



Dear Friends

This edition of my eNews covers my work over March, April and the Easter Recess. You will find some statistics on the next page about my work during the 2012-13 Session. Parliament is now prorogued and the new Session will start with the Queen's Speech on Wednesday 8 May 2013.

Yours ever
Valerie

VALERIE QUESTIONS HEALTH SECRETARY & NHS CHIEF EXECUTIVE



The Health Select Committee, of which Valerie is a member, has heard evidence from Sir David Nicholson the Chief Executive of the NHS and the NHS Commissioning Board and the Secretary of State for Health, the Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP, following the publication of the Francis Report into events at Stafford Hospital. The Committee's report is expected shortly.

Speaking after the Hearing with Sir David Nicholson in March, Valerie said: "I asked Sir David about the problems at the three strategic health authorities he was in charge of and what he did about them. It is extraordinary that he was not aware of, in particular, the high mortality rates in the hospitals that he oversaw. He said he was not made aware of the mortality rates until he was made Chief Executive of the NHS in 2006. However these figures have been made publically available by Dr Foster since 2001. In his statement, I could not find anything about patient care. Sir David said that during that time, 'patients were not the centre of the way the system operated, for a whole variety of reasons'."

Following the Hearing with the Secretary of State on Tuesday 23 April, Valerie said: "It was important to ask about the circumstances surrounding the suspension of children's heart surgery at Leeds Hospital. I asked the Secretary of State to clarify the timeline of when the information about children's heart surgery mortality rates was received by Sir Bruce Keogh and when he himself had been told. It is extraordinary that he did not know the exact dates of when this information was provided. I am concerned about the role of the new Chief Inspector and the Secretary of State told me he did not know how much this would cost."

GALA BATHS

Valerie said: "Walsall Gala Baths is home to the only brine pool in the West Midlands and I know this resource is valued by many of my constituents."



"I was contacted by constituents who use the pool and were concerned about its closure. I raised this with the Chief Executive of Walsall MBC who said that the Council is currently reviewing the provision of the Sports and Leisure Service. The Council has said that no decision has yet been taken as to the future of the Gala Baths."

"It is clear to me that the Gala Baths are of substantial benefit to many of my constituents and particularly those who are elderly or disabled. Given the Olympic legacy and the need for people to take more exercise, any move to close the Gala Baths would be resisted. I hope that following the review of Sport and Leisure Services, the Council will ensure the long term future of the Gala Baths."

BEDROOM TAX

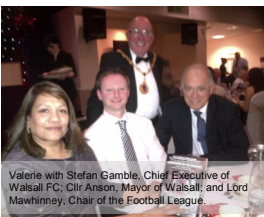
Valerie said: "A number of significant changes to the benefits system have taken effect in recent months. These are changes I opposed as they do not adequately take account of people's needs."



"Figures released by the National Housing Federation show that the 'Bedroom Tax' risks having a devastating impact on around 1,434 households in Walsall South. It is estimated that households with 1 spare room will face a bill of approximately £566 extra a year and those with 2 spare rooms will have to pay approximately £1,010 extra each year. It is difficult to see how those affected are going to be able to make ends meet. The Government says funds are available for people in need, but the principle is wrong and these funds may not be available in the long term."

SADDLERS' 125th ANNIVERSARY

On Sunday 29 April 2013, Valerie attended the End of Season Awards and 125th Anniversary Celebration of Walsall Football Club.



Valerie said: "Walsall FC makes a tremendous contribution to the community locally and helps to put Walsall on the map nationally. The Club had a successful season in League One and finished only 6 points from the playoff places. I hope next season, the Saddlers will be able to gain promotion to the Championship."

Surgeries

Valerie holds regular surgeries. To arrange an appointment, please call the Constituency Office on 01922 635835


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SCHOOL VISITS




Valerie has recently visited Hillary Primary School and Abu Bakr Girls' School. At Hillary School, Valerie discussed with the Head Teacher Ms Cherry what could be done to remedy traffic problems at the front of the School. Valerie subsequently made representations to Walsall MBC and WHG.

At Abu Bakr, Valerie presented certificates to pupils who had taken part in the 'Heartstart' Emergency Lifesaving Skills programme led in Walsall by Phil Jevon of the Manor Hospital, who was also present.




PARKING CHARGES



Valerie said: "For two years, alongside local businesses, we campaigned for the removal of on-street parking charges. These charges were removed from Ablewell Street in December 2013, but the parking meters have been left in place. In response to my subsequent representations, Walsall MBC removed the meters during the week commencing Monday 18 March 2013."

"This is fantastic news. It shows clearly the effectiveness of our campaigning over the past two years and I am pleased the Council have now listened to businesses."

CEMETERY PETITION



Valerie presented a petition of more than 1,200 signatures to Parliament on the planning application for the development of a cemetery on land south of Aldridge Road.

Valerie said: "The site would be a wholly inappropriate location for a cemetery. The

Council took into account the relevant considerations in refusing the application. I presented the petition as residents asked me to and it will ensure that their concerns are raised if ever there is a further application."

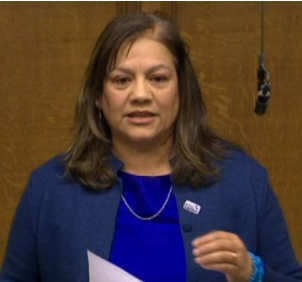
The transcript of the presentation is available to view from the Official Report [here](#).

2012-13 PARLIAMENTARY SESSION

During the 2012-13 Parliamentary Session, which ended on Thursday 25 April 2013, Valerie:

- Spoke in Parliament on **64** occasions
- Tabled **56** written questions
- Contributed to **11** reports of the Health Select Committee
- Tabled **30** Early Day Motions
- Signed **217** Early Day Motions
- Was granted an Urgent Question on the situation in Burma
- Served on the Crime and Courts Bill Committee.
- Raised adoption inequality at Prime Minister's Questions

THE CASE OF MRS PRESSDEE



In the Pre-Recess Adjournment Debate in the House of Commons, Valerie raised the case of Mrs Brenda Pressdee.

Valerie said: "My constituent, a senior citizen faces the prospect of having the home she has lived in for 38 years sold but she cannot remember why."


"It is unclear how Mrs Pressdee came into contact with Dream Money Ltd. It brokered an agreement and she had to pay £3,000 in fees because she signed a loan agreement for a second charge on her property of £36,000. Once the brokerage fee and all the fees for lawyers, solicitors and title insurance had been paid, the total charges and interest came to £32,995, which is 99.9% of the £33,000 Mrs Pressdee had initially requested.

"By December 2012, with interest and charges and charges associated with arrears, Mrs Pressdee's total debt was £51,713.74. She is unable to keep up her payments and now has to sell her home under the mortgage rescue scheme while living there and renting it out. As a result, Blemain Finance will receive a £55,000 redemption from the sale of her home."

"We must help Mrs Pressdee, a vulnerable pensioner who has been driven out of her home. We should be protecting her."

The full transcript of Valerie's speech is available in the Official Report [here](#).

QUESTIONS IN THE HOUSE



In response to the ongoing situation in Burma and a report published by Human Rights Watch on the humanitarian situation in the country, Valerie raised the issue of Burma with Ministers on two occasions in recent weeks. Valerie's questions and the Ministers' answers can be viewed [here](#) & [here](#).

Valerie raised in the Pre-Recess Adjournment debate the issue of why the Government has only designated 31 of 127 proposed Marine Conservation Zones. Valerie's speech can be read [here](#).

Valerie asked the Health Minister whether there was a mistake in the instructions given to parliamentary counsel in drafting the Section 75 Regulations which have subsequently been withdrawn for redrafting. The Minister's reply can be viewed [here](#).

Following reports by Cranfield Business School and Lord Davies on women on the Boards of FTSE listed companies, Valerie asked the Minister for Women and Equalities where there was a possibility of introducing quotas. The Minister's response is available [here](#).

Valerie asked the Health Minister whether the new list of 28 prescribed drugs produced by the NHS Commissioning Board will increase access to the cancer drugs fund. The Minister's answer can be viewed [here](#).

Following the Secretary of State for Health's statement on the Government's response to the Francis Report, Valerie asked whether the new list of 28 prescribed drugs produced by the NHS Commissioning Board will increase access to the cancer drugs fund. The Secretary of State's response is available [here](#).