



Valerie speaks at Westminster Hall debate



As Shadow Leader of the House, I responded to the Westminster Hall debate on the Good Parliament Report on 2 November 2016. The Good Parliament report by Professor Sarah Childs, outlined 43 recommendations to make Parliament user-friendly to men, women, families and disabled people. The report recommended that a House Statement be produced on maternity, paternity, parental, adoption and caring leave. I called on the Minister to say whether all those rights, that were won in Europe and that the Labour party played a part in securing, will be safe. At business questions, I asked the Leader of the House to hold a debate on the report.

Opposition day debate on Police safety

On 2 November 2016 an opposition day debate was held on Police Officer Safety. In the West Midlands, the Police Federation said there have been increases in the number of assaults from 428 in 2012 to 611 last year, with 2016's figure projected to rise even further. At the same time, the Police Force has decreased by nearly 2,000 officers. The West Midlands Police Federation launched a partnership with the Force, the Superintendents' Association, Unison and Unite which led to the launch of a 10-point pledge on assaults on police officers and police staff. I voted in favour of the motion but it was defeated: Ayes 207, Noes: 288.

Business Questions 3 November 2016

I called for a debate on the Government's negotiating position on exiting the European Union. The Education Secretary said that there will be no changes to education legislation in this Parliamentary session, I asked the Leader of the House to confirm whether this means no forced academies, no education bill and parents back on governing bodies. I asked for a debate on the Government's policy on aid and whether the UK's 0.7% of GDP for aid is protected.



Valerie attends multi-faith event at Grace Academy



On 5 November 2016 I attended a multi-faith event in Walsall at Grace Academy. There were food stalls, face painting and a clown entertaining the attendees with magic tricks. The Fire Brigade were present hoping to encourage volunteers. The photo shows me with Rev Liz Jones, Rev Gilbert David and Tarlock Chand.

Youth Parliament comes to the House of Commons



As Shadow Leader of the House it was a delight to welcome the Youth Parliament to Parliament for their 7th visit on Friday 11 November 2016. Members of the Youth Parliament (MYPs) aged 11-18 filled the Chamber and debated the following topics which were chosen by nearly one million young people: 'votes for 16 and 17 year olds', 'tackling racism and religious discrimination' and 'a Better Kinder democracy'. The result of the votes was that next year, MYPs will campaign on 'Votes for over 16s' and 'a Curriculum to prepare us for Life'. I encouraged MYPs to continue to lobby for the issues they debated and affirmed MPs would work hard to make our country worthy of them all.

Remembrance Day 2016



On Sunday 13 November I attended two Remembrance Sunday Services, at the Town Centre and also in Darlaston. I laid a wreath at both events made by disabled ex-servicemen. The event started with a march past by the many uniformed youth organizations. After the procession to the Cenotaph, the Bishop of Lichfield Rev Michael Igrave led the prayers and hymns. The sounding of The Last Post by a Bugler from



The Staffordshire Band rang out at 11am before the 2 minutes silence was observed. Rev Mark Kinder from St Paul's at the Crossing presided over the proceedings. After the Remembrance at the Town Centre, I went to Darlaston and processed with the congregation of St Lawrence's to the Cenotaph at Darlaston.

Meeting with EA, Boundary Commission and Sikh Temple

On Friday 4 November, I arranged a meeting with the Environment Agency (EA), and the Beacon Action Group representatives to discuss issues relating to Great Barr Hall and Park. It appears that the EA have not made any comments on the application as this has been split from the reservoirs.

I attended and gave oral evidence to the Boundary Commission. The Government has legislated that the 2018 Review must reduce the number of MPs from 650 to 600. For Walsall, the Boundary Commission have proposed two new constituencies, Walsall Central and Aldridge, Brownhills and Bloxwich. I also had a meeting at the Guru Nanak Gurdwara on Wellington Street and spoke with the trustees about the various issues that are affecting the Sikh community locally.

Valerie supports equal pay day campaign

The current gender pay gap is 13.9%. Equal Pay Day is the day that women effectively earn less than men in the calendar year. Progress on closing the gender pay gap has been slow, this year's Equal Pay Day was on 10 November 2016, just one day later than it was last year. It is vital that we tackle gender segregation and the under-valuation of women's work in the economy, to benefit the whole of society.



Business Questions 17 November 2016



On Thursday 17 November I said to the Leader of the House that the British people are being left behind by this Government. They have been left behind by: austerity measures, freezes on wages, zero-hours contracts, which now extend to lecturers, current childcare provision, cuts in grants to local authorities, which have decimated local services and caused the closures of libraries, the bedroom tax, which has now been ruled in two cases to be unreasonable, and the reduction in HMRC staff.

Valerie shows support for community pharmacies



Government figures shows that up to 3,000, a quarter of all pharmacies, could close. In Walsall South, 8 out of 32 pharmacies are at risk of closure. I am alarmed that the Government are going ahead with these cuts which represent a 12% reduction on current funding levels for the rest of this financial year. Local pharmacies provide a great service to the community and need to be protected.

Valerie calls on Government to guarantee 30 hours free childcare

In Walsall, the number of childcare places has decreased by 871 between 2009-2015, and the number of childcare providers has decreased by 107. The Government's Early Years Funding Formula will mean that the average funding for childcare providers will be reduced to £4.22 per hour in 2017/2018, a reduction of £0.57 per hour in Walsall. Many of my constituents depend on the invaluable services of their local childcare provider. The picture shows me and the Shadow Education Minister for Early Years.



Valerie hosts event in Parliament to raise awareness for Post-traumatic Hypopituitarism



On Monday 21 November I hosted an awareness raising event on Post-traumatic Hypopituitarism (PTHP). Joanna Lane, author of 'Mother of a Suicide: The Battle for the Truth Behind a Mental Health Cover-up', contacted me as she is concerned about the failure of health professionals to warn patients about PTHP. It was a pleasure to welcome Professor Chris Thompson, Professor of Endocrinology at Beaumont Hospital Dublin and a world expert on PTHP. Professor Thompson provided a valuable viewpoint of the challenges of PTHP.

Business Questions 24 November 2016



Following the Autumn Statement, I asked the Leader of the House for a debate on its impact on women on women. Cuts to social care hit women especially hard because the majority of those needing care and of those providing it, paid or unpaid, are women. Despite 74 written parliamentary questions on social care in November, there was no mention of extra money provided for social care in the Autumn Statement. I said that local government is in desperate need, money has now gone to unelected local enterprise partnerships rather than elected local authorities.

News in brief

- **More BAME Blood Donors needed:** There are only 134 blood donors from black or Asian communities in Walsall South. The 'Represent' campaign highlights that only 3% of regular blood donors last year were from black and Asian communities. More donors are needed and I encourage members of black and Asian communities to come forward and donate.
- **NHS demonstration in Walsall:** On Saturday 26 November, we gathered together in Walsall town center to distribute leaflets as Labour launches its 'Care for the NHS' campaign. The Autumn Statement did not contain a single mention of extra investment for social care and the NHS.
- **Queen responds to her birthday celebrations at St. Lawrence's Church:** Following my letter to the Queen notifying her that Rev Liz held a special service on the weekend of the 11th June 2016 to celebrate her 90th Birthday, Her Majesty responded and expressed her gratitude.



Written Questions:

- I asked the DWP whether it will end the re-assessments for those with long-term medical conditions who are receiving Personal Independence Payments. The Minister did not say that the Government has any plans to end the re-assessments.
- I asked a series of WPQs on Burma which can be read here: <http://www.parliament.uk>