

Last week the latest employment figures were released and showed a continuing fall in the rate of unemployment across the constituency. This reflects the wider regional and national picture, which shows that the employment rate of women is at record levels, along with more disabled people in work and the number of young people unemployed at the lowest level in over 12 years. Contrary to what some might say over 70 per cent of the rise in employment has been from full time work and real wages continue to rise.

However the point of my column is not to make political points about unemployment rates but to praise those who work tirelessly to help people into, or back to work. There are statutory bodies, private companies and charitable organisations that do all they can to provide support and assistance to those who are unemployed and help break long term and generational out of work practices. One of the great privileges is being able to see these interventions up close and personal. For example in Chatham the Samaritans support those with extremely challenging employment histories write CVs and get them interview ready. In Aylesford the Royal British Legion Industries support veterans return to civvy street through their LifeWorks programme. The JobCentres in Chatham and Maidstone, alongside many other employment initiatives, run Disability Confident events to assist employers recruit disabled employees. Private recruitment agencies play an important part in the fall in unemployment too. And not forgetting the employers themselves. Business confidence has a reputation of being incredibly volatile but these figures show a calm acceptance from employers that we have made real progress in creating a strong economy, which in turn more people are contributing towards through economic activity.

So my column is to say thank you to those who help us support people into work because without them it may be a different story.