



Valerie responds to emergency debate on Government and Parliamentary proceedings



On 10 October 2017 I spoke in our emergency debate on the Government's policy in relation to the proceedings of the House of Commons. The Labour Party is allocated 20 Opposition days in each session of Parliament to discuss motions chosen by the Opposition. Recently the Government considered two Opposition day motions concerning NHS pay and student tuition fees. However when the motions were put to the House, the Government remained silent, and each motion was passed without a vote. Parliament is a forum for debate, discussion and amendments and the Government are making a mockery of Parliament.

Business Questions 12 October 2017

I asked the Leader of the House for a debate on the Palace of Westminster Restoration and Renewal in Autumn 2017, a statement from the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in response to Opposition day debate on Universal Credit, and an explanation on why Public Health England is reviewing whether free travel vaccinations for diphtheria, tetanus, cholera, typhoid and hepatitis should be stopped. The removal of free travel vaccinations could pose a huge risk to the community and they should remain free. It was National Libraries Week and I called for the Chancellor's Autumn Budget to provide local authorities with enough money so that South Walsall, Pheasey and Pleck libraries in my constituency can be reopened. Our children are losing out.



Valerie supports Baby Loss Awareness Week



During Baby Loss Awareness Week, 9-15 October 2017, I raised awareness about the issues surrounding pregnancy and baby loss in the UK and called for better bereavement care. 15 babies die every day in the UK either before, during or shortly after birth. Baby loss is a traumatic event that can have long-term effects on parents, and their families and friends. The Labour Party have pledged action to significantly reduce infant deaths and to ensure all families who lose a baby receive appropriate bereavement support.

Valerie visits Queen Mary's Grammar School to present Speaker's School Council Award

I presented the School Council at Queen Mary's Grammar School with the runner-up plaque in the 17-19 year old category of the Speaker's School Council Award for their 'Change Your Mind' project. The aim of the 'Change Your Mind' project was to increase mental health awareness, particularly among Year 6 and Year 7 students in a time of transition. The project comes at an important time as we marked the 25th anniversary of World Mental Health Day on 10 October 2017. It is important that we raise awareness of mental health in our local community and ring-fence mental health budgets to ensure funding reaches the frontline.



Valerie nominated for Women of the Year 2017



I have been nominated as one of the Women of the Year 2017 and to participate in this celebration of the huge impact women are having on the life of our country nationally and locally. My mother inspired me to try and make a difference in life and these awards show women are making a big contribution to national life. Women of the Year has recognised, celebrated and inspired women of all backgrounds since 1955 and continues to shine a light on ordinary women, doing extraordinary work, through an annual Awards ceremony, Alumnae events and on-going foundation work. I was nominated in celebration of my work as Member of Parliament for Walsall South, Shadow Leader of the House of Commons and my previous service on the Health Select Committee and Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Epilepsy.

Business Questions 19 October 2017

A motion was passed in the House to pause the roll-out of Universal Credit but the Government did not respond to the motion. It took a week for the Government to end the charges on the helpline for Universal Credit. This is a disorganised Government who are disrespectful to the House. I called on the Leader of the House to inform us how the Government will honour the result of the motion. I asked for a date on when the EU (Withdrawal) Bill will come before the House for its Committee Stage and for a statement on the growing scandal of the missing NHS files, as revealed in the Public Accounts Committee. Children with autism have waited nearly four years from the point of referral to specialist assessment. NICE guidelines say it should take three months. We are failing those children, some of whom are absolutely brilliant and see life in a different way from us.





Valerie attends Palfrey Health and Wellbeing Day #iMatter

I attended Palfrey Health and Wellbeing Day at Palfrey Community Association on 21 October 2017 to raise awareness of health issues and empower local residents about the importance of prevention and early intervention. I spoke to many local services including West Midlands Police who were providing free information and advice to residents on safety. I also met with Walsall Healthcare's Well Wishers charity who fundraise to



improve the health and wellbeing of hospital patients and community services. I was pleased to support the CSE Campaign #iMatter (left).

Business Questions 26 October 2017

Following the Leader's statement on Opposition Day debates which announced that Ministers will make a statement no more than 12 weeks after the passing of an Opposition day motion, I asked whether Ministers will actually be attending in the Chamber. We are elected as representatives to speak on behalf of our constituents and the House is rapidly becoming like "House of Games" - a combination of "House of Cards" and "Game of Thrones". I called on the Leader to tell us when the former Justice Secretary will apologise for waiting nearly three months after the employment tribunal fees policy was struck down by the Supreme Court to reveal plans for refunds and when all claimants will receive their refunds including interest. I asked what 'implementation period' the Prime Minister is referring to in her Florence speech if in March 2019 there is no Brexit deal, as the Secretary of State suggested. The National Farmers Union say that a no Brexit deal would have severe effects for UK farmers and growers and UK business leaders fear they are at risk of losing jobs and investment.



Urgent Statement on Sexual Harassment in Parliament

On 30 October I responded to the Leader of the House Urgent Statement on the Government's plans to tackle sexual harassment in Parliament. The Labour Party are ready to work with the Government and with all parties on this matter. We all need to come up with an appropriate safeguarding policy for everyone who works in Parliament. It is not acceptable that, now in society, women are not treated equally even when we do the same work; it is not acceptable that names for women's anatomy are used as swear words; and it is not acceptable that, every time unacceptable behaviour is challenged, it is closed down as political correctness. I know that all parties will use our strength and experience to protect the vulnerable.



Opposition Day Debates

There have been 3 Opposition Day debates this month:

- (1) Universal Credit – To call on the Government to pause the rollout of Universal Credit which is driving up poverty and homelessness. I voted in favour of the motion which passed 299-0.
- (2) Social Care – To call on the Government to drop its 'dementia tax', stop threats to withdraw funding for Council's, and to close the social care funding gap. This passed without a vote.
- (3) Supported Housing – To call on the Government to halt its plans to cap housing benefit at Local Housing Allowance rates for supported housing and instead adopt a system which safeguards the long-term future of supported housing. The House resolved the motion.



Parliament's Education Service

I am delighted that between September 2016 and August 2017 15 constituents visited Parliament on a Member sponsored tour, 291 students from 11 schools participated in the Education Visits Programme, 33 teachers participated in training events at Parliament and in schools, and 1 school took part in the Speaker School Council Awards.



The Parliament's Education Service aims to inform, engage and empower young people to understand, and get involved in, Parliament, politics and democracy. As part of the UK Parliament Teacher Ambassador Programme the Education Service will be hosting a residential Teachers' Institute 22-24 January 2018. You can apply on the Parliament website: www.parliament.uk/education and if you would like to join a Member's sponsored Tour of Parliament please contact my office.

News in Brief:

- I took the Epilepsy PIP pledge. The PIP assessment process is failing people with epilepsy, and many people are missing out on benefits they are entitled to. DWP figures show that 60% of people with epilepsy have had their Disability Living Allowance decreased or disallowed (top left).
- I met with Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry, former Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir and President of PTI Kashmir, at the Kashmir APPG in Parliament. Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry briefed MP's on the current security and human rights situation in South Asia, with special reference to Kashmir (right).
- I attended the World's Biggest Coffee Morning to support the Macmillan and the work they do to improve the lives of people living with cancer. Macmillan are currently promoting the implementation of services and tailored support to help meet the physical and emotional needs of those after their cancer treatment has ended (bottom left).

