

NATASHA HARPLEY – MEMBERSHIP OFFICER

It has been a privilege to be Norwich Labour Party's Vice President Membership this past year and I would love to continue in this role.

I have worked hard alongside my EC colleagues, branches and campaign committees to try and develop our local campaigning by encouraging maximum participation in NLP activities - including inviting members to tell me about barriers to attending All Member Meetings and then adapt the meetings accordingly. I've also helped to facilitate new member training and taken feedback about important discussion topics and fed them back at EC, ensuring they are discussed.

This has been a particularly difficult period for the Labour Party as we've seen a steady trickle of resignations over the past few months - which is in stark contrast to the buoyant surge of membership since 2015. I am one of the 2015 co-hort of members and joined because I was utterly dismayed after the General Election defeat and wanted to be more pro-active in getting the Tories out and a Jeremy Corbyn lead Labour Government in. Members new and old play a crucial role in how our party is run and that combination of experience and enthusiasm, although sometimes clashing, it is what keeps our party vibrant and functioning. I want to make sure that we remain focussed on our shared goal of a Labour government, despite differing opinions on the best tactics to achieve that.

Whilst I embrace new technologies as effective ways to reach voters, physical campaigning is still absolutely key to our success - whether that be door knocking, rallies or street stalls. Without our members, none of that would be possible and we wouldn't have an active presence in local communities and zero chance of the Labour government that our country so desperately needs.

I've been proud to join and lead canvassing sessions for County, City, District and Parliamentary elections in Norwich, and was a County Council candidate in 2016 and this year (successfully!) a District Council candidate. Also, along with fellow NLP activists and at our own expense, I campaigned in the 2016 Stoke by-election. It was a genuinely heart warming experience to see so many people from all over the country, come together and work as one united force to get our message out there and fight for a Labour victory.

Over the course of local and general election campaigns since 2015, I have been very 'hands on' in many different capacities. During the 2017 snap General Election, I worked on Dr Chris Jones' campaign as a mobilisation assistant, with my primary role being managing Chris's public email account and dealing with enquiries from voters and also co-ordinating some visits and campaign days. Since then I have helped Karen Davis' PPC campaign in Norwich North and have received Labour Party training to build capacity and work with members, as well as use various Labour technologies. I've engaged with local branches to help them fill delivery round gaps, co-ordinated a large scale direct mail across Norwich North, as well as assisted in surveying our members to ask how they think we should campaign to win in Norwich North.

As a single parent, I understand the barriers that some members may experience when becoming more involved with campaigning and standing for elected roles. I want to continue exploring how to break down those barriers so our local party and Labour movement is more representative of the wider society and those who need us most. NLP members have told me that they often feel out of the loop with what is happening at EC and Councils if they are not able to attend meetings, I would like to explore ways of expanding communication and also increasing democratic involvement.

If re-elected, I will be a sensible voice at EC and someone who is always approachable. I will work closely with our great candidates Clive Lewis and Karen Davis to secure a victory in both Norwich seats for Labour. I will continue to write regular reports for AMMs and newsletters and listen to what members are saying to me.