



VALERIE PRESENTS BILL FOR ADOPTION RIGHTS



Valerie introduced the Adoption (Leave, Pay and Allowance Arrangements) Bill to Parliament under the Ten Minute Rule procedure. Valerie identified 3 areas where there are inequalities between the statutory entitlements for adoptive parents and the entitlements for parents whose children were born to them: the eligibility for adoption leave; the different rates for the first 6 weeks of statutory maternity pay and statutory adoption pay; and maternity allowance, which is available to self-employed mothers but not to self-employed adopters.

Valerie said: "I am bringing in this Bill because more needs to be done to support people who do so much for society by adopting children who do not have families of their own. It cannot be right that the people who come forward to give children a family life and offer them a stable and secure environment are not currently entitled to the same support as other parents."

The Bill is listed for second reading on 20th January 2012.

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HEALTH SELECT COMMITTEE

The Health Select Committee, of which Valerie is a member, published its report into Complaints and Litigation. They found that the current complaints system is not effective, and called for an overhaul of the role of the Health Service Ombudsman. Valerie said:

"The Government need to be clear about how complaints will be handled. It is important that information gathered during complaints procedures is properly reported and analysed, in order to avoid systematic weaknesses being overlooked."

The Committee recognised that the number of general NHS complaints has gone up, and that action should be taken to resolve this. More than 100,000 complaints were made in 2009/2010, a 13.4% increase on the previous year.

VALERIE OPENS WALSALL SAMARITANS AWARENESS DAY



Valerie with Andrew Lockley and Lyn Hughes

Valerie opened the Walsall Samaritans Awareness Day at the New Art Gallery, and unveiled the artwork, 'A Call for Help,' donated free of charge by local artist Lynn Hughes.

Valerie said: "It is a privilege to open the Samaritans Awareness Day. The event is an excellent way for Walsall Samaritans to make more people aware of their vital work offering emotional support to people in need."

Walsall Samaritans was set up in 1969 and is staffed and managed entirely by volunteers and paid for by donations. For each of the last three years Walsall Samaritans have seen an increase in contacts. In 2010, 18,900 contacts were made with the branch.

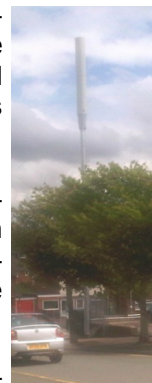
Valerie said: "It is important to recognise the commitment of the volunteers and to raise awareness of the Samaritans' vital service which provides confidential, 24-hour emotional support, available to everyone, every day of the year."

VALERIE FIGHTS AGAINST PHONE MAST

The phone mast recently erected at the junction of Beacon Road and Waverley Avenue in Pheasey, will be removed. The mast was put up despite Walsall Council refusing Vodafone planning permission. Residents raised their concerns with Valerie.

Valerie's suggestion to the Council of obtaining a second legal opinion on the position led to the issuing of an enforcement notice. The notice would require the removal of the mast within 3 months of the service of the notice.

The Council have also met with Vodafone to look at other sites.



PUBLIC DISORDER

Parliament was recalled on the 11th August due to the recent rioting in London and around England. Despite rioting and looting in parts of the West Midlands, Walsall Town Centre was secure thanks to the police and local authority.

Valerie said: "I want to thank the police and the local authority for working together protect the Town Centre."

Surgeries

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