



HOLYROOD UPDATE

From Wendy Alexander MSP

Your constituency MSP for Paisley North

February 2009

Humanitarian Aid to Gaza

I am sure many were as shocked as I was by the scenes of recent suffering in Gaza. Hospitals in this region have been struggling to cope with the sick, the wounded and the injured and the supplies of basic medicines and equipment are scarce. Many casualties have been children.

A Scottish charity, Edinburgh Direct Aid organised a humanitarian trip to take medical supplies. Welcoming this, I wrote to 16 pharmacies in my constituency – 10 in Paisley, 4 in Renfrew and 2 in Linwood - asking for their help to provide supplies to convoy hoping to go from Edinburgh to the region in early February. I appealed for donations of basic in-date medicines, painkillers, drugs of listed by the World Health Organisation, and disposable items such as gloves or dressings. I visited a number of local pharmacies to share the list of dressings and medicines needed. Enthusiasm was high.

There is no doubt a high demand exists for deserving humanitarian assistance for various parts of the world, however, I am pleased to report that Gaza's hospitals will benefit from the kindness of our local people.

Donations collected have now been taken through to join the truck convoy.

Victory on C-Difficile

and other Hospital Acquired Infections

Many of you will know of my ongoing campaign, since the tragic Vale of Leven C Difficile outbreak last year, that also hit the RAH, to improve hospital hygiene. Every month since the official report into the Vale was published I continuously lobbied the Health Minister – letters, questions in Parliament, constituency cases, expert evidence – we used them all to try and force each and every hospital to report their MRSA levels.

I am delighted that after six months of campaigning, the Health Minister has finally launched a website to report infection rates hospital by hospital. There is still more that needs done but the website is an important step forward in the fight against hospital infection. In future all of us will be able to see what has been happening at the touch of a button.

My next priority is to see a restoration of the RAH cleaning budget which, according to a BBC Freedom of Information request, has fallen by an astonishing £3855 per bed this year. I am also lobbying local RAH bosses to ensure every member of staff at RAH receives infection control training next year. This way our hospitals become safer, and at least one of the fears about a hospital stay is effectively tackled.

University Nursery Fights for Life

The West of Scotland University Court will make a final decision on the future of the on-site nursery at Paisley. I really hope the Court will opt for a last minute reprieve. I and my fellow Renfrewshire MSPs have been urging the University to think again about closure. The parents and staff deserve the chance to work with the University authorities to come up with a cost effective solution



Wendy and Hugh Henry MSP visit affected parents and children at the UWS Nursery

that provides an on-site nursery. I have had some wonderfully moving representations from parents and grandparents.

Additionally the nurses' trade union wrote to me thank us for the support efforts through the parliamentary motion, letters and local media. This is 1 of 10 universities in Scotland that provides nursing studies courses and has many student members enrolled on their course. They went on to tell me that of surveyed nurses who had to consider leaving their course, the reason for a significant percentage was due to childcare difficulties.

In this month's News ...

Know your Rights

The recession, employment fears and local council cutbacks are hitting lots of people in unexpected ways. So make sure you know what help is available. The UK government has recently produced an excellent booklet called Real Help Now – listing Practical information and advice on a wide variety of matters many people are currently anxious about, including how to help with keeping your home, with training and skills and with

Real help for people now

Help with keeping your home
Help with skills and training
Help with jobs and benefits
Help for people on a low income
Help with money problems
Help for employees
Help for pensioners
Help with buying a new home

You can access it through

www.direct.gov.uk/en/campaigns/RealHelpNow

Skills Assistance for our Teenagers

In the Scottish Parliament, Labour has been arguing for 15,000 extra modern apprenticeships and support for training to ensure no return of the youth unemployment of the '80's.

The number of young people thrown on the scrap heap then is too easily forgotten. There must be no return to those dark days and wasted years. The first step is to encourage youngsters to get all the qualifications they can at school.

Labour introduced the EMA, 6 years ago, to encourage youngsters in cash strapped families to stay on and finish their education.

So if you know anyone who might qualify - encourage them to apply.



EMA recipient Nicole went on to gain an amazing five A grade Highers

For Youngsters & Seniors

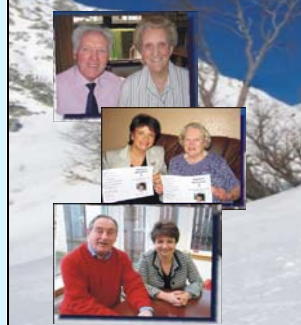
Allanton Playpark

Youngsters of all areas need places to play. I took up the case of the future of a play park in Ralston. The one recently demolished had been a designated play area for over 50 years, at the foot of Bathgo Avenue and Allanton Avenue. The land at Allanton fields which included the playpark, is to be leased to St Mirren for exclusive use for many years. Initial Council planner's reports said the play park should be retained or reinstated, however this so far has not happened. Whilst those who recently contacted me have no axe to grind with St Mirren's plans, they feared permanent total loss of any play park within the community as no a guarantee had so far been successfully secured from the Council. For the children of Ralston to permanently lose a 50 year right to the only public play facility within the heart of the community, without a replacement offered, is not right. I have lobbied the Council to give this community the commitment is has been waiting for.

Keep Warm This Winter

A guide to support for

Older People in
Renfrewshire



And finally...

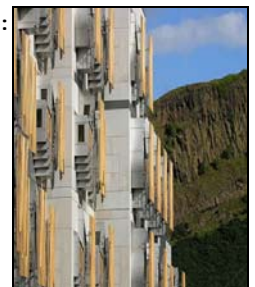
I recently distributed my winter leaflet to many local pensioners. It's a popular advice and information leaflet on entitlements and support numbers for use all year. If you know someone who might like a copy sent out email me or phone the office.

How to contact Wendy

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Advice Surgeries:
Telephone the office on 0141 560 1025 to discuss an appointment or to confirm attendance at Paisley, Linwood & Renfrew venues.



Working for you in Renfrew, Linwood & Paisley North

To be kept informed of my work in Paisley North and the Scottish Parliament please contact me.
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