

View from the House

Drummer Lee Rigby lost his life in a brutal and senseless attack by criminals. His family will never hear his voice again and his young son has lost a father who put the service to his country at the centre of his life. May he rest in peace.

Since the Queen's speech opened the third session of Parliament there have been a number of significant issues that have come before us. I spoke in the debate on the Queen's speech and tradition has it that we refer to it as the Gracious speech. I highlighted that some large organisations were given the benefit of the doubt, over a lunch, with the head of HMRC. In contrast, many constituents are not given the benefit of the doubt when they attend the ATOS assessments of their disability even when struggling to make it to the interview. There is still no sign of a Government response to Professor Harrington's report on reviewing these assessments.

The NHS is again under pressure. Our Health Select Committee have two inquiries; one on the Health and Social Care Act and the other on Emergency Services. This week in the media, already GPs have said they do not have time to see their patients and also be involved in commissioning NHS services. In the meantime there is growing pressure on Social Care.

A&E is also coming under scrutiny not least because it seems the new NHS 111 system, after the initial phone call and advice, directs everyone to A&E. And the College of Emergency Medicine told us that young doctors are not choosing emergency medicine as a career. When I raised it during the Urgent Question, I am pleased that the Secretary of State said he would look at this. Each trust on average spends £½ million on A&E locums every year. Surely the emphasis should be on training and supporting NHS doctors.

This is a government that promised at the last general election not to reorganise the NHS. They have broken that promise at a cost of billions of pounds to the taxpayer. Not only that. They even handed back over £2 billion of the Health Service's budget to George Osborne. It would appear that the chaos they are causing in the NHS will be used as a reason to privatise services. Voters wanted a custodian for their NHS – not an asset stripper.

Valerie Vaz MP

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