

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY/2021



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MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR LIVINGSTON

JANUARY 2021

Happy New Year to you all – let's hope it's better than last year, with a global pandemic and Brexit casting a dark shadow over our lives.

2021 started with positive news for the constituency, for Scotland and indeed for Europe: local specialty vaccine company Valneva has announced it is in advanced discussions with the European Commission (EC) for the supply of up to 60 million doses of its Covid-19 vaccine. This is in addition to the 60 million doses ordered by the UK government and further options over 40 million doses in 2022 and a further 30 million to 90 million doses, in aggregate, across 2023 to 2025. Revenue from these options could amount to almost €900 million. I am excited to be working with Valneva on an extensive recruitment programme, which could see up to 200 jobs being created in the constituency.

Lockdown

Keeping with the coronavirus theme, I'm really pleased to see that constituents have been trying hard to stick to the lockdown guidance. I know it is incredibly tough, especially after the restrictions we all had to face over Christmas, but it's vital that we knuckle down and stay at home to protect the NHS and save lives. The statistics show that West Lothian is now doing better, but we only need to look to London to see just how things could go if we rest on our laurels and start to let our focus slip.

Guidance on stay at home regulations that came into effect on 5 January 2021 and can found [here](#)

Covid-19 Financial impact

We are all aware of the financial impact coronavirus has had on people across the UK, but some startling research has highlighted that young women are being adversely affected. In a survey of 4,000 young people aged 18-30, research found that an estimated 1.5 million young women have lost income since the start of the pandemic and more than two thirds (69%) of young women claiming Universal Credit this year say they did so for the very first time. 750,000 young women were forced to go to work despite fears for their safety and protection against the virus and half of young women who are parents (51%) said they were unable to apply for or left a job because they could not cover childcare costs, up from a third of young women when the same question was asked last year.

The report 'Picking up the Pieces' is a sobering read, exposing how millions of young women across the country have struggled and felt ignored throughout this crisis and the toll it has taken on their careers, finances, home life and mental health. It is also a heartbreaking read; the young women's stories touched my heart, their bravery, compassion and sheer determination to keep going, to keep caring, to keep holding everything – and everyone – around them together is nothing short of incredible. Please take the time to read my article on this [here](#).

And you can watch my question to the Chancellor about this issue [here](#).

<https://youtu.be/m5wzeke14lc> – you won't be surprised by the tawdry response I received.

Helpful links

- [Guidance](#) on working from home: the responsibilities on employers and sources of support for concerned employees if they think they should be working from home
- [FAQs](#) on new takeaway rules have been added to the hospitality guidance, under "Takeaways – no indoor entry"
- [Information](#) for hospitality businesses on the ban on consumption of alcohol in an outdoor public place from 16 January 2021
- Updated Retail sectoral guidance on [click and collect services](#) and a [Q&A](#) on click and collect
- On working in other people's homes, the Stay at Home [guidance](#) has been updated to support the new provisions in the regulations and the existing Q&A is [here](#)
- Coronavirus (Covid-19): Taxi and Private Hire Driver Support Fund - [Here](#)

Vaccine Rollout - Lothians

NHS Lothian has rolled out vaccinations for the over 80s in community settings – which began on Monday, January 11th at Pentland Medical Centre in Currie.

The AstraZeneca vaccine (often referred to as the 'Oxford' vaccine) was approved on 29/12/20 and NHS Lothian received the first supplies last week. This is the vaccine that is being used to carry out the over 80s vaccination programme that is being delivered via GP practices.

NHS Lothian arranged media coverage to publicise this milestone and give confidence that the over 80s programme has begun. The national programme launched on Monday, January 11 when many practices received their first doses. A further number of practices will receive their first doses this week.

GP practices who will be contacting eligible patients on their lists in due course. People are strongly advised not to contact their practice – their practice will be in contact with them. Housebound patients in the priority groups will be vaccinated by District Nursing Teams as is done in the annual flu vaccination programme.

The NHS has revealed that all GP medical facilities in West Lothian are now signed up and ready to vaccinate elderly patients.

Howden Health Centre in Livingston vaccinated its first patients on January 12. By February it is hoped that other age groups will begin to get jabs at West Lothian's mass vaccination centre at Pyramids Business Park in Bathgate.

Deaths abroad

The Times reporter Catherine Philp wrote a hard-hitting article about the rights of UK citizens when they face trouble abroad. She published a letter from the FCDO which stated quite clearly that British citizens arrested overseas through no fault of their own have no right to the government's assistance or protection, even if they are tortured or held as diplomatic leverage against their country. I have written a cross party letter to the Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab calling on the UK Government to act now to protect our citizens' rights abroad and meet with me and a cross party delegation to discuss the possibilities of better protection for our citizens abroad.

I've been campaigning on this since I was elected in 2015 as some of my constituents have died or been killed abroad. I founded the APPG Deaths Abroad & we took evidence from more than 60 families. You can read the findings [here](#) - and see our recommendation that the right to consular assistance for British citizens is enshrined in UK law.

FINALLY, journalists and folk in the wider public are starting to understand how awful this situation really is.

Community

Lockdown exercise and civic duty combined last week when I joined Frank McAlister and his team from The Tower Bar in Craigshill to help clear the paths from ice and snow. Socially distanced and masked up, it was hard work, but well worth it so that folk from Craigengar sheltered housing could hopefully get out to walk and folk could get to the local shops. We really needed pickaxes to get through the ice as we broke two shovels!

YES Lothians meeting

On Friday I spoke at a meeting of Yes Edinburgh and Lothians. They got in touch with me and other SNP parliamentarians to discuss a realistic and practical way forward to achieving our goal of an independent Scotland. I really enjoyed the conversations, a clear strategy to get us to independence is crucial as we come through this next stage of the pandemic. Independence is key to Scotland's recovery and to securing our rightful place back in the EU.

West Lothian Endo Warriors

Finally, I was so pleased to be elected vice chair of the Endometriosis All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) in the House of Commons. APPGs are a really important part of our work at Westminster as they are a forum for MPs to work together, away from the confrontational nature of the chamber, on important issues and find consensus. I'm ever inspired by West Lothian Endo Warriors as they do such incredible work - and I look forward to continuing to work with them to raise awareness and get action for sufferers of endometriosis.

As ever if anyone has any constituency concerns or cases, please do not hesitate to contact me on hannah.bardell.mp@parliament.uk

Yours for Livingston,

Hannah