the Havering Resident’s Association which numbers more councillors: -

“This Council condemns all domestic violence and recognises the particular challenges of finding emergency refuge accommodation for

mothers with boys over the age of twelve years old. This Council calls on the Mayor of London and the Government to do more to address gaps in provision across the capital and nationally to ensure Havering residents have access to refuge care whether in Havering or not.”

During the debate I made the suggestion that members should be scrutinising the strategy. This has happened and that has further deepened collective understanding of the level of unmet need in Havering.

For example, in 2023, the Greater London Authority and the Mayors’ Office for Police and Crime, commissioned Crest Advisory to conduct a needs assessment to evaluate how demand and provision for safe accommodation-based support had changed since 2021. The assessment focused on the needs of victims and survivors, service gaps, the impact of newly commissioned services and the effects of COVID19 and the cost-of-living crisis.

- The minimum identified demand for safe accommodation and related support in London for 2022/23 was 11, 472 referrals.
- In 2022/23 80% of referrals reported by Mayoral-commissioned domestic abuse safe accommodation services were successful.

One third of unsuccessful referrals to Mayoral Commissioned domestic abuse safe accommodation were due to capacity issues, with a fifth unable to meet the specific needs of victims and survivors. Practitioners reported an increasing number of individuals with complex needs, highlighting the necessity for intensive, specialist and long-lasting support.

MOPAC LONDON-WIDE FUNDING:

It is no secret that Kier Starmer's Labour Government has inherited a toxic legacy. We await a comprehensive spending review but in the meantime funding restrictions on the London Mayor mean that investment in VAWG will be lower than anticipated. Havering's share of the MOPAC budget for Crime Prevention will be £266,268 year on year which of course means a reducing budget.

Year	2025-26 ALLOCATION	2026-27 ALLOCATION	2027-28 ALLOCATION	2028-29 ALLOCATION
Project				
IDVA SERVICE	148,900	148,900	148,900	148,900
DV ADVOCACY	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000
IOM OFFICER	57,368	57,368	57,368	57,368
DV PERPETRATOR PROGRAMME	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000
Annual Budget	266,268	266,268	266,268	266,268

There is an additional allocation of £100,000 which has been allocated to Havering.

Year	2025-26 ALLOCATION	2026-27 ALLOCATION	2027-28 ALLOCATION
Project			
NIGHT MARSHALLS	60,000.00	60,000.00	60,000.00
YOUTH DIVERSIONARY	25,000.00	25,000.00	25,000.00
JUNIOR CITIZEN	15,000.00	15,000.00	15,000.00
Annual Budget	100,000.00	100,000.00	100,000.00

Below is a breakdown of the projects supported by MOPAC in Havering:

PROGRAMMES COMMISSIONED BY MOPAC:

- Appropriate Adult (AA) Service for Vulnerable adults
- Children and Young People Victim Service

- Children and Young People Violence & Exploitation Support Service (from June 2024)
- CouRaGeus
- Cyber Helpline
- Drive
- Restart
- Drug Testing in Police Custody
- Empowering Communities with Integrated Network Systems (ECINS) Integrated Offender Management
- Galop Domestic Abuse (DA)/Sexual Violence (SV) survivors
- Harmful Practices
- Hate Crime Victim Service
- Integrated Offender Management – Mentoring Service
- Integrated Offender Management – Neurodiversity Service
- Integrated Offender Management – Service User Engagement
- London Gang Exit (LGE) (ended May 2024, replaced by Children and Young People Violence & Exploitation Support Service)
- London Holistic Advocacy Wrap Around Service
- London Integrated Offender Management – Mental Health Service
- London Rape Crisis Centres (x4)
- London Safeguarding Children - London Councils
- London Survivors Gateway
- London Victim & Witness Service
- London Victim and Witness Service Domestic Abuse Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) Service
- London Women's Community Rehabilitation Service
- Ministry of Justice DA/SV & Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA)/IDVA
- MOPAC GPS tagging for knife crime, domestic abuse and stalking
- Pan-London Prison Violence Reduction Strategy

- Prevention and Action through Community engagement & Training (P&ACT)
- Rescue & Response (ended May 2024, replaced by Children and Young People Violence & Exploitation Support Service)
- Stalking helpline and advocacy (London Stalking Support Service)
- Stalking Threat Assessment Centre (S-TAC)
- Support for victims of road collisions
- Survivors UK
- The Ascent Advice Plus Project
- The Havens Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs)
- Trauma-informed mentoring in Feltham Young Offender Institute (YOI)
- Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Grassroots
- VAWG Prevention Toolkit Support for Teachers

Programmes in Havering supported through the London Crime Prevention Fund (LCPF):

- Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme
- Domestic Abuse Advocacy Service
- Provision of IDVAs (Independent Domestic Violence Advisors)
- Serious Group Violence Mentoring
- Violent Reduction Analyst
- Youth Engagement Project

Programmes in Havering supported through Safer Neighbourhood Board Funding:

- Havering Neighbourhood Watch
- Ward Panel Cluster Community Engagements
- Crime Prevention pop up shop
- Switch Futures x Havering: Young Voices

- RISE – Social Football for Young Black Men
- Havering Women's Aid – 12 Support/Coffee and Connecting Community Mornings.
- Mobile Intervention Outreach Service/Youth Unity CIC

WHY ALL THIS DRAMA AND FUSS?

According to the recent Havering Needs Assessment which fed into the new strategy:-

- In 2023, Heaton ward in the Hornchurch and Upminster Constituency had the highest incidence of Domestic Abuse of all the 679 Wards that comprise London.
- St Edward's Ward, was the 4th highest ward in London for sexual offences
- In 2023, there were 566 cases brought to Havering MARAC, 542 of which were female victims of abuse, only 24 were male.

The Borough Commander, when talking about trends this week always presents the figures in tri-borough context but even that cannot mask the dreadful situation in Harold Hill and Romford. One Ward Panel Chair expressed surprise that he was unaware of those statistics. I am not surprised. There is a lot of shame and taboo talking about domestic abuse (private) and serious sexual offences.

ADA AND OLIVER - A HORRIBLE TALE OF MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

I have one more Case Study to present. I have mentioned that of the 174 women killed by men in 22/23, 35 women were aged 66 years and over. I think this case may signal a growing trend. The case concerns Ada and Oliver.

“AVA and OLIVER were mother and son. They lived in the same home (of which Ava was the owner) for all of Oliver’s life. Ava was an elderly woman who in recent years had memory problems and some mobility difficulties, with a dementia diagnosis in early 2017. In previous years, she had cared for her son in terms of everyday living arrangements. Oliver had not worked for the previous ten years. As time went on there was a gradual role reversal as Oliver became Ava’s carer, as she grew more frail with age. Following the death of Ava’s husband (Oliver’s father) by suicide 12 years previously, both struggled emotionally. Oliver is said to have become depressed. In 2016, Oliver and Ava suffered at the hands of rogue builders who came to the door stating his roof needed repair. Ultimately, they were defrauded of over £50,000. This had a deeply profound effect on Oliver and his mental health This also impacted on Ava, who initially was angry with her son about the fraud and upset.

Following the fraud Ava was reported to have suffered from anxiety and depressive episodes. On 10 July 2017, Oliver and Ava were found dead at home. A carer to Ava found a note protruding from the letterbox. The carer found both Ava and Oliver deceased in the bathroom on the floor. The police concluded that the cause of death to be stab wounds to the neck for both Ava and Oliver. On the 12th July 2017, a Special Post

Mortem (SPM) examination took place. The provisional cause of death for both was recorded as stab wounds to the neck. Ava died at the age of 89 at the hands of her son Oliver. Oliver died aged 54 by his own hand.

Both Olivia and Ava had come to the attention of the Police and to Adult Social Care following the fraud of over fifty thousand pounds in November 2016. Ava's deteriorating cognitive ability and memory difficulties were identified in 2016 via Oliver reporting these to her GP. Adult Mental Health Memory Service began the process of assessment Ava for dementia in early 2017 and the service remained involved up until her death in July 2017. Oliver had been known to Adult Mental Health Services due to a serious suicide attempt in February 2017 where he stabbed himself in the neck. He had been sectioned under the Mental Health Act.

One of the most important aims of the Domestic Homicide Review is to see what policies need to be changed and identify learning. If you want to read the full report, you will find it on the Council's website. It is a horrible tale of missed opportunities, a failure to assess risk, a failure of safeguarding. One of the most worrying aspects was:-

“Issues of domestic abuse, specifically coercive control and mental health, were not recognised or considered. Oliver's observed behaviours were assumed to be related to his mental health difficulties. Alongside this, the lack of knowledge and awareness of domestic abuse of older people led to a narrow perspective of thinking, and it is clear that professionals will need to review and consider this going forward, through appropriate multi agency training and individual developmental programmes.”

ENDING ON A POSITIVE NOTE

The VAWG Strategy does address these shortcomings but with funding as short as it is in all aspects of our public services, I would not be confident that we can prevent the abuse of older women and men.

I am coming to the end of my talk. I have presented some very sobering information. But I want to end on a high note. With the right support many victims of violence and domestic abuse do go on to lead happy lives and make a positive contribution to their communities. I know, I am one of those survivors.

Jane Keane is a Havering Labour Councillor for St Albans Ward

Ken Clark – My time as a Union official in Fleet Street

Our June speaker was Ken Clark, who spoke on his time as a union official in Fleet Street and the Wapping dispute. He then continued his career as a Labour Party official. The first section of the report is taken from Ken's speaking notes, so is written in the first person. When Ken "goes off script" I have reported on what he said, so this changes. I hope this is easy to follow.

Ken began

"I started work after leaving school in Bethnal Green with three O levels. I had two job offers: one from the London Electricity Board, known as the LEB, as an apprentice electrician; the other was working for Beaverbrook newspapers in Fleet Street in the picture department. I chose Fleet Street.

Working in the picture department was really fascinating. Express newspapers had over thirty staff photographers in those days, including David Bailey (from East Ham)¹, Brian Duffy (also from East Ham), Terence Donovan (Stepney), and Terry O'Neill (Romford)- all East End working class lads. Bailey, Duffy, and Donovan helped to capture and create the swinging London of the 1960s, a culture of high fashion and celebrity chic and found themselves elevated to celebrity status.

In those days when photographers came back from their assignments, they would have to develop their own film; this was to make sure they could not blame anyone else if anything went wrong.

¹ [David Bailey - Wikipedia](#)



Figure 5 Ken Clark (standing) recalls his time in Fleet Stret with acting Chair Dave Baldock looking on

National newspapers trade unions had a closed shop. All staff had to be a member of the appropriate union, which for me was Natsopa² - the main printing union.

² [National Society of Operative Printers and Assistants - Wikipedia](#)

I had an interest in trade unions and was now attending my union chapel meetings. These were compulsory (you would be fined for non-attendance), and the chapel had a membership of over 450.

Interestingly many people wonder why the unions in printing use the terms chapel, Father of Chapel, Mother of Chapel (this is referring to a shop steward). This was due to early printing taking place within the Church.

After a while I decided I wanted to play more of a role. I managed to get elected to the negotiation team to meet with management regarding a pay increase.

With the Father of Chapel and the committee, I met with the general manager to discuss our pay claim. After stating our case, the general Manager made a comment I have never forgotten, that shaped my view of management : “if you employ monkeys, you pay them peanuts.”

After that experience I later decided to stand as the Father of the Chapel and was successful. The position was full time with an office and a replacement found for my job, with a guarantee to be able to return. During my time as Father of Chapel, we negotiated a 4-day 32-hour week I was also elected to my union’s governing council.

In the year before the Wapping dispute, I was invited to be part of a union delegation to Paris print to investigate how the French unions had dealt with the transition to new technology. It really was a look into the future. Paris print had a plant that produced a number of French titles through the day and night.

Our first visit was to the publishing floor. In British newspapers, there would be a staff of about 150. In Paris print it was two staff sitting in a tower in the middle of the floor with computers - the whole process had been computerised. Most areas we visited were the same. The composing floor where lino type operators (hot metal) would type the story before going to the compositor would place in the page. It was then printed to go to the readers dept, who would check spelling and grammar.

It is all gone now - just computers and a few staff.

The French union representatives explained that they saw the revolution was coming in how printing of newspapers was going to change dramatically. They decided that they must start immediately to negotiate with the owners. They struck a deal where all staff would be retrained, and new jobs found for them, which had been very successful.

We reported to our union that we needed to prepare for what could happen to our members.

A few months before the dispute, the president of our union and myself met informally with Rupert Murdoch the owner of news corporation in a coffee bar in Soho.

We made our case that we were not opposed to new technology but be introduced in a constructive way, like the French.

Being an Australian his reply was to the point! Saying that he could do business with us two but sadly he was unable to convince our colleagues who he thought they were dinosaurs.

I concluded afterwards that the days of proprietors of newspapers like Beaverbrook, Harmsworth, Murdoch, Maxwell and others owning

newspapers for power and influence was over. That it is now changing to be about generating profit, which will dilute the power of the print unions.

The Wapping dispute

In 1986 Wapping was transformed into a police state. On the 20th of January 1986. Rupert Murdoch made 6,000 print workers redundant by moving producing his newspapers from Fleet Street to a new plant in Wapping.

The Wapping dispute was a fight to save jobs.

The dispute was one of the most protracted and bitter in Britain's industrial history. Mass protests with over 5,000 people were common. The Police started to use riot shields and mounted Police were brought in to break up sections of the crowd.

Police would come out of the back of vans with batons and the numbers on their uniforms blacked out so they could not be identified.

This strike was held against a background of new legislation brought in by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to curb the power of unions.

This was one of two industrial disputes in her term of office. The other being the miners' strike.

The Wapping dispute ended on 5 February 1987.

Wapping effectively broke the power wielded by the print unions over the newspaper industry.

Robert Maxwell purchased the Mirror Group newspapers, including the Daily Mirror. He raided the Mirror pension fund. On 5th November 1991 he mysteriously disappeared from his luxury yacht and drowned.

Fleet Street had changed, and papers relocated.”

Ken ended his prepared talk at this point and continued by giving a summary of his career since, with plenty of interesting anecdotes. Ken looked for another job and again had two options: work for a university or the Labour Party. He chose the latter



Figure 6 Ken meets PM Harold Wilson

His new path began a journey taking in Downing Street under the Blair Premiership, running the Labour Party organisation in Scotland during a difficult period, being Regional Director of the London Labour Party, and in that role, was the Election Agent for Ken Livingstone in his unsuccessful Mayoral election in 2012. He had also been a Havering Councillor from 1998 to 2002, and a Newham Councillor from 2014-2022, being Deputy Mayor for part of that period.

It was an interesting evening with plenty of questions. During these, Ken was reminded of the time he met Harold Wilson on a visit to Beaverbrook newspapers. The executives were lined up to meet Wilson, and as Father of Chapel Ken was invited as well, Wilson ignored the executives but when informed Ken was FOC he spent ten minutes talking to him, much to the annoyance of the management. Ken has a picture of this meeting at home and is shown above.

Future Meetings

The Committee are working on the programme for the rest of the year. This will include a visit to the House of Commons in October at the invitation of Margaret Mullane MP.

Links

Blog	http://haveringfabians.wordpress.com/
Website	https://haveringfabians.org/
Twitter	https://twitter.com/HaveringFabians
Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/havering.fabians
LinkedIn	https://uk.linkedin.com/in/havering-fabians

Online payment

Details are included in the regular Havering Fabians email. Contact us for further details if you are not on the current mailing list. Membership is £5 waged, £10 unwaged. **This will increase to £6 and £12 from January 2026.**

National membership is also available via the link below.

[Join | Fabian Society](#)

National membership includes a regular quarterly magazine; regular email updates and invites to conferences. There are theme-based groups that develop policy in areas such as Housing, the economy and environmental issues.

Politics in Havering

You may already be aware of the excellent Politics in Havering Blog, which we repost via our twitter feed. This gives a regular update on politics within the borough – a link is below, please follow them (and our blog!) for regular updates!

<https://havering.blog/>

We value your input!

The Society invites speakers on a range of subjects; if you would like us to invite speakers on a particular subject let us know and we will try to oblige. The Society has a policy of rotating meetings around the borough; **if you need or can offer a lift or if you know of any suitable venues** we could use, contact David Marshall.

Local Fabian Society Contacts

Chair Councillor Keith Darvill	Secretary David Marshall	Contact David Marshall
Membership Secretary Councillor Harriet Spoor		31 Vicarage Road Hornchurch RM12 4AS 01708 441189 david.c.marshall@talk21.com
Vice Chair Sanchia Alasia		
Treasurer Dave Baldock		
Committee Members Councillor Jane Keane Councillor Andrew Achilleos Cecile Duerinckx Keith Taffs		

Future Editions

The Fabian Society exists to promote progressive ideas from within and outside of the Labour movement. As such we are happy to publish articles in keeping with this broad ethos but reserve the right not to include all or part of any material which falls outside of this parameter. Our next edition will be in **September\ October 2025**. – contributions welcome.

Haivering Fabian Society is affiliated to.

- National Fabian Society
- Dagenham and Rainham Labour Party
- Romford Labour Party
- Upminster and Hornchurch Labour Party
- Barking Labour Party

Havering Fabian Membership

To join Havering Fabian Society, please complete the following and send to David Marshall. You can also join the Society nationally; David has more details. You do not have to be a member of the Labour Party to join Havering Fabians, but you will need to be a Labour Party member to take part in Labour Party selections and elections.



Havering Fabian Society

Founded in 1974, the Society promotes progressive political thought in Havering and beyond. Membership of the Society is not necessary to attend meetings, and neither is membership of the Labour Party.

However, to participate in nominations to the Local Labour Parties or in selection conferences, membership of both is required. The Society meets regularly throughout the year, apart from the summer and during election campaigns. Local Membership is currently £10 waged, £5 unwaged.

If we wish to join Havering Fabians

Name

Address

.....

.....

postcode.....

E-mail.....

Phone number

Waged (£10) unwaged £5