

Holborn and St Pancras: the good, the bad and the ugly of campaigning for No More Falls

For Westminster, the Holborn and St Pancras by-election is a contest over Labour's future and the Greens' ambitions. For me, it is about whether the next MP will help prevent another family losing someone they love.

My son Joshua Robbins was 23 when a communal railing failed at his home, Thurstan Dwellings, Newton Street, Holborn in January. No More Falls – Josh's Legacy grew from that loss. Through the Joshua Test, I am asking for competent inspections, testing where risks demand it, proper maintenance and recorded evidence that barriers are safe.

The good has been meeting people who listened. In September, I met Zack Polanski – Green Party, Patrick Stillman – Liberal Democrats and Ewan Cameron Conservative. All three conversations were positive and productive. Different parties, but a willingness to take Joshua's story and our proposals seriously.

Zack offered support for the campaign and contacts that he would connect me with, Patrick understood why housing safety matters and read all 200 pages of the Joshua Test, that preparation meant something, he also promised to support the pledge and work with me no matter what happens, Ewan followed up with questions for Camden about what happened after Joshua died, including inspections and action across different types of housing.

I also want to acknowledge the kindness and seriousness shown by Sir Keir Starmer's office staff namely Richard. My criticism of Labour's campaign does not erase that support. Fairness means recognising both.

Beyond the election, meeting Kate Henderson CEO at the National Housing Federation and securing ministerial engagement with Matthew Pennycook MP have given me hope. My little campaign is opening doors. But support must become action.

The bad has been the gap between political promises and meaningful engagement. My emails of 8th and 10 September asking to meet Labour's candidate went unanswered before my London trip. Having worked in political communications, I would have expected at least an acknowledgement.

Labour's candidate, Sagal Abdi-Wali, is Camden Council's leader. That makes questions about Camden's response particularly relevant. What safety checks followed Joshua's death? What comparable barriers were identified? What defects were made safe? Residents deserve answers supported by records.

A meeting within 30 days and a case handover matter. So does parliamentary continuity. But none tells a resident whether the railing outside their front door can safely withstand someone leaning against it.

The ugly was how the late Labour approach felt. After publicity around my meetings and ITV's involvement, there was urgency about meeting me. I felt pressured to shorten a pre-arranged meeting with my police family liaison officer to accommodate a handshake and photograph.

I cannot know anyone's motives. I can describe the impact: I felt used. A bereaved parent should not have to defend time with the officer supporting her through her son's death investigation.

This election has shown me the value of listening, preparation and follow-through. It has also shown how easily grief can feel swallowed by campaign priorities. Whoever wins on 8th October must carry this work forward, with clear commitments, deadlines and public accountability.

No More Falls will judge every party by the same standard: what changes, and who is safer?

Joshua had a life, a family and a future. I will keep asking these questions because someone else's child still has theirs.