



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

### **PADDY TIPPING LABOUR MP FOR SHERWOOD**

#### **NEWARK ADVERTISER ARTICLE MAR 08**

On Monday a group of around thirty Year 10-12 students from the Dukeries Comprehensive, Ollerton visited Parliament. The visit was facilitated by Education at Parliament and I was delighted meet the group and their teachers.

We had a lively discussion. Topics included transport, student loans, leisure and recreational facilities, education and the Treaty of Lisbon. The debate was conducted in a much more constructive and thoughtful way than the debate that took place that same afternoon in the House of Commons Chamber. The students were prepared to listen and acknowledge points of difference and difficulty.

I receive a good deal of correspondence and complaints about the behaviour of young people. Often residents feel threatened by what they perceive as rowdy and antisocial behaviour from groups of young people. There is a tendency to view young people with concern and see them as a problem. But young people are our future – our future prosperity depends upon them.

The group from the Dukeries typified most of the young people I meet. They are energetic, enthusiastic and imaginative. What's more they normally have a strong belief in fairness and social justice. There's no doubt in my mind that we need to recognise and praise the majority of young people rather than focusing on the minority that cause nuisance.

Education at Parliament was set up to help students understand the work of Parliament. Recent events suggest strongly that we should be doing more. Politics for all the political parties are viewed with suspicion and cynicism. Urgent steps are need to redress that balance. I'm keen to see MPs expenses published in detail. The 'Advertiser' comments on them on an annual basis, we can and will do more. From the beginning of April, MPs will have to produce receipts for expenditure of more than £50. The present limit of £250 is simply too high and subject to ridicule.

Some MPs, including local ones, employ members of their own families. They are committed and hardworking, but recent events show that abuse can occur. As a member of the Standards and Privileges Committee I've been arguing that MPs should have to register members of their own family who

LOCAL OFFICE

TEL: (0115-9640314)

FAX: (0115-9681639)

E.mail [paddy@paddytippingmp.com](mailto:paddy@paddytippingmp.com)

Sherwood Parliamentary Office

1st Floor, Council Offices,

Watnall Road, Hucknall, Notts, NG15 7LA



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work for them. These details would include the relative's name and relationship, the job undertaken and hours worked. Again I hope and expect that these new registration requirements will be in place by April. Openness is the best form of defence from suspicion.

But MPs, like councillors, come in to public life with good intent, determined to make a difference. Bringing about change can take time. I've campaigned for many years for pensioners to have free public transport. From 1<sup>st</sup> April, pensioners in Nottinghamshire and across England will be entitled to free off-peak bus travel. It's a big step forward, it's taken time and it will make a difference.

Let me declare an interest – I'm not entitled to one, but my wife has just qualified! I think that declaration will cause trouble at home!

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TEL: (0115-9640314)  
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E.mail [paddy@paddytippingmp.com](mailto:paddy@paddytippingmp.com)

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Watnall Road, Hucknall, Notts, NG15 7LA