



VALERIE PUBLISHES 2nd REPORT INTO 0845 NUMBERS

On Thursday 16 October 2014 Valerie published the Second Report into the use of higher rate telephone lines by Government departments.

Valerie said: "I am concerned that nine Government departments continue to operate higher rate telephone numbers. This is too high. The Ministry of Justice and the Department of Work and Pensions, who have contact with some of the most vulnerable in society must put in place as a matter of urgency local rate phone lines."

"My Second Report builds on the First Report and shows that Arms-length bodies and private contractors who deliver public services should also follow the Cabinet Office Guidance, published in December 2013, in the same way as central Government. There should be no financial barrier to contacting Government departments or their Arms-length bodies when a member of the public needs their assistance. I have called on the Cabinet Office to set a deadline of 31 December 2014 for the phasing out of higher rate telephone numbers in all Government Departments."



PALESTINE RECOGNITION VOTE

Valerie voted for the motion to recognise Palestine as a state.

Valerie said: "I was pleased that the motion passed 274 votes to 12. A number of my constituents contacted me about this issue. In 2012 the United Nations voted overwhelmingly to grant Palestine Non-Member Observer State Status of the UN. This vote in Parliament adds to the growing recognition that there must be progress with negotiations for a peaceful two state solution."

VALERIE VOTES AGAINST BEDROOM TAX

Valerie sponsored and voted for the Affordable Homes Bill which contains measures to address the worst effects of the Bedroom Tax.

Valerie said: "The Affordable Homes Bill which I am sponsoring, contains provisions to create exemptions to the Bedroom Tax which will reduce the number of people affected. The



exemptions include where the taxpayer has funded modifications to the home of a person with a disability, or where a family has lived in a home for more than three years. I would prefer to see the Bedroom Tax abolished completely, but this Bill is a welcome first step in addressing the injustice this policy is causing many families locally."

"Many constituents have contacted me about the Bedroom Tax. In one case, my constituent's 'spare bedroom' was too small to fit a single bed. I voted against the Bedroom Tax each time it was put before Parliament. This is a disastrous policy which the Opposition Labour Party has promised to repeal if we win the General Election in May 2015."

NICE AT HEALTH SELECT COMMITTEE

The Health Select Committee, of which Valerie is a member, heard evidence from the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE).

Valerie said: "I asked Sir Andrew Dillon, Chief Executive of NICE about Quality Adjusted Life Years (QALY). I put it to him that this measurement is not the



same for all patients as the overall NICE budget is fixed and it takes into account a person's age."

"I asked for definitions of clinical guidance and quality standards in an accessible manner. I was told that a clinical guideline is a document that 'shows the important decision points in the sequence of treatment or care that somebody needs to get the best possible outcome for whatever problem they have. Quality standards are markers of good practice that need to be in place so that patients know that the service gives them the best outcomes."

DEALING WITH DREAMS EXHIBITION AT NAG

Valerie recently visited "Dealing With Dreams": The 40th anniversary of the Garman Ryan Collection exhibition at the New Art Gallery. Valerie said: "The exhibition at the New Art Gallery reminds us in Walsall how lucky we are to have this collection. The Garman Ryan Collection features works by Van Gogh, Monet, Freud, Epstein, Turner, Durer and Constable as well as many others. "Dealing with Dreams" is the phrase used by Lady Kathleen Epstein in her letter to the Gallery when she donated the Garman Ryan Collection to the people of Walsall to be housed in this iconic building. The exhibition includes other original letters from Lady Epstein and previously unseen exhibits. The exhibition runs until 16 November 2014."

Surgeries

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

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MEETING WITH SPORTS MINISTER



On Monday 27 October 2014 Valerie and representatives of the Khalsa Football Federation (KFF) met with the Minister for Sport, Helen Grant MP to discuss the support available to increase participation in grassroots football and other sports.

Valerie said: "The KFF carries out important work at the grassroots level of English football, supporting the development of young BAME people since 1987. The KFF work with the Football Association and football clubs such as Chelsea, Derby County, Leicester City and Walsall to run coaching sessions for junior players. This year the KFF have expanded their national tournaments to enable the community to enjoy "taster sessions" to try a range of sports."

"The Minister had made welcome remarks about the positive engagement of women and the BAME community in sport. The meeting was extremely positive and I am very grateful to the Minister who agreed to write to the Regional Directors of Sport England, *sported* and the local County FAs on behalf of the KFF. to build greater links and help increase participation in the local areas."

VALERIE DISCUSSES THE ROYAL INSTITUTION

Valerie met with the Royal Institution (Ri) Director of Science and Education, Dr Gail Cardew.

Valerie said: "In 2013 I campaigned to secure the future of the Ri at 21 Albemarle Street. For the immediate future the Ri will remain at their historic home thanks to a generous anonymous donation. It was good to know that raising the issue in Parliament had helped."

VALERIE VOTES FOR IRAQ MOTION

Valerie said: "It is never an easy decision to put our Armed Forces into theatre. We are grateful to them and their families for their service to their country. Military action alone will not defeat ISIL. That's why the International community's current military response to the threat that ISIL pose is just one element of a long-term multinational political strategy on the region."

"In particular, providing ongoing support for an inclusive, sovereign and democratic Iraqi government that can push back on ISIL advances and restore stability and security. I voted in favour of the motion which was passed by 524 votes to 43 votes."

WALSALL AFRO CARIBBEAN CENTRE



Valerie said: "I was delighted to be invited to the Centre for a 'meet and greet' event. The event was well attended. At the Q&A session a number of specific issues were raised."

"One person spoke about how she had been told that people will not have wet rooms funded so they can have showers and that it is expected that they will be washed with flannels in bed. Another person raised the inadequacy of 15 minute homecare visits as part of care packages. I was able to say that a future Labour government would move away from 15 minute care."

VALERIE SUPPORTS AID SPENDING PLEDGE

At the Second Reading of the International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Bill 2014-15, Valerie voted to enshrine into law a commitment to spending 0.7% of national income on international development aid.

Valerie said: "Over the last two decades, UK aid has contributed significantly to improving lives in developing countries. During this time, the rate of poverty has halved and more than 9 in 10 children globally now receive a primary education. Between 1997 and 2010, the previous government's aid spending contributed to lifting 3 million people out of poverty each year, as well as improving water and sanitation services for a further 1.5 million, and sending 40 million more children to school. This is an impact by the UK government on global development which we are striving to maintain for the future. I am pleased that the vote passed the Second Reading, by 164 to 6."

VALERIE SUPPORTS BUS PASS PETITION



Valerie said: "I met the Walsall Pensioners' Convention who presented a petition of over 152,000 signatures to Downing Street, asking for assurances that the bus pass for the over 60s will be retained in its current form."

"I congratulate them for their successful work in getting the signatures for their petition in just three months. This has demonstrated the support for the over 60s bus pass. The pass allows anyone over 60 free off-peak local travel throughout England."

QUESTIONS IN PARLIAMENT



Valerie asked:

- The Leader of the House for an urgent debate on the Universal Jobmatch Website. The Official Report transcript of Valerie's question and the Leader of the House's response can be viewed [here](#).
- The Business Secretary what steps his department is taking to ensure that scientific advice carries appropriate weight across Government. The Official Report transcript of Valerie's question and the Minister's response can be viewed [here](#).
- The Leader of the House for an urgent statement on a code of practice in the NHS that makes the interests of children paramount and that balances the views of parents and clinicians. The Official Report transcript of Valerie's question and the Leader of the House's response can be viewed [here](#).
- The Attorney-General what steps can be taken to ring-fence budgets for rape victims. The Official Report Transcript of Valerie's question and the Attorney-General's response can be viewed [here](#).