



Lynda opens the Butterfly Children's Centre in Lye



Lynda pictured with guests at the official opening of the new Butterfly Children's Centre, Lye.

I was delighted to be invited to take part in the official opening of the Butterfly Children's Centre, part of the Government's Sure Start initiative, backed by Government funding and in partnership with Dudley Council and NCH.

As a mum and former teacher, I am well aware of the importance of the 0-5 age range and how important it is that children of this age receive the best care available and that parents and carers are supported with the right tools. The programme aims to increase quality childcare, aid and improve health and emotional development of young children and support parents doing this vital job.

Launching Dudley Foster Care Fortnight

It was great to be able to help launch Foster Care Fortnight this month and to visit Dudley's Hope House to help celebrate their first anniversary.

It was a great opportunity to speak with people who may have been considering offering to become a foster carer and to break down some of the misconceptions people may have, not least that you need to be married and with a family.

Foster carers can be from any background, be male or female, single or married, employed, unemployed, a tenant, a householder. The main qualities needed are time to care and a drive to help.

For further information, please click onto the Dudley MBC website, or contact Marlene Caudwell, Fostering Manager on 01384 815833.



Lynda with foster carers Charlie Hooper and Elaine

Tough action against bad employers

Last week I was briefed about some new measures to target bad employers with tougher fines if they pay below the minimum wage.

Trade and Industry Secretary Alistair Darling MP, wants to see employers who break the law given fixed penalty fines linked to the number of workers underpaid in their employment.

I think this is a good move that will further protect workers from being ripped off. At the moment some disreputable employers take the risk of ripping off their staff as the amount they get fined is not enough. Now they will get hit even harder in the pocket if they con their staff.

The Secretary of State also said that if his proposals go through, for the first time, businesses would have to pay interest or other cash to workers they have underpaid on top of repaying arrears.

Of course paying less than the minimum isn't only unfair to the workers - it's unfair to the vast majority of employers who obey the law, because it lets 'rogue' businesses undercut them.

I think action on this will give this simple message to bad employers: pay less than the minimum wage and it will cost you. The vast majority of employers obey the law already so why should a minority get away with it?

I'll keep you posted on what happens.

Want to receive this report by email?

If you would like to receive this or any other communication from me via e-mail, please respond with your email address details to:

halech@parliament.uk

Bill to help boost regeneration

Last week the Empty Property Rates Bill was published to encourage empty buildings back into use as part of government efforts to regenerate local areas.

Presently, most empty commercial property receive relief from taxation whereas empty warehouses and factories receive a permanent exemption from rates.

It simply does not make sense to provide tax relief for buildings that sit empty. I will be looking forward to voting on this Bill as I know that in Stourbridge this change in the law could benefit the area significantly.

From April 2008, empty commercial property will be liable for the full business rate after an initial rate-free period of three months, or six months for factories and warehouses.

These reforms will provide a strong incentive to bring empty shops, offices and factory buildings back into use, and so improve access to property and also reduce rents for businesses.

I was glad to see that empty property held by charities will be completely exempt from business rates, as will empty property held by community and amateur sports clubs.

How to contact Lynda



Stourbridge Office:

The Lawns
31 Hagley Road
Stourbridge
DY8 1QR
01384 374356

Westminster Office:

House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA
020 7219 6208

Email: walthol@parliament.uk

For details of advice surgeries, please call the Stourbridge Office.