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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Wednesday 28 June 2017

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The House met at half-past Eleven o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr Speaker: I remind Members that the private Members' Bill ballot book is open in the No Lobby today until the rise of the House, when the ballot for 2017 to 2019 will close. The ballot draw will be held at 9 am tomorrow in Committee Room 10. I also remind Members that the ballot for the election of Deputy Speakers is taking place until 1.30 pm today in Committee Room 8. The result will be announced as soon as the count is complete.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

The Secretary of State was asked—

Belfast Agreement: Impartiality

1. **Kate Hollern** (Blackburn) (Lab): What steps the Government are taking to comply with the requirement for rigorous impartiality set out in the Belfast agreement. [900001]

5. **Jeff Smith** (Manchester, Withington) (Lab): What steps the Government are taking to comply with the requirement for rigorous impartiality set out in the Belfast agreement. [900005]

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (James Brokenshire): The Government remain steadfast in our commitment to the Belfast agreement and its successors. We will continue to govern in the interests of all parts of the community and to work in partnership with the Irish Government, in accordance with the well-established three-stranded approach, as we have done for the past seven years.

Kate Hollern: In the past few days, the deal with the Democratic Unionist party has been described as grubby, dangerous and desperate. Obviously, the situation in Northern Ireland is at a very sensitive point. Can the Secretary of State outline in a clear and cohesive way the steps that his Government are taking to ensure impartiality?

James Brokenshire: I say at the outset that I do not recognise the characterisation that the hon. Lady has given the agreement, which is about providing stability here for the UK Government and governing in the best interests of all parts of the UK. But in response to her important question about the Belfast agreement and its

successors, I say to her that the Government remain steadfast in their commitment to those agreements and we continue to work with all parties, as I have done over recent days and will continue to do, so that the Government act in the best interests of all parts of Northern Ireland and continue to listen to the concerns of all parts of the community.

Jeff Smith: Over the past few days, a lot has been made about the extra money for infrastructure spending. What assurances can the Secretary of State give that that extra funding will be spent across all communities in Northern Ireland, especially the rural communities in the west? What can he do to help make sure that that happens?

James Brokenshire: The additional funding that has been outlined is for an inclusive Executive to be able to utilise those funds in the best interests of Northern Ireland. That is the most powerful, effective way to deliver on that. That is why I have been using all my time, energy and efforts to see that the Executive are restored. That is absolutely the best way to ensure that the points that the hon. Gentleman rightly makes are seen.

Mr Laurence Robertson (Tewkesbury) (Con): Is it not the case that in September 2015 there was a crisis in the institutions in Northern Ireland—long before any deal between the Conservative party and the DUP was struck? Is it not also the case that this particular crisis started long before any deal between the Conservative party and the DUP was struck?

James Brokenshire: My hon. Friend highlights the challenges that we have in seeing the Executive restored and the challenges that have emerged over the course of this year. He is right: it is so important that we focus on that task at hand and see that the time available is used so that the Executive are restored and perform in the best interests of Northern Ireland and all communities across Northern Ireland.

Sir Hugo Swire (East Devon) (Con): Surely the point is that, given the additional funding for Northern Ireland, the imperative will be on the Executive to reform and deliver for all people there, and to kick-start more private industry there to make the people of Northern Ireland less dependent on the state and to get better receipts back to the UK Treasury.

James Brokenshire: I entirely agree with my right hon. Friend, who makes such an important point about the real opportunity that there is for Northern Ireland. We want to see jobs, growth and prosperity—to see investment in infrastructure and that enterprise-driven economy. There is that opportunity here, and we as a Government want it to be seized and to see Northern Ireland continue to move forward.

Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): I wish the Secretary of State well in his efforts in the coming days to restore the Executive to Northern Ireland. For our part, we are absolutely committed to getting the Executive up and running again. We did not collapse the Executive and we are not setting any red lines or preconditions for a reformation. Will he be assured that our focus is on

ensuring that money for infrastructure, health, education and the rest of it is spent equally and fairly across Northern Ireland, as has been our record in office over the past 10 years in the Northern Ireland Executive?

James Brokenshire: I very much welcome the right hon. Gentleman's statement of his party's determination to see an Executive restored and, equally, that funds made available are seen across the whole community. This is about infrastructure, including investment in the digital infrastructure that provides the mechanism for prosperity to continue to grow in Northern Ireland.

Nigel Dodds: On the issue of rigorous impartiality, of course we are committed to the agreements that we have entered into, as are Her Majesty's Government. I particularly welcome the statement in the policy agreement that

"the Conservative Party will never be neutral in expressing its support for the Union",

and that it

"will never countenance any constitutional arrangements that are incompatible with the consent principle."

We are united on the great principle that we want to strengthen the United Kingdom, and the Secretary of State will have our full support in measures to achieve that.

James Brokenshire: The right hon. Gentleman is right that we will never be neutral in our support for the Union. The Government are proud to take that approach. Equally, we uphold the principles of those agreements, particularly the principle of consent, which has underlined and underpinned the activities of Governments over so many years. It is about the rightful balance between support for the Union and, equally, upholding the principle of consent.

12. [900013] **Mr John Baron** (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): I have seen the troubles at first hand, so I know that the peace process has been integral to progress since then. I very much welcome the agreement with our friends in the Democratic Unionist party, but what more can the Government do to reassure all the people of Northern Ireland that the agreement will not jeopardise this process? That is the chief concern at the moment.

James Brokenshire: My hon. Friend makes a powerful and important point. This agreement underlines our steadfast commitment to the Belfast agreement and its successors. Indeed, I have been working with all major parties in the Executive in recent days to see the restoration of that Executive—one of the key bodies under the Good Friday agreement. That remains such an important outcome to achieve.

Deirdre Brock (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): It is clear that other parties in Northern Ireland have serious concerns about the Good Friday agreement as a result of the deal that the UK Government have done with the DUP. What guarantees can the Secretary of State offer that the confidence and supply agreement does not threaten the impartiality of the UK Government? What assurances can he give us that the Prime Minister's reliance on DUP votes to remain in power does not

compromise his position? Finally, given the sword of Damocles clause—offering support on a case-by-case basis—how can any of us be sure that the UK Government will not be compromised when it suits the DUP?

James Brokenshire: The agreement relates to what happens here at Westminster. I am not part of those discussions or the envisaged committee, but there are important reasons for the role I play in Northern Ireland. The hon. Lady makes various assertions and characterisations. It is worth underlining that I have been working closely with the Irish Government in recent days as part of the restoration of the Executive, and they noted in their response that they welcomed the British Government's commitment to

"govern in the interests of all parts of the community in Northern Ireland."

That principle will guide our actions.

Dr Andrew Murrison (South West Wiltshire) (Con): Notwithstanding the commitment to parity in the Good Friday agreement, does my right hon. Friend agree that the military covenant needs to be applied throughout the country, regardless of where servicemen and women live?

James Brokenshire: I do uphold the military covenant. The Conservative party has made great strides in rolling it out across the UK, and the Government remain committed to that. We will work with the Executive and all the parties so that the benefit of the military covenant is felt in all parts of the UK.

Owen Smith (Pontypridd) (Lab): May I begin by paying tribute to Northern Ireland Members from all parties who lost their seats at the election? I pay particular tribute to Mark Durkan, who served this Parliament and Northern Irish politics with such distinction for so long. I also welcome all new Members from Northern Ireland to the House.

I do not doubt for a minute the good faith of the Secretary of State, and I wish him well in trying to bring about the power-sharing Executive, but he must acknowledge that his desire to look impartial has been compromised by the arrangements with the DUP. I would like to know what advice he gave the Prime Minister. Did he tell her that she was making his life that much harder?

James Brokenshire: May I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his place? I know the role that he has played previously in Northern Ireland, and I welcome his experience on to the Labour Front Bench. I join him in recognising those who served previously in the House. I pay tribute to his predecessor, Dave Anderson, for the very constructive approach that he took. I would also like to recognise my colleague Kris Hopkins, who, as my Minister, played an extraordinary role. I also recognise my colleague Lord Dunlop.

The hon. Gentleman makes the point about Mark Durkan—another colleague who has served in the House—and it is notable that Mark Durkan is reported as saying that there is nothing in the Good Friday agreement that prevents agreements between parties in Northern Ireland and the Government of the Republic of Ireland or the UK Government. It is the principles of those agreements

that we continue to uphold in the actions that we take, and we see nothing inconsistent with the agreement that was reached this week in terms of our actions and the role that we play in Northern Ireland.

Owen Smith: I acknowledge all the points the Secretary of State has just made, but he knows from his experience and mine that trust is absolutely vital in Northern Ireland, and there is a danger that that trust between parties and in the Governments will be eroded over time if one party is seen as having the ear of the Government. Transparency is the key to avoiding that, so can he commit that, in addition to being transparent in the initial agreement, all subsequent agreements and all the minutes of the DUP-Tory co-ordination committee will be published so we know exactly what is going on?

James Brokenshire: This issue of impartiality, and the principle of working across all communities and with fairness to all communities, is one that we steadfastly uphold. That is why I will continue to work and engage with all parties and, indeed, community groups and sectors across Northern Ireland in the role that I uphold. I think the hon. Gentleman has seen from the actions that we have taken in publishing the confidence and supply agreement and the financial statement that sits alongside it that that transparency has been provided.

Power Sharing

2. **Mr William Wragg** (Hazel Grove) (Con): What progress has been made on discussions on power sharing in Northern Ireland. [900002]

10. **Victoria Prentis** (Banbury) (Con): What progress has been made on power-sharing arrangements in Northern Ireland. [900011]

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (James Brokenshire): The overriding priority for the UK Government in Northern Ireland remains the restoration of devolved power-sharing government in Stormont. The UK Government are working with the main Northern Ireland parties and, in accordance with the well-established three-stranded approach, the Irish Government to restore a fully functioning inclusive Executive and Assembly. But time is short. I would urge all concerned to use the narrow window that remains to look beyond their differences and to see that an Executive is formed.

Mr Wragg: Like many Members, I have been assisting constituents who are former members of Her Majesty's armed forces and who served in Northern Ireland with distinction during the troubles. Will my right hon. Friend tell the House the extent to which disagreement over reforming the unfair legacy case process is a sticking point in restoring power sharing?

James Brokenshire: I think that there is a growing consensus that the next stage needs to be the publication of a consultation around the Stormont House agreement bodies, which are founded on the principle of fairness and proportionality, and it is that that has come through from the discussions that we have had.

Victoria Prentis: Does my right hon. Friend agree that any return to direct rule in Northern Ireland would be a huge backward step and that devolution is really the only good way forward?

James Brokenshire: I do agree with the comments of my hon. Friend. An Executive—an inclusive Executive—acting in the best interests of Northern Ireland is profoundly what Northern Ireland needs and what the people voted for, and that is where our focus must lie.

Emma Little Pengelly (Belfast South) (DUP): The Secretary of State will be aware that the armed forces covenant has been the subject of talks in Northern Ireland because of the lack of full implementation. Does he agree that the party blocking that implementation talks a lot about rights and respect? It needs to do the right thing and stop being a barrier to the support that the veterans in Northern Ireland need.

James Brokenshire: May I welcome the hon. Lady to her position? I am sure that the experience she has—over legacy, and over so many parts of Northern Ireland—will enrich the debate in the House.

We obviously stand by our commitments in relation to the military covenant—wanting to see that felt in all parts of the UK—and we look forward to working with all parties and all communities across Northern Ireland and the UK to see that that happens.

Lady Hermon (North Down) (Ind): Will the Secretary of State confirm that the vast majority of the public in Northern Ireland are very interested to see who actually pays and funds the political parties in Northern Ireland? As part of his ongoing discussions, will he therefore have the courage of his convictions and make sure that there is an end to the anonymity of political donations in Northern Ireland?

James Brokenshire: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for making that point, which she has made on a number of occasions in the House. I think she will have seen the commitment in my party's manifesto over the transparency of political donations. I look forward to moving ahead and seeing that that is actually implemented.

13. [900014] **Mrs Sheryll Murray** (South East Cornwall) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend ensure that the disgraceful treatment of my constituent, Major Dennis Hutchings, and other ex-service personnel will continue to be an important element of his discussions?

James Brokenshire: I recognise the way in which my hon. Friend has championed the cause of her constituent. I know she will appreciate that there are legal proceedings outstanding that mean that I cannot comment in detail, but I hope she appreciates the Government's desire to see fair, balanced and proportionate mechanisms put in place for dealing with the issues of the past.

Stephen Pound (Ealing North) (Lab): May I associate myself with the generous comments the Secretary of State made about Kris Hopkins, who is a good and decent man? I welcome the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Norwich North (Chloe Smith), my seventh opponent, to the Government Dispatch Box. Unlike all her predecessors, she lacks a little close combat experience, except, of course, from her time in the Whips Office.

We all hope that there is a re-establishment of the Executive tomorrow, but should that not happen, Ministers must obviously be undertaking some contingency planning. What structures would they like to see in place to ensure impartiality in the disbursement of the additional money?

James Brokenshire: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind comments about Kris Hopkins, who served in the House with distinction, including in the role that he played in the Northern Ireland Office.

I hope the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that our focus is on seeing that an Executive is restored. I have been clear on not wanting to pre-empt what may happen should that not be the case. Obviously, there would be profound and serious implications in that context. I can assure him that we will work with all parties, and indeed have discussions with his party and others across the House, to see that these issues are considered very carefully, but our focus—

Mr Speaker: I am very grateful. Mr Ranil Jayawardena.

Security Situation

3. **Mr Ranil Jayawardena** (North East Hampshire) (Con): What recent assessment he has made of the security situation in Northern Ireland. [900003]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Chloe Smith): The terrorist threat level in Northern Ireland remains unchanged at “severe”—namely, an attack is highly likely. The need for vigilance remains, and I pay tribute to the brave men and women who work to keep communities safe. They will always have this Government’s fullest support.

Mr Jayawardena: Last December, the Secretary of State assured me in the Chamber that he would be unswerving and unstinting in underlining the huge contribution of our armed forces, so will the Minister join me in welcoming the commitment in our manifesto that the bodies envisaged in the Stormont House agreement will be fair, balanced and proportionate to former soldiers?

Chloe Smith: Yes, I do reiterate that commitment in our manifesto. We continue to focus on implementing the Stormont House agreement and creating new bodies that will be fair, balanced and proportionate. The next phase, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has outlined, is to consult publicly on the detail of those bodies’ workings.

Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP): As the Member of Parliament in the west of the Province who takes his seat, may I ask the Minister whether she is aware of the fact that security has been getting worse in the west of Northern Ireland, particularly the north-west? Will she review the problems associated with the bomb disposal team in getting them to the places where problems have occurred?

Chloe Smith: I welcome the hon. Gentleman’s experience in this area and would be more than delighted to meet him to hear more about his specific concerns. As a new Minister, I have endeavoured to be in touch straight away with all the Northern Ireland MPs and those in the House with an interest. We must be vigilant, as I said earlier, and I look forward to further detail from him.

Theresa Villiers (Chipping Barnet) (Con): Will the Minister ensure that she and the Secretary of State play a full part in the Government’s forthcoming review of

counter-terrorism strategy to reflect the lethal nature of the domestic terrorism threat in Northern Ireland? [Interruption.]

Mr Speaker: There is far too much noise and too many private conversations taking place in the Chamber. There has been extensive interest in all parts of the House in Northern Ireland in recent weeks; there ought to be interest in these matters being treated of in the Chamber today.

Chloe Smith: The short answer is yes. Both I and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will endeavour to ensure that security is at the forefront of all that we do.

David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): The Minister will know that many terrorists have been brought back to Northern Ireland to face justice under the European arrest warrant. Will she commit today from the Dispatch Box that this Government will keep that arrest warrant post-Brexit?

Chloe Smith: The right hon. Gentleman will know that all such matters are for negotiation and are in the hands of my right hon. Friend the Brexit Secretary. We enjoy strong working relationships with our counterparts in the Irish Government. We intend to continue that, in the service of all the communities of Northern Ireland.

Leaving the EU: Free Movement of People

4. **Stuart C. McDonald** (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): What assessment he has made of the implications of exiting the EU for the free movement of people between Northern Ireland and the (a) Republic of Ireland and (b) rest of the UK. [900004]

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (James Brokenshire): The Government want to protect the ability to move freely between the UK and Ireland, which is an essential part of economic integration and daily community life. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister confirmed in this House last November, there will be no change, alteration or impediment to movement within the UK.

Stuart C. McDonald: The simplest way to ensure that free movement continues unimpeded across these islands is to accept that there will in reality be no increased border checks or in-country controls on EU nationals after Brexit—any controls occurring in-country. That is what the Home Secretary has previously suggested. Will the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland confirm that that remains the Government’s thinking?

James Brokenshire: We want to maintain the common travel area, which has served us so well over so many decades. Equally, we want to work with the Irish Government to ensure that the external border is upheld and strengthened. That remains our focus.

Leaving the EU: Border

6. **Gareth Johnson** (Dartford) (Con): What steps he is taking to ensure that there is no hard border with the Republic of Ireland after the UK leaves the EU. [900006]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Chloe Smith): My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear in her letter to Donald Tusk that we want to avoid a return to a hard border—nobody wishes to return to the border of the old days—and to maintain the common travel area. That desire is shared with the Republic of Ireland and the European Union, and we shall work tirelessly to achieve it.

Gareth Johnson: Northern Ireland is as much part of the United Kingdom as Dartford, but does the Minister agree that, given Northern Ireland's unique situation, it is essential that there is a frictionless border between it and the Republic, without ever compromising the security of the whole of the United Kingdom?

Chloe Smith: Yes, I do agree. We all want to see people and goods moving as freely as possible across the border between Northern Ireland and Ireland, in the service of a strong economy for those who need it.

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): Mindful of the worryingly high levels of radicalisation of people in the Republic of Ireland, what assurances can the Minister give DUP Members that the soft border that is important for trade will not become an unsafe border in terms of security?

Chloe Smith: I value the strong working relationship between this country and the Republic of Ireland, which will allow us to focus on the issue raised by the hon. Gentleman. We need to preserve the common travel area and to maintain tariff-free trade with Europe. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"]

Mr Speaker: The Minister has never been more popular.

Economic Development

7. **Jeremy Quin (Horsham) (Con):** What recent progress has been made on developing Northern Ireland's economy. [900008]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Chloe Smith): The fundamentals of the Northern Ireland economy are strong, with growth last year at 1.6%. Unemployment has fallen and employment has risen, but there is much more we must do.

Jeremy Quin: I welcome the additional investment in Northern Ireland's economy, to address structural weaknesses. May I urge the Government to reinforce their efforts to secure private sector and foreign direct investment?

Chloe Smith: I assure my hon. Friend that we will continue to do that, using our relationships across the globe. It is clear that, despite the progress made in recent years, special circumstances still apply to Northern Ireland. We want a strong economy for all communities there.

Gavin Robinson (Belfast East) (DUP): The industrial strategy and the national shipbuilding strategy give two key opportunities for the Minister and this Government to assist in building and growing the Northern Ireland economy. Will she facilitate discussions with us and Ministry of Defence colleagues so that we can advance those golden opportunities for our Province?

Chloe Smith: I will be happy to do so.

Mr Owen Paterson (North Shropshire) (Con): Under the terms of the Azores agreement and legislation passed through this House, only a devolved Administration can use their powers to reduce corporation tax, which would have an overwhelming beneficial impact on every citizen in Northern Ireland. Can the Minister guarantee that that will be raised in the talks over the next two days?

Chloe Smith: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will do everything he can to ensure that those talks come to a successful conclusion. The point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson) simply underlines the need to make the reaching of that agreement a priority.

Confidence and Supply Agreement

8. **Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP):** What assessment he has made of the potential effect on the peace process of an agreement on confidence and supply between the Government and the Democratic Unionist party. [900009]

9. **Patricia Gibson (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP):** What assessment he has made of the potential effect on the peace process of an agreement on confidence and supply between the Government and the Democratic Unionist party. [900010]

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (James Brokenshire): This agreement provides stability at a vital time for our country and is in the interests of all of the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland. It in no way changes the UK Government's commitment to the Belfast agreement and its successors.

Alison Thewliss: We are now in the slightly odd position that each DUP Member is worth more than Ronaldo: I do not know what that says about their footballing skills. Does the Secretary of State agree with Jonathan Powell that it is now impossible for the UK Government to be even-handed in Northern Ireland?

James Brokenshire: No, I do not.

Patricia Gibson: Can the Secretary of State not see that the UK Government's credibility with the other constituent parts of the United Kingdom has been destroyed following the £1.5 billion bribe for Northern Ireland, subverting the Barnett rules, as the price of staying in office?

James Brokenshire: No, I cannot.

14. [900015] **Jo Churchill (Bury St Edmunds) (Con):** Will the Minister join me in welcoming the Government's commitment to use our high commissions and embassies to promote Northern Ireland as a place to do business, to ensure that Northern Ireland is fully included in any UK-wide initiative to boost exports and prosperity?

James Brokenshire: I strongly support the point that my hon. Friend makes. Northern Ireland is a great place to do business and as a Government we will continue to support that in all ways that we can—and in all other parts of the UK.

PRIME MINISTER

The Prime Minister was asked-- **Engagements**

Q1. [900051] **Mrs Sheryll Murray** (South East Cornwall) (Con): If she will list her official engagements for Wednesday 28 June.

The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May): The House will be aware that today the Crown Prosecution Service announced charging decisions in relation to Hillsborough. I know from working closely with the families when I was Home Secretary that this will be a day of mixed emotions for them. The House will understand that I cannot say anything further on matters that are now subject to criminal prosecution.

This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I will have further such meetings later today.

Mrs Murray: Over the past months I have had swastikas carved into posters; social media posts such as “Burn the witch” and “Stab the c***”; people putting Labour party posters on my home, photographing them and pushing them through my letterbox; and even someone urinating on my office door—hardly kinder, gentler politics. Can my right hon. Friend suggest what can be done to stop such intimidation, which may well put off good people from serving in this place?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right to raise this issue and she was not the only person to experience such intimidation during the election campaign. This sort of intimidation was experienced—I am sorry to say—by female candidates in particular. I believe that such behaviour has no place in our democracy. She is right: it could put good people off serving in this House. We want more people to become engaged and to want to stand for election to this House. As I stand here and see the plaque dedicated to the late Jo Cox, I think we should all remember what Jo said, that

“we are far more united and have far more in common”—[*Official Report*, 3 June 2015; Vol. 596, c. 675.]

—with each other than the things that divide us.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): I welcome the announcement by the Crown Prosecution Service this morning that it will prosecute six people in relation to Hillsborough. The prosecution, the inquiry and this development happened only because of the incredible work done by the Hillsborough Justice Campaign, Andy Burnham, Steve Rotherham and other colleagues. We should pay tribute to all those who spent a great deal of time trying to ensure justice for those who died at Hillsborough.

Seventy-nine people died in Grenfell Tower. Our thoughts are with the families and friends of those who have died, those still unaccounted for and those who will live with the trauma of this horrific and utterly avoidable tragedy for the rest of their lives. Last Thursday, the Prime Minister said she expected to appoint a judge to chair the inquiry within the next few days. We have not had any further news on that. Will she now update the House on when an appointment will be made, and what will be the timetable for the inquiry?

The Prime Minister: There have been many years of waiting for the Hillsborough families and the different groups who came together, not just the Hillsborough Justice Campaign. The work done by Margaret Aspinall and others has been absolutely exemplary. As I said, today will be a day of really mixed emotions for them, but we all welcome the fact that charging decisions have been taken. That is an important step forward.

The right hon. Gentleman asked me for an update on Grenfell Tower. If I may, Mr Speaker, I would like to update the House on a number of aspects. We all know what an unimaginable tragedy this was, and our thoughts will continue to be with all those affected by it. As of this morning, the cladding from 120 tower blocks across the country, in 37 local authority areas, has been tested and has failed the combustibility test. Given the 100% failure rate, we are very clear with local authorities and housing associations that they should not wait for test results; they should get on with the job of the fire safety checks—indeed, they are doing that—and take any action necessary. The Government will support them in doing that. The Communities Secretary has set up an independent expert advisory panel to advise on the measures that need to be taken. The panel is meeting this week.

On the housing offer, 282 good quality temporary properties have been identified, 132 families have had their needs assessed and 65 offers of temporary accommodation have already been made to families. The payments from the discretionary fund we have made available continue. As of this morning, nearly £1.25 million of payments have been made. In addition, we are giving an extra £1 million to the local consortia of charities, trusts and foundations that have been doing such important work.

On the public inquiry, I expect us to be able to name a judge soon. As the right hon. Gentleman will know, the process is that the Lord Chief Justice recommends the name of a judge. We want to ensure that, as the process goes forward for that inquiry, the survivors and the families concerned are involved. That is the work we are currently doing.

Jeremy Corbyn: I thank the Prime Minister for that answer, but I hope she is able to stick to her promise of everyone being rehoused within three weeks. At the moment, it does not look anything like that target will be achieved. I hope she understands the fear that so many people have living in tower blocks at the present time all around the country. In 2014, the all-party fire and safety group wrote to the Department for Communities and Local Government, warning:

“Today’s buildings have a much higher content of readily available combustible material”.

There have been contradictory messages from the Government. Can the Prime Minister give a categorical answer: is cladding with a combustible core, such as polyethylene, legal for use on high-rise buildings, and was the cladding on Grenfell Tower legal?

The Prime Minister: The building regulations identified the cladding that is compatible with the building regulations and that which is non-compliant. My understanding is that this cladding was not compliant with the building regulations. This raises wider issues, as the House will recognise. It is important that we are careful in how we

talk about this. A criminal investigation is taking place, and it is important that we allow the police to conduct that criminal investigation and to take the decisions they need to take.

There is a much wider issue here, as we have seen from the number of buildings where the cladding, from the samples already sent in by local authorities and housing associations, has failed the combustibility test. This is a much wider issue, with cladding having been put into buildings for decades. There are real questions as to how this has happened, why it has happened, and how we can ensure it does not happen in future. That is why I am clear that in addition to the inquiry that needs to identify the specific issues for Grenfell Tower—what happened in relation to Grenfell Tower and who was responsible—we will also need to look much more widely at why it is that over decades, under different Governments and under different councils, material has been put up on tower blocks that is non-compliant with the building regulations. There is a very wide issue here. We need to make sure we get to the bottom of it and that is what we are going to do.

Jeremy Corbyn: Last Thursday the Prime Minister told my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) that she would make the results of the Grenfell Tower cladding testing public within 48 hours, and I am not sure she has actually done that with her statement today. As of yesterday—the Prime Minister has just confirmed this—120 high-rise blocks across Britain have had fire safety tests and failed them. What timetable has the Prime Minister set for such tests to be completed, including on schools and hospitals, in every part of the country? What plans does she have to compel the testing of high rise buildings such as private sector office blocks and hotels, which may also have combustible cladding material on them?

The Prime Minister: What I said last week in the statement is that my understanding is that the police were going to make a statement about the cladding material within 48 hours, and I think the police then did make a statement about the position. In relation to the tests, my message is a very simple one. As I said in my answer to the right hon. Gentleman's first question, what we are saying to people is that this is not a question of waiting for the tests: do not wait until you have a sample in and you know the result of the test; so far, 100% of the samples that have come in have proved to be combustible, so work on the assumption that you should be doing the fire safety checks now. That is what we are telling people to do. We know that parts of the private sector are also doing their work on fire safety checks, but my response to all those who have buildings that are covered by this is: do the fire safety checks with the fire service, take any measures that are necessary to ensure fire safety and the Government will support you in doing that.

Jeremy Corbyn: Since 2010, only a third of new schools have had sprinkler systems installed, so parents are rightly concerned about the safety of their children. In 2013, the Lakanal House coroner's letter formally recommended that the Government encourage providers of housing and high-rise residential buildings to consider retrofitting sprinklers. Two years later, *Inside Housing* reported that only 1% of council tower blocks had

sprinklers fitted. Can the Prime Minister let us know what the Government actually did to encourage retrofitting during the past four years?

The Prime Minister: The Government did indeed ensure that those local authorities were aware of the recommendation that came from the coroner and they did act on that recommendation. However, if we look at what has happened and the identification of the issues in a number of tower blocks so far, there are various issues that lead to concern about fire safety. If we look at what has happened in Camden, for example, where one of the five blocks was considered to be habitable but four were not, that was not just because of the cladding; it was because of other issues, in relation, for example, to the gas riser.

All these issues raise wider questions about the inspections that have taken place and about residents' complaints and residents' voices not being heard. That is an issue that has been raised at Grenfell Tower and it has also been raised in Camden. This is a much wider question. A terrible tragedy took place. People lost their lives who should never have lost their lives. We need to look at what has happened over decades in this country that has led to this position, and that is exactly what we will do.

Jeremy Corbyn: There have been two coroner's reports. Building regulations have not been overhauled and local authorities, while asked to act on them, have had their budgets cut by 40% during the same period. Under the Prime Minister's predecessor, fire safety audits and inspections were cut by a quarter and fire authority budgets were cut by a quarter. Can the Prime Minister give an assurance to the House that the further 20% cuts to the fire service planned by 2020 will now be halted?

The Prime Minister: I think that, in his reference to the building regulations, the right hon. Gentleman missed part of the point. It is not just a question of what laws we have; it is a question of how they are being applied. That is the issue. We have building regulations about compliant materials. The question is, why, despite that, have we seen, in local authority area after local authority area, materials being put up that appear not to comply with those building regulations? That is what we need to get to the bottom of. Why is it that fire inspections and local authority inspections appear to have missed that essential issue?

Jeremy Corbyn: I think I can help the Prime Minister with that issue. When you cut local authority expenditure by 40%, you end up with fewer building control inspectors—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. It is pretty bad when people shout. For someone sitting right by the Speaker's Chair to shout displays, let us say, a lack of wisdom, which should not be repeated. *[Interruption.]* Order. Every Member in the Chamber must and will be heard, however long the session has to run.

Jeremy Corbyn: I was simply making the point—which seems to have upset a lot of Conservative Members—that when you cut local authority budgets by 40%, we all pay a price in public safety. Fewer inspectors—fewer building

control inspectors and fewer planning inspectors—and we all pay a price. Moreover, those cuts in the fire service have meant that there are 11,000 fewer firefighters, and the public sector pay cap is hitting recruitment and retention throughout the public sector.

What the tragedy of Grenfell Tower has exposed are the disastrous effects of austerity, a disregard for working-class communities, and the terrible consequences of deregulation and cutting corners. I urge the Prime Minister to come up with the resources that are needed to test and remove cladding, retrofit sprinklers, and properly fund the fire service and police so that all our communities can truly feel safe in their own homes. This disaster must be a wake-up call.

The Prime Minister: The cladding of tower blocks did not start under this Government. It did not start under the previous coalition Government. The cladding of tower blocks began under the Blair Government.

The right hon. Gentleman talks about local authority resources, and about changes in regulation. In 2005, it was a Labour Government who introduced the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order, which transferred the requirement to inspect a building on fire safety grounds from the local fire authority, which was usually the fire brigade, to a “responsible person”. The legislation governing fire safety in tower blocks—and this was commented on in the report on the Lakanal House fire; it criticised that 2005 order, which had been put in place by the Labour Government—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister’s answer must be heard, and it will be.

The Prime Minister: Laws that took effect in 2006 ended the practice of routine fire service inspections, passing the responsibility to councils. That is why I say to the right hon. Gentleman that we should recognise, across the House, that this is a matter that has been developing over decades, and has occurred under Governments of both colours and councils of all political persuasions. I hope we will say that we should come together and ensure that we get to the answers to the questions about why this has happened over many years, what has gone wrong, and how we can stop it happening in the future.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. Understandably, on this most solemn and sensitive of matters, the Front-Bench exchanges have, perhaps inevitably and perhaps rightly, been very comprehensive. I am now keen that all Back Benchers scheduled to take part should have the opportunity to do so.

Q2. [900052] **Mr William Wragg** (Hazel Grove) (Con): Businesses in my constituency share the Prime Minister’s desire to provide certainty for trade arrangements in the years immediately following our exit from the EU. Can she confirm that any transitional arrangements will be for a strictly limited period and that any suggestion of ever-retreating deadlines or a perpetual status quo would fall short of honouring the decision made by the people of this country to leave the EU?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. For very practical reasons, when we know what the future relationship will be, we may need implementation periods—we made that point in our article 50 letter—to ensure that the practical arrangements can be put in place for that new relationship. But I am very clear that this does not mean an unlimited transitional phase. We are going to leave the European Union. That is what people wanted and that is what we will deliver.

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): I welcome the announcement of the prosecutions on Hillsborough, and I congratulate the families and all those involved in the many years of campaigning to achieve justice.

The Scottish Secretary insisted that Scotland would see increased funding if the Democratic Unionist party secured money for Northern Ireland as part of a confidence and supply deal. He insisted:

“I’m not going to agree to anything that could be construed as back-door funding to Northern Ireland.”

Did the Prime Minister receive any representations from her Scottish Secretary about the DUP deal, either before or after it was signed?

The Prime Minister: When we look at what has happened in terms of funding for the rest of the United Kingdom, we see that in the autumn statement last year, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor set aside an infrastructure fund of £23 billion. We are putting more money into our NHS and more money into our schools. And of course there is an impact on Scotland as a result of that autumn statement: £800 million extra spending is going to Scotland and, as a result of the Budget, £350 million extra is going to Scotland. I do not remember, when that money for Scotland was announced, the hon. Gentleman complaining that more money should be going to Northern Ireland—but then of course, he is a nationalist and not a Unionist.

Ian Blackford: The Prime Minister’s failure to give a straight answer to that question speaks volumes—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. Let’s hear the fellow!

Ian Blackford: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The Prime Minister’s failure to give a straight answer to that question speaks volumes and has succeeded only in piling more pressure on the Scottish Secretary, whose position now looks less secure with every day that passes—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman’s question—I think he is reaching his peroration—must be heard.

Ian Blackford: I will give the Prime Minister one more opportunity: did she receive any representations about the DUP deal from the Secretary of State for Scotland—yes or no?

The Prime Minister: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I regularly receive representations from the Secretary of State for Scotland about matters relating to Scotland, including regular representations pointing out that if

the Scottish nationalists actually had the interests of Scotland at heart, they would want to remain part of the United Kingdom.

Q9. [900059] **Maria Caulfield** (Lewes) (Con): Given that rail passengers in my constituency are once again facing rail misery with an overtime ban and strike action looming, does the Prime Minister agree that the only way to end the 18 months of rail misery for my constituents and for all passengers on Southern rail is for the unions to stop their strike and get back round the table to resolve this once and for all?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Southern rail passengers have been experiencing unacceptable delays and disruption to their service. An expert report has found that the main cause of widespread disruption was union action, so I say, “For the sake of the passengers, get around the table and solve this dispute.”

Q3. [900053] **Ian C. Lucas** (Wrexham) (Lab): May I thank the Prime Minister for coming to my constituency during the general election campaign and for making her widely welcomed U-turn on the dementia tax? May I invite her back to Wrexham to make another announcement, reversing her appalling cuts to police budgets, which my constituents want to see the back of?

The Prime Minister: We are protecting police budgets—*[Interruption.]* Yes. But we are of course making reforms to policing. That is why I introduced the National Crime Agency to deal with serious and organised crime, which actually relates to crime on the streets. That is why we have put money into a new national cybercrime unit to ensure that the police can deal with the new sorts of crimes they are having to deal with. Yes, we are reforming policing, but the key thing is not the number of police on the streets; the key thing is what happens to crime, and crime has fallen to a record low.

Q12. [900062] **Richard Graham** (Gloucester) (Con): The Grenfell Tower tragedy shocked so many of us because we all believe that there is much that should never have happened. However, to claim ahead of any inquiry, as an Opposition Front Bencher did, that residents were “murdered” by politicians is grotesquely inappropriate. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that our Government will get on with helping to rebuild lives and homes and with progressing critical inquiries with urgency and, above all, non-partisan calm?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend raises a very important point. What all of those affected by Grenfell Tower deserve is an inquiry that gets to the truth and provides them with the truth and with the knowledge of who was responsible. We need to do that in a careful, calm and determined way. We also need to use that same calm determination to ensure that we get to the bottom of the wider issue of why materials that have been used in tower blocks around the country appear to be non-compliant with the building regulations. There are real issues here. We are not going to get to the truth by pointing fingers, but we will by calm determination.

Q4. [900054] **Kevin Brennan** (Cardiff West) (Lab): On the deal that the Prime Minister has done with the DUP, is it true that, on the one hand, she is shelling out all this extra money to secure its support while, on the

other hand, she is still giving it taxpayers’ cash in the form of Short money to be in opposition? Is that what we get from this Prime Minister: no pay rise for the nurses, but a double bubble for her friends in the DUP?

The Prime Minister: Let us be clear about what the Government have done in the agreement with the Democratic Unionist party. As a result of the election, no party had a majority in this House—*[Interruption.]* Yes. The party with the largest number of seats and the only party that can form an effective Government is the Conservative party. That is the right thing to do, and that is what we have done.

Q13. [900063] **Charlie Elphicke** (Dover) (Con): Does the Prime Minister share my concern that 50,000 people were stopped at the controls in Calais last year? That is 150 people every single day, which underlines the fact that we should keep the controls in place. Will she consider the case for investing more in state-of-the-art technology and in more border officers, so that we can win the war against the people traffickers and keep our borders safe and secure?

The Prime Minister: Our Border Force officers are doing an excellent job at the juxtaposed controls and the work they do in his constituency, in particular the work to stop illegal immigrants and human traffickers. We have been investing in the system capabilities, with £108 million invested in new technology in the past two years and with a further £71 million earmarked for that in this current financial year. Of course, there are particular pressures on Dover, which is why we have also invested more money to maintain security there and to ensure that the Calais camp remains closed. We are also making efforts upstream to ensure that we reduce the number of people who are trying get to the United Kingdom illegally. The Department for International Development is now putting extra focus on the central Mediterranean route, and, as I announced last week, an extra £75 million is going towards humanitarian support there.

Q5. [900055] **Jo Stevens** (Cardiff Central) (Lab): I know the Prime Minister is well aware of the misery and suffering caused by reckless gambling. Following her own recent experience and the turmoil it has caused to her friends and colleagues, will she now commit to legislating on fixed odds betting terminals, the cause of so much hardship across our communities?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Lady knows, a consultation was undertaken on that particular issue, which the Department for Culture, Media and Sport is considering. It will announce a response in due course.

Suella Fernandes (Fareham) (Con): In Fareham 63% of voters chose the Conservatives, a share of the vote not seen since 1935. Will my right hon. Friend join me in reminding the Chamber that this side won the election and the other side lost? Will she join me in thanking the good people of Fareham for placing their trust in the Conservatives and reassuring them that she is the best person to deliver a prosperity-led and successful Brexit?

The Prime Minister: I am very happy to join my hon. Friend in thanking the good people of Fareham for re-electing a first-class Member of Parliament to this

House to represent them. She is absolutely right, of course, that it was the Conservative party that got the highest percentage share of votes in this election, the Conservative party that got the most seats—56 more seats than the Labour party—and the Conservative party that got more votes. That is why we are an effective Government.

Q6. [900056] **Ian Austin** (Dudley North) (Lab): Will the Prime Minister confirm that, last week, Britain's four most senior police officers—the commissioner of the Met and the heads of counter-terrorism, the National Crime Agency and the National Police Chiefs Council—all wrote to the Government saying that the counter-terrorism policing and protective security grant is being cut by 7.2%? Does that not show, contrary to what she just told my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Ian C. Lucas), that her promise to protect police budgets is not being kept?

The Prime Minister: No. As I said earlier, we have protected counter-terrorism policing. We have also put money into an uplift in armed policing. The commissioner of the Metropolitan police has made the point that the Metropolitan police are well resourced and has a wide diversity of tools that it can use in countering terrorism. That is the point. It is not just about the funding; it is about ensuring they have the powers they need to deal with the terrorists—that is what we are determined to ensure.

Leo Docherty (Aldershot) (Con): As the Member for Aldershot, the home of the British Army, I was deeply alarmed to hear of the Leader of the Opposition's reported announcement at the Glastonbury festival that, if in power, he would abandon Trident and utterly undermine the security and safety of our country. Does my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister agree that it is only her Government and the Conservative party that can provide the safety and security that our great country needs?

The Prime Minister: First, I welcome my hon. Friend to his place in this House. I am sure that he is going to be, as was his predecessor, a fine representative of the people of the Aldershot constituency. I join him in saying that I think people were shocked to hear that the Leader of the Opposition, who appears to support Trident in public, in private said that he wanted to scrap it. Only the Conservative party is clear about retaining our nuclear deterrent. In the case of the Leader of the Opposition, it appears that he says one thing to the many and another thing to the few.

Q7. [900057] **Gavin Newlands** (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): After he was fairly defeated by my hon. Friend the Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart), this Government have nevertheless seen fit to reward the defeated candidate by giving the unelected Ian Duncan a peerage and a job in the Scotland Office. Instead of this affront to democracy, and in the light of the need for a legislative consent motion at Holyrood, does the Prime Minister not think she should stop treating the Scottish people with contempt, do the right thing and give the Scottish Government a seat at the Brexit negotiations table?

The Prime Minister: We have, throughout the time we have had so far on the Brexit issue, been working with and talking to the Scottish Government, and indeed other devolved Administrations, and we will continue to do that. I hope and trust that the nature of the hon. Gentleman's question means that from now on the Scottish nationalists are going to be focused on issues that matter to Scotland other than independence.

Mr Marcus Fysh (Yeovil) (Con): Is the Prime Minister aware of the current crisis in Venezuela, and is it an example of how an experiment in socialist revolution can go horribly wrong?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes an extremely important point, and I hope the Leader of the Opposition has heard what he had to say. When we are talking about trade deals in the future, I sometimes think that the Leader of the Opposition and his shadow Chancellor think that the only good trade deals are with Venezuela, Cuba and North Korea.

Q8. [900058] **Marion Fellows** (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): The brave men and women in our emergency services have consistently put the safety of others first, especially in response to the terrible events we have seen in recent months. We all pay tribute to their professionalism, which is why I believe it is important that we give them all the resources they need to do their vital job. It is outrageous that in Scotland the police and fire services are required to pay VAT, which has cost front-line services £35 million—

Mr Speaker: Order. Mr Cleverly, you are usually the embodiment of calm repose and potential statesmanship—take some sort of tablet, man! Mrs Fellows must be heard.

Marion Fellows: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I shall repeat what I said. It is outrageous that our police and fire services should pay VAT, when that has cost the front-line services £35 million last year alone. Now that the Prime Minister has found the magic money tree, will she extend the VAT exemption to Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. We have got the gist of it.

The Prime Minister: When the Scottish Government took the decision to merge Scottish police forces into a single force, Police Scotland, they were told that it would lead to VAT being paid by Police Scotland. They were advised that that was the position and they chose to go ahead with the merger.

Mrs Anne Main (St Albans) (Con): Today is the festival saint's day of St Alban, and his pilgrimage was celebrated on Saturday. What more can be done to protect all persons of faith who are being persecuted for their faith, particularly our students on campuses who are suffering large amounts of anti-Semitism?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to recognise St Alban's day, as my hon. Friend has. She is absolutely right that this is important. Sometimes we talk a lot about people who are being persecuted for their faith in countries abroad, but actually we need to be very clear that, sadly,

we do see people here suffering attacks, particularly anti-Semitic ones, on campuses. The Community Security Trust does a lot of work with students to provide support, and I am happy that the Government are supporting them. We are also supporting Muslim communities that are suffering from Islamophobia. There is no place for such hate in our society, and we must all work to stamp it out.

Q10. [900060] **Paula Sherriff** (Dewsbury) (Lab): The current Prime Minister recently visited my constituency. Upon being asked about the precarious situation facing both Dewsbury and District hospital and Huddersfield royal infirmary, she stated that people were “scaremongering”. Will she therefore use this opportunity today to reassure my constituents that all services will be retained at both hospitals, including full accident and emergency provision?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I was asked about Dewsbury A&E, and I can confirm that it is not closing. The service will be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and the majority of patients will see no change to their service.

Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con): The repeated claim that spending ever increasing amounts of money on overseas aid keeps this country safe has been shown by recent events to be utter nonsense. May I tell the Prime Minister that spending more and more money on overseas aid each year makes us look not compassionate to the public, but idiotic when that money is much needed in the United Kingdom? Will she promise to slash the overseas aid budget and spend it on priorities in the UK? I hope that she does not have a strange political aversion to pursuing any policies that might be popular with the public.

The Prime Minister: I can assure my hon. Friend that I do not have that aversion, but on this issue I do take a different view. It is important that, given the position that we hold and the fact that our economy is one of the largest in the world, we recognise that we can help those around the world. We are seeing millions of people, particularly girls, being educated as a result of the action that we are taking. That is important. I recognise what my hon. Friend has said: we have suffered from terrible terrorist attacks here in the United Kingdom, and our services have also foiled a number of terrorist attacks in recent months and years. It is important that we are able to use our aid money to help ensure good governance in countries so that we do not see the creation of spaces where the terrorists are able to train and incite others.

Q11. [900061] **Dr Rupa Huq** (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): I must thank the Prime Minister and most of the Cabinet for visiting Ealing during the election, because my majority went up by 50 times.

Some 53,000 EU nationals reside in the London borough of Ealing, and they would now like some clarity on this “fair and generous” offer, such as how much extra their settled status applications will cost them and why they will not be able to vote in local elections, as they can now.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful that the hon. Lady has described this as a fair and generous offer, as indeed it is a fair and generous offer, ensuring that people can stay here in the United Kingdom and that they will have rights here in the United Kingdom just as UK citizens do.

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): A significant number of charities, including those looking after the most vulnerable disabled people in our society, are in fear of imminent closure due to the application of the national living wage to sleep-in shifts and the fact that Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs is insisting on six years’ back pay despite the advice changing only last year. Will the Prime Minister ask HMRC to suspend any actions until we can find a workable solution?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has raised a very important issue, and I know that it is one that he particularly cares about. Of course, it is through the national living wage that we are making sure that pay is fair in all sectors, including in social care. On the specific point he has raised, the Department of Health and other relevant Departments are looking at this issue very carefully, because they want to ensure that enforcement protects low-paid workers in a fair and proportionate manner. We have invested more money in social care—as he will know, there was £2 billion extra in the Budget. We do need to look at this issue on a longer-term basis, but I can assure him that Departments are looking carefully at the specific issues that he has raised.

Q14. [900064] **Angela Smith** (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Lab): Does the Prime Minister think, like her Brexit Secretary, that it will be simple to deliver a free trade deal with the European Union?

The Prime Minister: The Brexit Secretary and I have both said over the past few months that a comprehensive trade agreement will be not just possible but easier than for other third countries negotiating trade deals, precisely because at the moment we are operating on the same basis as other countries in the European Union. Therefore, we are not negotiating from the same position as Canada and other countries from outside the European Union. So yes, I think we can achieve that comprehensive free trade agreement, and it will be good for the United Kingdom and good for the European Union.

Ben Bradley (Mansfield) (Con): Does the Prime Minister agree that an Opposition leader who claims to be all things to all men and says one thing to remain voters in London and quite the opposite to leave voters in constituencies such as mine is actually no kind of leader at all? Perhaps that might be why voters in my constituency rejected his leadership in the recent election.

The Prime Minister: First, I welcome my hon. Friend to his place in this House. I was very pleased to visit his constituency during the election campaign, and he is absolutely right: what people want to know is what the position of the parties is on the question of Brexit. We are very clear that we want to see the country coming together, because we want to deliver on the will of the

British people, which was that we should leave the European Union. It is precisely what this Government will do.

Q15. [900065] **Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): I beg the Prime Minister, at this crucial time in our country's history, to listen to the many friends that we have in Europe and in the rest of the world who fear that we are sleepwalking zombie-like to a disastrous deal with Europe. They have no confidence in the three Ministers in charge of the deal and believe that our country will be deeply damaged, in terms of both our economy and our role in the world, if we do not get our act together.

The Prime Minister: Formal Brexit negotiations have now started. There was a very constructive and positive start to those negotiations, with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union and the Commission's appointed negotiator, Michel Barnier. We have set up three working groups dealing with key issues initially, including citizens' rights—I am pleased about that—and we have also started a dialogue on the issue of the border between Northern Ireland and Ireland and that relationship, which is important for Northern Ireland but also for the whole of the United Kingdom. We have set out our objectives. We have published our White Papers. We will be bringing the repeal Bill before this House. We know the plan we have got. The party that does not know what its plan is for Brexit is the hon. Gentleman's party.

Robert Neill (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): The Prime Minister was crystal clear on Monday that the reciprocal agreements we seek on citizenship should include the people of Gibraltar. On Tuesday, the Spanish Foreign Minister sought yet again to suggest that Spain should have a unilateral veto on that. Will she make it quite clear that this posturing and game-playing is pointless and counterproductive, and that our commitment to Gibraltar is absolute, and perhaps send him a hearing aid?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for raising that issue. This Government's commitment to Gibraltar has not changed and it will remain.

Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): Suicide rates in Northern Ireland, particularly in my constituency, and issues of severe mental health are some of the worst in Europe, and indeed the developed world, and clinicians and others have pointed to the legacy of 30 years of terrorism and violence and the awful effects of that. Part of the money that we are investing this week will go to mental health care—extra investment in the health service. Is it not time that people recognised that this is delivery for all the people of Northern Ireland, across all sections of the community, and that it is going to help some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in Northern Ireland? People should get behind it and welcome it.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend makes a very important point on this. It is the case, as we said in the agreement, that we recognise the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland, which have arisen as a result of Northern Ireland's history. As he says, there will be mental health issues that arise as a result of that. It is important that we put more into mental health generally across the United Kingdom, which we are doing; yesterday I visited a school in Bristol to see some of the first training that is taking place of teachers in schools to help them identify mental health issues among young people and deal with those. But as he says, that money is for the good of all people in Northern Ireland, across all communities.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): I wonder whether the Prime Minister has had an opportunity to see the British attitudes survey published today, which stated that 75% of British people wanted to leave the EU—up 20% from last time. She will, of course, know that more than 80% of the British electorate voted for parties that want to leave the EU. She will also know from her extensive canvassing—and I know personally from mine—that thousands and thousands of people tell us, "The referendum decided the issue. Just get on and leave the EU." Will she assure the House that she will make that her priority?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. What I have seen across the whole of this country is a real unity of purpose of people. For most people, regardless of how they voted in the referendum, their view is, "The decision has been taken—just deliver it," and that is what this Government will do.

Rachel Reeves (Leeds West) (Lab): With 9 million people in our country lonely all or most of the time, and given that loneliness is as bad for someone's health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, will the Prime Minister join the hon. Member for South Ribble (Seema Kennedy) and me in encouraging Members across the House to attend the event organised by the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness in Speaker's House immediately after Prime Minister's questions to find out what we can all do in our communities to tackle this blight in our society?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady has raised a very important matter, and I commend her and my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Seema Kennedy) for the work that they have both done as co-chairs of the Jo Cox commission. I indeed encourage hon. Members to do exactly as she has said. She has raised an important issue. We all increasingly recognise the impact that loneliness has on health. We have been able to put some support into the dementia-friendly communities programme, and the Cabinet Office is doing more by putting money in grant funds, particularly to help to tap the skills of volunteers over 50, to look at the issue of loneliness. It is an important issue, and hon. Members should recognise that and the work of the Jo Cox commission.

Point of Order

Mr Lindsay Hoyle (Chorley) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I do not know whether you have been given notice by the Secretary of State for Health of a debate on the introduction of charges for blue badge holders at Chorley and South Ribble hospital, as well as at Royal Preston hospital. That seems to go against everything that we thought—the most vulnerable in society should not be penalised. Have you had any notice of a debate, Mr Speaker?

Mr Speaker: I have not, but I have a sense that by one means or another I will hear further about this matter, possibly today, but certainly in subsequent days, very likely on the Floor of the House and possibly also in conversations between colleagues, conceivably outside the Chamber. I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman—we will leave it there for now.

Debate on the Address

[5TH DAY]

Debate resumed (Order, 27 June).

Question again proposed.

That an Humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

Health, Social Care and Security

Mr Speaker: I inform the House that I have selected amendment (i) in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

12.54 pm

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): I beg to move an amendment, at the end of the Question to add:

“but respectfully regret that the Gracious Speech fails to end cuts to the police and the fire service; commend the response of the emergency services to the recent terrorist attacks and to the Grenfell Tower fire; call on the Government to recruit more police officers and fire-fighters; and further call on the Government to end the public sector pay cap and give the emergency and public services a fair pay rise.”.

On occasion, much of what we do and say in the Chamber must seem to ordinary members of the public looking on like something approaching an elaborate game, but the Opposition believe that the amendment goes to the heart of public concerns. We wish to commend the response of the emergency services to the recent terrorist attacks and to the Grenfell Tower fire; we wish to call on the Government to recruit more police officers and firefighters; but above all, we call on the Government to end the public sector pay cap and give emergency and public service workers a fair pay rise. As we have seen in recent months, in times of national and personal crisis, it is to public sector workers that the country looks.

We have all seen and read about the firefighters who ran towards danger, into the blaze in Grenfell Tower to save lives. Some of us wondered whether we could have summoned up that courage. We all know about the national health service workers who came in off shift to save lives and help the victims of the terror attacks at Westminster, Manchester, London Bridge and Finsbury Park. We know of the gallantry and professionalism of the police and the transport police who responded swiftly to the terror attacks. My mother was a nurse, and I know that the dedication and commitment of our public service workers is above price. It is one thing for hon. Members to praise public service workers for their bravery, heroism and effectiveness at times of national emergency, but we need to treat public service workers fairly every other day of the year. That is what the Opposition think, and increasingly that is what the general public think.

Ministers will be aware that the latest British social attitudes survey revealed that eight in 10 people wanted more cash pumped into the NHS; seven in 10 people wanted more investment in schools; and six in 10 wanted

[Ms Diane Abbott]

higher spending on the police. I will come on to Ministers' claims to have protected police budgets later, but the question that Ministers have to answer is: how long will they continue to peddle hard-line austerity? Their targets for closing the deficit are receding ever further, raising the question of whether savage cuts are counterproductive to encouraging growth. How long are Ministers going to pursue austerity when any parent who has a child at school, anybody who uses an accident and emergency department, and anyone who has an elderly relative in need of social care can see for themselves that cuts have consequences, and that there is a human price to pay for Tory austerity?

Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): I have much sympathy with the points that the right hon. Lady is making, and my colleagues and I will support the Labour amendment this evening. However, can she explain why in Wales, which is run by the Labour party, the number of firefighters has been cut by 20%?

Ms Abbott: It is not for me in this—[*Interruption.*] I think that the hon. Gentleman will find that the funding available to the Administration in Wales has been cut.

In her statement to the House last week, the Home Secretary said:

“We have protected the police budget from 2015.”

She went on to say:

“There has been a lot of scaremongering about changes to the budget, and I repeat here, in the House, that it will be protected.”—[*Official Report*, 22 June 2017; Vol. 626, c. 199.]

The Opposition are aware of the Government claim that the allowed increase in the council tax precept adds funds that will make good any shortfall, but this is a tax increase to provide funds, not Government protection for the budget. I wonder whom the Home Secretary is accusing of scaremongering. Is it Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary, who said in March that policing in England and Wales was in a “potentially perilous state”, as Government cuts lead to investigations being shelved, vulnerable victims being let down and tens of thousands of dangerous suspects at large?

Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): I thank my right hon. Friend for giving way so quickly. What she is saying relates particularly to bobbies on the beat. Police are doing excellent work on knife and gun crime, particularly in hotspots; taking away bobbies on the beat has an undermining effect on otherwise excellent police work.

Ms Abbott: The public fully appreciate that community policing and bobbies on the beat are important, not just in respect of knife and gun crime but in providing the first line of connection and communication with the community when it comes to tackling terrorism.

I was wondering who the Home Secretary was accusing of scaremongering. Was it the president of the Police Superintendents Association of England and Wales, who said that

“There are now 34,000 fewer staff working in policing than there were in 2010, including 19,000 fewer police officers”?

Sir Edward Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): On the right hon. Lady's theme, has she heard Cressida Dick, the new Metropolitan Police Commissioner, talk about the need for more resources and say that the Met is stretched? Has she ever heard a Met Commissioner demanding more resources so publicly?

Ms Abbott: Government Members can mock, but Londoners are very concerned that within the overall levels of crime, there is rising violent, knife and gun crime. No, I have never heard the Metropolitan police talk so clearly about funding problems.

Maria Caulfield (Lewes) (Con): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Ms Abbott: I need to make some progress.

When the Home Secretary accuses people of scaremongering, she should explain why every stakeholder in policing is saying that there is an increasing problem with Government cuts to policing.

Ian Austin (Dudley North) (Lab): Can my right hon. Friend tell me whether the right hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Sir Edward Davey), who just got up to complain about police cuts, is related to the right hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton who was in the coalition Cabinet that reduced the number of police officers by 20,000?

Ms Abbott: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that helpful intervention, and I ask the House to focus on the information he has brought forward.

After seven years of Tory government, there are 20,000 fewer police staff, 10,000 fewer firefighters and 1,000 fewer Border Force guards. When the Conservatives came to office in 2010, they immediately cut Security Service personnel by 650; now they expect plaudits when they pledge an increase.

All ordinary public sector workers have faced pay freezes and pay caps, which have made them worse off. Between the coalition's coming into office in 2010 and May this year, inflation has seen prices rise by more than 15%. In reality, whatever figures the Government want to throw around, public sector workers have had effective cuts to their pensions and seen large-scale job losses because of inflation. They have been asked to do more with less.

The Opposition say that asking the security services, and public sector workers generally, to do more with less is unfair, unworkable and counter-productive. It has led to low morale, difficulties in recruitment and retention—particularly in parts of the country where house prices are spiralling—staff shortages and gaps in services. Those public services are among the most important that any civilised society offers. In his remarks, my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester South (Jonathan Ashworth) will highlight the effect of austerity and Government cuts on our NHS. The cuts in vital services—the police, the fire services, the Border Force and the security services—have been serious, and they come in addition to the cuts that have already forced out more than 20,000 police staff.

I turn to the counter-terrorism strategy. Labour welcomes the considered approach outlined in the Queen's Speech; too often, the knee-jerk reaction of Governments has been further legislation. We believe that it is right to review what is happening in relation to the evolving terrorist threat and its many and varied sources and purposes, but the terms of the counter-terrorism review are crucial. Labour believes that the following questions must be addressed. Are there sufficient resources and are they properly directed? Are there gaps in the legislation, or is it catch-all and ineffective? What is the role of community policing in gathering intelligence? Sometimes, Ministers seem to think that community policing has no role in combating terrorism, but we believe that it does.

Is there a danger that communities are being alienated by Prevent, although good work is done under the Prevent badge? Should we review Prevent? How can community engagement be increased, and could we immediately take basic precautionary measures, such as installing barriers to cars and trucks? Should terrorism prevention and investigation measures, or TPIMs, be used more frequently, as Max Hill, the independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, says? If so, should they be subject to better due process?

We believe that some of the answers to these questions are self-evident. If the Government announced today that they were going to introduce more barriers to trucks and large vehicles along some major thoroughfares, we would support them. Advice could be issued immediately to all elected officials not to remove existing barriers, as the Foreign Secretary did when he was Mayor of London. If the Government announced that they were going to halt and reverse the police budget cuts this year, we would support them.

The Government have announced a commission to tackle extremism. We welcome such a commission in principle, although some have suggested that it is being set up because the Government cannot make good on their repeated promises to introduce anti-extremism legislation. We note that there are already laws against incitement, conspiracy and murder. We are told that some perpetrators were known to the authorities.

I was at the Finsbury Park mosque with the Prime Minister, and more than one of the faith leaders raised the importance of a review of the Prevent strategy. In common with many members of the communities involved, we believe that, despite the good work that has happened under Prevent, the strategy needs to be reviewed. It needs not to run the risk of alienating communities; we have to work with all communities. The terror threat confronts us all, and we must all confront it together. If the Government want to discuss with us how we can help engage all communities in the fight against our common threat of terrorism, we will be only too happy to help.

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Ms Abbott: I have to make progress.

When I was at the Finsbury Park mosque last week, people there would have been concerned that Government Members do not want to take part seriously in a debate of this nature. I note that there was no promise of further legislation on counter-terrorism. Max Hill has

said that the security services already have enough powers. The Opposition concur, and it now seems that the majority of the Cabinet also agree.

Resources remain the key issue in fighting terrorism. The Conservatives have constantly sought to portray Labour as not facing up to the challenges posed by terrorism, but in our communities—in the inner cities and in areas such as London Bridge, Finsbury Park and Manchester—we face up to the day-to-day threat of terrorism and disorder. Nobody takes those issues more seriously than Members on this side of the House. We speak for our communities, and for the parents concerned that their children may be drawn into terrorist activity. We seek to offer practical remedies and support, and to support the Government in strategies that do not run counter to our liberties and community support.

Talking tough on terrorism and antisocial behaviour is cheap. Like all decent services in a civilised society, security costs money. Records show that since 2010, the Tories have proved unwilling to spend what is necessary to keep us safe. We need only look at what has happened to police numbers and Border Force officials, the closures of fire stations and the cuts to fire officers. Labour is prepared to spend the money and commit the resources to keep us safe. In closing—

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Anna Soubry (Broxtowe) (Con): Will the right hon. Lady give way? Does she want to have a debate?

Mr Speaker: Order. At present, the shadow Home Secretary is manifestly not giving way.

Ms Abbott: I said at the beginning that from some of what we do in this House, it might appear to members of the public looking at us on their television screens or reading the newspaper that some Members of this House see this as a game. Labour is fully aware of the fear and horror with which the public regard recent terrorist outrages and the fire in Grenfell Tower. We are talking about practical measures, real community involvement and, above all, the resources to keep our communities safe.

1.13 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Amber Rudd): I agree with one thing that the right hon. Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) said—that the response from the emergency services to the series of attacks and the tragedy at Grenfell Tower has been truly heroic. The brave men and women of our emergency services were able to suppress their own emotions of fear and anger. As she said, they rushed in to save lives, putting their own thoughts on hold for a while. I had the privilege of meeting the numerous police officers, firefighters and paramedics who were first on the scene in Manchester following the arena bomb, and in London after the Westminster and London Bridge attacks. It is because of their bravery that there are people alive today who might otherwise have perished. The same is true of the Grenfell Tower fire. Lives were saved because of the skills and sacrifice of the brave men and women of our emergency services. We owe them a huge debt of gratitude and we stand behind them.

[Amber Rudd]

Nobody thinks of this as a game. We want to engage and debate with the Opposition because there are important subjects to be discussed. We are all serious about what has happened, what could happen in the future and what steps we need to take.

The shadow Home Secretary raised her concerns about cuts to the fire service. Let me remind the House of some facts. The fire crew at Grenfell Tower was on the scene within six minutes, and more than 200 firefighters responded. Can she really suggest that numbers were inexcusably low? We should also remember that the number of fire incidents has halved in the past decade, but the number of firefighters has fallen by less than 20%. They do an incredibly good job.

The Government do not recruit fire or police staff; chief officers do. It is up to each fire and rescue authority to manage their resources, and to decide who to recruit and when. In fact, some fire and rescue services are reporting an increase in the recruitment of full-time firefighters. Public safety is an absolute priority for the Government. Under my watch, fire and rescue services and the police will continue to have the resources they need to do their important work.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Amber Rudd: I will give way in a moment. I just want to address the clear points that the right hon. Lady made about resources.

Let us talk about the police. Since 2015, we have protected the police budget in cash terms. In order to maintain that, it is correct that chief officers have to maximise their access through the precept. To be able to say that we protect it in real terms, I have to draw attention to the police transformation fund. One of the differences between the Conservatives and Labour is that we know that we have to focus on outcomes. That means continuing the business of police reform and continuing to fund it through the police transformation fund. We are most concerned with outcomes—on how to get the best results for victims and communities.

Ian C. Lucas (Wrexham) (Lab): The Secretary of State is of course right to talk about police reform, which is extremely important, but it misrepresents the Labour party to say that we are not interested in police reform. We introduced police community support officers when we were in government, and there was a constant period of reform then. The real point is that the Conservative party have cut budgets not since 2015, but since 2010. There has been a massive cut to the police budget, which is affecting my constituents in Wrexham.

Amber Rudd: I am delighted to have the hon. Gentleman's support on police reform, which will continue. He is right that there were cuts between 2010 and 2015 but, as always, we must look at the outcomes. Crime fell by a third during that period.

Jack Dromey (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab): Will the Home Secretary confirm that the Commissioner of the Metropolitan police, the head of counter-terrorism, the head of the National Crime Agency and the chair of the National Police Chiefs Council have written to her

saying that the counter-terrorism, policing and protective security grant will fall by 7.2% in cash terms over the next two years?

Amber Rudd: I have received that letter and I will be speaking to all the individual leaders of those groups. The issue to which they are drawing attention is that they are under tremendous strain because of the events of the past three months. Additional resources are being deployed in order to work on the ongoing investigations into some of the terror events, including the investigation in Manchester. We recognise that and will work with them to see how we can support them.

Margaret Greenwood (Wirral West) (Lab): The Secretary of State mentioned that there were 20% cuts to fire services across the country. On Merseyside, the figure is much higher. Since 2011, we have lost nearly 300 firefighters—that is a loss of 31%—and a third of fire engines. Both of the only two fire stations in my constituency are closing, which will make the situation less safe for my constituents. Will she look again at the funding for Merseyside fire and rescue service as a matter of urgency?

Amber Rudd: I would ask the hon. Lady: what are the outcomes in her constituency? What is the level of incidents of fire in her constituency? What work are those bodies doing? I would ask her to first look at the outcomes before coming back for more resources.

Sir Hugo Swire (East Devon) (Con): My right hon. Friend is presumably not wholly taken in by the shadow Home Secretary posturing as a defender of people's safety, when, in 1989, she—now famously—signed an early-day motion calling for the scrapping of MI5 and the Metropolitan police's special branch.

Amber Rudd: My right hon. Friend raises such an important point. It is a sad truth that those on the Opposition Front Bench—not those on the Back Benches, but sometimes those on the Front Bench—have such a poor record on supporting the people who do such great work to keep us safe.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Amber Rudd: I will make some progress first, and then I will come back to some interventions.

The Gracious Speech is about building on the Government's strong economic record so that we can continue to invest in our priorities, such as the NHS and national security. Conservative Members know that it is only with a strong economy that we can fund our NHS, protect our elderly and back Britain's defences.

The Gracious Speech we heard last Wednesday set out the Government's legislative agenda for the next two years. It is a programme that will build on our strong record of achievement under the last Government. Crime has fallen by a third since 2010. Legal highs have been banned. More than 900 bogus colleges have been closed. Police and intelligence agencies have been given more powers and tools to keep the public safe. We have an ambitious programme of police reform, on which I am delighted to hear we may continue to get support

from the Opposition. Some £100 million of funding has been provided to tackle violence against women and girls.

We have a proud record on the NHS. NHS spending has been protected. We have more doctors, more nurses, more midwives and more GPs. Last year, the NHS treated more people than ever before. Now we will build on the foundations we have laid, working even harder to create a Britain that works for everyone. Above all else, this is a Government committed to keeping families, communities and our country safe.

Jess Phillips (Birmingham, Yardley) (Lab): I, like the Home Secretary, want to hear about outcomes. Recently, the west midlands chief constable said that one of the outcomes for police there was that, as police officers are pulled away on to anti-terror alerts and more high-alert policing, call-outs on other crimes have to be downgraded. One of the things that was downgraded—this is the outcome of there not being enough police in the west midlands—was call-outs on domestic violence.

Amber Rudd: The past three months have seen an extraordinary series of attacks, which have put pressure on our police. They have dealt incredibly well with that by having mutual aid coming from different areas to support them. We recognise that there has been a particular surge, but I do not think the hon. Lady's point—that we need to operate as though there were this level of attacks every three months—holds water. However, I will be engaging with chief police officers to find out whether they have the support we expect them to have, despite the additional work they need to do.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Amber Rudd: I am going to make some progress, and then I will come back to some more interventions.

In the last Parliament, we announced a 30% increase over five years in Government spending on counter-terrorism, increasing spending from £11.7 billion to £15.1 billion. We introduced measures to disrupt the travel of foreign fighters. We passed the Investigatory Powers Act 2016, which gives the police and intelligence agencies more of the powers and tools they need to keep people safe and secure.

Mrs Anne Main (St Albans) (Con): Further to my right hon. Friend's answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips), does it not increase pressures on the police when there are calls for days of rage and other activities on the streets that pull the police into London and take away resources from areas such as mine in Hertfordshire that have to provide mutual aid?

Amber Rudd: That is a very good point from my hon. Friend. We need to make sure that, at a time when such terrible national events are taking place, everybody gives out the message that we should support our police by having fewer protests of that type.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Amber Rudd: I am going to make some more progress.

We also legislated in the previous Parliament to strengthen our response to terrorist financing with the Criminal Finances Act 2017. We have protected overall police funding in real terms since 2015, and we have funded an uplift in the number of armed police officers.

Ian Austin (Dudley North) (Lab): Last Friday, I and a group of MPs from the west midlands met the chief constable and the police and crime commissioner, and they told us that funding for the police in the west midlands has been cut by £145 million, or 27%. That has resulted in the number of officers being reduced by 2,164, which is a quarter, and the number of PCSOs being reduced by half. It has also resulted in the closure of Dudley's police station. Will the Home Secretary allow me and a group of my colleagues to come to talk to her about the terrible level of cuts her Government have imposed on west midlands police?

Amber Rudd: The hon. Gentleman puts it so kindly—I am so keen to have a talk on that topic. I assume that the figures he is looking at are from 2010; I have been referring to the figures from 2015, which have been protected in cash terms and in real terms. I would welcome a visit from him—perhaps to my police Minister—so that we can go through the figures and reconcile his thoughts with mine. *[Interruption.]* I do not think we are going to do that across the House right now.

David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): The Home Secretary has just indicated that there is an uplift in the number of armed police officers. Does she recall that, the day I left office as police Minister in 2010, we had 7,000 armed police on the streets of Britain? We now have 5,500—a 20% drop. Will she reflect on the statement she has just made and correct it for the House?

Amber Rudd: I am afraid I do not particularly recall the day when the right hon. Gentleman stepped down, but I stand by what I said, which is that we are funding a significant uplift in the number of armed police. These officers are trained at a different level to those he oversaw as police Minister; they are much more effectively trained, to the high level required for counter-terrorism.

Anna Soubry: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the way we now operate police officers means that the old days of a police officer being an accredited firearms officer have completely changed? Now we effectively have squads of crack officers, who are properly trained in all aspects of serious policing, and who, frankly, do a far better job than we have seen for many a long year.

Amber Rudd: My right hon. Friend is exactly right.

In addition to those armed police officers, we are in the process of recruiting security staff—

Chris Ruane (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab): Will the Home Secretary give way?

Amber Rudd: I am going to make some more progress.

We are recruiting over 1,900 additional security and intelligence staff. To combat terrorism, we also work with technology companies to tackle terrorist and extremist use of their platforms. The UK has been leading in

[Amber Rudd]

driving a global response on this subject. This week, leading communications service providers announced the formation of an industry-led global forum to counter terrorism, which they committed to following a meeting I had with them in March.

Giles Watling (Clacton) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that in the perfect utopian society—as Sir Thomas More would have it—we would have no police at all, so it is clearly not about numbers and vast amounts of cash, but effectiveness?

Amber Rudd: I welcome my hon. Friend to the House and thank him for his comments about wanting a much more peaceful world—I think that is something we can all endorse.

Jonathan Edwards: I have been listening with great interest to the Secretary of State, and she will surely welcome the private Member's Bill being introduced by my colleague Lord Wigley in the other place, which calls for an independent resource audit for Welsh and English police forces. Will she look at that Bill and offer Government support?

Amber Rudd: I thank the hon. Gentleman for drawing my attention to it, and I will certainly take a look at it.

Sir Edward Davey: Will the Home Secretary give way?

Amber Rudd: I am going to make some progress, but I look forward to coming back to the right hon. Gentleman.

In terms of what else we are doing to combat terrorism, earlier this month the Prime Minister and President Macron announced a joint action plan, which included measures to tackle terrorist use of the internet. We have Prevent, which the right hon. Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington referred to, and I repeat my invitation to her to come and visit some of the Prevent initiatives. If people see them for themselves, they will find they do a really positive job in engaging with communities. In addition, the Channel programme, which offers voluntary tailored programmes of support to people assessed as being at risk of radicalisation, has supported over 1,000 at-risk individuals since 2012.

However, as we have, sadly, seen with the recent attacks at Westminster, Manchester, London Bridge and Finsbury Park, the country faces an escalating threat from terrorism—36 innocent people dead, 150 hospitalised, families torn apart, and communities left grieving. The Government must do everything in their power to defeat the scourge of terrorism.

Where we can learn more and improve, we will. That is why, as set out in the Gracious Speech, our counter-terrorism strategy will be reviewed. We will look at our whole counter-terrorism approach across Government, police, local authorities and the security services to ensure that they have what they need to protect our country.

If the review finds that further legislation is needed, the House can be assured that we will put this before Parliament. As I announced last week, there will also be a separate review of the handling of recent terror attacks to look at whether lessons can be learned about our approach to these events. This review will be conducted

by the police and MI5, and I have asked David Anderson, the former independent reviewer of terrorist legislation, to provide independent scrutiny.

Chris Ruane *rose*—

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): Will the Home Secretary give way?

Amber Rudd: I am going to continue for a while.

We will establish a new commission for countering extremism to support the Government in eradicating extremist ideology in all its forms. Britain is a wonderfully diverse, inclusive and open country that many people proudly call home. Time and again, we have seen our communities come together, demonstrating unwavering acts of kindness, compassion and support for one another, but it is no secret that there are those in Britain who do not share our values—who do not share our compassionate outlook, and despise our way of life and wish to do us harm. That is what we saw in Finsbury Park, Westminster, London Bridge and Manchester. Extremism cannot just be ignored, and neither can it be wished or explained away. Extremists need to be confronted, and the narratives they use to weaponise people and breed this horrific violence need to be called out and taken head on, not afforded accommodation.

Geraint Davies: Does the Home Secretary accept that talk of Islamic extremism, in particular, is in danger of being misinterpreted as meaning “too much Islam” when in fact, of course, “Islam” is the Arabic word for peace; that the problem is those who pervert, distort and blaspheme in the name of Islam; and that the true Islam was shown by Imam Mohammed, who stood in front of the killer and said that life is sacred? Does she not want to pursue a route that says that the Islamic community should work with us to target those who would distort Islam and correct their interpretation, rather than talk about Islamic extremism, the danger of which is making out that Islam is the problem?

Amber Rudd: The hon. Gentleman makes a very good point. We all need to choose our words carefully, but we also need to call out what we believe this is. We should talk about radical extremist ideology, whether it is Islamic or far right, but we need to make sure that we are clear that we are equally hostile to both, and will take action where either is doing damage to society.

Dr Julian Lewis: Following up what the hon. Member for Swansea West (Geraint Davies) said about the use of terminology, does the Home Secretary accept that there is a valuable store of experience from the past in the way agencies tackled the doctrines of fascism and Nazism, and subsequently of Marxism-Leninism, and that questions such as the use of vocabulary mean that we need a specialist agency to co-ordinate this effort in the future as we did successfully in those past instances?

Amber Rudd: I thank my right hon. Friend for his contribution. This may be something that the new commission for counter-extremism will want to look at.

Since 2015, we have had a Government-wide counter-extremism strategy, the first of its kind. At the heart of the strategy is a partnership with communities to make sure that we build on British values. We have published a hate crime action plan and funded additional security

measures at more than 50 places of worship. We are also supporting 53 civil society groups that are confronting extremism in their communities.

However, defeating the evil ideology of extremism is one of the greatest challenges of our time, and there is more that we must be able to do. That is why we will have the new commission, which will support the Government to identify and eradicate extremist ideology in all its forms. Across society and online, we will work with communities, and public sector and civil society groups, to promote and defend our pluralistic values of democracy, freedom of belief and expression, the rule of law, mutual respect, and opportunity for all. The commission will advise the Government on what new powers might be needed to tackle the evolving threat. Work is under way on the design of the commission, and we will set out our plans in due course.

Turning to the future immigration system, the Gracious Speech included an immigration Bill that will allow the Government to end the EU's rules on free movement of EU nationals in the UK, ensuring that we have the flexibility to create a fair and controlled immigration system. It will give us control over the numbers of people who come to the UK from the EU while welcoming those with the skills and expertise to make our nation better. What these rules look like will depend on the needs of the UK, and we are considering all the options of our future system very carefully. It is imperative that we understand what the impact could be on different sectors of the economy and the labour market, and that we make sure that businesses and communities have an opportunity to contribute their views on any future system. As now, new immigration rules will be subject to scrutiny by Parliament.

Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): An issue that has been vexing many of my EU constituents who have been here for many years is whether the Government will admit that such people now face an income threshold if they wish to bring a family member here to the UK. Many of them who are on low incomes—for example, nurses who are in band 5 and on below £22,000—will not be able to bring a family member here. Will the Home Secretary confirm that, and is she going to investigate what impact it will have on public services?

Amber Rudd: The Prime Minister made her statement about the EU nationals earlier this week. I urge the hon. Lady to reassure her constituents who fall into that cohort that they maintain these rights until at least when we leave the EU in 2019, and then after that they will have two years in which to apply. I cannot give her any more detail than that in terms of the other rights, elements of which are subject to the discussions with the EU at the moment. However, I would say to her, and to other Members here, that the Prime Minister was absolutely clear that those 3.2 million or 3.4 million people are going to be allowed to stay. We are yet to have additional discussions with the EU about elements of these rights. I hope that Members here will take that message back to any concerned EU citizens in their constituencies.

Ian C. Lucas (Wrexham) (Lab): Will the Home Secretary clarify whether it is her intention that after Brexit a different set of rules will apply to EU nationals and nationals from outside the EU who are visiting the United Kingdom?

Amber Rudd: Those discussions have not yet concluded. We have said that people will have this special right depending on from when we negotiate the cut-off date—whether it is when article 50 was invoked or when we actually leave the EU—but there will be existing rights in place for all those who can accumulate the five years and those who can, depending on when the cut-off date is, add to them because they arrived before that.

Jonathan Ashworth (Leicester South) (Lab/Co-op): Will the Home Secretary give way?

Amber Rudd: Not now, I am afraid. I am going to carry on because I want to cover some of the other Bills that are going to be introduced in the next two years.

We will also bring forward a domestic violence and abuse Bill. It is truly chilling that, every day, women and girls across the UK are being subjected to the most horrific abuse in their own homes. I am incredibly proud of the work that the Conservative Government have done to support victims, bring perpetrators to justice, and prevent those vicious crimes from ever taking place. In the previous Parliament, we published our strategy to end violence against women and girls. We made it clear that everyone needs to play their part—friends, family, employers, health providers, and the police—and to support this we pledged £100 million of funding. We also brought in domestic violence protection orders and the domestic violence disclosure scheme, and introduced a specific offence of controlling or coercive behaviour.

Our focus on this terrible crime has contributed to improvements for women, but the number of people experiencing domestic abuse is still far too high. Despite record numbers of prosecutions and convictions, there are 2 million victims of domestic abuse every year in England and Wales, and that is 2 million too many. All too often, domestic abuse is not properly understood, recognised or dealt with, and that can leave a devastating impact. Our landmark domestic violence and abuse Bill is one part of our programme of work aimed at addressing this insidious crime.

John Woodcock (Barrow and Furness) (Lab/Co-op): Of course the Bill is very welcome, but what can the Home Secretary say to reassure those who fear that the definition that is now going to be produced might not be strong enough to capture the level of emotional and financial abuse that terrorises too many women in the UK today?

Amber Rudd: I know that the hon. Gentleman has done a lot of work in this area. I reassure him and stakeholders who are, I hope, interested in what we are trying to do that we will be consulting widely to make sure that we get the Bill right, so that it delivers the strength of purpose he refers to. The fact that it will create a legal definition of domestic abuse to help to ensure that it is properly understood means that we will not have the same situation of isolated pieces of domestic violence not being added up into a pattern of a really grotesque form of domestic violence that some women have been subjected to.

The Bill will also create a new domestic abuse prevention and protection order regime. A new order to specifically tackle domestic abuse will lead to better protection and

[Amber Rudd]

better prosecutions. It will ensure that if abusive behaviour involves a child, the court can hand down a sentence that reflects the devastating and lifelong impact that abuse can have. In addition, it will establish a domestic violence and abuse commissioner, who will stand up for victims and survivors, raising public awareness and holding local authorities to account.

Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): Will the Home Secretary also include in the commissioner's remit the ability to look at those victims of domestic violence who are subsequently subject to a new form of abuse, namely being constantly returned to court by ex-partners demanding extra access to the children? That is a way to intimidate, bully and impoverish many of those who have the children in their care.

Amber Rudd: Absolutely. That is exactly the sort of issue that I would expect us to look at in the domestic violence Bill, to make sure that that sort of abuse does not take place. We want to be a society where domestic abuse is not tolerated, victims feel safe and supported and perpetrators are punished, and we look out for situations such as that raised by the hon. Lady. Victims deserve the best treatment and justice, and we will make sure that they get it. I very much hope that the Opposition will support the Bill.

Turning to health, as the Government continue to strengthen the economy, we can continue to invest in the NHS, supporting that public service on which we all depend. As we set out in our manifesto, we will increase health spending by a minimum of £8 billion a year in real terms by the end of this Parliament. We know, however, that wellbeing is about being strong not just in body, but in mind. This Government recognise that mental health should be given equal priority to physical health. That is why we will consider reform of mental health legislation and ensure that mental health is prioritised in the NHS. We will look at the Mental Health Act 1983 to make sure that the law is working for those who need support, and we will also publish a Green Paper on children and young people's mental health, to make sure that best practice is being applied and there is sufficient access to support.

In 10 years' time there will be 2 million more people over the age of 75. It is essential that they are able to live well and get the care that they need. The Government have already invested an additional £2 billion in social care to relieve pressure, but more needs to be done. That is why the Government are committed to listening to people's views about how to reform the system. Full plans will be consulted on in due course.

This is a Government with purpose, determined to deliver the best Brexit deal to secure a strong future as we leave the EU.

Anna Soubry: My right hon. Friend will know that there is much concern on both sides of the House about the situation pertaining to women who live in Northern Ireland who seek terminations. They cannot get them in Northern Ireland—it is a devolved matter—and come over to England for them, but find themselves being charged by the NHS. While that is being resolved, will she give an undertaking that access to terminations will not be in any way affected and that women can still come here from Northern Ireland to get them?

Amber Rudd: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. We are absolutely committed to healthcare for women, and that includes access to terminations.

We are a Government with purpose.

Jonathan Ashworth *rose*—

Amber Rudd: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to speak on health at the end of this debate.

We are determined to deliver the best Brexit deal to secure our future as we leave the EU. We are determined to enhance our standing in the world and bring our United Kingdom closer together, and intent on building a stronger economy and a fairer society, taking action to keep families, communities and our country safe.

Stella Creasy *rose*—

Amber Rudd: I am not going to give way further. The hon. Lady will have a chance to make her own remarks later.

We will be challenging extremism, protecting the vulnerable, giving mental health the attention it deserves and improving social care for the long term, putting ourselves at the service of millions of ordinary working people for whom we will work every day in the national interest, setting out a programme for a Britain that works for everyone.

1.44 pm

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): I rise to address matters arising from the Gracious Speech pertaining to security. My hon. Friend the Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford) will address health matters later.

I will speak to the Scottish National party's amendment (h), which urges the Government to exempt Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service from VAT without further delay. In addition, the Scottish National party will support the Labour party's amendment (i). The SNP has consistently opposed the Conservative party's austerity agenda, and the manifesto on which we won the general election in Scotland indicated that, in these times, the pay cap is no longer sustainable and that we would look at it very closely. I am very happy to lend our support to the shadow Home Secretary. On police and fire service cuts, I am very happy to say that the Scottish Government have not imposed the cuts seen south of the border. I will come to that later.

I want to look in particular at the proposals for a counter-extremism commission; the proposals to review whether the police and security services have all the powers they need; and concerns that I and my party hold about the scope of the repeal Bill, particularly for justice and home affairs issues.

I also want to address the potential impact of Brexit on our security arrangements. The European Union enables European nations to come together not just for the common economic and social good, but to tackle crime and terrorism in the interests of all citizens across Europe. Last year Rob Wainwright, the current, British director of Europol, said that in the event of Britain leaving the European Union it would be very difficult to negotiate security pacts from outside the Europol bloc.

He said that trying to do so would be a “damage limitation exercise”. We have yet to hear any detail about how the Government propose to address that problem. We need to look at it closely.

The Scottish National party has already welcomed the Prime Minister’s recent change in tone and rhetoric following the attack at Finsbury Park. We were very pleased to hear her equate all forms of extremism. We hope that that signals the beginning of a Government approach that will not single out any particular group in our community for counter-extremism or terrorism measures. We believe that measures to counter extremism are very important, but they must not be allowed to create division among our many diverse communities across the UK.

We continue to be very concerned that, despite the Government’s failed attempts to introduce a counter-extremism Bill in the previous Parliament, they have yet to offer any legally sustainable definition of extremism or British values. We are concerned, as I have said previously, that the new plan in the Gracious Speech to establish a commission to look at those matters risks bypassing parliamentary scrutiny and the need for legal certainty on the nebulous terms of “extremism” and “British values”. I was therefore pleased to hear the Home Secretary say in response to a question I asked last week that any commission recommendations will be fully scrutinised by this Parliament.

We have already heard about the Prevent strategy, which has been controversial, and concerns have repeatedly been raised about its implementation. May I respectfully suggest that the UK Government look at how we have implemented the Prevent strategy in Scotland as a model of how things might be improved? Although counter-terrorism is of course a reserved issue, the implementation of policies to counter extremism is the responsibility of the devolved institutions. In Scotland we have worked very hard to recognise that we have diverse communities and that they must all be allies in ensuring that all our citizens are safe. The delivery of Prevent in Scotland has benefited from positive relationships fostered with all communities in Scotland through years of regular engagement. We recognise that the way in which people are becoming radicalised is constantly evolving and changing. We must therefore remain vigilant and refresh our approach accordingly, but we must also continue to work with our communities, rather than against them, in making sure that terrorist messages will not resonate.

I now turn to the question of whether the police and security services have all the powers they need. The SNP believes that they do have sufficient powers at their disposal and that the real issue that the Government should be looking at is whether the police and security services have sufficient resources to fight terrorism. I am fortified in that view by the quote from Max Hill QC, the official reviewer of terrorism, that has already been referred to today:

“My view coming into the scrutiny which we are told the Prime Minister wants to conduct is that we do have the appropriate laws in place, and that essentially the police and security services, and those whose job it is to keep us safe, do have the powers at their disposal.”

It is already a crime to incite violence. People suspected of terrorist activity can be stopped and searched. People who aid terrorists are imprisoned and those convicted of plotting an attack can be locked up for life—so we have the powers.

During the passage of the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 in the last Parliament the Scottish National party repeatedly urged the Government to concentrate resources on robust, targeted surveillance of suspects rather than subjecting the whole population to blanket, suspicionless surveillance. During the election campaign, and after the terrible terrorist atrocities in London and Manchester, the Prime Minister rightly faced difficult questions about the resources she is putting into targeted surveillance. She was Home Secretary for seven years and it is clear that her influence still holds sway at the Home Office—for example, in relation to the unrealistic and unobtainable immigration targets that continue to be set. The Prime Minister must face up to her responsibility for cuts to police budgets and police numbers in England, which have been dictated by her party’s narrow austerity agenda. That is why I am happy that the SNP will support Labour’s amendment.

It does not have to be this way. In Scotland, the Scottish Government have increased police numbers and in particular invested in increasing the number of trained police armed responders, while still balancing our budget. We have been able to do that despite the UK Government’s repeated refusal to remove the burden of VAT from Police Scotland. Police Scotland is the only territorial police authority in the UK unable to recover VAT. My Scottish Government colleagues and I have repeatedly raised this issue with the UK Government. I wrote to the Minister about the issue earlier this year. The SNP has tabled an amendment to the Loyal Address calling on the Government to rectify that anomaly, and today we again call on them to do so. They have recently rectified the anomaly for several other national bodies: it is now time to do it for Police Scotland.

Notwithstanding the Tory Government’s failure to rectify that anomaly, the contrast between Scotland and the UK in policing terms could not be starker: 20,000 police officers have been lost in England, but in Scotland we have maintained 1,000 more than the number we inherited when the SNP came into government in 2007. We have also taken steps to increase the number of police officers who are trained to carry firearms. In the days following the Manchester attack, Police Scotland was able to provide the heightened level of police cover, including armed policing, without having to call on the resources of the military.

We have also protected the police resource budget in Scotland, but in England the Home Office has cut the amount it spends on policing by 20% since 2011. It is time for the Conservatives to stop diverting attention from their under-resourcing of the police and emergency services and to follow the Scottish Government’s lead in giving them the resources they need.

I have already said that international co-operation is essential to keep Scotland and the rest of the UK safe from the threats of organised crime, cybercrime and terrorism. In this Parliament, SNP Members will call for continued co-operation across Europe and we will oppose any moves that would seek to use security co-operation as a bargaining chip in Brexit or trade negotiations with our European friends and neighbours. It is too important for that.

The Gracious Speech promised a new law on the protection of personal data, but we will not be able to continue to co-operate with our EU colleagues unless we abide by EU data protection and privacy protection

[Joanna Cherry]

law. In practice, there will be limits to how closely the UK and the EU27 can work together if the UK is no longer accountable or subject to the oversight and adjudication of supranational institutions, such as—most importantly—the European Court of Justice. We saw at the end of last year that the Court took a dim view of the provisions for data collection and retention in the Investigatory Powers Act 2016, as many of us warned would happen when we considered the Act. If the UK does not comply with EU law on data sharing and privacy protection, our former partners will not be able to share information with us under the laws by which they are bound. That would be a disaster for security co-operation and for business, universities and research.

I am concerned that the Gracious Speech does not mention any specific legislation on the many changes to justice and home affairs, even though the Government have confirmed that the repeal Bill will include powers to allow for changes resulting from the negotiations to leave the EU. It is vital that Ministers and civil servants are not handed vast powers to change our legal landscape without proper parliamentary scrutiny, particularly in relation to security matters. Legislative consent motions must also be sought for justice and home affairs matters, and I am delighted that the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union and the Secretary of State for Scotland have all acknowledged that legislative consent will be sought for the repeal Bill.

Finally I turn briefly to the issue of human rights protections. During the election campaign, the Prime Minister spoke of ripping up human rights to fight terrorism. I suspect the attack on human rights was an attempt to distract from her own security failings and the impact of policing cuts in England. So I renew my request to the Home Secretary to confirm that nothing in the Human Rights Act or the European convention on human rights would prevent a robust approach to terrorism. Will she therefore confirm that there are no plans to “tear up” human rights to tackle terrorism? I would remind her that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has said:

“Effective counter-terrorism measures and the protection of human rights are complementary and mutually reinforcing objectives which must be pursued together as part of States’ duty to protect individuals within their jurisdiction.”

Terrorism is a fundamental attack on our way of life and of course we must respond robustly and appropriately but it is at such times that human rights must be protected and cherished, not attacked and undermined. With the announcement by the CPS today on Hillsborough, we see the prospect of justice being achieved after many years as a result of the Human Rights Act guaranteeing a proper inquiry into that disaster. If we ripped up human rights, we would undermine the traditions that we all share across the House and play into the terrorists’ plans to undermine our democracy and the rule of law.

1.57 pm

Sir Nicholas Soames (Mid Sussex) (Con): I want to start by extending on behalf of all my constituents our most profound sympathy to the victims, and their families, of the horrific events that have recently taken place in Manchester, London Bridge and Finsbury, and the

appalling Grenfell Tower fire. I think the whole nation was greatly taken by the Queen’s response after the fire that she was

“profoundly struck by the immediate inclination of people throughout the country to offer comfort and support to those in desperate need.”

It is incumbent on us all to measure our language as we deal with these events, and I wish to place on record my deep shock at the words that the shadow Chancellor has recently used—that the fire at Grenfell Tower amounted to murder. That is an inexpressibly appalling thing to say. In a civilised society, there can be no room for such talk. It is not normal, it is not politics as usual, it is disgraceful and it is intolerable. All of us in public life have a duty to measure with care what we say in an era of brutal untruths, and to try to retain the language of reason and proportion.

The Queen’s Speech is a moment for the Government to set out their programme and for the rest of the country to regain its sense of balance. I want, as do my constituents, to see the Government exercise resolution, prudence, integrity and humility at a very difficult time in our affairs. I also want the Government to exercise what Field Marshal Lord Montgomery rightly called “grip”, and to govern effectively and with vigour, determination and energy. I place on record that I think our Prime Minister has all those qualities in abundance and I strongly commend and support her. If the Government manage to do that, my constituents, to whom I am yet again most grateful for their confidence, will be content.

Quite apart from the immense complexities, difficulties and grave uncertainties of the Brexit negotiations, this country has more than its fair share of major issues with which the Government must deal. What is it in our system that seems to mean we cannot arrive at a sane national plan—unlike Denmark, the Netherlands or Japan—that deals efficiently, humanely and decently with care for the elderly in all its complexity? I say to the Government, “Just get on and do it. Work across all the parties, and with all the considerable expertise in this country, to get this done.” Incidentally, I worry very much about the denigration of expertise at all levels when a deeply complicated world demands it more than ever.

There are many issues that can no longer be shirked: reform of care for the elderly; housing policy; prison reform, including the training of prison officers to enable them to do their very difficult job better; skills shortages; and nursing and leadership in the NHS. The Government must exercise their will to see that they are dealt with. The Gracious Speech sets out a good way ahead: promote fairness and transparency in the housing market; tackle unfair practice in the energy market; secure good, properly funded schools, which is a very important issue in Mid Sussex; secure high-wage jobs for the skilled; and get an increasing living wage for those in work. I think our constituents expect us to see to it that that is all done, along with an unrelenting effort for the continued building of a strong economy in the safe hands of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and, more obviously, a return to the Conservative facts of life of enterprise, aspiration, opportunity, wealth creation, sound money, good defence and, above all, the really effective running of our public services.

In my 34 years in this House, I do not think I have ever seen a way ahead that is more complex or difficult for our country, in particular the ongoing, desperately worrying low level of basic educational achievement in too many parts of the country; a separate lack of skills; low wages for too many; geographical economic and wealth inequality; intergenerational inequality; and what I am afraid to say is a very naive approach indeed to international trade relations. Leaving the single market will obviously restrict us from accessing the world's most skilled peoples. Unless a good way is found to resolve that, it will further negatively influence our productivity. That is relevant to many of our industries, and of course to our universities, which are widely regarded as some of the very best in the world. My views on immigration are well known, but I have to say that in my judgment, persisting with the inclusion of students in the immigration targets makes no economic sense whatever. Surely it is absolute madness to have halved our student intake from dynamic India to the benefit of America and Germany. Whatever happens with Brexit, we should be wanting to attract even more of those talented young people to our country. This is all of a piece with the need for Britain to retain a global view of the world.

Britain seriously lacks key skills. There is a grave shortage of graduates in engineering and science, which is made all the more acute by the clampdown on immigration. I have to tell my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary that that is already dissuading important young talent from coming to these shores, as any employer of PhDs will confirm. I have a suggestion in this regard: the Government should scrap tuition fees for the core STEM subjects of science, technology, engineering and maths, all of which are critical for our survival as our transition from the industrial to the digital world goes on apace, a fact that hardly seems to have appeared on the Government's radar.

Finally, may I make a respectful suggestion to the House and to the Government? I think pretty much all of us in this House are deeply concerned about the question of trust in public life. The Government have some very difficult tasks ahead of them. They need to remember that competence generates trust and respect. I want that to be their aim: to secure competent and effective government, and thus the trust of the people who did and did not elect us.

2.5 pm

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): It is good to follow the right hon. Member for Mid Sussex (Sir Nicholas Soames), who always makes a thought-provoking speech. I join the Home Secretary and the shadow Home Secretary in paying tribute to our police force and emergency services, who have dealt with so many difficult incidents in the past few weeks, and in expressing sympathy with the victims of both the terror attacks and the Grenfell fire.

The Queen's Speech suggests that the Government are carrying on as if, in the words of the Prime Minister, "nothing has changed, nothing has changed." In fact, very much has changed. The Prime Minister called the election wanting a landslide. Instead, she has a hung Parliament. That means that this hung Parliament has to work differently, and that the Queen's Speech has to respond differently too. Many Members wish to speak

in the debate today, so I will keep my remarks short and concentrate on two areas where the Government need to change course as a result of the hung Parliament delivered to us by the electorate: public services and the approach to the Brexit negotiations.

This week, the Government recognised the importance of investing more in public services in Northern Ireland. They have rightly supported additional investment in schools and hospitals in Belfast, but what about those in Birmingham, Bristol and many other parts of the country? I support the Democratic Unionist party's request for more investment to stop school cuts in Portadown, but I want to stop the school cuts in Pontefract as well. The DUP is right to request more support for jobs in County Down but what about in Castleford and in other places across the rest of the country?

The Government cannot say to parents, patients and people who need the support of police officers right across the country that, as a result of this hung Parliament, they cannot have more support for their public services—that they will have to face further cuts to their public services, with teachers lost from our schools and services squeezed from our national health service—but those in Northern Ireland can have additional funding. They cannot say to Mark Rowley, Cressida Dick and the other police chiefs doing such a magnificent job in difficult circumstances despite being overstretched that the Government can somehow find £1 billion to support Northern Ireland and to support those in the Government keeping their own jobs, but they cannot provide the additional resources the police and emergency services need to support their jobs at this difficult time.

That is why the Government have to rethink. It would be easy to rethink the police cuts and to decide not to go ahead with the cuts to capital gains tax that the Chancellor has pledged. It would be easy to cancel those cuts and put the investment into additional police officers on our streets. It would be easy for the Government to recognise that if we care about recruitment and retention in our public services—in particular in our national health service, which in many parts of the country is struggling to recruit the nurses and doctors it needs—then continuing with the public sector pay cap will make it harder and harder for our NHS and all our public services to get the talented staff they need. In the end, that will cost all of us, including the Government, more in the long run.

The second area in which the Government need to change course is their approach to the Brexit negotiations. Britain voted for Brexit in the referendum and Parliament has voted to trigger article 50, but the Prime Minister did not win the free hand that she wanted for the Brexit negotiations. She asked for it, but voters said no. That means that the Government need to change their approach to the Brexit negotiations. If we are to get a deal that is not only the best for our country but is also sustainable—one that does not unravel in a year or two years' time and does not end up undermined because there is so much disagreement, not just in this House but across the country—then there must be an effort to build a consensus around that deal as well, not just to get agreement in Europe but to build that consensus across Britain.

That is why I urge the Government not to keep pursuing the negotiations through a narrow cabal but instead to open up the process—to set up a cross-party

[Yvette Cooper]

commission to hold the Brexit negotiations or to find other ways to include more voices and more transparency, and to strengthen the powers of the Select Committee on Exiting the European Union, so that this House can properly have its say as well. I know that that means difficult ways of working and will be a challenge to those on both Front Benches, but they, and the whole House and the whole country, will benefit if we find a different way to do this.

Joanna Cherry: The right hon. Lady is making a powerful and persuasive speech as usual. I agree with what she has just said. Would she extend that to giving the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government a place and a say in the negotiations to leave the EU?

Yvette Cooper: I certainly think that the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government, and Northern Ireland too, need to be involved in this commission and this process, because it has got to work for the whole of the United Kingdom. I think that is possible, but only if all parts of the House and those on both Front Benches behave in a different way and recognise the responsibility that has been placed on us by the hung Parliament that we have been given. That means, too, that the great repeal Bill that the Government want to put forward can no longer be a Bill that simply accrues powers to the Government through Henry VIII powers, because in a hung Parliament the legislature simply cannot hand over huge power to the Executive. The legislature itself must be involved in those decisions, step by step along the way.

The right hon. Member for Mid Sussex was right when he said that the course before us is more complex than anything he or I can remember at any time. With a hung Parliament we will have to work differently, but that has to start with the Government. I urge them to start today by changing course on public services and, as the amendment before us asks, on public sector pay and supporting our public sector workers, but also by changing course in the approach to Brexit, in a way that can build consensus, not division. That ought to be the spirit of what the Prime Minister has said.

2.12 pm

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the eloquence of the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), and an honour to be re-elected once again to represent the lovely New Forest East constituency.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr George Howarth): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the right hon. Gentleman, but I should have announced that there is now a time limit of six minutes, which I think he was aware of, in order to accommodate as many people who want to speak as possible. Dr Lewis, your six minutes start now.

Dr Lewis: I have at least benefited from a few extra seconds as a result.

There is plenty to welcome in this Queen's Speech, from the prioritisation of mental health to the forthcoming visit of Their Majesties the King and Queen of Spain, which will give us all a chance to show that our friendship

with that great country is as enduring and immovable as the Rock of Gibraltar. I will touch, however, on two other aspects of the Queen's Speech, and they will not come as a surprise to colleagues who know of my areas of speciality.

The first is the reiteration of the Government's pledge to continue to meet the NATO commitment to spend at least 2% of national income on defence. I am sorry to say that it is not enough. One of the things that the Select Committee on Defence managed to establish, through a great deal of hard work and original research by its professional and dedicated staff, was a comparison over the decades of what happened to defence with a graph showing something very different for other high-spending subjects. We found that in the early 1960s we spent similar sums—about 6% of GDP—on welfare and defence. Now we spend six times as much on welfare as we do on defence. In the mid-1980s we spent similar sums—about 5% of GDP—on education, health and defence. Now we spend two and a half times as much on education and nearly four times as much on health as we do on defence. In every year from 1981 until 1987, at the height of east-west confrontation, we spent between 4.3% and 5.1% of GDP on defence, yet even after the cold war had finished, even as late as the financial year 1995-96, we were spending 3% of GDP on defence—a total that does not include things such as war pensions and Ministry of Defence civil service pensions.

Mrs Moon: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr Lewis: I will happily give way to my fellow former member of the Defence Committee.

Mrs Moon: I thank the former Chairman of the Select Committee for giving way. He, like me, was at a dinner last night at which it was pointed out that at 2%, without pensions and all the other bizarre add-ons that the Government add to get this country to 2%, France will be spending €56 billion on defence; Germany, when it gets to 2%, will be at €70 billion. We are at £36 billion. How can we hold our heads up high and say that we can defend ourselves with sums like that?

Dr Lewis: The hon. Lady is a staunch defender of everything to do with the defence of this country, and she is absolutely right. It is a measure of the management downwards of our expectations that we are supposed to ring the church bells in triumph at our not falling below the bare minimum that NATO members are supposed to achieve. We really have to rethink this. We really should be looking at 3% of GDP, and not this bare minimum of 2%.

I want to turn mainly to what is said in the Queen's Speech about the creation of a commission for countering extremism,

“to support the government in stamping out extremist ideology in all its forms, both across society and on the internet, so it is denied a safe space to spread.”

That implies, although it is not explicit, that the new body will be some form of executive agency. I want to hear from the Front Bench that that will be the case, because we are approaching a key point: it looks likely that the territory seized by ISIL/Daesh will be retaken from it. That will rightly be hailed as a considerable

achievement, but we need to remember that only a few years ago no one had heard about ISIL/Daesh, and everybody was overwhelmingly concerned with al-Qaeda. It was unusual for a terrorist organisation to seize territory, because by doing that, ISIL/Daesh gave up the advantage of invisibility, which is what most terrorist organisations make maximum use of. However, I venture to suggest that when it has been removed from its territory and its moment has passed, there will be other groups that take its place, perhaps fighting in different areas and perhaps not trying to seize territory. This will go on and on, as long as there is no effective response to the underlying ideology.

This is not the first time that there has been talk of commissions of this sort. Back in 2013, David Cameron had a taskforce on tackling radicalisation and extremism. On that occasion, too, evidence was taken, but I believe that any future successful plan needs to draw on the similar threats that we faced and overcame in the past.

As I said in an earlier intervention, huge agencies were called into existence to counter other totalitarian ideologies. This rather massive book was never really meant to be published. It is called “The Secret History of PWE”. PWE was the Political Warfare Executive, and the book is a classified history of all the work that it did to counter fascist and Nazi ideology. It was published as recently as 2002. Another organisation, the Information Research Department at the Foreign Office, worked on a grand scale to counter the poisonous ideology of Marxism-Leninism.

What we need today is an organisation that is equally wide-ranging, equally proficient, and equally capable of answering the thoughtful interjection of the hon. Member for Swansea West (Geraint Davies) on the subject of the vocabulary that we should use—whether we should use the terms “Islamic”, “un-Islamic”, or simply “violent extremism”. We need an agency to do that. Until we have such an agency, and until it operates to scale, groups will continue to crop up to implement the ideology, and we do not want that to happen.

2.20 pm

Sir Edward Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): It is always a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for New Forest East (Dr Lewis). He mentioned the new commission for countering terrorism. I look forward to debating the issues surrounding the commission with him and with many other Members, and to listening to what the Government have to say. This is a very important initiative, and we need to get it right.

As the House debates any issue relating to security and home affairs, not just today but in the coming weeks and months, we must recognise what has happened in the last few weeks. There have been the terrorist outrages in Manchester, at London Bridge and at the Muslim Welfare House in Finsbury Park, and, of course, there has been the tragedy at Grenfell Tower. Those issues, and how the House responds to them, will be a measure of whether Parliament is serving the British people properly.

Having read the Queen’s Speech, I want to address some of those issues, and others that will occupy this Parliament. I intend to concentrate on three themes: sovereignty, security and regulation. Let me begin with sovereignty. As we debate the issues surrounding Brexit, we must bear in mind that criminals, terrorists and

organised crime do not recognise borders. They love borders: they can hide from justice, and seek succour. How we as a country keep our people safe and secure will be partly determined by how we work with other countries. In the European Union we developed, over time, a set of organisations, policies and systems that was keeping our people safe: Europol, Eurojust, ECRIS—the European Criminal Records Information System—the Schengen information system, and the European arrest warrant. Those systems and policies help our people. They catch terrorists, they catch rapists, they catch murderers. As we debate our relationship with those very important crime-fighting systems, we have to get it right.

During the Brexit debate, some have said, “We will still be part of those organisations: do not worry.” Well, I do worry. I visited Europol in 2009, and met Rob Wainwright, the head of Europol, a Brit and a former MI5 agent. He led, and leads, the organisation very well, but after Brexit, it will not be a Brit who is leading it. Over a period during the setting up of those institutions—those crime-fighting mechanisms—the British Government, and parties of all colours, were at the centre of the development of rules for them. We will not be, after Brexit. I worry greatly about how those mechanisms will evolve. These are very important discussions. I also worry about the Government’s position on the European Court of Justice, which manages issues relating to the European crime-fighting institutions. I think that the rejection of the Court is a serious mistake on the Government’s part, and that they will come to rue it.

When it comes to security, yes, those European co-operation systems are fundamental, but so is the need for more police. We heard from the shadow Home Secretary about the mess that the current Government have made in the police. We have heard from the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Cressida Dick, that the situation is serious. The Government can quote figure after figure, but if they look at what is happening in our constituencies, they will know that cuts are affecting police on the ground. Since May 2015, my constituency has lost nearly 10% of our police officers, which is having a big impact: crime is going up in my area. The Government must stop these police cuts.

As we heard from the right hon. Member for New Forest East, the proposal for a commission for countering extremism prompts many questions. Will the commission be independent? Will it be accountable to the House? Will it reach out to all groups who want to help the Government fight extremism, and will it look at all causes of extremism? Common sense suggests that extremism must have multiple causes, including terrorist groups recruiting and the activities of hate preachers, but there is one cause on which I want to focus briefly, and that is Islamophobia.

Islamophobia is rife in our country, and we do not speak out against it enough. British Muslims play an incredibly important and positive role in our society, but that is rarely recognised, in the media above all. The reporting of some newspapers makes it appear that British Muslims are the enemy within, and the House should speak out against the press barons who allow such reporting. Just a few months ago, a headline in *The Sun* read “1 in 5 Brit Muslims’ sympathy for jihadis”. The press regulator said that that was “significantly

[Sir Edward Davey]

misleading”, but the headlines still come. “British Muslims are killing our troops”, according to one newspaper. Other headlines read “Britain goes halal” and “Muslims tell us how to run our schools”. Those are outrageous headlines, and they are irresponsible. I hope that when the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary meet newspaper editors, that issue will be No. 1 on their list, because if we are not countering Islamophobia, we are not working against one of the issues that are creating extremism.

My last point concerns regulation. We must challenge the way in which we debate regulation. Regulations are not always bad; many are superb. I am afraid that Conservatives have an ideological block about some regulations. I was once told by the former Member of Parliament for Brentwood and Ongar that regulations were communist. I told him that “Thou shalt not kill” was a good regulation—and it was introduced before the time of Marx or Lenin.

2.26 pm

Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Sir Edward Davey).

When the national health service was launched in July 1948, it was launched on the basis of three core principles: that it should meet the needs of everyone, that it should be free at the point of delivery, and that it should be based on clinical need and not the ability to pay. Those principles continue to serve us very well; they are supported across the House, and they have been reinforced by the NHS constitution.

The extraordinary success of the NHS and public health provision lies in its delivery of increased life expectancy. Many people who now survive into adulthood would not have done so when I qualified as a doctor, some years ago. However, that extraordinary success hands us the key responsibility and challenge of ensuring that we can continue to provide and to meet the needs of everyone in the coming decades. The right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) spoke of the importance of joint working across the House. Given that we now have a different parliamentary arithmetic, I agree with her, and I would extend that to the way we talk about funding of health and social care.

Gloria De Piero (Ashfield) (Lab): Last week I was told by Pauline that her mum, 79-year-old Sheila, who has dementia and heart failure, suffers from seizures and is unable to eat, go to the toilet or dress on her own, has been denied a funded place in a care home. Does the hon. Lady agree that that is a scandal that needs to be resolved?

Dr Wollaston: The hon. Lady has made a very important point. We will all see similar cases in our surgeries. However, we will not resolve the problem by having constant arguments about how we are going to do so. What we must do is agree, across the House, on how we are to provide long-term sustainable funding. I commend the House of Lords Select Committee on the Long-term Sustainability of the NHS for its work on the provision of long-term sustainable funding for health and social care. I welcome the commitment from Ministers in the

Gracious Speech to seek sustainable social care solutions, but I call on the Government to extend that to health, because if we continue to view the two systems in isolation, we will fail exactly the patients, and others, to whom the hon. Lady has just referred.

The parliamentary arithmetic is such that there is an additional responsibility on all of us to ask what we can achieve by the end of this Parliament and what we can achieve when the NHS reaches its 70th birthday next year. I would say that by working together we could achieve something really remarkable, and I call on all Members from all parties to work to make that happen.

I also very much welcome the proposals in the draft patient safety Bill, but I put it to the Secretary of State that we need to get to grips with the impact of the workforce challenge across health and social care on patient safety. I agree with others that it is time for us to think again about the impact of the public sector pay cap. There is no doubt in my mind that seven years of the cap are now having a significant impact on morale in the health service and across our wider public sector. Again, I think that the change in the parliamentary arithmetic following the message that we have had from the electorate is very clear. People value our public services and they want to see this matter addressed.

One way in which we can address the issues of recruitment, retention and morale is to deliver a fair pay settlement, and I hope that we can make further progress on that. Again, however, we will achieve the funding that is required for that through realistic cross-party working. During the election campaign, and in the manifesto, we tried to address the issues of intergenerational fairness in funding these services, and it might be that, as we look realistically at how we are going to fund our public services, we need to take ideas from all parties in order to achieve our aims, so that we can do something about public sector pay and improve the retention rates in our health and social care workforce.

Another area of the Queen’s Speech that I want to touch on is mental health, and I should declare a personal interest, in that I am married to an NHS consultant psychiatrist who is also the registrar of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. I very much welcome the fact that we are the party that legislated for parity of esteem, but we now need to translate that into practice. It needs to be translated into ensuring that the welcome extra funding for mental health actually reaches the frontline and delivers.

I am pleased to see the proposals in the Gracious Speech for a Green Paper on children and young people’s mental health, and I hope that the Secretary of State will look at the joint work of the Select Committees on Health and Education in that area and take note of our proposals and suggestions. I also hope that he will look again at the work done by the Health Committee on suicide prevention. Suicide remains the single biggest cause of death in men under the age of 50 and in young people of both sexes. This is a core challenge, and one of the issues that we identified is now in the Government’s proposals—namely, how we involve the families of those with serious mental health challenges in their care and treatment. That does not involve riding roughshod over the important principles of confidentiality. Often, it can involve simple things such as ensuring that mental health professionals are aware of the consensus statement on how to achieve consent.

I welcome the progress that we have made on reducing the use of cells as a place of safety for those with serious mental health problems. Their use is wholly inappropriate and I hope that we can make further progress on that. There is much more that we can do to improve mental health care, but we have some excellent proposals in the five-year forward view. This is all about implementation, and I urge the Secretary of State to do everything he can to ensure that the money reaches the frontline, that there is transparency about that and that we make further progress on improving the mental health of young people and adults alike.

2.34 pm

Sir Kevin Barron (Rother Valley) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston), who chaired the Health Select Committee in the last Parliament.

It is now widely accepted that the adult social care sector in the UK is in a state of crisis. Over recent years, funding has fallen and demand has risen, and the sector has not kept pace. The Queen's Speech has failed to address the long-term funding issues behind this crisis that are currently overwhelming not only the social care sector but the NHS. Our hospitals and surgeries are full, social care is on its knees and staff are working under impossible conditions in a system struggling to cope. The Government's choice to provide less funding than the health service needs is compromising safe staffing levels. They talk about providing extra funding, but this is set against the backdrop of enforced savings in the NHS that are far in excess of the extra money that they tell us, in every debate, that the NHS is going to get.

It is wrong and counterproductive to look at social care simply as care for the elderly. Nearly 33% of all the people receiving long-term social care in 2015-16 were under 65 years of age. They account for almost 50% of the expenditure on social care, at approximately £6.6 billion a year. Working-age adults with a learning disability accounted for 33% of the total expenditure, at almost £4.6 billion a year. We need to recognise the full cost of social care in this country and decide how those costs are going to be met. In the fading final few months of the last Labour Government, tripartite talks took place between Labour Ministers, Conservatives and Liberal Democrats about how to meet those costs. Two Members who have spoken today—the right hon. Member for Mid Sussex (Sir Nicholas Soames) and the hon. Member for Totnes—have emphasised that we need, as a nation, to take control of this. If any example is needed, it is the shambolic mess that the Conservatives got into during the general election campaign. Was there going to be a cap? Was there not going to be a cap? We need to take national action on this, and the sooner the better.

As a past officer of the all-party parliamentary group on smoking and health, I urge the Government to publish the new tobacco control plan. We have been waiting some 18 months for it now. A great deal was achieved under the previous plan: progressive tobacco control legislation was introduced; smoking rates among adults and children have fallen below the target levels; and rates of smoking during pregnancy are very nearly below 10%, which is a huge improvement on a decade ago. This is why Britain is a world leader in tobacco control, with the UK coming top in a European survey

measuring the implementation of key tobacco control policies and passing legislation that goes further than the requirements set out in European Union directives.

Mrs Main: Does the right hon. Gentleman share my concern that those improvements might start to tail off, now that the EU tobacco directives include vaping, because it is becoming more and more difficult for people to take up vaping and get themselves off cigarettes?

Sir Kevin Barron: As I was saying, we have gone much further than the European directives have told us to do. My understanding is that the new tobacco control plan will have vaping in it. NHS England has told us that vaping is 95% safer than using cigarettes, and it is not a way to get into cigarettes. Some 2.8 million smokers have voluntarily gone on to vaping, which is 95% safer, and we need to ensure that the action plan for tobacco recognises that fact. More will need to be done to support vaping, perhaps in public places as well.

Gloria De Piero *rose*—

Sir Kevin Barron: I will give way, for the last time.

Gloria De Piero: I declare an interest, as a vaper. Vaping is healthier and safer, but is this not also an issue of social justice? It is far cheaper to vape than to buy cigarettes and, as we know, it is poorer people who are most likely to smoke.

Sir Kevin Barron: Yes, indeed it is. Some people say that they do not like vaping because the products are produced by tobacco companies, but that is wholly wrong. I have had a running battle with the tobacco companies for decades in this place, and it is wholly wrong to use attitudes to vaping in that way.

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Kevin Barron: Very quickly.

Vicky Ford: I just wondered whether the right hon. Gentleman was aware that the European tobacco products directive, which makes things more difficult for vapers, was introduced by a British Labour Member of the European Parliament. At the time, the Conservatives in the European Parliament made the exact point that it would restrict vaping.

Sir Kevin Barron: I am very aware of that. I am also very aware that vaping is good for the public health, and I support it.

Moving on, one area where the NHS has contributed to smoking cessation is through the huge network of community pharmacies across the UK, which was treated shoddily by the previous Government. In January this year, the all-party parliamentary health group, which I chair, launched an investigation into the Government's community pharmacy reforms, and the report showed that the reforms have dented confidence in the sector and raised questions about the Government's commitment to developing community pharmacy services. The APPG heard, however, that community pharmacy remains well placed to address some of the NHS's biggest challenges, and we made recommendations that will hopefully strengthen the sector's ability to serve its patients and mitigate some of the negative impacts of the reforms.

[*Sir Kevin Barron*]

The overriding priority, though, is for the community pharmacy sector and the Government to come together again to develop and realise a shared vision of clinical services in community pharmacies. I hope the Government will take heed of the report and work constructively with the sector.

The reforms have been made and, as we all know, there has been a massive decrease in the money going into NHS pharmacies, and we need to take stock of that. The Health and Social Care Act 2012 gave the Government—Governments of all sorts—responsibility for reducing health inequality in this country and to promote public health and population health. Running down our pharmacy sector and community pharmacies is not the way to do that. Those health professionals should be helping to improve population health to keep pressure off the NHS, but we are not doing that very well at the moment.

I see that I just have a minute left, so I want to say that nearly all of that work is performed by our superb staff in the NHS, but we are all aware that staff morale across the NHS remains low. The situation has been worsened by real-term cuts in pay through this Government's public sector pay cap. Current estimates state that over £4.3 billion was cut from NHS staff salaries between 2010 and 2016. These are the people who treated the victims of terror attacks and the dreadful fire in London just a few weeks ago. I think the electorate said in the general election, "No more of this." The Government should remove the pay cap in order to retain and attract staff, resolve the workforce shortage and ensure safe patient care. I will be supporting the amendment if it is put to the House tonight.

2.42 pm

Sir Hugo Swire (East Devon) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Rother Valley (Sir Kevin Barron), who made some extraordinarily sensible points. May I take this opportunity to associate myself, on behalf of my constituents in East Devon, with the earlier tributes paid to the victims of Grenfell Tower and the terrorist attacks? I also pay tribute to the extraordinary work of the emergency services and to NHS staff for their incredible efforts.

In the 2017 Gracious Speech, the only mention of social care, to which I will dedicate my speech, was:

"My Ministers will work to improve social care and will bring forward proposals for consultation."

That is in line with the revised section of the 2017 Conservative manifesto, but no more details have been announced about the Green Paper or when it will be published. When it is published and goes out to consultation, it is vital that elderly people, who do not always have access to the internet, are given fair chance to respond and to put their views forward. I, too, believe that the recent election showed how worried people are about their future healthcare needs. While the system needs to be fixed, it is incumbent on the Government to have a frank and honest consultation on how we fund and provide social care for the most vulnerable in our society. The issue has been kicked into the long grass for too long, so I have two offers to make to the Government this afternoon.

Over 850,000 people in the United Kingdom are living with dementia—equivalent to the entire population of Devon—and that number is expected to double in the next 20 years. Over 12,000 people in Devon are living with dementia, 4,500 of whom are in East Devon. The number of over-65s in Devon will increase from 195,000 in 2015 to 264,400 in 2030—an increase of 35.5%. Seventeen per cent. of the UK population is over the age of 65, compared with 24% of the Devon population. Some 2.38% of the population is over the age of 85, compared with 6.25% of the population of Budleigh Salterton in my constituency. In other words, with those ageing demographics, the rest of England will look like Budleigh Salterton in 2050. East Devon has over 6,500 people over the age of 85 and about 40,000 over the age of 65, so my offer to the Government is this: if we want to get long-term social care right nationally, look at what the country will look like in 2050, which is what towns such as Budleigh Salterton look like now. If we get it right in Devon, we will get it right across the country. As a Devon MP, I am offering—I am sure my hon. Friend the Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston) will also agree—to act as the guinea pig for getting social care right in this country. That is offer No. 1.

Offer No. 2 builds on what some of us tried to do with the Prime Minister some months before the general election when a cross-party group of us went to see her to talk about long-term care. We thought that the issue should be apolitical and that we should finally build on early reports to get things right. Our efforts were not taken up at the time, but in the new spirit of things following the election I believe that we would all be prepared to work together to make the offer again. Where better to start than to build on the "Fairer Care Funding" report—the Dilnot report—of July 2011, which contains many good things, not least a cap, but it also omitted other things, such as some form of insurance to cover the cap. We should leave nothing off the table, but a cross-party group should steer the Government forwards on this matter.

Those are my two offers. As a humble Back Bencher, I will work with other Back Benchers to get social care right in this country, and I offer up Devon, particularly East Devon, as the guinea pig or template for trying to get a social care system that is properly integrated with the rest of the NHS. If we get it right there, we will get it right across the nation, and everyone, including our electorates, will be enormously grateful to us.

2.47 pm

Phil Wilson (Sedgefield) (Lab): I primarily want to talk about the state of GP services, with particular reference to a temporarily closed surgery in Trimdon village in my constituency, to try to make a point about the crisis in GP services. While the closure is only temporary, the surgery will open again next month with limited services.

I want to start with a few words about the national picture. One in four patients now wait a week or more to see a GP or do not get an appointment at all. We are 10,000 GPs, 3,500 midwives and 40,000 nurses short of the number we need. Against a target 3,250 GP training places for 2016-17, Health Education England said that only 3,000 were filled. The number of GPs in this country dropped by nearly 100 in the year to September 2016,

and in three years' time the NHS will have 1,200 fewer family doctors than predicted because there is a struggle to fill training places. There has been a huge drop in the number of GPs in training. In 2016, 92 GP practices closed and 34 were merged with other practices. A survey of 2,000 GPs found that two in five plan to quit in the next two years. Since 2014, there has been a 150% rise in patients being forced to move practices due to record levels of closures—that is 265,000 people. Although the Government want to recruit 5,000 more GPs by 2020, one in three GPs are considering retirement in the next five years—about 10,000 doctors.

That is part of the background that has led to the temporary closure of the GP surgery in Trimdon village. The surgery is one of four operated by Skerne Medical Group—the other three are in Sedgfield village, Fishburn and Trimdon Colliery. The surgeries are very busy and service some of the most deprived areas not just of the county but of the country. In a letter to the registered patients who use the surgery in Trimdon village, Skerne Medical Group announced that the surgery would need to close on 21 June 2017 due to “unprecedented circumstances with our clinical team and the continued difficulties in recruitment”.

Eighty-eight per cent. of residents in the area are registered with Skerne Medical Group, and the GP group has told me that the building housing the surgery in Trimdon village is not fit for purpose, which for me is a reason not for closing but for upgrading the premises.

I also understand that the GPs are preparing to expand their facilities in Sedgfield village, which is good news for the residents of Sedgfield, but I do not see why, if investment is due in Sedgfield, it cannot be due in surgeries such as in Trimdon village, especially when, considering the indices of health deprivation, Trimdon is one of the 10% most deprived areas of England and Wales—Sedgfield village is not. There is still a great need for Skerne Medical Group to keep the surgery open in Trimdon.

The House of Commons Library has provided me with figures on the amount and kinds of prescriptions issued to the residents of Trimdon. More prescriptions are distributed in Trimdon than in 95% of areas of England. Furthermore, prescriptions for gastrointestinal drugs—issued for ulcers, for example—are 48% above the national average. Prescriptions for drugs for cardiovascular issues are 50% above the national average. Prescriptions for drugs for breathing difficulties, including asthma, are 55% above the national average. Prescriptions for antidepressants, some of which are issued for chronic pain, are 51% above the national average, and prescriptions for painkillers themselves are double the national average. More than 40% of Trimdon's population are over the age of 50, which is well above the average for the rest of the UK. Trimdon has an ageing population with chronic health problems.

I say this to Skerne Medical Group: “I know the issues, and I know you offer the best service you can, but I do not believe the closure of the surgery in Trimdon, be it temporary or not, will help the situation. Especially when there are expansion plans for the surgery in Sedgfield, surely the needs of Trimdon are also great.”

If the surgery in Trimdon is not fit for purpose, it must be made so. I can understand the problem with the shortage of GPs, because that is an issue not just for this practice but is happening all over the region and the

nation. I know that the closure of the Trimdon surgery is temporary and that it is to reopen in July, offering only a limited service, but Skerne Medical Group came to see me about a year ago to say that it wanted to close the surgery permanently, which I said I would oppose all the way.

How can a village that is in the 10% most deprived areas of the country be left without a GP surgery physically situated in the heart of the community? Of course the medical group has other surgeries, but forcing an ageing population with high levels of chronic illness to use those other facilities will put pressure on those surgeries, extending waiting times even further. The crisis in GP provision must be looked at nationally, because it is now starting to affect people who really need that support and help.

2.53 pm

Bim Afolami (Hitchin and Harpenden) (Con): I wish to speak briefly on the Gracious Speech as my first modest contribution to the proceedings of this House. Before I go on, I pay tribute to my predecessor, Peter Lilley, who served in this House and served his nation for 34 years. Most hon. Members on both sides of the House will be aware of his distinction in high office, serving under the premierships of Margaret Thatcher and John Major, of his huge intellect and of his knowledge on a range of subjects. But they may be less aware of the genuine affection in which he is held by the people of Hitchin and Harpenden, which I know from every single day of the general election campaign, and of how effective he was as a local constituency MP, in addition to all the offices he held. I am inspired by his example.

I thank the people of Hitchin and Harpenden for sending me to this House. Hitchin and Harpenden, and all of our villages in between, are not just physically beautiful and historic, with a landscape and character unique not just in Hertfordshire but in England and this great nation as a whole; the people are what really make a place special, and my constituents are special, in a very good way. They are kind, open, tolerant and sometimes challenging—they do like writing letters—and it is a great honour to represent them here in this House.

I come to this House with no gilded lineage but as a child of immigrants. My mother, born in Britain but growing up in Nigeria, became a pharmacist. My father, born and bred in Nigeria, is now an NHS doctor. Both came to this country in the 1980s in search of a better life. In particular, they believe that a good-quality education is key, not just for giving a child—an individual—a decent start in life but as the foundation of the future health and prosperity of our society as a whole. They worked incredibly hard and sacrificed a lot—some might say too much—to pay for the best education that Britain could offer, and I was immensely fortunate in that. It was, indeed, an amazing start in life.

And it is education that I believe to be at the heart of everything. I believe we can do better. During the election campaign there was a lot of debate in my constituency, and I know in many others, about whether school funding is adequate and about the excessive bureaucracy that teachers still have to put up with. I happen to think that we need more of the former and less of the latter, but the debate on education needs to be bigger than that, more fundamental.

[*Bim Afolami*]

Are we truly preparing our children for the second industrial revolution we are living through, in which we do not know what jobs will be like in 10 years, let alone 20? Some hon. Members, on both sides of the House, obsess about the type of school, whether it be comprehensive, grammar or private, but should we not focus more on outcomes than on the form? How do we significantly raise both the morale and the standards of teachers everywhere in every school? I promised my constituents that I will bring a relentless focus to that area, and I intend to do so every single day I am in this House, and it starts with fairer funding for every school. In many areas, yes, that will mean more resources.

I enter this House at a time when we face serious challenges as a nation—not just Brexit or, indeed, health and social care but the challenge of creating the most dynamic, productive and technologically advanced economy in the world. Education is central to that challenge because it is our future. The world-class human capital produced by our education system needs to be combined with financial capital investment, with better infrastructure and with a more competitive, simpler tax system for individuals and businesses. That is what a 21st-century, new economy looks like.

Although all Conservatives believe in world-class education and a dynamic, forward-thinking free market economy, we must also consider the type of society we are building together—a just society that, in the words of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, works for everyone. That means zero tolerance of discrimination. That means making sure that our increasingly diverse society of all creeds and races is more cohesive. That means that the poorest among us deserve the right to live not just in decent and, yes, safe social housing but that they also have the right to aspire to own a home of their own. These are the challenges of our age. These are the challenges that we need to meet. I look forward to working with colleagues on both sides of the House on meeting those challenges in our time.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. I very warmly congratulate the hon. Member for Hitchin and Harpenden (*Bim Afolami*) on a maiden speech that was both eloquent and self-assured. It was a contribution of the highest quality, and the reaction of colleagues bears testimony to the truth of what I have just said. In welcoming the hon. Gentleman to the House, I wish him every success in the course of his parliamentary career.

Colleagues, before we continue the debate I have a short announcement to make. The House will know that the election of Deputy Speakers took place today and that the ballot was closed at 1.30 pm. The counting has now finished. Before I announce the results, let me thank, and thank effusively, I hope on behalf of all colleagues, the hon. Member for Southend West (*Sir David Amess*) and the right hon. Member for Knowsley (*Mr Howarth*) for public-spiritedly serving as temporary Deputy Speakers during the debates on the Queen's Speech. They excelled themselves in that role, they are great public servants and I think the House is extremely appreciative of what they have done. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

Let me also take this opportunity to pay a warm personal tribute to *Natascha Engel*. *Natascha* unfortunately lost her seat at the general election, but she served with real commitment and effectiveness as a Deputy Speaker in the last Parliament. That, of course, was service coming on top of a period of great distinction as the first Chair of the Backbench Business Committee. In all, *Natascha* served in this place for 12 years, and we thank her for the quality and commitment of her service. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

I shall now announce the result of the ballot that was held today for the election of Deputy Speakers. *Mr Lindsay Hoyle* was elected as Chairman of Ways and Means. *Mrs Eleanor Laing* was elected as First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means. *Dame Rosie Winterton* was elected as Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means. I congratulate all three colleagues who have been elected, and I greatly look forward to working with them. I also want to thank the hon. Member for City of Durham (*Dr Blackman-Woods*) for contesting the election, and for all that she has done and continues to do in this House, not least in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association work which she enthusiastically, and to great effect, undertakes. I am sure we are going to hear a great deal more from her in the years to come in this Chamber. The results of the count will be made available as soon as possible in the Vote Office and will be published on the internet. I hope that we can have one last expression of congratulations, with a suitable, "Hear, hear" to victorious colleagues and thanks to the hon. Member for City of Durham, after which I am keen to proceed with the debate. Well done! [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

3.3 pm

Dr Paul Williams (*Stockton South*) (*Lab*): May I begin by paying tribute to my predecessor, *James Wharton*, who showed a strong commitment to international development and worked hard for his constituents? I also wish to thank the Member of Parliament before him, *Dari Taylor*, who served *Stockton South* tirelessly for 13 years and was a formidable advocate for our community.

Some of my colleagues have been excited to see another doctor in the House. Members have told me about their bad backs and other problems that confidentiality and common decency prevent me from divulging, but I am afraid I have bad news for them: I have left my prescription pad at home. However, they can join me in keeping fit at my 6 am boot camp if they want. I am a big physical activity enthusiast, and I hope to encourage colleagues to lead active and healthy lifestyles. So *Mr Speaker*, I invite you and other hon. Members to set your alarms for tomorrow morning.

Stockton South is a diverse place with a proud history, a strong community and vast potential. It includes a large part of the town of *Stockton*, a vanguard of the industrial revolution and the birthplace of some of the finest ships to set sail. Innovation and industry have been a cornerstone in *Stockton* since the first tracks were laid for the *Stockton to Darlington* railway, and that is still evident in many of the businesses across the constituency. Today, *Stockton* shows strong leadership in regional arts; we are proud to provide sanctuary to refugees; and we have a vibrant voluntary sector and good-quality schools.

Stockton South also includes Yarm, which has a healthy small business community; Eaglescliffe, which has the leading manufacturing business, Nifco; Ingleby Barwick, which is home to many public servants, among others; and Thornaby, which has a proud history as an RAF base, protecting Teesside's industry during the second world war. Thornaby was the place where Margaret Thatcher walked over the rubble that was once the Head Wrightson steel foundry—her infamous “walk in the wilderness”. The people of Stockton South have asked me to dispatch Thatcherism into the wilderness.

The diversity and tolerance among people of all faiths, beliefs and backgrounds in Stockton South is to be cherished, but, sadly, there is also diversity in terms of wide health and socioeconomic inequalities that cannot be tolerated. The life expectancy for people in some parts of my constituency is 10 years less than for those in others—10 years' difference in life expectancy at birth. As a family doctor, every day I have seen too many people who have been left behind: people battling mental health problems, besieged by loneliness, and people with learning disabilities who have preventable illness. This holds people back and drains their potential. Not only is it unjust, but it is damaging to all of us. When a person's health becomes so poor that they cannot work or someone's father dies a premature death, we all lose.

Sadly, the people who have the most to gain from preventive healthcare are the people least likely to have their cancer screen or their diabetes check. We must challenge this so-called “inverse care law”, whereby those most in need are least likely to access healthcare. We need the most effort to be made to improve the health of the most vulnerable. We should invest in making pregnancy and the first 1,000 days of life from conception safer and better for people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. That is where the evidence tells us the greatest gains can be made. We should remodel our healthcare system so that prevention is given the status and resource now afforded to our treatment services. Prevention really is better than cure.

This Queen's Speech did not have anything to say about health inequalities or about our lack of investment in public health. Every single person who cast a vote in this election wanted so much more from this Queen's Speech, and they have been let down. The parents who told me they will have to wait three years for their child to get an assessment for autism—they wanted improvements. The families of people with dementia, worrying about the cost of care—they wanted clarity. The hard-working nurses facing 10 years of pay caps—they wanted fairness. An inspired and rejuvenated electorate have sent us here to create change. What an opportunity we have to listen to their voices. From many ordinary mouths came one extraordinary message: we must listen and we must act.

3.9 pm

Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): It is a pleasure to speak in response to the Gracious Speech, and to follow both the hon. Member for Stockton South (Dr Williams) and my hon. Friend the Member for Hitchin and Harpenden (Bim Afolami)—two new Members. I have to tell the hon. Member for Stockton South that, having ruptured my Achilles twice in the

last two years, I will be probably be looking at a pass note for the 6 am boot camp, but it is always reassuring, particularly for me, to have another doctor in the House.

May I also praise my hon. Friend the Member for Hitchin and Harpenden for his contribution? His constituents will be reassured by his words today, including none other than Dora Scott, a constituent in Kimpton who is in her 90s and who also happens to be my aunt. We will both be keeping an eye out for him.

In the time that I have, I wish to focus on social care and its impact on health. Bexhill and Battle perhaps has a higher proportion of retired people than many other constituencies, and that requires me to speak up on their behalf. All politicians tend to do this when they sit on the Government Benches, but I urge us to get some form of consensus on this pressing issue for all our retired constituents.

It causes me great concern that despite the extra money that the Government put into the social care system, radical reform is absolutely required. I absolutely welcome the £2 billion that the Government put in earlier this year, but that remains unfunded, due to the failure to get the tax system to pay that extra amount. I also welcome the 3% levy on council tax bills, but in my constituency, where there is a smaller proportion of council tax receipts, it falls to people to pay even more. That concerns me for another reason that was prominent in the election campaign: intergenerational fairness. Is it right, for example, that my younger constituents, who do not have a home of their own, are saving as hard as they can, are paying private rent and cannot afford a deposit, are paying more and more on their council tax bills, which means that a home of their own is even further out of sight? We must look at not just funding, but radical reform, which brings me to the manifesto on which we stood.

Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): The hon. Gentleman mentions funding. Does he think that England should see a change in the Barnett consequential as a result of the Northern Ireland deal—the grubby deal or the protection money that has been offered to the Democratic Unionist party? I am talking about £30 billion to £40 billion for England, which would help greatly in the case that he mentions.

Huw Merriman: When I looked at the winter fuel allowance and the amount of money that we would put back into health as a result of the changes, I was concerned that, under Barnett, some of that money could end up funding Scotland, when Scotland already has the ability to make those decisions about funding. My concern is that as we devolve ever more powers to Scotland, we are not also asked to devolve ever more finance as well.

Let me come back to my main thread. With respect to social care, consensus and intergenerational fairness, I think that we should consider the ideas in my party's manifesto. Those ideas were worthy of more thought than was afforded to them by the Opposition parties. I also found it incredibly distressing that our vulnerable constituents were receiving election literature through their letterboxes saying, “Under the Conservatives, you will be forced to sell your home in order to go into residential care.” That was put out by the Liberal Democrats, when, in fact, our manifesto was changing that current

[*Huw Merriman*]

practice. They were completely misinterpreting the position—and, worse, to a group in our communities who are particularly vulnerable to that type of scare tactics.

Let me turn to pensions. Representing a constituency such as mine, I absolutely agree that we need to look after those on pensions, especially those who have been on fixed incomes and have not had much of a return over the past few years. It is true to say that the triple lock has ensured a 22% increase in pensions, whereas earnings have only risen by just over 7% and prices by only 12%. Again, we must look at intergenerational fairness and ask ourselves how we can ensure that, as well as equipping our elderly and retired constituents to ensure that they can continue with good means, we also look after those who will ultimately fund them.

I am absolutely delighted that this Government are pushing ahead with the consultation exercise. When it comes to contributions to social care, we should ask those who can afford it to take some form of individual responsibility. They should make those payments themselves; otherwise we will effectively see the taxpayer subordinated to those who end up inheriting under the system. Yes, I agree that those people have worked hard all their lives to create their nest egg and for their house, but ultimately I want to ensure that people have the best-quality social care, and that will not happen unless we reform it.

I ask all Opposition Members to think about intergenerational fairness, and to ask those people who can afford it to make more of a contribution, which means that those people starting off on the ladder, who have to think not only about buying a property but saving for their advanced age, have that opportunity as well. Without taking that type of adult decision, we will never get any further in reforming social care.

In my last 30 seconds, Madam Deputy Speaker—congratulations on your return—I make a plea on behalf of my schools. At a school hustings, at which there were candidates from all three parties, I told pupils that there was no point in getting something today, because they, more than any other generation, would have to pay for it tomorrow. Despite what has been said about our party's popularity with the young, more people in that school voted for the Conservative candidate than any of the others, because they recognised that we have the policies to deliver for them, as well as for those who are retired.

3.16 pm

David Hanson (Delyn) (Lab): I congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker—and my right hon. Friends the Members for Chorley (Mr Hoyle), and for Doncaster Central (Dame Rosie Winterton)—on your election to a fantastic role in which you will support the Speaker. I also congratulate the hon. Member for Hitchin and Harpenden (Bim Afolami) on a confident maiden speech. He made a good impression on the House today, and I am sure that he will do so again in the future. I welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton South (Dr Williams) and congratulate him on his maiden speech. He will bring great knowledge to this House. As his seat was a Labour gain in this election, I am particularly pleased to see him in his place.

This was the eighth election that I have fought in Delyn constituency, and the seventh that I have won, so I am certainly pleased to be back. I have never gone into an election knowing that I would win, and this one was particularly tough. It is important that, having returned to this House, I represent all the people of my constituency and ensure that the issues that are important to them are raised.

The Prime Minister called this election on Brexit. The Queen's Speech is largely about Brexit, but the issues that my constituents brought up on the doorstep were anything but Brexit, most of the time. They were arguing about jobs, security, public spending, austerity and, particularly, security and policing. I wish to focus on the latter, not least because in the middle of this general election campaign we had the horrific events in Manchester, Borough Market and, latterly, Finsbury Park. We also remember the incident in this House earlier this year, when a brave police officer lost his life defending our liberties.

It is important that we focus on security and policing, and I will touch on four areas. I want to know how the Government intend to increase police numbers and change their policy—an issue also raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper). Our focus on policing has changed following those incidents and the acceptance that austerity has been a difficult challenge for the community. I want to know what progress is being made in improving the number of armed police. I want to know what happens in relation to Eurojust, the European arrest warrant and Europol, to which the Government have not made any commitment in discussions to date. I want to know what plans they have to look at terrorism legislation as a matter of course. Policing has changed dramatically over the past seven years of this Government.

We know the figures, but they are worth repeating: we had 144,235 police officers on the streets of Britain in 2010. We have lost 21,376 officers since then. We had a reduction of over 6,000 police community support officers in that period. The number of firearms officers, which the Home Secretary seemed to trumpet in her contribution today, has reduced by over 1,337 in that period.

Those reductions are important because we need to focus on how we re-embed the police in this country. Police on the ground help reassure communities, help strengthen neighbourhood policing, and help with the big challenges of terrorism. Police embedded in the community pick up intelligence and recognise some of the challenges of vulnerable adults—challenges posed by both the fascist right and, at the other end of the spectrum, extremist Islamist terrorist potential. That policing on the ground makes a difference. Looking at the current challenges, we should never forget that police officers, in their reduced numbers, are significantly stretched.

Mrs Moon: My right hon. Friend, having served as a Minister with responsibility for policing, will remember the inputs of the Ministry of Defence police in providing security and stability for much of our most important national infrastructure. Is he aware that there is to be a £12.5 million cut in Ministry of Defence policing in this year, which means that fewer armed police officers will be available to support Home Office police?

David Hanson: My hon. Friend makes an important point. I want to challenge the Government, in the winding-up speeches, to say what the Government mean when they talk about an uplift in the number of armed police officers. We have a downlift of more than 1,500 armed police officers.

I praise the speed and effectiveness of the response in London, and indeed in Manchester, but the events in London happened within one mile of a significant concentration of armed police, here in central London. If those events had happened in some parts of the country, there would have been great difficulty in effectively getting an armed police response at the speed that we would expect, and that was delivered by brave police officers here in London.

More police officers are now reporting sick because of stress. The number of police officers who have taken sick leave each year has increased by about 1,500 since 2010. That is because they are under pressure, because they do not have the numbers that there were in the past. It should also be remembered that police officers do not do 24-hour shifts. Police officers take holidays. Police officers sleep. Police officers have time off. Those police officers whom we have are very thinly stretched.

We should also recall that the police officer cohort is ageing; nearly 50% of officers are now in the higher age range. Unless we recruit effectively and speedily, we will not have the level of policing that we would wish to see in our community at large.

I mentioned the European arrest warrant and the European matters that we face as part of Brexit. On Monday, in answer to a question that I asked her, the Prime Minister said,

“As regards Eurojust, Europol and the European arrest warrant, those will be matters for...negotiations”—[*Official Report*, 26 June 2017; Vol. 626, c. 321.]

I am very sorry; they should not be matters for negotiation. They should be things that we, as a United Kingdom Government, are committed to participating in in the future. We need the European arrest warrant, Eurojust and Europol to ensure that we tackle crime, stop terrorism, bring back to this country people who have committed heinous offences here, and export to other countries people who have committed heinous offences there. I want a commitment from the Government as soon as possible that they will commit to the European arrest warrant, Eurojust and the European security co-operation measures that make so much difference to our lives and our security. We shall be voting against the Queen’s Speech tonight, and we are right to do so until we get clarification on those key issues.

3.23 pm

Mike Wood (Dudley South) (Con): All Members will have their own examples of mental health casework. Often, those constituents will have attended an advice surgery or sent an email for help about a different problem entirely. It could be housing; it could be employment or welfare; it could even be a problem involving the criminal justice system. But it soon becomes clear, after a few questions and a little bit of probing, that the underlying problem is one of undiagnosed—or unsupported—mental illness.

Poor mental health weakens people’s life chances, and many of the effects of deprivation further aggravate the impact of mental illness. Sadly, an increasing proportion

of cases from our surgeries involve children suffering from poor mental health. I welcome the Green Paper on children and young people’s mental health, and I am pleased that the Government have committed £1.4 billion for child and adolescent mental health services by 2020. That is absolutely the right thing to do. It will transform mental health treatment for children and young people. We all need to ensure that it is properly directed and spent in those areas where it was intended to be spent, because it is a shocking fact that one in 10 children in this country have a diagnosable mental health condition.

I am pleased that the Prime Minister launched the expansion of the mental health first aid training scheme in secondary schools yesterday. It is essential that we do more to deliver early intervention to support people’s mental health, rather than relying so heavily on acute mental health services once conditions have deteriorated, sometimes to the point of psychosis. It is the difference between treating an illness and just tackling the immediate symptoms—a distinction that would be so obvious for physical health that surely nobody would argue against its existence. That means ensuring that training for GPs allows them to identify mental health conditions in patients who present with a completely different illness, and ensuring that continuing professional development allows GPs to keep up so that more senior GPs also have the necessary understanding of mental health. It means securing access to successful programmes such as Improving Access to Psychological Therapies—introduced by the previous Government and continued by this one—and other talking therapies, where alternatives to drug-based treatments are appropriate.

I am pleased that the Mental Health Act 1983 is to be reformed. It was doubtless introduced with the very best of intentions and has certainly had many beneficial effects, but in too many cases the starting point seems to be that it treats people with mental illness as threats that need to be contained, rather than as patients who need treatment and support. Of course, there are times when people need to be detained, for their own protection or that of those around them, but then the focus must be on medical treatment rather than, effectively, imprisonment.

Chris Green (Bolton West) (Con): In terms of providing that support in the right environment, would my hon. Friend like to show some appreciation of the Government for the mental health hospital that recently opened just down the road from my constituency? It is a £40 million investment, and will go a long way to providing that kind of support in the local community.

Mike Wood: I absolutely agree. As part of the increased capital investment that the Prime Minister announced earlier this year, the £10 billion capital investment for the national health service will mean not only that new buildings such as the one to which my hon. Friend referred—the new hospital in Sandwell in the west midlands is an example—become more common, but infrastructure such as the new urgent care centre at my own local hospital in Russells Hall is provided so that our NHS can become more effective.

The Secretary of State should take great pride in the changes that he has introduced to guidance on section 135 and 136 powers, which mean that a safe place should usually be a place where patients can receive medical help, rather than the default position of a police cell.

[Mike Wood]

It is time for those changes to be given a statutory footing, and I hope that the new Bill will deliver that. There should be parity of esteem so that people with mental health conditions receive the same respect and equivalent status, and are treated with the same dignity, as people with physical health conditions. It is a positive step that that has been legislated for, and I hope that we will see more and more efforts to make sure that that commitment becomes a reality for constituents who receive treatment for mental health conditions.

If I may briefly speak of my own experience of the health service. As some hon. Friends know, I received rather more direct and personal experience of our hospitals, GPs and outpatient clinics than I had planned at the beginning of the year. I should like to place on record my thanks to the doctors, consultants, nurses and support staff who were all absolutely fantastic in keeping me alive so that I am here now. It has also given me the chance to work with the UK Sepsis Trust and the formidable Ron Daniels. I hope that during this Parliament the Secretary of State will have a chance to look at calls from the trust for simple measures that it is estimated would save perhaps a quarter of the 44,000 lives that are lost as a result of sepsis every year in the UK. They include instigating a national registry to record accurately the true burden of sepsis, raising awareness nationally, and looking at commissioning levers to deliver best practice and reinforce that.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing): I call Dr Philippa Whitford.

3.31 pm

Dr Philippa Whitford (Central Ayrshire) (SNP): Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker, and my congratulations, too, on your re-election.

I echo what the hon. Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston) said when highlighting the fact that across all four NHS services the biggest challenge is the increased demand from an ageing population, with huge and growing workforce challenges. That has been aggravated by Brexit. There has been a 95% drop in nursing applications from the EU, along with a prolonged 1% pay cap. Members have rightly paid tribute to the emergency services after the terrorist attacks and the appalling Grenfell fire. It is now time that we met the rhetoric with a decent salary.

It is a bit strange to combine a debate on security with a debate on health, but when I made my maiden speech two years ago during a Queen's Speech debate I highlighted to the Government the fact that their first priority was the security of their citizens, not by replacing weapons of mass destruction but by providing the security that comes from knowing that there is a roof over your head and food on the table. It also matters what kind of roof it is. The people of Grenfell were failed by local government scrimping and saving on cladding and sprinklers, and by successive UK Governments, who did not act on previous warnings. The issue of cladding and sprinklers was first raised as a result of a fatal fire in my constituency in 1999, when a disabled man lost his life. That was 18 years ago.

Anna Soubry: Does the hon. Lady not agree that it is absolutely imperative in the wake of this terrible tragedy that we wait to establish the facts? One fact that we

know is that the local authority had almost a quarter of a billion pounds in reserves, which is a good indication that it was not about scrimping and scraping. There may well have been other serious failures, but we await the full public inquiry, and we will then establish all the facts.

Dr Whitford: I am not saying that the local authority was scrimping and saving because it did not have money; it was because it was not spending the money. It used cheap panels and it did not put in sprinklers. Some 600-plus buildings across London and England are covered in panels that clearly contain flammable materials. We hear from Camden that fire doors were missing, despite millions of pounds having been spent. As Ben Okri says in his poem, there has been a focus on surface and appearance rather than on the substance of such buildings and the protection of people who live in them.

Dr Andrew Murrison (South West Wiltshire) (Con): I always listen to the hon. Lady with care and respect, but I appeal to her to look at the evidence base before making the remarks that she has. Words are important. We have established an inquiry that will establish the facts and make recommendations. Until then, with the greatest respect, I think that her remarks are premature.

Dr Whitford: The hon. Gentleman may feel that my remarks are premature with regard to Grenfell, but they are not when it comes to Lakeland, Irvine or other terrible fires that were clearly shown to relate to cladding and where sprinklers could have made a difference.

We have been repeatedly warned over the past 18 years and we have not taken action. The people in Grenfell died not only because of fire regulations, but because of inequality. They lived in the richest borough in the richest city, yet they were among the most poor and vulnerable. That tower stands like a black monolith shadowing the whole city and this place. The people in it were not well served.

We see people dying in Grenfell, suddenly—the drama and the horror. Yet people die of inequality, poverty and deprivation all the time. There is a 20-year gap in longevity between the richest and poorest, both in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy. Some 1,400 children under 15 die every year as a direct result of poverty—that is like the roof of a secondary school collapsing on them every year. If that happened, surely we would take action.

Anna Soubry: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Dr Whitford: For the last time.

Anna Soubry: I echo the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for South West Wiltshire (Dr Murrison): I have a lot of respect for most of what the hon. Lady says. However, does she agree that no one side in this place has an exclusive hold on the moral things that guide us? All of us come into this place to make life better for all our constituents. The eradication of poverty runs deep to the roots of conservatism as it does elsewhere in this House.

Dr Whitford: If the right hon. Lady had listened to what I was saying, she would have heard me say “UK Governments”. I talked about a period of 18 years, which involves not one but repeated Governments, who have been complacent and not taken action.

The children who die because they are born into poverty die of low birthweight, chronic illness, suicide, road traffic accidents and—poignantly—house fires. Children who live in poverty suffer from hunger, malnutrition, cold and damp houses, and chronic illnesses. They lose their chance to succeed at school and to have the life opportunities that a lot of us take for granted.

The number of children living in poverty is now approaching 4 million and is expected to reach 5 million by the end of this decade; that is an indictment on everyone in this House. On average, 28% of UK children live in poverty, but that average hides the inequality across the UK. There are wards in the north of England where the figure reaches the high 40s—nearly half of the children in such areas grow up in poverty. Those children will not have decent life chances—and if we think that money is being saved, we are wrong: we will be picking up the pieces later in their lives when they end up with addictions or in the criminal justice system.

We need to tackle the situation now. The biggest driver of ill health is poverty and the biggest driver of poverty is the decisions that we make. We had welfare Acts in 2012 and 2015, and that was when child poverty stopped falling and started to rise. We need to change the situation. As the Prime Minister keeps saying, we have a responsibility to every single person across this country, and that includes children.

Vicky Ford: It is great to see you in the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is the hon. Lady aware of the news released by the Office for National Statistics today? Of the 28 EU countries, the UK has the fifth lowest rate of child poverty. There is more to be done, but surely that is a very good start.

Dr Whitford: That may come down to a matter of definition. Last year, this House had a Government who were trying to get rid of child poverty by simply putting a line through it with a pen and removing the title from the Social Mobility and Children Poverty Commission. They wanted to abandon the Child Poverty Act 2010 and the commitment to end child poverty, and to stop measuring income because—oh, let's face it—the money within a family does not contribute to poverty.

Joanna Cherry: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Dr Whitford: I am sorry, but I am running out of time. We all have a responsibility to the children across the United Kingdom to invest in their future and not to allow them to be cast aside, or we will pay the price later. This needs to change now. That is how to change health and to protect NHS services.

3.40 pm

Colin Clark (Gordon) (Con): I am delighted to see a fellow Scot in the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker; many congratulations. It is also an honour to follow the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford).

It is an honour to speak for the people of the constituency of Gordon. My constituency was formed in 1983 and has since been loyally represented by two Members. Malcolm Bruce represented Gordon from 1983 until 2015. He was an able and well-admired Member of Parliament, becoming a member of the Privy Council

in 2006. He was knighted in 2012 and became a life peer in 2015 as Lord Bruce of Bannachie.

I also pay tribute to my immediate predecessor and former First Minister of Scotland, Alex Salmond, who was elected to represent Gordon in 2015. He was first elected in Banff and Buchan in 1987, served at both Westminster and Holyrood and was a parliamentarian for 30 years—30 years as a public servant dedicated to his cause. I wish him all the very best.

The traveller through Gordon starts in the hills of the west, first coming to Huntly, the home of the Gordon clan. Heading east, they experience the howes and valleys, taking in the Garioch and Inverurie, on to Ellon and the coast at Newburgh and Balmedie. This is good, productive land on a scale that can compete, dominated by family farms. The constituency takes in large parts of the north of the city of Aberdeen. Expanding rapidly during the boom years, it has shown remarkable resilience. It is industrious and has adapted to lower oil prices, and I look forward to the city region deal linking the city and shire.

Gordon has a diverse and resilient economy driven by locally grown entrepreneurs. It is an area of enterprise and employment, where the number of registered businesses has grown from 4,500 to 5,200 over five years. Having seen downturns in the North sea before, many supply companies have moved their focus to exports outside Europe: exports of personnel with expertise developed in the North sea, technology built and manufactured in the north-east and unique engineering techniques applicable to other industries. Offshore oil and gas is focused on efficiency. It is a long-term investor and needs stability.

The downturn in oil and gas has taught us to promote other industries, such as tourism, which was long neglected. Gordon is rich with castles, stunning and bracing beaches and access to limitless outdoor pursuits. The area is well served by hotels and restaurants and very well served by golf courses, even one owned by the President of the United States. Industry, however, has been hurt by punitive business rates in the north-east. During the oil boom, there was a froth of high rents. Business rates increases of 100% to 200% are not unusual and coincide with a fragile recovery. The business sector recognises that it must contribute, but excessive rates damage employment, investment and sentiment, and we are at risk of displacing jobs. The Scottish Government committed that every penny raised locally would stay local. It was none other than my predecessor, the former First Minister, who made this change to regional finances. I ask that the north-east regional councils get to keep the extra funds raised, allowing councils to mitigate the business rates rises if they so choose.

All three of the north-east constituencies of Scotland are geographically dominated by farming. Farming in Scotland is the bedrock of the food and drink industry, which turns over £14 billion a year. It accounts for 19% of total manufacturing, and supports 360,000 jobs. As that bedrock, agriculture deserves our support to achieve efficient production and a fair share of the high street price.

In the light of today's debate, I implore the Minister to highlight the plight of health provision in Gordon and the north-east of Scotland to his counterpart in the Scottish Government. Aberdeen Royal Infirmary serves 600,000 people. We depend on its continued expertise; it is of the utmost importance that it preserves its international

[Colin Clark]

reputation as a teaching hospital. In the last few years, it has been at risk of playing second fiddle to the hospitals of Glasgow and Edinburgh.

The people of Gordon would ask us to respect the geography—it is three to four hours' travel time to the central belt—and to look again at the shortage of doctors and nurses in the north-east. Gordon, like so many other areas, has an ageing population, and I would encourage the Minister to bring the debate out into the open on how we best prepare for demands on our services in the future.

Gordon and the whole north-east makes a huge contribution to the Scottish and UK economies, paying for the services we all depend on. It is not an area of privilege, but an area of hard work, an area of new start-ups and reinvention, and an area of enterprise and employment. Gordon is an outward-looking constituency, a confident area and an area of optimism and growth, ready to embrace opportunities, including Brexit. Through the democratic process, Gordon has fiercely defended its place in the United Kingdom.

I would suggest to Opposition Members that this country needs to talk up its opportunities, talk up its position in the world and be positive about the road that lies before us.

3.46 pm

Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): I warmly welcome you back to your place in the House, Madam Deputy Speaker. I also congratulate the hon. Member for Gordon (Colin Clark) on an excellent maiden speech, and welcome him to the House—I am sure he will serve his constituents extremely well.

I welcome the focus, prioritisation and investment in the Queen's Speech in regard to mental health—parity of esteem must be achieved. I refer the House to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests and to my background in psychology.

In Scotland, we have a mental health Minister. We also have continued prioritisation and someone who will lead that forward. I am extremely happy to be named the mental health spokesperson for the SNP in this House, where we are also prioritising the issue of mental health.

A number of decades ago, in the 1990s—unfortunately, that shows my age—I started as a young psychologist in the NHS. At that time, patients could wait for up to a year to receive treatment, which was absolutely ineffectual. They came with their problems, one year after those problems had started, but their problems had often changed or multiplied. So I welcome the fact that we have been trying across the United Kingdom to establish waiting times. That is an important step forward for all.

Time is crucial in the delivery of services. It is extremely important that additional funding goes to those on the frontline—to clinicians. Most reviews since the 1990s that I sat on as a clinician sought to increase the number of management staff in our NHS, but it is extremely important that funding goes to the frontline and to the key professionals who will deliver the services—in relation to mental health, that has to be mental health practitioners. I would welcome some words from the Secretary of State about ensuring that staff on the frontline are prioritised when funding is produced.

The training of staff is also crucial. My hon. Friend the Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford) spoke about the impact of Brexit, and we cannot take that lightly. It is extremely important that we have workforce planning. In recent weeks, I have been contacted by concerned psychologists.

Dr Whitford: Does my hon. Friend recognise the impact that Brexit will have on staffing? We have a 95% fall in EU nurses registering to come here, and up to 60% of doctors in a General Medical Council survey said they would go back. That would obviously threaten staffing in the north-east—an issue the hon. Member for Gordon (Colin Clark) raised.

Dr Cameron: As always, my hon. Friend makes an excellent point, which goes to the crux of this. With Brexit looming, we must ensure that our NHS and our social care services continue to be adequately resourced and staffed. Those are crucial issues, which I would certainly wish to be taken forward.

In recent weeks, I have been contacted by a concerned psychologist stating particular worries regarding funding for their profession. If we are going to place mental health as a priority at the core of what we do, then surely we have to ensure that funding for the placements of clinical psychologists continues. I would very much welcome comment and reassurance from the Secretary of State in that regard.

On services for people who have autistic spectrum disorder, very many constituents with families come to see me who are concerned that their children may merit a diagnosis of autism but still continue to find that the situation can be difficult. I am sure, given the background reading that I have done, that it is the same right across the United Kingdom. Diagnosis as early as possible is absolutely crucial to ensure access to services so that children can meet their full potential. What level of funding will be made available, and will any be ring-fenced for diagnosis, particularly for those with specific needs such as autistic spectrum disorder?

In child and adolescent mental health services, there is a real issue of demand at the current time. Prevention is absolutely key, as is early detection. That means that teachers will have an important role, alongside parents, and they must have a point of contact in primary care that they can reach in order to ensure that treatment and support can be taken forward. There is concern from professional bodies in relation to in-patient beds being made available within the locale. I have recently been reading reports saying that one patient from Somerset—a child—was sent for care in the highlands, 587 miles away. Use of out-of-area in-patient beds has apparently risen by 40% from 2014-15 to 2016-17. That really must be addressed. The knock-on effect of slashing mental health beds may be that the A&E bed figure lists are down, but we need particular investment in mental health beds and ring-fencing of money for mental health beds and services.

The very important aspect that we sometimes forget is mental health support for carers. Carers often feel at the very forefront of a crisis when that crisis happens. We must look at services and funding to protect carers to ensure that they have access to the support that they need at their greatest time of crisis.

Public sector pay has been discussed widely across the House today, and obviously pay recommendations must be reviewed. Many nurses and allied health professionals have been receiving a pay level which, given inflation, has meant that they have been, in effect, receiving a pay cut. This has to be taken forward positively. We cannot just rely on our crucial health services at the time of need; we must also walk the walk by ensuring that we pay them effectively and fairly, and give them the justice that they deserve.

3.53 pm

Mrs Anne Main (St Albans) (Con): It is delightful to see you back in your rightful place, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is also a delight to follow the hon. Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow (Dr Cameron), because I too want to talk about mental health services, particularly those for children.

It is sadly the case that many young people have very troubled existences in school, and it sometimes takes quite a long while to get a diagnosis that they are suffering from mental health problems. I am sure that over the years all colleagues will have seen desperate parents coming into their surgeries to raise this issue. As a parent myself, I can honestly say that there is nothing more desperate than feeling that one's child is friendless, singled out, left out, and somehow missing out on what should be one of the happy periods of their lives.

I suggest to the Secretary of State that as we go forward with child mental services we look at how we can seamlessly integrate them with the schooling that children are receiving, or often missing out on as a result of their conditions. Parents who come to visit my surgery tell me that too often there are two silos where they are raising the same issues and problems—the school system and the child mental health services system—and they are having to do so over and over again because there is no transference of knowledge about the individual's case. Parents have been put in the dreadful situation of being pursued by a school because it thought that the young person was truanting, when in reality they were unable to leave their room because they could not escape the utter mental trauma they were experiencing. It took a huge amount of work to ensure that that young person got some degree of education at home.

The way forward for many of our services is for them to integrate with others. I make the plea that child and adolescent mental health services be better hooked up with educational services. Different groups of professionals should not be prevented from discussing matters with each other, because that makes the situation worse. If a child or young person is experiencing a period of ill health, bad health or a crisis, that information should be seamlessly conveyed to the school. I know that there are all sorts of issues to do with protection of privacy, but if a young person's opportunities to gain educational qualifications are slipping away and it is impossible for them to be home schooled or receive tutor support at home because of a lack of dialogue, we need to address that. That is why I am pleased about the proposed Green Paper, which will address how families can access information about mental health and treatment for loved ones, and how the Mental Health Act has been implemented on the ground.

We should look at the issue across the board, including the role of pharmacies. Many of us spoke in the debate on that subject in January. There is an argument that pharmacies should be encouraged to do more and not just be paid for the number of prescriptions they dispense. I repeat that we need to bring different services together. Some hon. Members have talked about loneliness and others about dementia. I am absolutely certain that pharmacies can play a part in the seamless transition I have mentioned by providing not only drugs and other forms of care but a listening service. I want pharmacies to do much more and for them to be encouraged to integrate more with other aspects of social and GP-led care in areas such as mine, where the National Pharmacy Association has its headquarters.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): The hon. Lady has outlined the importance of pharmacies. Does she agree that money should be set aside for frontline GP services? One way of doing that would be for them to work closer with pharmacies to ensure that they can give an all-inclusive picture when someone visits their GP.

Mrs Main: The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point. Some people have described the Queen's Speech as thin, but I think it touches on key points and gives us a chance to flesh things out and submit our views on what should happen. I want pharmacies to provide more support to other services than they do at present.

The West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust, which provides acute care services in my area, has been struggling for a considerable period, but I pay tribute to it, because it is now turning around some of its problems. I visited it recently and I am pleased to say that it now has a complete hold on hospital-acquired infections and has refurbished and upgraded some wards. The Herts Valleys clinical commissioning group has also launched a new community perinatal mental health team, which is starting to work with families. I believe that visionary approaches can be taken, using current resources, to ensure that we get the most out of our national health services.

It is a shame that this place focuses on the negative. I was frankly shocked to hear the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford)—this is how I understand what she said, but she can correct me if I am wrong—seem to support the claim by the shadow Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell), that families and individuals had been “murdered” by political decisions over recent decades. That was an atrocious comment for him to make in public at Glastonbury.

Dr Whitford *rose*—

Mrs Main: I will give way in a moment, because I am sure the hon. Lady wants to respond. In these difficult times, it is deeply irresponsible to whip up resentment in political groups—the shadow Chancellor said that this had happened over decades—when we do not have the results. Building Research Establishment in my constituency is doing the panel testing, and we should have a period of reflective calm. There are still unidentified remains in that building, and it is deeply irresponsible to pass judgment on what caused the fire. I do not think it should ever be acceptable to suggest murder without any evidence—it is a very harsh thing to accuse people of.

Dr Whitford *rose*—

Mrs Main: I will give way to the hon. Lady, as I am sure she would like to distance herself from the concept of murder.

Dr Whitford: If the hon. Lady had paid any attention, she would recognise that I did not use that term, and I talked about Governments. The fire in Irvine in 1999—18 years ago—identified the issues with cladding and sprinklers. That is many Governments ago and a long time in which this place has not taken sufficient action on tower blocks.

Mrs Main: In this period of deep distress and anguish, when many things remain to be found out and many lessons to be learned, it behoves us all not to use this as a political football. I hope that in future we will stop doing so.

I am delighted that the Queen's Speech has a real focus on mental health, but I make a particular plea to the Secretary of State to work with education services and child and adolescent mental health services to ensure that young people do not end up, during troubled periods in their lives, missing opportunities to gain the qualifications and make the friendships and relationships they need. It is a tragedy that young people feel so isolated. When they reach adulthood, the continuity of services drops off a cliff, with no pick-up from adult mental health services. We should take seriously the need for a seamless transition to wellness for young people, and I am pleased that the Government have decided to spearhead that campaign.

4.1 pm

Derek Twigg (Halton) (Lab): I congratulate you on your election today, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Queen's Speech set out no strategy and no answers to solve the crisis of both staffing and funding in the health service. Back in the 1980s and 1990s, when the Conservatives were in power for so long, we saw a massive crisis, and that has been repeated under the Conservative Governments of the last seven years. There is not enough funding and not enough staff. The Government have done nothing to solve the crisis, but it needs funding.

Take trolley waits, for example. A recent Library paper says that in 2012-13 there were 152,754 trolley waits, and in 2016-17 there were 563,901. That is a disgrace, and it shows that the NHS needs to be funded properly. We have talked about the GP crisis, and the Library paper says that the estimate for this year is that the number of GPs will fall—although the number is now calculated differently. In my constituency and others, people cannot get to see a GP when they want to, and there is a real crisis in GP practices.

NHS deficits are still a problem and are estimated to be at least £7 billion. Some commentators claim that not even that figure is high enough to be correct. More than 100 NHS trusts have a deficit—when I last spoke to the chief executive of Warrington and Halton Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, the deficit was about £5 million. We know the stress and worry the staff face because they do not have the resources they need.

Clinical commissioning groups have not been mentioned much, but the Government fragmented the health service through the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and it is not clear where to go for a decision or to get something done. I have regular meetings with my clinical commissioning group, and it has a serious funding problem, as do many CCGs. What will the Government do about that? I also ask the Secretary of State, who is in his place, why Halton CCG is mainly working in collaboration with Warrington CCG and not with the other CCGs in the local health economy, as it should. I have already raised that problem with the CCG, but it has not done anything about it. I hope that the Secretary of State will look into that.

The Care Quality Commission said clearly last year that social care was at a tipping point. The delays have been discussed many times in the House, and the Secretary of State knows that I have raised them. The Library paper states that delayed transfers were 24.5% higher in 2016-17 than in 2015-16, and 64% higher than in 2011-12. This is a real problem. The Government, despite talking about a Green Paper, have still not come forward with a strategy. There needs to be proper funding for local councils—my council has had £57 million cut from its budget—and proper funding for the NHS and the health economies of each area.

Education is the other big issue that is raised with me. Again, the Government have not set out a strategy, and the Queen's Speech does not address it in the way it should be addressed. There are cuts taking place. I have been talking to headteachers in my constituency and they are making cuts as we speak, particularly in teaching assistants, but some are talking about cutting teachers as well. This mess is best summed up by reading an extract of a letter from a headteacher in my constituency:

“At my school, we manage the budget prudently and we have rising numbers so have received similar funding for 17/18 as for 16/17. In fact there has been a small increase of just over £1,000. Despite this, without any planned increase in spending on teachers or resources, I am unable to balance the budget. The increased costs for areas such as Employers NI, pension contributions, apprenticeship levy, salaries and utilities has meant that I don't have the capacity”—

I stress this—

“to set a balanced budget without making reductions and using our carry forward. For 2018/19 the school will almost certainly need to undertake a re-structuring programme to reduce staffing costs. This will inevitably impact on the teaching and learning, at a time when we have increasing pupil numbers.”

I talk to teachers and headteachers on a regular basis and I know the stress they are under. It is not just an issue of better pay—although, of course, they would like more pay—but one of workload, which is a key factor in the problems and stress they face. I want to put on the record my praise for teachers and their work. The Government's proposed new funding formula will see huge cuts in all but one secondary school in my constituency. That will not address the problem; it will make it worse. The new funding formula is not up to scratch.

Finally on education, further education colleges have been cut and cut over the years. We talk about apprenticeships and the need to ensure that we have the skills to improve productivity. We need to ensure that our further education colleges, which can deliver them, have the funding they need to do so. We cannot achieve an improvement in productivity and skills without that.

In the few seconds I have remaining, I want to talk about defence and security. We have heard about police numbers. My constituents tell me that they want more police in their community and on the streets. We have specialist security, police and intelligence teams, but my constituents want more police officers on the street.

The Government have cut and cut the armed forces. We now have our smallest Army since the Napoleonic wars. At a time when there is so much stress in the world and so many challenges, that is appalling. The Government should increase the amount of money available for our security and armed forces.

4.7 pm

Dr Andrew Murrison (South West Wiltshire) (Con): It is good to see you back in your place, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We have been treated to a range of excellent maiden speeches from my hon. Friends the Members for Gordon (Colin Clark) and for Hitchin and Harpenden (Bim Afolami), and the hon. Member for Stockton South (Dr Williams). They obviously have the measure of this place already, because not one of them is left in the Chamber, but in his absence, I reassure the hon. Member for Stockton South that we can never have too many doctors in the House.

I welcome the commitment in the Queen's Speech to improving social care, and I welcome the plans for a consultation. All of us who have gone through the general election process—certainly on the Government Benches—will be aware of the importance of this issue. We may even recall the 2015 manifesto commitment, on which we stood, to implement something that looked a little bit like Dilnot. Most of us at the time thought that was a jolly good idea.

Our public services are all about pooled risk. That is what the NHS and our social services are all about—in everything, it seems, except for dementia and other chronic and long-term conditions that require ongoing care. For most of us, they will not actually be that expensive. Mercifully, for most of us dementia care will not be expensive. It is a condition that affects us right at the very end of our life and very few of us will require institutional care. For a few of us, however, it will be expensive. For those people and their families it will be a matter of huge importance, as many of us, particularly those of us on the Government Benches, found out a few weeks ago to our great cost. It seems reasonable that we should indeed have a Dilnot-style cap on our liability for these extraordinary costs that affect a few of us—a number of our families. It is surely right that we should do so, and I have no doubt that that will come out loud and clear in the consultation.

I very much welcome the commitment to mental health in the Queen's Speech. I am particularly interested in mental health so far as it relates to the criminal justice system. It is welcome that we should be revising the Mental Health Act 1983. It has been a good piece of legislation and has served us well, but it is due for revision and updating. Some 10% of women and 30% of men in the criminal justice system have had some involvement with mental health services, or had to access acute mental health services prior to their incarceration. Ninety per cent. of people in the criminal justice system have some form of mental health problem. That is a huge indictment not, I would suggest, of the

service, but of all of us. It is absolutely right that in our general attempt to reduce the rate of incarceration in this country, which is far too high, we focus particularly on the people in the prison system who have serious and significant mental health problems.

I very much welcome the focus on general practice articulated by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and his Ministers. The service, it has to be said, is under pressure. It is certainly running hot, and my worry about the medical workforce—GPs, hospital doctors and nurses, and everybody who works in our NHS—is that we risk allowing the well of good will not just to get low but to run completely dry.

It is absolutely right that we should now look at removing the cap on pay for public sector workers, and that we should think in particular about those working in our health services. These people give far more back to the service than we give to them, in terms of the package, and those of us who go into medicine, healthcare or social care understand that. We do it because we want to give something back. We are altruists, but that only goes so far. When we have to support our families, pay the mortgage and deal with everything that bears down on people in their working lives, it is pretty rotten to see salaries increasing, rightly, in the general economy but not in the public service. It is absolutely understandable that the Government, as a big employer, should seek to contain cost. As an evangelist for reducing our deficit, I will support that, but there comes a point—I welcome the Government's indication that it is rapidly approaching—when we have to look at pay settlement for those who work so well for us in the public sector.

I am absolutely obsessed by outcomes in healthcare; the Secretary of State will know that, because we have discussed it. Healthcare outcomes in this country languish behind those of countries with which we can reasonably be compared, and I do not mean the OECD average. I mean countries such as France, Germany and Holland. On Britain's disappointing position in the league tables, we must do more to improve on things such as bowel cancer and cervical cancer, on which we are overtaking France and Germany respectively. We need to do that right across the board. I am left with the conclusion that because money, inputs and outcomes are causally related, we have to get the funding right.

I hope very much that the Government will consider again the proposal put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston) and my right hon. Friend the Member for East Devon (Sir Hugo Swire) that we should achieve consensus through a cross-party commission on this issue, so that we can discuss, in the NHS's 70th anniversary year, how to get sustainable funding for our NHS and make sure that this great national institution is fit for the next 70 years.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing): Order. It will be obvious to the House that a great many people still wish to speak. I have to warn the House that after the next few speakers, I will have to reduce the time limit on speeches to four minutes. I so appreciate the good wishes that everybody has given me on my re-election this afternoon, but I realise that I will not get any more now. That is fair enough; we will try to get everybody in. Still with six minutes, I call Gill Furniss.

4.14 pm

Gill Furniss (Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough) (Lab): Thank you for calling me, Madam Deputy Speaker, and congratulations on being back in the Chair.

During the election campaign, I spoke to many doctors, nurses and other NHS professionals in my constituency, as well as service users, and listened to what they said about the state of our NHS and social care. At each and every meeting, I listened to people, many of whom felt demoralised by the state of the profession after seven years of this Tory Government. From longer waiting times to missed A&E targets to the cancelling of operations to record numbers of nurses leaving the profession, the NHS has suffered greatly since 2010.

The anger and frustration felt during the election campaign were reflected in the result: a vote that reduced the number of Conservative Members and wiped out the majority of the Government. The public have simply rejected the Tories' austerity agenda. I hope I shall be forgiven for being hopeful—like many others—that that would be reflected in the Queen's Speech, which, instead, reflected a continued total disconnect between the Prime Minister and Government and the wider public.

The Queen's Speech failed to begin to tackle the issue of chronic underfunding in our NHS. Among the top 10 economies in the EU, the UK spends the smallest proportion of its GDP on health: 9.8%, compared to a 10.4% average. If the UK only half-matched the EU average, there could be 35,000 extra hospital beds and 10,000 more GPs, and the cuts in public health budgets could be reversed.

After the election, the Prime Minister and her Ministers appeared to be listening to the electorate when they were reported to have said that austerity was over. Sadly, that was just Tory rhetoric, and far from the reality. Only this week, secret cost-cutting plans drawn up by the Tories were leaked, suggesting shocking details that could pose further danger to our NHS. Reports suggest that NHS managers are being told to "make difficult choices" to curb overspending in a drive to cut costs. Full details of those plans have not been announced; in fact, I do not believe that the Secretary of State had any intention of announcing them before the leaks occurred. Instead, they are being worked out secretly behind closed doors. They could lead to even longer waiting times, rationing of care, job losses, and ward closures in hospitals. I am deeply concerned about what that could mean for my constituents, and I ask the Government to disclose the plans fully for the purpose of public scrutiny. The NHS belongs to the public, and should therefore be accountable both to Members of Parliament and to the public at large.

As for pay, while workloads have increased, nurses have been handed a 1% pay cap for seven years in a row. That does not even cover the rise in inflation. During the election campaign, the PM said that nurses went to food banks "for a variety of reasons". I suggest that the only reason is that the Government have made them £3,000 worse off since 2010, while continuing to give tax breaks to the richest.

We know that their current conditions are causing more staff to leave the NHS out of desperation. Many of those vacancies are left unfilled. According to the Royal College of Nursing, there are 40,000 registered nurse vacancies in England, and an average vacancy

rate of 11.1%. The rate has doubled in the past three years, and we are seeing the effects in NHS hospitals up and down the country. Furthermore, the Government's shambolic approach to Brexit has created a feeling of uncertainty among EU nationals. No wonder the number of applications from EU nurses to work in the UK has plummeted by 96% since last year.

Nurses and doctors are not crying wolf when they warn us about the health and safety issues that are arising from the lack of proper staffing levels. Has the Secretary of State made any assessment of the impact of the drop in applications on the NHS, and, if so, what action does he propose to take to ensure that it does not affect the health and safety of patients?

The proposal in the Queen's Speech for an immigration Bill provides no details to reassure those EU citizens currently living in the UK. Labour has been calling for all their rights to be guaranteed since the referendum was decided. I concede that the Prime Minister has finally made an offer for EU citizens, but it is a half-hearted one at best, containing little clarity.

I welcome any suggestion that would help and support the NHS, and I therefore welcome the Government's commitment to reforming mental health legislation to give it greater priority. However, last Wednesday the Prime Minister gave no assurances that no mental health trust would see its budget cut this year, as 40% of them did last year. If the Government want to be taken seriously, they must back their rhetoric with the financial support that is needed. They have not done this. It is clear that the Prime Minister will find the money to cling to power, but not to secure mental health spending.

Finally, the debacle over the dementia tax revealed that this Government will gladly force the most vulnerable, particularly those suffering from long-term debilitating diseases such as dementia, to cover their own social care bill entirely. Surely we need to merge health and social care to get the best results, but we must pool the risk and not let the most vulnerable fend for themselves in old age.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing): To make a maiden speech, I call Alex Burghart.

4.20 pm

Alex Burghart (Brentwood and Ongar) (Con): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. How very nice it is to see you back in your rightful place.

I am honoured to stand before the House as the newly elected Member for Brentwood and Ongar, that most beautiful constituency in the most beautiful county of Essex in this, our most beautiful country. At the heart of our community is the Brentwood-Shenfield-Hutton conurbation, a very hive of Thatcherite prosperity. We have the UK headquarters of Ford, a major BT office, many hundreds of people who work hard in the square mile to feed and fuel the City, and a large number of small, medium and large enterprises built by the sweat of local people. We have high employment and high home ownership. We have good schools. I would not say that our mission should be to make the rest of the country more like Brentwood and Ongar, but there are certainly parts of the country that could benefit from being more like it.

Brentwood is surrounded by the numinous beauty of the much-neglected Essex countryside, which contains many wonderful rural villages. I think just of one: Greensted by Ongar. It is mentioned in the Domesday Book, when it had 44 families and 520 pigs, which makes it slightly larger than it is today. It also has a small wooden church, which is unremarkable but for its beauty and its age, both of which are very great. You see, it is the oldest wooden church to be found anywhere in the world. It was built in the mid-9th century, and it is a somewhat stirring thought that some of those families mentioned in the Domesday Book might have shared the space that we can occupy today.

Such things matter to me not because I am a sentimental old fool—although I am—but because I was for a long time a student and a teacher of medieval history. One of my friends was kind enough to suggest that that was the perfect training for becoming a Conservative MP, and in that they may have been right, but perhaps not in the way they intended. I see a great many resonances between that period and our own. Let us take the peasants' revolt of 1381, which started on the high street in Brentwood. It was a rebellion against vexatious taxation levied by a distant, overbearing Government. I warn the House that my constituents' attitude to taxation has changed very little in the intervening 636 years.

I think also of the writings of the Venerable Bede, who said that in the mid-7th century, the East Saxons formed a great friendship with that great man of the north, King Oswiu. In our own time, the people of my constituency formed a great friendship with another great man of the north: Sir Eric Pickles. For 25 years, he was a great servant of his constituency, his party and his country. He was much loved, and he will be much missed. Sir Eric and I are alike in some ways. He and I are both great defenders of a property-owning democracy. But we are not alike in all ways. He is a great man and a great Yorkshireman, to boot, whereas I am a mere novice and a man of Wessex.

I was born in Dorset, the son of two state school teachers who taught me everything I needed to know about the importance of hard work, of family, of education and of home. While those are all things that are important to my constituents today, I suspect that they were important to the people of my area in the mid-14th century and, who knows, maybe in the mid-7th century. I would not go so far as to say that they are everything, but we are nothing without them. That view has been reinforced in me through my work with the Centre for Social Justice, which was founded by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr Duncan Smith), and by my work in the Department for Education on the Munro review of child protection, which was established under the aegis of my hon. Friend the Member for East Worthing and Shoreham (Tim Loughton).

Wherever in our country we find an absence of work, wherever we find families who have been broken by poor mental health, addiction or domestic abuse, wherever we find children failing in schools or families struggling with home life, we find the social problems that are so knotty. They are the challenges of our time, and the best of way tackling poverty and those problems is by tackling the root causes. We have a good record of that in government: we have record employment; we have 1.8 million more children in good and outstanding

schools; we have a troubled families programme that helps 400,000 families with complex problems to get back on their feet; and we have a huge programme of house building. But there will always be more to do in this area. This House will face many challenges in this Parliament—historic challenges. To quote a former Prime Minister, we will

“feel the hand of history upon our shoulders.”

Who knows—but we may at times find its hand on other bits of our anatomy. The challenge of social justice is something that will continue throughout this Parliament and beyond, and I am here to try to do my part and to serve my constituents.

4.26 pm

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you for choosing me to make my maiden speech in this debate, which is of such crucial importance to our nation's future. It is a pleasure to follow the entertaining speech of the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Alex Burghart). It is a particular honour for me to have the privilege of representing Edinburgh West 20 years after the late Donald Gorrie first won the seat for the Liberal Democrats. He was a great servant to the area, first as a councillor, then an MP, and then an MSP. He was succeeded by John Barrett and then Mike Crockett, who was replaced two years ago by my immediate predecessor, Michelle Thomson. I am sure that her powerful, moving speech on International Women's Day, in which she revealed her own teenage trauma, was an inspiration to many.

Now it is my privilege to serve the communities of Edinburgh West. I know that each of us is confident of our constituency's uniqueness, but few sights can compare with the majesty of our three bridges across the Forth. Whether arriving in Edinburgh West by land, rail or air, those three bridges seem somehow to encapsulate the essence and history of British engineering and its success. From the stark red girders of the 19th century Forth bridge, now a world heritage site, to the distinctive 1960s architecture of the road bridge, to the striking 21st-century sleekness of the soon-to-be-completed—we are promised—Queensferry crossing, all were created along the route of Queen Margaret's 11th-century crossing, from which the community in their shadow takes its name: South Queensferry. It is just one of our many socially and culturally diverse communities, which include, in the west, Newbridge, Ratho, Ratho Station, and Kirkliston. Then there is Branton, Cramond, Muirhouse, Davidson's Mains, Blackhall, Drumbrae, Drylaw, Corstorphine, and Murrayfield, whose stadium is of course home to Scottish rugby union, where we look forward to greeting the other nations of the United Kingdom—often with trepidation.

However, Edinburgh West is also home to one of Scotland's most celebrated couples: Tian Tian and Yang Guang, the UK's only giant pandas. Some Conservative Members may be relieved that, since the general election, they are no longer outnumbered in Scotland by the pandas. I reassure them that I sympathise; they are not alone.

The constituency is also a key driver of the region's economy, which is dependent on European trade and European citizens who work in the health service and other sectors and who now find that they are under

[Christine Jardine]

threat from Brexit. Edinburgh airport—a key link between Scotland and the international market—the royal highland show, which is crucial to agriculture, the RBS headquarters and a new bottling plant for one of the world's leading drink companies all represent an economy now tensely awaiting the outcome of the next two years of negotiations.

Although we are an area that benefits from being home to many such companies, our communities are not without their challenges. They are challenges that are common to many across the UK: pressure on public services, rising household debt and overstretched health and welfare services. There are also local issues, such as the controversial proposed new flightpath into Edinburgh airport, the threat to our green belt, and the pollution along St John's Road.

I intend to dedicate my time here to working with groups that take on those challenges, such as the award-winning Tenants and Residents in Muirhouse, the Corstorphine community, which is currently working to rebuild its historic public hall, and many others who campaign tirelessly to improve the lives and welfare of their neighbours. I promise to be their voice on the issues that affect their lives, their livelihoods and their health. I will work on their behalf for the open, tolerant society I believe in and that offers opportunity for all and protects our human rights. And I will remain true to the promise I made on the doorsteps of Edinburgh West last month, to stand up for the constituents' view, as clearly expressed in two referendums and the recent general election, that although their overwhelming preference is to remain at the heart of the EU, they will have no truck with independence, and are determined that that will be as part of this United Kingdom.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): Order. I thank all Members for the support that has been given in the election of Deputy Speakers. Like Mr Speaker, I pay tribute to Natascha Engel, who will be missed on both sides of the House.

4.31 pm

Maria Caulfield (Lewes) (Con): It is good to see you back in the Chair, Mr Deputy Speaker.

I start my four minutes by paying tribute to the amazing maiden speeches we have heard this afternoon from my hon. Friends the Members for Hitchin and Harpenden (Bim Afolami), for Gordon (Colin Clark) and for Brentwood and Ongar (Alex Burghart), and the hon. Member for Stockton South (Dr Williams). It is great to follow the maiden speech of the hon. Member for Edinburgh West (Christine Jardine).

I will focus my short time on social care and the pay cap. I will not go over the same ground as my hon. Friend the Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston), because she echoed everything I wanted to say. My message to Ministers is that the consultation is much welcome, because we cannot kid ourselves. The current social care system is not working. I echo that we need to move health and social care together by commissioning them together, paying for them together and delivering them together. Until we do, we are just rearranging the deckchairs on a sinking ship.

My plea to Ministers is that the consultation is not just about how we fund social care, because we will be missing a trick if we just do that. We need to consider the structure of social care and the population we aim to serve. When the system was set up many, many years ago, with the NHS looking after healthcare and local authorities looking after social care, the population we were caring for was very different. We now look after a much older population who have many comorbidities who need multiple services. We are now looking after patients who are living with diseases that people used to die from; those patients often die from something else completely. It is a different population, and we need to structure the service around their needs and what works best for them.

I declare an interest in the pay cap. Having worked as a nurse from 2010 to 2015 under the pay cap, I know exactly how difficult it is and how challenging the finances are. Most nurses I know work in their hospital bank to supplement their wages. Let us look at the issue seriously. On the whole, nurses were initially very understanding of the pay freeze, but we are now seven years into this, with no end date in sight. We need to support nurses and all healthcare professionals in this situation because, unless we do, the £3.7 billion that we currently spend on agency fees will only increase as people vote with their feet. Nurses make life-and-death decisions on every shift. It cannot be right that they are paid, on average, £34,000—the Royal College of Nursing disputes that figure, saying that the real figure is £26,000 a year, as most nurses are paid, on average, in bands 5 to 6—yet hospital managers, who make important but not life-threatening decisions, are paid on average £45,000 a year and senior managers are paid £75,000 a year. We need to look at the pay structure for nurses, as well as the pay freeze.

I have a final point to make. When the Labour Government were in control they had a great opportunity in 2004 to deal with that situation under Agenda for Change, but they wasted that opportunity. They wanted to reduce the wage bill by £1.3 billion and they downgraded nurses from the General Whitley Council to the Agenda for Change banding structure, with many nurses losing pay and grades as a result. Let us not pretend that when the Labour Government were in charge they did any better.

4.35 pm

Mr Stephen Hepburn (Jarrow) (Lab): I wholeheartedly support the vibrant campaigns to save our precious NHS and social care that are going on around the country, not least in South Tyneside. These are some of the noblest causes our country has. These things are under threat from austerity, and I want to raise a few issues today.

First, it is disgraceful that on the 69th anniversary of the NHS we are talking about the possible downgrading and closure of my local hospital in South Tyneside, but that is exactly what is happening. Next week, a bogus consultation exercise will start—it is one that we know only too well from our experience in the area. In Jarrow, we had an NHS walk-in centre used by 26,000 people a year, but it closed following the very same Mickey Mouse consultation exercise. The same is now going to happen to South Tyneside hospital. This week, there was a crowded meeting in the Jarrow Alberta club,

which was organised by the Save South Tyneside Hospital group, who are demanding that the hospital stays open. There is only one reason why the hospital is under threat—Tory Government cuts.

Secondly, we are experiencing a national crisis on social care—it is a crisis caused in Downing Street and a crisis that can be solved in Downing Street. One word explains why our elderly and vulnerable are left unwashed, unfed, neglected and frightened; once again, it comes down to cuts—Tory Government cuts. Local councils have seen their grants cut by up to 50%. As the leader of South Tyneside Council, Iain Malcolm, has said,

“Adult social care is at a tipping point”.

Thirdly, let me deal with the issue facing cystic fibrosis sufferers. More than 10,000 people suffer from that life-threatening condition, half of whom will die before their reach the age of 30. The drug Orkambi has the potential to change that, and it is available through health services around Europe. It is recognised in this country by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, but it is not recognised by this Government, because, once again, of cuts, cuts, cuts.

I know people are going to be saying, “Where do we get the money from?” I will tell them where we can get it from. We can get it from the same magic Tory Government money tree that can give the Democratic Unionist party a £1 billion bung to save their necks in office. We can find it from the same magic Tory Government money tree that gave the top 1% of richest people in this country tax cuts. We can get it from the same magic Tory Government money tree that gave the richest 2% of estates in this country a tax cut. And we can get it from the same Tory Government magic money tree that gave the top 5% of richest corporations in this country tax cuts. That is where we will get the money from. I look forward to voting against this Queen’s Speech tonight and voting for a Queen’s Speech that will bring fairness to this country.

4.39 pm

Derek Thomas (St Ives) (Con): It is good to see you again in your place, Mr Deputy Speaker. The new Parliament gives us an opportunity to renew a commitment to address the significant challenges Great Britain faces. Following the general election, the majority of people I meet want us to work together to address these challenges in the interests of everyone. That is certainly the case as regards health and social care. People expect, want and deserve our commitment to work together to ensure that they get the care, respect and compassion they deserve.

This is an immense subject, and there will be many more opportunities to debate how healthcare, the NHS and social care are supported to meet the increasing demand. For now, I wish to refer to just a few areas using the experience in west Cornwall and Scilly in my constituency of St Ives. It is imperative that we increase efforts to integrate services. In Cornwall and on Scilly, GPs and healthcare workers have drawn up impressive locality plans that bring together services, which promise to improve patient care and to make better use of resources so that more people can be treated. However, progress is slow, as these efforts are frustrated by processes and external managers.

I have raised in this House before the Edward Hain community hospital, which was closed due to fire safety concerns in February 2016. Despite considerable local will and determination, the community beds remain closed even though hundreds of patients have been resident in urgent care hospitals, which is not the best place for them or good for the hospitals concerned. The community hospital remains closed because no one NHS body will take responsibility for reopening the beds.

Let me move further west and slightly overseas. On St. Mary’s on the Isles of Scilly, there is a united effort to integrate health and social care. However, progress is painfully slow. The islands have a community hospital and a council-run care home. Patient care would be even better if those services were brought closer together. There is wide agreement to do that, but islanders became dangerously close to losing their care home because of a lack of progress towards that integration and shared service provision.

There is an urgent need to integrate services so that patient care and use of resources are further improved. There is also a need to train, support and pay adequately our care and support workers. That will reduce the pressure on urgent care as we will be able to improve care in the community.

Cornwall council, our local authority, received an extra £12 million from the Treasury in April, yet three months on, the council has not made it clear how it intends to use those additional funds. It is vital that the council gets on and addresses that issue.

It is also important that, during this Parliament, considerably more is done to remove the pressure on health and care services. Prevention, improved education and understanding expectations are key to that. Healthcare specialists, GPs and consultants have made it clear to me that much more must be done to provide education for us all so that we are empowered to look after our own health and well-being long before we present to an NHS provider for treatment. That is true for diabetes, which is a condition that has such an impact on people’s lives. Better education, better use of community pharmacy and specialist health professionals and advancement in technology offer a brighter future for people with this condition and I urge the Government not to lose sight of their ambition to deliver these measures for those who suffer from diabetes.

In my constituency, I have found that people are unclear about where to turn for diagnosis and treatment. As a result, they present to urgent care centres when another service may be more appropriate. A great service could be delivered and considerable pressure on urgent care reduced if we can give, during this Parliament, greater clarity on who people should turn to when they are in need of care.

4.43 pm

Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP): It is a pleasure, Mr Deputy Speaker, to see you back in your place. All is well with the world when you are back in the Chair.

May I begin by congratulating new Members from across the House on their maiden speeches, particularly our new friends from different political parties who are representing constituencies in Scotland?

[Stewart Malcolm McDonald]

My remarks will primarily focus on defence and international security. I am sure that I am not the only Member of this House who was dismayed by the fact that defence got so little attention during the election campaign, which explains why defence has been given such a poor showing in the Queen's Speech, adumbrated by the fact that not a single Defence Minister has appeared at the Dispatch Box in the past five days.

That said, I should like to start on a note of consensus. I think that we can work with the Government on the Bill on flexible working for the armed forces. There is much to be welcomed in the fact that the Government are now looking at that seriously, as it is a model that works elsewhere in the world. Our manifesto committed to making the case for having an armed forces representative body on a statutory footing—something that is the norm in countries such as Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark. Our serving personnel should be properly represented within the military, and with defence policy decision makers. We look forward to making that case here in Parliament.

I should also like to express our continued frustration at the lack of a national shipbuilding strategy. In the previous Parliament, the Government continued to move the goalposts and avoided being up front with the country on what was happening here. Despite continual attempts by hon. Members on both sides of the House, the Government continued to duck and dive. Well, the time for ducking and diving on the national shipbuilding strategy is over. If it is not written, get it written. If it is written, the Government need to get it published.

More fundamental was the grave omission from the Queen's Speech of a new strategic defence and security review. The previous SDSR was based on the premise that Britain would still be a member of the European Union. Given that it has not taken Brexit into account, its risk analysis, and ultimately its conclusions, surely require updating with some considerable urgency.

We will also hold the Government to account on their actions abroad. On Monday the Defence Secretary gave a very helpful briefing on the current situation in Syria, which I thank him for, but we remain concerned about the deconfliction lines between Russia and the coalition forces. We would also like to hear a bit more about what the Government are doing to tackle the poison of Daesh online.

There is something more profound that we would like to see change, and that is the defence posture of the United Kingdom Government. We would like to see not only a shift away from the militaristic projection around the world that relies on Trident, but a shift towards defending our own waters and those in the Icelandic gap and the high north. This is a massive dereliction of duty on the Government's part in keeping their citizens safe, and it is also a dereliction of what we owe our allies. It was the former United States General and NATO Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, Philip Breedlove, who described the north Atlantic as NATO's lifeblood and the transatlantic link. So I plead with the Government to please face up to their responsibilities in the high north.

I do not have time to cover everything, but however long we are here for, I will be sure to get round to it.

4.47 pm

Helen Whately (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con): All of us must listen and learn, and one lesson I take from the recent election is that we on the Government Benches must explain our values to a new generation and explain why our approach gives people opportunities and a chance to make the most of their lives, and funds the public services we care about. We must get on with the job we have been asked to do, see through a good Brexit, heal divisions in our society, sort out housing, set out how we will fund public services sustainably, and tackle the sense people have of being overlooked too often by those in authority.

In this Queen's Speech, the patient safety Bill, creating an independent body to investigate patient safety, should help achieve exactly that for the NHS. It should give people a safe space to speak up, driving a stronger culture of listening and learning—applying lessons from the airline industry—so that patients are less likely to suffer the consequences of mistakes.

The commitments on mental health, along with the £1.4 billion of extra funding for children and young people's mental health announced in the last Budget, address one of the great concerns across society, particularly among young people. I particularly welcome the introduction of mental health first aid training for teachers, so that more children get mental health help at school.

Providing social care as more people—thankfully—live longer is one of the great challenges we face as a country, and one that, I am afraid, Labour shirked in this election. We committed an extra £2 billion in our last Budget, but we know that is not enough for the longer term, and it is time to have the conversation about the contract between generations—about whether younger people, struggling right now to afford a home, to buy or even to rent, who are likely to work for more years than their parents, should really be the ones to pay for older people's care.

Norman Lamb (North Norfolk) (LD): I was surprised to hear the hon. Lady mention the references to social care in the general election campaign. Does she support what the Conservatives put forward, and the abandonment of the cap on care costs that they had previously committed to implementing?

Helen Whately: I hope that we will consult on a cap, but I welcome the fact that we took the issue head on and came up with a plan that would fund and improve social care to address exactly the point that I am referring to. We need to make sure that it is not the younger generation—people of working age—who fund much of the bill for social care.

As with social care, we face growing costs for the NHS, and the Government have put more money where it is needed—an extra £8 billion more annually by 2022 compared with this year. We can do that because we have a strong economy—3 million more jobs since 2010; rising wages; and unemployment at its lowest for over 40 years. That economic growth changes lives for the better, and it pays for public services.

While I differ from the official position of the Democratic Unionist party on issues of equality and women's rights, I thank DUP colleagues for their support and responsible

approach in helping us to make sure that we have a Government. That is in contrast to the Opposition, who made it clear in their manifesto that they would put our economy and British livelihoods at risk. People voted for change in the election, but they did not vote for a socialist revolution. Britain deserves better. We should be an open, optimistic and united country: a great place to do business, with a strong economy that pays for world-class public services, where everyone has the chance of a decent job and a better life and people contribute their fair share because we all have a stake. I urge Members from all parts of the House to come together in the national interest and back the Prime Minister to get on with the job.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): I call Jess Phillips.

4.51 pm

Jess Phillips (Birmingham, Yardley) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker—rightfully returned. I rise in this debate about health and security to speak about how the two things collide. I am pleased to see in the Gracious Speech that there is going to be a domestic violence and abuse Bill. I await the details of what exactly that means and look forward to working with the Government on the real action that is needed. I think I speak for every victim of domestic violence when I say that practical action and resources are what is needed, not more words written on goatskin.

No one will be surprised to hear that domestic violence is damaging to a person's health. There has always been an argument, and it remains the case, that the Department of Health must do more to join the fight to tackle the issue, which for many years has been the poor relation. The fight has been left to local councils and the Home Office. I hope that tomorrow we will get to vote on real action by the Health Secretary that will really help vulnerable women in the United Kingdom—I am talking about the inequality that exists when it comes to abortions in this country.

I do not needlessly conflate the two issues of domestic abuse and abortion. Creating a world where women control their bodies and their lives is the beginning, middle and end of tackling violence against women. I have met hundreds of women who were kept pregnant as a pattern of their abuse. I remember one case where a young woman was held down by her husband's brothers while he raped her to get her pregnant, thus ensuring her captivity. I have met victims of human trafficking brought to this country for their ability to bear children and reap the financial benefits for their slave owners. "The Handmaid's Tale" is not a dystopia to me: I have met women whose wombs kept them captive. I will never forget sitting on the domestic homicide review of Natasha Trevis, a 22-year-old Birmingham mom of three murdered by her partner. During his trial it emerged that he learned of Natasha having an abortion after it was "let slip" by a social worker in the days leading up to the murder and was seen as the key motive. No one can tell me that the desire to control a woman's reproductive rights by this man was not an act of abuse. She was 22 and on her fourth pregnancy.

The state must never collude with this abuse, let alone perpetrate it. By turning some women away from having abortions in any part of the UK we make a political act to control their bodies. We do not have to be culturally or religiously sensitive to our devolved nations or their persuasions. The Health Secretary has a real chance to help women who travel to this country by offering them safe, free abortions here in England. We would not tolerate other cultural practices such as female genital mutilation, so why do we tolerate this? Today I am here simply to ask for a change in health policy in this country. I want our NHS in England to provide a safe haven to the women of Northern Ireland.

While we are talking about wombs and how some want to tell women what they can and cannot do with theirs, I wanted to give a shout-out to my mate Ruth, a midwife. While the rest of my mates were chatting on WhatsApp last night about "Love Island"—Marcel, totally for the win—she was working a night shift as a midwife. She trained as a nurse first, then as a midwife; she has worked for the NHS for 19 years. For every hour she worked last night, like every night, she was paid £12.09. My baby took two hours to be born. I nearly died in those two hours and so did he, but both of us are here to tell the tale. I think that is worth more than £24.18. It seems that Ministers do not agree.

4.55 pm

Victoria Prentis (Banbury) (Con): It is always difficult to follow such a powerful and passionate speech, but I will do so because I feel just as passionately about what I am going to talk about—the draft patient safety Bill, which I truly believe will do a great deal to assist my constituents and all of us who care about patient safety. I hope that it will embed a new culture of learning lessons in the NHS.

I am deeply concerned about how the NHS is often defensive when something goes wrong. It is not always transparent; the medical profession can be very hierarchical. Believe you me, as a former senior civil servant and Government lawyer, I know about hierarchies—not least from when I worked at the Ministry of Defence. The NHS is much worse than many of the organisations for which I have worked. It is right that we should focus on outcomes, not inputs.

Anybody who has ever met me will know that I talk about the Horton general hospital within about a minute of starting a conversation, but there may be a few new Members who have not yet heard that my hospital, in which I was born, is under threat; I reassure them that in Banbury we talk of little else. I am proud to have been re-elected with an increased vote share to continue the fight for all my constituents. Most of my constituents accepted the Conservative message that to have a strong NHS we must have a strong economy. But however they voted, I will continue to fight to save the Horton on behalf of them all.

Robert Courts (Witney) (Con): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Victoria Prentis: No.

Last week, I visited the Grange primary school, where I met seven and eight-year-olds. They had grasped the two main issues: we are worried about the safety of

[Victoria Prentis]

poorly babies and about mummies who have to spend up to two hours in the latter stages of labour in their cars going to the John Radcliffe hospital. Those children reminded me of my seven-year-old self: I, too, made a speech in defence of the Horton general hospital in my primary school a few minutes' drive from where I was last week. It is noticeable that the pupils grasped some of my concerns about patient safety better than some of the members of the clinical commissioning group, whose meeting I also attended last week. The children understood how quickly babies can become high-risk during labour. I have many reasons for losing sleep over the safety of the mothers giving birth in my constituency, and we have significant challenges in the year ahead.

In the minute remaining to me, I shall quickly discuss governance issues. Yesterday, we heard that the chief executive of the CCG would be retiring, as will the clinical lead. I am concerned that the architects of the transformation process will be disappearing halfway through it. I really beg them to stop the consultation process at this point and start again—regroup. Let us listen to patients. We have a problem with recruitment. As I have said before in this place, for want of a nail the shoe was lost. I am concerned that the lack of two obstetricians means that thousands of women in my constituency will be unable to give birth close to home.

In Banbury, Bicester and the villages that I represent, we concentrate on doing the right thing. Our companies adapt to the challenges of Brexit. We are building five times more houses than the national average. We need healthcare that is kind, safe and close to home. The draft patient safety Bill will strengthen our resources to fight for the Horton general hospital, and I really welcome its inclusion in the Gracious Speech.

4.59 pm

John Woodcock (Barrow and Furness) (Lab/Co-op): It is good to see you back in your place, Mr Deputy Speaker. Indeed, it is rather good to be back in mine after everything that has happened.

Those of us who occasionally glance at Twitter while we are listening attentively to speeches in the Chamber may have noticed that the Government appear to have told the media today that they may be relaxing the pay cap that has been strangling public sector workers for many years. The Minister was gracious enough to look at the badges that many of us are wearing, although he has declined to wear one. Given that we have heard no announcement, I do hope that he may be about to let the House know what the policy will be for the millions of public sector workers.

Margaret Greenwood: Does my hon. Friend agree that the issue of low pay is really sapping morale in the national health service, and that we really should do something about pay in the NHS in this, its 70th anniversary year?

John Woodcock: Absolutely. The cap is not only unfair to those workers who are just scraping by; it is becoming a barrier to delivering the first-class care that patients need.

Given the way this is being done, the Government are beginning to look like they are, to quote the now Lord Lamont,

“in office but not in power.”—[*Official Report*, 9 June 1993; Vol. 226, c. 285.]

Now, I have not been one to lavish unnecessary praise on our Front Benchers over the past two years, but it increasingly looks like the Opposition are driving the agenda in this country on behalf of people who are, frankly, sick of the way in which they have been taken for granted by the Government, and who gave that message strongly at the ballot box. It is so important that the Government put this right. Lord Lamont's speech back in 1993 could have been made today. Back then, he said:

“There is something wrong with the way in which we make our decisions...there is too much short-termism, too much reacting to events, and not enough shaping of events.”—[*Official Report*, 9 June 1993; Vol. 226, c. 284-285.]

That is exactly what is happening now. The Government have lost their authority and are drifting. There are some welcome consequences—for example, the hateful message, “Bring back foxhunting”, is absent from the Queen's Speech, and grammar schools have gone by the wayside—but this is no way to run a country.

My constituents want to know the future of the NHS sustainability and transformation plans. In my area, Lancashire and South Cumbria has more than £300 million of cuts on the table. If those cuts were applied proportionately to Furness general hospital in my constituency, we could lose our prized A&E and our hard-fought-for maternity unit. These cuts are not sustainable and are not in the long-term interests of the country. We need a Government who will take a grip for the long term and not be buffeted from pillar to post by events.

I end on an issue on which I hope there is consensus between Members on both sides of the House: the domestic violence and abuse Bill. It is really good that this has been brought forward, but it is concerning that, after the Government talked this measure up, it will now appear in draft form. If that means that the Government will take the time to get it right and bring forward the strongest Bill possible, that is all well and good, but when the Government's majority is propped up by another party that does not share the culture and world view of many of the Conservative Members whose views I respect on issues such as women's rights, which the hon. Member for Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately) mentioned, I have to wonder whether there is some nervousness about what the definition of abuse will be.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Jackie Doyle-Price) *indicated dissent.*

John Woodcock: The Minister shakes her head, but will she tell me whether that definition will take into account the full need to deter the horror of financial control and emotional abuse, as only a strong definition will? If it will, the Government can rely on full and hearty support from Labour Members. If it will not, we will push them to finish the job properly.

5.4 pm

Mr Marcus Fysh (Yeovil) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (John Woodcock). It is also a pleasure to be back in this place, and I thank the good people of the Yeovil constituency for sending me back here.

It appeared to me during the election campaign that people in the south-west really did understand what was at stake, and in my patch they voted overwhelmingly for the return of a Conservative Government and against any change to the Government. In part, that was because we will have high-quality public services only if we have a strong economy and a sensible plan for delivering those services.

I am very proud today to wear the tie of Yeovil district hospital, which is one of our nation's vanguards when it comes to trying properly to integrate social care with healthcare. That has to be one of the main planks of a policy that will allow us to provide a high-quality service to our older generations in the future. Things are going very well: the hospital is performing according to its targets, its waiting times are down, and although things are challenging there, morale is actually very good.

I welcome the idea that there might be a bit more flexibility in how we pay our people, because recruitment and retention is a big issue in primary care, acute care and social care, and that is a major challenge for us. We have to look at the overall packages, and we have to incentivise good behaviour in our hospitals and in the whole sector.

Liz McInnes (Heywood and Middleton) (Lab): While the hon. Gentleman is talking about recruitment, will he comment on the fact that although the Government scrapped the nurse bursary, saying that they would fund an extra 10,000 nursing places, they have so far not funded a single nursing place?

Mr Fysh: I thank the hon. Lady for her intervention. When it comes to the student loans system, I am keen to make sure that loans are made at a reasonable interest rate. Broadening the availability of loans and training places is also massively important, and I want to come on to that.

In Yeovil, we have a potential project to train more nurses and healthcare professionals locally. I would like to put in a plug for Yeovil College, which wants to set up a new facility to do that in conjunction with the district hospital. It is only by doing that that we can attract good people to the south-west to take part in this massively important work.

Another part of attracting people is having affordable housing. We have heard how some on public sector salaries—and on private sector salaries—find it hard to afford private market housing. That needs to be a major focus of the Government going forward. It is absolutely one of our values in the Conservative party to try to create more housing in the right places at the right price, so that young people can get on the housing ladder and take part in society.

With our ageing population, we will need to spend more money on our public services in general. We have serious challenges on that front, but the difference between the Government and the Opposition is typically that we want to plan properly for how to pay for those things, whereas the Opposition just think we can spend the money and borrow more and more. That is just not the case, and I for one will always try to come up with things that we can do.

We should be looking at the pension system. I see no reason why those who are very wealthy in retirement should have the same entitlement to a state pension as

those with less money. I think we could save about £4 billion or £5 billion if the very wealthy did not have the same entitlement, and I am very happy to share that idea with Ministers.

All this depends on our having a very constructive and smooth approach to the Brexit process. That will clearly be a focus of this Parliament, and we need to make sure that it happens correctly. We need to work together on both sides of the House to make sure that we get a good Brexit that we can be proud of in the future. Compromise will be needed on both sides.

5.10 pm

Rosie Cooper (West Lancashire) (Lab): The issues that I wish to discuss encapsulate how the Health and Social Care Act 2012 is, day by day, weakening the fundamental foundations of the NHS; they include disparities in salaries and pay rises, lack of scrutiny and accountability, severe deficiencies in financial governance with regard to public moneys, and an emerging culture in which bosses feel they can act with impunity.

When I asked the Prime Minister about pay rises given to the Liverpool clinical commissioning group board, that information caused uproar and disbelief in health circles and among the wider public. While frontline staff were subject to the pay cap, the board gave themselves increases of between 15% and 81%. The chair got a 50% increase, taking him to £150,000; a practice nurse got 62%, taking her up to £65,000; and the chief executive and the finance director got 15% each. The board had only two non-exec directors; one was paid £105,000—a 42% increase—while the other got £55,000, a 25% increase. Deloitte's limited-scope review confirmed that there were serious failings in governance, conflicts of interests, and payments to the board and non-exec directors that fell outside existing guidance. Only the chair of remuneration has resigned. The whole board who gave themselves these pay rises have not been held to account at all.

I alerted Simon Stevens to a cavalier attitude to contracting, including in the Liverpool Community Health NHS Trust break-up, in which the CCG insisted on a clinically unsustainable contract figure of £77 million, and then hid behind weak, low-ranking NHS Improvement employees. The conduct of the CCG in these matters fell well below that which would be required in commercial circumstances and should be investigated.

I alerted NHS England to the CCG's handling of the SSP Health surgery contracts. One of the failing practices was allocated to the CCG chair's practice. Several other surgeries went to Primary Care Connect, an organisation that did not even exist when the bids for these surgeries were opened and had only one director, who happened to be a former GP member of the governing body. I have had complaints from right across the city about how this was handled. The CCG is cutting clinical funding to vital organisations, telling them, "Don't talk about it because you'll be biting the hand that feeds you."

Stella Creasy: My hon. Friend is describing an absolutely shocking case, which is about the treatment of NHS workers in her constituency. She talks about people being told not to talk about it. Today we have heard this Government say that they have heard our message about the importance of proper pay in our NHS, and now they are trying to shut that down because they are

[Stella Creasy]

frightened about the reaction on their Back Benches. Is that not a terrible indictment of how they intend to run our country?

Rosie Cooper: It is a terrible indictment; the NHS is doing exactly these things. The CCG employed a senior administrator, paid them £70,000, and then seconded them to the GP Federation—a private company. While giving itself huge pay rises, cutting cash to organisations, and making unilateral financial decisions that threw NHS organisations into crisis decision making, it still found £14,000 to sponsor a “women of the year” dinner. NHS England has indicated that the financial governance is poor, but not fraud, because the Health and Social Care Act was so loosely written in this regard. I ask the Secretary of State whether the Government intend to tighten the rules to prevent such outrageous decisions being made ever again. Highly paid auditors who passed each year’s accounts without qualification did not notice. The ultimate accountable body is NHSE; so far, it has investigated remuneration governance, not governance generally, and it has taken no action against the accountable officer, the finance director and the board, who have shown them themselves to be failing in their duties. To me, this says institutionalised dishonesty bordering on corruption.

Sadly, I believe that the NHS is now so used to fudging and mudging that not sticking to the rules is becoming acceptable practice. We need to recalibrate our response to bad behaviour and make sure that the people who show it are held to account. We need an independent, systematic investigation into Liverpool CCG—and indeed the wider Liverpool health economy. Will the Health Secretary ensure that Liverpool CCG is independently investigated, and that any failings are openly addressed to ensure that this cannot and is not happening elsewhere in the country? After all, this is our taxpayers’ money.

5.15 pm

Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): I am honoured to follow that amazing speech by my hon. Friend the Member for West Lancashire (Rosie Cooper). To say that addressing the corruption of Liverpool CCG should be a Government priority is an understatement. It is an example of privatisation by stealth and corruption that has no place in this country.

Throughout today’s debate there has been a lot of talk about British values, but what do we mean by British values? Do we mean the bravery of those doctors, nurses, firefighters and police officers who ran to help those being attacked by terrorists? Do we mean those who ran into Grenfell Tower to help people at a time of distress? Do we mean those we have been insulting with a 1% pay rise, year on year, driving them into poverty? Do we mean those NHS workers who between 2010 and 2016 have lost £4.3 billion in cuts from the NHS staffing budget? Is that who we mean when we talk about British values? Or do we mean the 42% of NHS workers who do unpaid overtime to keep the NHS going?

Perhaps we mean the teachers and teaching assistants who have been trying to subsist on that 1% pay rise. We rely on them to teach British values and to tell our children about the need for reflection and decision making based on the analysis of facts, not personal

gratification, and to make judgments based on equality, fairness and opportunity for all. Yet today disadvantaged children in this country are, at 173 percentage points, not ready for school at age 5. The gap grows at every stage in life, from play group to university. How can that be part of the British values espoused and promoted by this House?

British values used to be espoused by our pride in our armed forces and their capacity to provide security around the globe, but they have now been hollowed out. The right hon. Member for New Forest East (Dr Lewis), my colleague on the Defence Committee, has addressed the massive underfunding of our armed forces. We fudge our 2% commitment to NATO by including in it pensions, GCHQ funding and even overseas broadcasting. The gap in our defence budget is between £10 billion and £20 billion. Our armed forces are being bled dry and our capability to defend this country is diminishing day by day. We need a rapid review and a new assessment of the capability of our armed forces and of how we intend to fund them and keep our place in NATO. Our place there used to be critical and highly respected, but now, sadly, it is viewed as offering little to our allies. Yesterday at the land warfare conference in London, we were told by American invitees that “your military is too small. There is no question about that”. That is to our lasting shame.

5.19 pm

Mr Virendra Sharma (Ealing, Southall) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to speak in this debate, and I congratulate you on being returned to your position. I thank the people of my constituency of Ealing, Southall for returning me to the House of Commons with an increased majority. It is a pleasure to follow so many illustrious Members. I have enjoyed listening to their speeches and contributions.

I want to remind hon. Members on both sides of the House of two important intertwined topics that in the past have secured important cross-party support, but sadly last week were not mentioned in the Queen’s Speech. While there is still much work to do on ensuring effective treatment—we can dream of eradication—tuberculosis is normally spoken of in the House in an international context, but I want to talk about the prevalence of TB and antimicrobial resistance in this country, and the lives that that ruins.

Many believe TB has been eradicated here. That is not the case, and there are thousands of cases annually in the UK. Some 40% of those cases occur in London, and most affect people born outside the UK. It is a disease that hurts the least well-off because of poor housing, overcrowding and poor health services. They are seven times more likely than the better-off to contract TB.

International and British efforts have been ineffective in developing modern treatments, and there is still no effective vaccine for adolescents and adults. The current treatments are seriously deficient, they require six-month pill regimens, the treatment is painful and patients can often develop side effects, such as temporary paralysis, which deter them from completing the course. That exacerbates the issue of antibiotic resistance, a serious problem in this country across the whole health sector.

Currently, treatment for drug-resistant TB involves a gruelling two-year course of 14,000 pills—they can have severe side-effects, including permanent deafness—as

well as eight months of intravenous injections. It is little wonder that less than half of those who start treatment complete the course. But it is not just under those trying circumstances that the completion rates for courses of antibiotics are unacceptably high. Too often, patients will feel better and not quite finish their course of antibiotics. That is driving the epidemic of resistance, a horrible and present threat to the way we do healthcare in this country. I hope that the Government will look at how we can ensure that patients are properly educated about the treatment they are taking.

While internationally we are focused on Brexit, I hope that the Government can take steps to ensure that we are not ignoring this serious issue; to ensure that no more lives are lost to this ignored killer; and to reassure thousands undergoing painful and dangerous treatments daily that we will help.

5.23 pm

Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): I, too, congratulate you on your election, Mr Deputy Speaker. I also pay tribute to the many excellent maiden speeches we have heard this afternoon.

I thank the people of Kingston upon Hull North for returning me to the House for the fourth time. The Prime Minister started this election on a “strong and stable” mantra, but she ended it “just managing”, getting by with the best help money can buy from her friends in the Democratic Unionist party.

I campaigned for re-election on the basis of my record as a constituency Member of Parliament, and a manifesto that I believe was much like a modernised version of Labour’s 1945 programme, combining hope and radicalism with a patriotic commitment to the security and unity of our nation. Labour lost the election, but that combination will see our day come again.

Large parts of the Tory manifesto were dropped from the Queen’s Speech, with no dementia tax; the retention of the pension triple lock; no means-testing of the winter fuel allowance; the retention of free school lunches, a policy first pioneered in Hull; and no return to the 1950s on grammar schools or even to the 1850s on foxhunting. However, many plans remain for further cuts to schools, our local NHS and local policing. Recent events show that we need to look again at the magnitude of the cuts to our emergency services over the past seven years. As a Hull MP, I appreciate the value of these services. In 2007, just 10 years ago, we had floods in Hull and I recall how important the work of the police and the fire service were. What happened at Manchester Arena, London Bridge, Grenfell Tower and even in New Palace Yard reminds us how vital these services are, which is why tonight I will be supporting the amendment to the Queen’s Speech to scrap the cap on public sector pay. The Government seem to be in some confusion about their position on the cap. I hope we do not see another omnishambles from the Government over this Queen’s Speech.

On other Government policies that need to be dropped, I hope we will see the end of the gerrymandering scandal of cutting the size of this elected House under the false guise of cost, while increasing the size of the unelected other place. Sadly, the Gracious Speech did not include any reference to the WASPI women’s fight for transitional help, or to those affected by the contaminated blood scandal, the worst treatment disaster

in the history of the NHS. Today, we finally saw some individuals charged for the Hillsborough disaster. After Andy Burnham’s brilliant valedictory speech in the Commons exposing the extent of criminal behaviour in the contaminated blood scandal, we wait to see whether the Government will do the right thing and order an inquiry into what happened.

I noticed mention in the Gracious Speech of further legislation on High Speed 2. As a Hull MP, I find this rather galling. Tory Ministers recently blocked Hull’s privately financed rail electrification scheme—our High Speed 1. The space industry Bill poses the real possibility of commercial space travel happening before the Selby to Hull rail line gets electrified. I wonder what will happen to the northern powerhouse as the Government find £1.5 billion for the new Northern Ireland powerhouse. If Hull were to have the same treatment as Northern Ireland, we would get an extra £209 million of funding: enough to pay for the rail electrification, and to reverse the cuts to the councils and the police.

I will continue in this Parliament, as I did in the previous Parliament, to campaign for a fair deal for Hull, and to make sure the Brexit deal we get is best for this country and my constituency.

5.27 pm

Ian C. Lucas (Wrexham) (Lab): It is a real pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) and to take part in this very interesting debate. There has been a very strong message from this Chamber on public sector pay. One great advantage of general elections is that the voters tell us what they want to talk about. The Prime Minister may have wanted to have an election on Brexit, but on the doorstep public sector pay was a huge issue in my constituency, and, I suspect, in constituencies up and down the country.

The strong message from the campaign was that the country has had enough of inequality. I am a member of the Nationwide building society. Its chief executive receives £3.5 million per annum, on top of all the additional support he receives. That is a building society, not a bank, and a mutual organisation that I support and am a member of. I do not have a bank account, because I do not like banks very much at all, but the chief executive of my building society receives £3.5 million a year. We have been talking about hourly rates of £9 and £10 an hour for midwives who save people’s lives. The message for Government Members, regardless of which way they vote this evening, is that this is coming: this argument has been won. I urge the Government to reconsider their position and do what those of us on the Labour Benches want them to do, because they will have to make up their mind and do the right thing in due course.

In the short time available, I would like to focus on criminal justice. This was another massive issue in my constituency during the election. The message from my constituents is that they recognise that community policing, which the Labour Government carried forward magnificently when in office, introducing police community support officers and funding police officers in every ward of my constituency, has been undermined since 2010 by the huge cuts to police budgets that were introduced first by the coalition Government. I listened with some hilarity to some of the observations made by

[*Ian C. Lucas*]

Liberal Democrat Members about the dreadful police cuts. They had Cabinet Ministers in the Government that implemented them, so I listen to their arguments with some incredulity. I want to see the re-establishment of proper community policing, not only in Wrexham but up and down the country.

There is one area that I want to highlight for the Home Secretary in the short time available. She referred to the legislation on legal highs that was introduced in 2015 and which has already been amended once. I have a message for the Home Secretary: it is simply not working, and there is a crisis with legal highs in many town centres up and down the country. We need to look at that in the Queen's Speech as a matter of urgency, because unless the legislation is amended huge amounts of public money will be spent on trying to enforce legislation that is simply incapable of doing the job for which we drafted it. Will the Government therefore please go away, look at the issue of legal highs and the legislation that has already been passed, redraft it, consult, reach out, recognise that they do not have an overall majority, speak to the people who want to try to solve the problem and work with the Opposition to resolve this important issue?

5.31 pm

Yvonne Fovargue (Makerfield) (Lab): It will surprise no one that there is a close link between poor mental health and problem debt—it will probably surprise no one that I wish to talk about it either. Three times as many adults with mental health problems report debt or arrears than those without mental health problems. The debt charity StepChange recently asked its clients how debt affected them. Over half said they had been treated by their GP or a hospital for debt-related physical or mental health problems. Whatever the root cause, that combination can have devastating consequences for people's lives, resulting in a vicious downward spiral of worsening debt and worsening mental health.

One thing that the Government could have done in the Queen's Speech was to introduce a statutory breathing space for those in problem debt—a period of protection against further interest, charges, collection and enforcement action for up to one year while people seek help with their debts, hopefully from a free debt advice agency. That would help them to stabilise their financial situation. It is not a controversial proposal—it was in our manifesto and the Conservative manifesto—so it is really disappointing and quite puzzling that it did not appear in the Queen's Speech. I hope it will appear in some form later on.

A breathing space would be a win-win for everyone. Creditors would get a greater proportion of their debt repaid. For the state, a breathing space would help to mitigate some of the £8.3 billion cost of problem debt to the public purse, which includes £1 billion in health costs, by reducing demand for debt-related health services. For the individual, the chances of recovering from financial difficulty would be greatly improved, through delivery of the right support for people when they need it most. Household debt is high by historical standards and consumer borrowing is heading towards levels not previously seen. I hope that the new Government will address this seriously. A breathing space would be a really good place to start.

I would also like to mention something that came up before and during the election when I visited schools in my constituency. Under the funding formula, 89% of my primary schools are losing money, as is every secondary school. I spoke to one young pupil, aged 11, who said, "What's going to happen to our nurture unit?" This is where pupils who are stressed or having a bad time at home can go to take time out and be supported. That is one of the first things that could be cut by the loss of £116,000 to that school. The demand on NHS services will surely go up if such units are forced to close in my constituency. The pupils are aware of these units: that young man called it the heart of his school. To take the heart out of that school would indeed be wrong.

There is another notable lack: the WASPI women. Women working in the caring professions who expected to be able to retire are carrying on beyond their expected retirement age rather than enjoying the happy and healthy retirement that they anticipated.

Good health involves more than just NHS services. Access to advice and information, the ability to live debt-free, support from schools for children who need it, and the possibility of timely and affordable retirement all reduce pressures on the health service, and on other services. I hope that the Government will take that into account when considering their legislative programme.

5.35 pm

Ian Austin (Dudley North) (Lab): Let me begin by thanking the great people of Dudley North for sending me here to speak up for them. I promise them that I will work as hard as possible to represent them and speak up for them for the duration of the current Parliament, and that I will keep the promises that I made before the election, including a promise to speak up for patients and staff in Dudley.

Today I want to set out my concerns about a new £5.5 billion contract to provide health services in Dudley for the next 15 years. This proposal is completely unprecedented in the NHS. On Friday 9 June, Dudley's clinical commissioning group issued a contract for what it calls a multispecialty community provider, which will be worth between £3.5 billion and £5.5 billion. It will provide a range of services, including community-based physical health services, some existing out-patient services, primary medical services, urgent care and primary care out-of-hours services, adult social care services, mental health services, learning disability services, end-of-life care, and activities currently carried out by the CCG. The closing date is as soon as 19 July, and the new contract will run, incredibly, from April 2018 until 2033. What sort of organisation issues a contract for 15 years? A contract of this size and length has never been tried anywhere else in Britain. It is being advertised abroad, and I understand that anyone can bid for all or part of it.

I have tabled 60 parliamentary questions, asking the Secretary of State—I am delighted to see that he is present—to meet me, and people from Dudley, to discuss the proposal. I plan to send a survey to local residents to find out their views, because I do not think that the consultation carried out so far has been in any way adequate.

I definitely want to see an NHS that focuses on patients, and makes it simple for patients and their families to find their way around. I think that the present NHS is

too fragmented, and confusing for patients and their families and carers. Far too often people are told to speak to someone else, or to consult another department or organisation, and there are obvious difficulties for older people moving from hospital to social care. However, it worries me that what is being proposed has not been tried anywhere else, and I should like to know more about the risks associated with such an approach.

For example, how is it possible to predict what will happen over the next 15 years in the light of all sorts of issues—the impact of new healthcare technologies, new drugs, workforce changes, public spending, and three general elections? I want to know how local people will be involved in the new organisation. What say will they have in healthcare in Dudley over the next 15 years? How will staff be affected? Will they all be transferred to the new organisation? Will the organisation that wins the contract be able to sell it on after a few years, and what would happen to the staff if it did? Could healthcare businesses such as UnitedHealth Group or Virgin Care bid for part or all of the contract? I am also worried about the impact on our local hospital, Russells Hall. What would happen if another provider won a major part of the contract? Could that undermine the other services provided at the hospital, given that hospital finances are so interwoven?

I am asking Ministers to answer the questions that I have tabled as a matter of urgency, so that local people have all the details before the deadline falls in just over a fortnight. I am asking the Secretary of State to meet me, and people from Dudley, to listen to our concerns about what I think is an absolutely unprecedented proposal.

5.39 pm

Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley North (Ian Austin), I begin by thanking the good people of my constituency for returning me to this place. I pledge to continue to work as hard for them as I can.

We lost two good people of Walthamstow during the election period, and I want to pay tribute to them for their work in our local community: Eleanor Firman, who was a passionate campaigner, and Councillor Nadeem Ali, who had so much to give the country and whose life was brutally cut short. Both of them would have been joining me to look at this Queen's Speech and asking what it could do for our local healthcare services. They would both have been passionate advocates for our campaign for the future of Whipps Cross hospital, 40% of whose buildings were built before the NHS came into existence. It treats 450 people every day at its A&E, the highest figure in the country. If ever there was a group of NHS workers who deserved a pay rise, it is the nurses and doctors there. That is why I and many others on the Opposition Benches are rightly furious when we hear the Government saying that they have got the message but see that they are not acting.

Over the past seven years, we have seen how austerity has torn the social and economic fabric of our country, and we can now see how threadbare things are. We look at the Queen's Speech and see a need to echo the call for investment in policing. We have a massive amount of gang crime in Walthamstow, and the cuts that the Government are talking about simply will not help. Many of my constituents have raised deep concerns about education and school funding cuts, as they see

teachers having to buy goods for their schools. They see the rising levels of personal debt and, like my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Yvonne Fovargue), they are worried about that. They also see the sustainability and transformation plans ruining our NHS.

What is missing from this Queen's Speech is as important as what is in it. The Government say that they are committed to equality, but many of us know that the fight for equality is not just about defending existing rights but about the advances that need to be made. It is women from Northern Ireland who will pay the price for the coalition deal that the Government have made unless we in this House speak up. The ruling in June this year was very clear that those women were being discriminated against as UK taxpayers in their access to abortion rights. The Secretary of State, whatever his personal views on the matter, has the ability to provide the funding to enable those women to access services here. Thousands of women have to travel from Northern Ireland, and I do not understand why a decision made in Belfast should influence what happens in my hospital in Walthamstow or in other hospitals across this country.

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): I respect the hon. Lady's genuine interest in this subject, but it is important for the House to recognise that this is not a matter for Belfast; it is a matter for NHS England.

Stella Creasy: The hon. Gentleman and I are on the same side in agreeing that it is for English and Welsh MPs to decide what happens in English and Welsh hospitals. The Secretary of State needs to listen to the opinions of Members on both sides of the House and act accordingly.

Tracy Brabin (Batley and Spen) (Lab/Co-op): Does my hon. Friend agree that the cost of an abortion for women from Northern Ireland, at around £900, is dividing the women who have money from those who do not, as well as adding greater stress for women having to make that difficult decision?

Stella Creasy: I completely agree with my hon. Friend. The fact is that those women are UK taxpayers contributing towards the cost of the NHS, yet they are unable to use NHS services at all when they are in England. That is the issue we have to resolve. I put the Secretary of State on notice: if he does not change his mind, there are plenty across this House who will support legislation to change it for him. I ask him to do the right thing and ensure that we have equal access to abortion for every UK taxpayer.

The same principle about what is missing from the Queen's Speech applies to Brexit. I support calls to ensure that membership of the single market is on the table when we negotiate with our European counterparts. With 750,000 jobs in London alone dependent on it, and one in 10 of my neighbours being European nationals, the idea that we would take those issues off the table before we even start talking to our European counterparts seems crazy. The Secretary of State for Brexit says that Brexit will be as complicated as a moon landing. Certainly, many of us thought that he was on another planet, but the Government have to think again about crashing back down to Earth and damaging the economy and the lives of the people of this country through their approach to Brexit.

[Stella Creasy]

This country is clearly at a crossroads. There are divisions on many different issues, and there is no doubt that Britain is facing some real horrors. We have seen the horrific events at Grenfell Tower, and the terrorist attacks at Finsbury Park, London Bridge and Manchester. We have a choice: we can either offer this country hope and certainty about what happens next, or we can continue to be divided. We on the Opposition Benches are clear that those who argue that we cannot settle our differences through democracy at the ballot box are wrong. I believe that there is a responsibility on all of us to show every community that their concerns will be heard, and that their causes will be equally valued and listened to. It is certainly my intention to do my bit during this Parliament to make that happen. That is why I have tabled my amendment, and I am so pleased that Members throughout the House have supported it. I hope that Members will continue to listen to the arguments, put personalities aside and start looking at good policies, because the people not only of Walthamstow and Northern Ireland but of Great Britain need and deserve nothing less.

5.44 pm

Tulip Siddiq (Hampstead and Kilburn) (Lab): I thank the constituents of Hampstead and Kilburn, who helped me to increase my majority from 1,000 to 15,500. It is a pleasure to be back here. I also want to thank the nurses and doctors at the Royal Free hospital in my constituency. Members will be aware of the tragedy of Grenfell Tower, but they may not be aware that 12 people from the tower were rushed to the Royal Free for treatment, including two who were placed in intensive care due to the extent of their injuries. The nurses and doctors of the Royal Free responded diligently, with speed and professionalism. I put on the record my thanks to them, and I am sure that other Members will join me in doing so.

Many of the doctors and nurses who treated the people from Grenfell Tower are EU citizens, which is what I want to focus on today. In February, I voted against triggering article 50 because I did not feel that EU citizens had been reassured about the security of their ability to stay in this country. Since the vote, I have submitted freedom of information requests to NHS trusts that reveal the extent to which our local NHS services depend on EU nationals. In total, EU nationals make up 15% of professionally qualified and clinical staff, 21% of nurses and health visitors, and 50 of the 350 midwives employed by the Royal Free NHS Foundation Trust. EU nationals also make up 10% of both specialist doctors and consultants. As Nigel Edwards, the chief executive of Nuffield Trust, said back in January:

“There are already a number of reasons to be concerned about the workforce: this”—

Brexit—

“could be the last straw.”

A Commons Library report from April underlined our NHS's dependence on EU nationals, with 60,000 members of staff coming from EU countries. To be frank, the Prime Minister's feeble attempt to satisfy the EU nationals living here is just not enough. The fact that she has asked all EU citizens who have applied for permanent residence to reapply for settled status shows how little respect she has for those people, who are

already suffering from high stress and anxiety as they go through a burdensome application process. I want to quote a nurse, Karen, who is 40 years old. She says:

“Before the Brexit vote, we used to have hundreds of applicants in nursing. Now, we barely see 50. All staff are tired and worried about what will come next. In my department, 60% of nurses are EU citizens and already five of them have handed in their notice. I am an EU citizen myself and I'm already making plans to leave the UK for good. The healthcare system will collapse and I don't want to be part of it.”

Whichever Member laughed while I was reading that out should be ashamed of themselves.

The Prime Minister needs to offer some kind of security to EU nationals. If she does not, the healthcare system will be in serious jeopardy. I will continue to fight in this House for the 17,000 EU nationals who live in Hampstead and Kilburn, many of whom work in the Royal Free and have shown how dedicated they are to our health system in this country.

5.48 pm

John Grogan (Keighley) (Lab): I have three points to make on health and social care. I was just reflecting on the fact that when I retired from Parliament in 2010 following boundary changes to the Selby constituency, I followed the example of Sir John Major and went straight to the cricket. In my case, it was Headingley, not the Oval, and I was quickly reminded of my new status in life. I had a pint of beer in my hand as I walked in front of the packed grandstand and this big Yorkshire voice boomed out from the back saying, “Ey, lad, you can't put that on expenses now, can you?”

I am now pleased to be representing Keighley as the seventh Labour Member to do so. I will not be following the example of the second such Labour MP, who crossed the Floor to the Conservatives in the 1940s to shouts of, “You dirty dog,” which were ruled out of order by one of your predecessors, Mr Speaker, but I will try to live up to predecessors such as Bob Cryer and Ann Cryer, who are legends. Indeed, I now share with Bob Cryer one claim to fame: the House of Commons Library tells me that we are two of the three Members of Parliament on either side of the House since the war who have represented two different marginals with majorities of fewer than 500. I also thank Kris Hopkins, my predecessor, for his service to the House. As an MP for Keighley and as a Minister, he served with the same distinction as he did as a soldier for our country.

I have three quick points. First, Airedale general hospital is the institution that unites my diverse constituency—from the multi-faith communities of Keighley through Brontë country and Haworth to Ilkley—and the hospital is under strain. Last year, the Care Quality Commission said simply that it did not have enough doctors. The hospital has a really good reputation, but we are looking to the next Budget. The Secretary of State for Health will be judged on how much money he can extract from the Chancellor for the health service.

Our social care is in crisis. Age UK says that 1 million over-65s do not receive the care they want. Many of the big care providers are under financial strain, so I hope the Secretary of State has a plan in case one of them keels over in the next few months. I visited the Hollycroft care home in Ilkley, which is due to close. Four Seasons, which manages the care home, assured me that all the workers would get three months' pay, but it now seems

to be going back on that—I hope Four Seasons revises its opinion. In short, we need to value all care workers more, we need to pay them more and we need to provide more training and more career paths.

Finally, on the financing of social care, my right hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Sir Kevin Barron) referred to the discussions in 2010, which are where the solution lies. One in six of us will require social care during our life, and the now Mayor of Manchester said in 2010 that we can either fund it individually or we can fund it collectively, perhaps by levying 10% or 15% on all estates. No doubt the likes of Lynton Crosby would say that is a death tax, but who cares about his opinion now? Certainly not Conservative Members. We need to be bold and collectively insure ourselves by financing social care for the long term. It is not a death tax; it is a tax that would give life to those of us who need social care later in our lives and enable us all to be sure that we can pass on a great part of our estate to our children, or to whomever we want.

I look forward to making further contributions in this House. I feel that I am in the centre of power on these Benches, next to the Democratic Unionist party.

5.52 pm

Paul Girvan (South Antrim) (DUP): It is a great honour and privilege to be called to speak in this House, and that privilege has been given to me by the people of South Antrim. The area is very dear to my heart. I was born and reared there, and it is in my blood.

Many Members have spoken today of the wonderful constituencies they represent. Well, they obviously have not seen South Antrim, which most definitely is a wonderful constituency. It stretches from Lough Neagh right through to the Bann. We have a wonderful river, a six-mile water that runs through three of our major towns: Templepatrick, Antrim and Randalstown.

I am a Ballyclare man through and through. For those who do not know anything about Ballyclare, some people say there is only one road in and one road out; well, I can tell the House that those are very important roads to me. The area I represent has a number of small villages that were built up around what was a very extensive linen industry. Unfortunately that industry no longer exists, but our strong and vibrant agricultural businesses are a key employer in the area. Those businesses need help to ensure that they are there for the future.

I pay tribute to my predecessor, Mr Danny Kinahan. Danny and I, though we were on opposite sides, were the best of friends during the election. I do not know whether Danny will still say that now that I have taken his seat. It was somewhat of a battle, and we knew it would not be an easily won seat. When we won, I congratulated Danny on the way he fought his campaign. I have spoken to him since, and I can say we will remain friends. That is a good way to be, because political life is somewhat daunting, in that people receive their P45 in public, on a stage, and it is not always a pleasant experience.

Before that time, I worked for the then MP for South Antrim, Dr William McCrea, who served the constituency well for many years. I want to pay tribute to the hard work that William and Danny have put in, and I hope to continue it; indeed, I vow to do so. We want to focus on a number of areas. Danny was working on areas

associated with the military, which I feel very strongly about; I want to ensure that we do not have a witch hunt against our military in relation to issues that are going on.

The constituency I represent is very strong on the Union, which is why it has always returned a Unionist. I am a great believer in the Union, as we benefit from the liberties that we gain by being part of the United Kingdom. We should hold on to that dearly, and I, as a Unionist, will fight to ensure that we do.

I have listened to many speakers this afternoon, and I have enjoyed the maiden speeches. Some of them were a lot more articulate than mine, but I can say that I speak with fervour for the area I represent. I have a great love for it, and I have worked for it as a councillor and as a Member of the Northern Ireland Assembly—I resigned my seat to be here. I can only say that it has been an honour and a privilege to represent the area, and I will do so again to the best of my ability.

5.56 pm

Chris Elmore (Ogmore) (Lab): First, let me pay tribute to the hon. Member for South Antrim (Paul Girvan) for an eloquent maiden speech. He speaks with true pride for his constituency; it is clear that he is very proud of the community he comes from and now represents in this House. Secondly, I wish to thank my constituents for returning me as their Member of Parliament for the second time in 13 months. We are a little election-obsessed in my constituency, although I am hoping for a period of calm, as I am sure are my constituents. Serving in the House of Commons is the greatest honour imaginable, and I am extremely grateful to my constituents for returning me to this place.

In recent months, some of the most dreadful tragedies of modern times have been met with the resolve of those in our public services, who, through their bravery and skill, have surely saved far more lives than were lost. The emergency services in my constituency are world-class. Although they are often strained by the budgetary cuts of this Government, my constituents often remark on how hard-working and friendly our local police, fire and ambulance services are. They have my utmost gratitude and support for protecting our towns and villages, and I am proud to share the same community as them.

I was disappointed that the only mention of the emergency services in the Gracious Speech was in a vague allusion to police powers. We should not take our emergency services for granted, but under this Government I feel that has become the norm. Instead of heaping praise on the police, fire and ambulance services, and listening to their expert advice on how they could be better supported, this Government have cut to the bone at every opportunity. The fire service, whose heroics have been recognised again in the recent Grenfell fire, has seen 10,000 personnel and 41 stations cut since 2010. The police, to whom we personally owe our lives and health for keeping us safe during the Westminster attack just beyond our gates, have seen 20,000 officers cut in that same period. Our armed police, who during the London Bridge attacks neutralised the situation in minutes, have been reduced in number by 1,000.

We live in unprecedented times, and the first half of 2017 will be recorded in history as a time of tragedy for our country. I challenge any Member to stand before this House and say that they believe the Government

[Chris Elmore]

have best supported our emergency services to tackle such events; the services themselves clearly believe they have not. The Police Federation has made it clear that the police are struggling under Government cuts, saying that there is no ignoring the fact that the police simply do not have the resources necessary in the light of recent events. Previously, as Home Secretary, the Prime Minister accused the Police Federation of “crying wolf” over the impact of the Government’s cuts. Clearly, the Government believe that they know better than the police.

The Fire Brigades Union has made it clear that firefighters do not have the resources that they need. It says that cuts have put the public at risk, which is evidenced by the increased number of fire deaths. It says that firefighters could soon lose their lives as a result of cutbacks, and that many no longer feel safe or supported. The Government believe that they know better than the fire service and have pressed on with austerity measures regardless.

In the Gracious Speech, there was no indication of increasing resources for emergency services. Instead, the Government signalled that there would be legislation to paper over the cracks with increased powers. I will wait until the Bill is debated before giving my further thoughts on increasing police powers, but I am concerned that yet again, this ignores the lack of funding and resources.

Only last week, the Home Secretary conceded to this House that police resources are very tight. Austerity may initially have been driven by ideology, but now that even the Home Secretary understands the strain, it is only dogma that continues to drive implementation of the cuts. It does not have to be like this, and under a Labour Government, it would not be. As long as the Government ignore our emergency services and their cries for increased resources, they cannot pretend to protect our country.

6 pm

Holly Lynch (Halifax) (Lab): I am delighted to follow my good and hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Chris Elmore). It is a pleasure to make my first speech in the new Parliament. It is a privilege that I feared might elude me, going into the snap general election. I was trailing in the polls, and had a majority of just 428. The betting odds were 10:1 against me. Returning to Westminster, one of my so-called hon. Friends went so far as to call me Lazarus Lynch, returned from the dead, politically at least. Having increased my majority from 428 to 5,376, despite the odds, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Prime Minister for carefully selecting Halifax as the place where she launched her manifesto. She parked her tanks firmly on my lawn; however, not only did those tanks misfire, but the engines seized up and the tracks completely fell off, giving me the chance to continue my work, standing up for the good people of Halifax.

With that in mind, there is a lot to do, and the Queen’s Speech failed to provide answers of any substance, but I wish to focus, in the short time that we have today, on our emergency services. My community, as well as those up and down the country, has never been so aware of the invaluable work that those services do. Over the past few weeks, with the terrorist atrocities in London

and Manchester and the Grenfell Tower tragedy, we have seen the emergency services at their very best. It is a workforce of which we as parliamentarians, and as a country, can be incredibly proud, but it is a workforce that is tired and that we have let down.

The emergency service workers whom I know and whom I have spent time shadowing are pragmatic, and know just how vital their work is, so they get on with the job. However, there are fewer of them than ever before; they are asked to work harder and are stretched thinner, and as a result of the public sector pay cap they are paid less than they should be. It is surely time that we ended the public sector pay cap, which is demoralising our emergency services. The starting salary for a police constable is £19,700 in some forces, and £22,000 for a firefighter. The weight of the work that we ask them to undertake, and the risks that go with it, are not, I am afraid, reflected in their pay.

Emergency service workers face enough risks as a consequence of their job without a small group of shameful individuals making their job even harder by deliberately seeking to assault them. I launched my “Protect the Protectors” campaign last year, after having to call 999 while out shadowing the police. The lone officer I was out with found himself surrounded by an angry mob when a routine call very quickly escalated.

Many emergency service workers who have been subject to horrendous assaults while at work described feeling like they had suffered an injustice twice: first at the hands of the offender, and then again in court when sentences were unduly lenient. As the ballot for private Members’ Bills is taking place this week, I very much hope that I might be in a position to relaunch my ten-minute rule Bill from last year, which would seek to ensure that sentences for assaulting emergency service workers and NHS staff reflected the seriousness of the crime. I make this plea: if any hon. Members are drawn in the ballot and would like to discuss the Bill further, please let me know.

Crucially, we must restore numbers. The police and crime commissioner in West Yorkshire, Mark Burns Williamson, and Chief Constable Dee Collins last week joined the growing number of PCCs and chief constables taking the unprecedented step of admitting that reduced numbers are affecting frontline capabilities. West Yorkshire police has lost 1,200 officers since 2010, which is a 20% reduction of the force. The Home Secretary talks about an uplift in firearms officers to respond reactively to the threat of terrorism, but those officers just come from elsewhere in frontline policing, which again reduces the numbers in response policing, neighbourhood policing and policing elsewhere on the frontline, and makes proactively stopping terrorism even tougher. Chief Constable Dee Collins is extremely concerned about the impact that the loss of officers is having on neighbourhood policing in particular.

Finally, a police officer recently asked me why there is not an emergency services covenant, in the same spirit as the armed forces covenant. I very much hope that the Secretary of State will consider that request and respond to that officer in his reply to the debate.

6.4 pm

Margaret Greenwood (Wirral West) (Lab): I thank the people of Wirral West for returning me to this place.

We learn from this Queen's Speech that the Government intend to do nothing to stop the fragmentation and undermining of the national health service that the last Conservative Government pursued with so much determination. In my constituency, many are very concerned about Cheshire and Merseyside sustainability and transformation plan's shortfall of just under £1 billion and what that will mean for the service. The Government could have chosen to address that, but instead they have left services in Wirral and elsewhere across England to struggle to maintain levels of care. Board meeting papers of April 2017 show Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust with an operating deficit of £11.9 million in 2016-17. The effect is being felt by patients and staff, and targets for A&E waiting times, bed occupancy rates and GP referrals are being missed.

Staff morale is rock bottom across the NHS, bringing with it recruitment and retention problems. We have seen junior doctors striking and looking for work abroad. The Royal College of Nursing criticised the Prime Minister's failure to scrap the public sector pay cap in the Queen's Speech, and warned that failure to do so will result in an historic ballot of 270,000 nursing staff, signalling a summer of protests by nurses. But it is not only clinical staff who deserve fair pay. In my constituency, NHS administrators from the Wirral Community NHS Foundation Trust are seeing their roles downbanded from band 3 to band 2, which would mean they are paid below the Living Wage Foundation's voluntary living wage for the first five years of employment. I recently met some of the women affected and they told me of how clinical staff, some on band 7, are being required to carry out some of their administrative tasks. That cannot be an efficient or effective way to run a service. It is an attack on the pay and conditions of administrative staff who play a vital role in the delivery of safe patient care. Hardworking clinicians should receive the full administrative support that they need to deliver care, from staff who should be valued for the important part that they play in the delivery of services in our NHS.

In addition to the cuts and rationing of the STP programme, the Government have quietly ushered in further initiatives, putting the squeeze on the national health service. The Naylor report recommends the accelerated sell-off of NHS land and buildings. The capped expenditure programme undermines the very founding principles of the NHS and requires senior health managers in 14 areas of England to think the unthinkable and impose strict spending limits in their areas. That will result in longer waiting times, closure or downgrading of services, job losses, ward closures and rationing of care. Essentially, the Government are no longer saying, "Do more with less." They are just saying, "Do less." Less care and fewer treatments will lead to poor health outcomes for our nation.

While the Tories' NHS privatisation agenda has been clear for years now, their policy on adult social care, announced in the manifesto just a few weeks ago, demonstrates their approach to social security. Instead of pooling risk and developing a collective response to shared societal problems, they are replacing that approach with an ideology of, "Sort yourselves out. You're on your own because this Government won't help you." Labour Members take a different view. We would restore and protect the national health service and establish a national care service of which we can all be proud.

During the general election I heard from hospital consultants from Arrowe Park hospital, the Royal Liverpool and Alder Hey, and their shocking testimony revealed a picture of overstretched staff in an under-resourced service. One consultant I spoke to said he felt that in future only the rich will have access to doctors. That is indeed a bleak vision for the future of the NHS from people on the frontline, and the Government must now take responsibility. I urge Conservative Members to change course, restore our NHS as a public service and give NHS staff the reward they truly deserve. Today we are asking colleagues to vote to end the public sector pay cap. In the light of all that public sector workers do for us, that is the very least they deserve. We owe it to them, but we also owe it to ourselves and the next generation. As we approach the 70th anniversary of the founding of the national health service, our finest social institution, let us cherish it, protect it and show how we value the staff who work in it.

6.8 pm

Gerald Jones (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) (Lab): May I first thank the people of Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney—the constituency where I was born, raised and still belong—for doing me the honour of re-electing me to represent them in this place?

As we come to the last days of debate on this year's Gracious Speech, it is difficult to find positive things to say, mainly because the speech is devoid of detail. Clearly, this is no reflection on Her Majesty but a reflection on the shambles of the Government who are camping out on the Government Benches. The speech is indeed a threadbare document, which has highlighted the Tory party's inability to put forward a proper programme of government.

We know that the Tory-led Governments since 2010 have promoted the mantra of austerity. We know that austerity is a political choice. After seven years of austerity, we know only too well the effect that it has had on our communities and our public services. As a former county councillor, I have seen at first hand what the Tories' austerity agenda has done to local services—services that many, many people use and appreciate. Services such as leisure centres, libraries, youth centres, Sure Start centres and many, many more have been cut or closed as a result of Tory austerity. Under the previous Home Secretary, who is now Prime Minister, since 2010 we have seen police numbers cut by 20,000. South Wales police and Gwent police, who cover my constituency, have, like other forces across the country, lost police officers from the frontline. That has had a huge impact on the police service and its ability to deliver a visible assurance to many communities. The police have got on with the job, because they are professional people who serve our communities, but the service that they provide is under huge pressure. Something that has all but disappeared is neighbourhood policing. In my constituency, the ability of the police to provide effective neighbourhood policing teams in our communities is just not there.

A few years ago, most electoral wards had a police constable and possibly two police community support officers not only to engage with the community and solve low-level crime and deal with nuisance behaviour, but to gather intelligence about the issues brewing in the areas that they covered. That does not happen anymore, and the teams that once covered one electoral ward now

[Gerald Jones]

cover five or six wards, so the level of engagement is minimal. Some may say that neighbourhood policing is not important and that there are higher priorities—they may have a point—but in many communities the lack of neighbourhood engagement and reassurance from the police is coupled with cuts in youth service provision or leisure services, so once again, as in the 1980s and '90s, communities have to manage disaffection and disengagement among some of our young people—and other sections of the community, for that matter.

Taken alongside the other concerns of 2017, including Brexit, low wages, zero-hours contracts and the rise of food banks—all issues on which the Tories have failed to act—we are beginning to see a bleak picture, which is why I support the amendment introduced by the shadow Home Secretary.

Finally, I would like to express concern about the deal between the Tory party and the DUP. We have been told over the past few years that there is no money to invest in public services, yet money has been found to cut inheritance tax, income tax for the top earners and corporation tax, so money is available when it suits. There is no clearer example of that than the latest deal with the DUP. The Tories are so desperate to cling to power that they have offered up to £1 billion to cover Northern Ireland over the next two years. This is great for Northern Ireland, but the same should apply across the United Kingdom. In Wales, we have seen the Welsh budget cut by 8% since 2010. Public services are suffering and the communities that I represent, many of which are deprived, are among those that are the hardest hit.

Furthermore, the deal does nothing to safeguard the Union of the United Kingdom. In fact, it helps to sow further division. The Conservative and so-called Unionist party has done more to put the Union at risk over the past two years than at any other time in my memory, and that is deeply regrettable.

6.12 pm

Chris Ruane (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab): First of all, it is good to be back after two years' enforced sabbatical. I thank the 50.5% of my constituents who voted for me, and the 49.5% who did not: I wish to serve them all. I also wish to declare an interest. In my two years' enforced sabbatical, I spent 18 months on a voluntary basis visiting other legislatures, Parliaments and politicians to discuss the issue of mindfulness, and I was also paid for a six-month period to do that.

I shall begin with some stark statistics. The World Health Organisation says that by 2030, the biggest health burden on the planet will be depression. We are heading that way, as we have a crisis in mental health in this country and across the western world. A parliamentary question that was answered some years ago revealed that 32.3% of young people between 15 and 25 have one or more psychiatric conditions. Some 90% of prisoners have psychiatric conditions when they enter prison, and 78% of students, according to the National Union of Students, suffer from stress, anxiety or depression. Those are terrible statistics, but the most worrying statistic of all is that in 1991, 9 million antidepressant prescriptions were issued; last year it was 65 million. There has been a huge increase in the issuing of antidepressants in this country.

There are alternatives. Improved Access to Psychological Therapies—IAPT—was introduced in 2008. It is a runaway success, but it needs more funding. Mindfulness was approved by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence in 2004 for repeat-episode depression—in other words, the worst type of depression has the best response to mindfulness. Yet its take-up within the national health service has been minimal. I urge the Minister to look at why.

The hon. Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston) made an appeal to her hon. Friends to look to the expertise in the House to help develop mental health policy in this place. I urge Health Ministers to look at the “Mindful Nation UK” report, which was put together by the all-party parliamentary group on mindfulness. At its launch 18 months ago, there were three Conservative Ministers: the sports Minister, the hon. Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch); the former mental health Minister, the right hon. Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt); and a former Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Loughborough (Nicky Morgan).

There is consensus on this issue. I urge the Minister to work on this consensus, across all parties, on the important issue of mental health and mindfulness. I am talking about not only helping people who may be unbalanced to get back to a balanced position but about human flourishing, which mindfulness can help with. Our report considered mindfulness in education, the criminal justice system, the workplace and healthcare. Mental health should not be in a silo. Policy should be developed across the piece.

I welcome the inclusion of mental health in the Queen's Speech, but Ministers and the Prime Minister will be judged on deeds, not words. We need the money to take forward these measures.

6.16 pm

Naz Shah (Bradford West) (Lab): I thank the people of Bradford West for re-electing me and putting their faith in me by sending me back to the House. I want to echo the words of many of my colleagues over the last two weeks and pay tribute to all the victims affected by the horrible acts of violence we have seen. I also pay tribute to our emergency service personnel and the tremendous job they do for us on a daily basis.

In the Queen's Speech last week we got the first glimpse of the Government's proposal to have a commission on counter-extremism. Although we will all be interested to see the make-up of the commission and more about the proposal, I cannot help but feel that it may be a way for the Government to devolve responsibility for some of the more difficult decisions that need to be made and more difficult questions that need to be answered.

As we move further into the space of what the Government term “non-violent extremism”, I urge that any proposal ensures that the 15 points raised by David Anderson QC in his 2015 annual report are fully considered. They form a very sound basis on which to assess the reasonableness of such a move. Given that the Government are still falling short of finding a full and encompassing legal definition of extremism or hate speech, the further attachment of counter-terrorism policy to safeguarding, community cohesion, integration and thought is an area in which we should tread extremely carefully, with extreme sensitivity and great oversight.

As the Joint Committee on Human Rights said in the previous Parliament, we should legislate only where there is absolute need or a clear gap. However, I have concerns, as do many others, that we are still failing to learn the lessons of our current programmes. Community cohesion cannot be forced from the top down; we need to empower communities to find their own solutions, and Prevent has become toxic. We must protect against the alienation of those who should be most prominent in tackling extreme views. The issue is not just about engaging, but listening to and hearing their concerns: we need to treat them as motivated by our shared goal of a safer, more secure nation.

Here in the UK, Muslim communities have suffered a number of terror attacks and hate crimes: from the brutal murder of Mohammed Saleem and Mohsin Ahmed to the terror attack in Finsbury Park, and from petrol bombs thrown at many mosques to the verbal and physical assaults of Muslims—Muslim women in particular. Let us not pretend that Muslim communities do not share the same goals. Let us work together, incorporating the concerns of all, to build a stronger strategy to keep ourselves safe and secure. The Government still resist a new full and independent review into the successes and failures of the Prevent programme. I call on them to change that position.

We must recognise the need to protect police budgets. Further cuts are simply not sustainable. My region has lost nearly 20% of its police officers and, although the force may be recruiting now, it is still far short of where it once was. Crime is changing, but community policing is essential. It is how we build trust in police forces. Local knowledge is paramount to rooting out extremism. With this must come a renewed commitment to having representative police forces. With the police service only being 5.5% black and minority ethnic, it is still in no way reflective of the communities it serves, and that presents barriers to local engagement.

As the Government propose to introduce a digital charter, I encourage them to revisit the report by the Select Committee on Home Affairs at the end of the last Parliament. During those sessions, it became evident that the large social media companies had failed to tackle the issue of hate and extremist content on their platforms. The charter may be a welcome tool, but we must recognise that regulating online space will present exceptional challenges. The Government should tread extremely carefully, and with extreme sensitivity and great oversight.

6.20 pm

Tommy Sheppard (Edinburgh East) (SNP): It is good to be back.

It was 10 minutes past 8 in the evening on Friday 19 May when I realised the election campaign was going to get a whole lot more interesting than I thought it would be when it was called. I was sitting in a room in a public school outside Guildford, taking part in BBC Radio 4's "Any Questions?" programme. The first question from the audience was whether the Government were taking the support of pensioners for granted with the pronouncements they had made a few days earlier on the funding of pensions and social care. Listeners to the radio will not have heard this, of course, but in that room I could tell that the audience did not need to wait for the panel to pronounce before they made up their

minds on that question. The sense of indignation and outrage was palpable. In that moment, I knew that if that was the feeling of those small "c" conservative voters in the heart of Tory Surrey, the electorate were most certainly on manoeuvres in this election and that the outcome would be a lot more unpredictable than any of us had imagined.

Of course, the policy of making people pay for their social care to the point of their own impoverishment was quickly qualified and taken off the table but, as we all know, perception is everything in politics, and the damage was done. That ill-fated policy was one of the reasons that a Government with a majority went into an election and lost it. We are promised in the Gracious Speech that there will be a review of social care and, presumably, its funding. I am concerned that the thinking behind that ill-fated policy is still alive and well on the Conservative Benches, and that it may yet come forward as ruminations continue on public policy in this area, so I will spend this brief time dismissing that thinking and saying that it should not form part of our thinking.

There is a perfectly coherent and legitimate point of view on the political right that says that the funding of public services should be transferred from the state to the individual. It is wrong and I disagree with it, but I understand the point of view. To my mind, that point of view is invalidated and becomes incoherent and unjust when we say that it will be applied only to people who contract debilitating and incurable diseases, because we are then talking about the epitome of double jeopardy. We are talking about people who have the misfortune to become ill. We would be saying that they will not only suffer the pain and worry of that, but that they will be forced to fund their own care to the point of losing their savings so that they and their families will become much poorer than they would otherwise be. That seems an outrageous suggestion, and that was what lay behind the indignation of the audience in that room.

We do not know which of us will fall ill and which of us will remain healthy. That is why every civilised society turns for answers to the concept of social insurance, where we all pay in with the hope that we will not need to draw down on the policy, but with the expectation that, if we need to, the care will be there and we will not have to pay for it ourselves by becoming poor. That principle must underpin any review of social care funding. People will throw their hands up, aghast at the potential cost. But the Scottish National party Government in Scotland, with support from other parties, have maintained for 10 years free personal care for the elderly. That service is provided for 77,000 older people in Scotland. To do that across the UK would perhaps cost £7 billion or £8 billion, which is a very large amount of money—1% of our gross national product—but that is the question we are presented with as this review continues.

6.24 pm

Tracy Brabin (Batley and Spen) (Lab/Co-op): It is an honour to contribute to the debate on the Queen's Speech. I am so delighted to be back in this place, and I thank the people of Batley and Spen for returning me with the best majority, apparently, since 1966. Having experienced two elections in the last year, I would like to put it on record that I am itching for a third so that Labour can finally be the party of government.

[Tracy Brabin]

As I learn more about my role as an MP, I am very excited to hear my first Queen's Speech. Sadly, it was not a grand, sweeping statement about the destination of our country, but more a postcard from the edge—a flimsy echo of the Tory manifesto, short on vision and lacking ambition.

While there is a lot to say about what was not in the speech, I will choose two topics to discuss: extra support for the NHS, and carers. Yesterday, we heard the Secretary of State admit that a privatised service was not up to scratch, leaving hundreds of people in harm's way. We have heard about nurses visiting food banks, and now there is news that the Government might be about to renege on their promise to fund 10,000 extra nursing places.

The A&E in my constituency is still set to be downgraded later this year, and concerns remain about the future of Huddersfield A&E, with the entire Kirklees area potentially being left without a 24/7, fully functioning, fully funded and dedicated A&E. I am extremely grateful to the voting public for the fact that there are now four Labour MPs in Kirklees, and we are united in our mission for a better NHS that listens to the needs of the people it serves.

Thelma Walker (Colne Valley) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend agree that we need to stop the STPs in their tracks right now so that we can prevent the dangerous downgrading of hospitals and the loss of our accident and emergency centres?

Tracy Brabin: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. One of the highlights of the general election campaign was when the shadow Health Minister came to Batley and Spen, where he launched the Labour manifesto on health and said that, on the first day of a Labour Government, we would pause the STPs and seek consultation.

Of course, the decisions made by CCGs and trusts across the country are born out of the fact that they need to deliver more on tighter and tighter budgets. Recently, I was informed that surgery for my constituents will soon be delayed by up to six months if they smoke, or for a whole year if they are overweight, with a high body mass index. Now, of course, we do need to improve public health, and 14% of adults in north Kirklees smoke, while 24% have a BMI of over 30, but we must be able to do better than denying care at the point of need. As a local paper pointed out, some of our incredibly talented local rugby stars have a high BMI. Surely we are not going to deny professional sportspeople surgery on health grounds.

While I am opposed to these changes, I hope Ministers understand that these decisions are having to be made because of their austerity. They are the ones asking our CCG to make £15 million in savings this year, after it already made £11 million in savings last year. The people of this country, and the people of Batley and Spen, have had enough, and it has to stop.

The omission of any mention of carers in the Queen's Speech is enormously disappointing. Our country has an army of unpaid carers—some 6.5 million—and I would like to take this moment to praise these selfless people, who often do more and go further, without recognition or seeking a reward.

Recently, one of the 10,843 carers in my constituency—a woman about to retire, who is looking after her 35-year-old disabled daughter—asked me to help her with a problem. Her carer's allowance—a sum of £62.70—had been stopped because she is now eligible for a state pension. When I asked whether she had phoned the relevant authorities to check whether it was correct, she said she had, but she was told it is not something that often comes up, because most people her age with disabled children had given up and stuck them in a home. I find this brutal and unfeeling, not to mention lacking in common sense, especially when we consider how much the state would have to pay if this lady's daughter was cared for in a home. In Kirklees, the average residential care cost is £520 per person, per week.

That raises the question of why the Queen's Speech said nothing about protecting our NHS or looking after our amazing carers. The only answer is that it was not a Queen's Speech for us, the people, where our leaders have a vision to improve lives and to build a better country that includes kindness, tolerance, generosity and humanity; it was a political manoeuvre to protect those in power, and I cannot commit to supporting it. While for me this might mean three elections in 18 months, I say bring it on, because to me it could not be more obvious: this country needs a Labour Government.

6.30 pm

Douglas Chapman (Dunfermline and West Fife) (SNP): I imagine that those sitting on the Government Benches and their new helpers in the DUP would usually find the security day in the Queen's Speech debate part of their natural territory, but the lack of defence-related issues in either their grubby deal or the Queen's Speech itself shows how much we have moved away from being what could be called a normal Parliament.

From my perspective as the newly re-elected MP for Dunfermline and West Fife, this week has been a very proud week indeed, as the largest ship ever built by the Royal Navy, HMS Queen Elizabeth, left Rosyth in my constituency for the first time to begin her sea trials. She is testimony to the men and women in Rosyth who played a part in her construction. The Queen Elizabeth and the Prince of Wales, along with the Goliath crane, have become part of the West Fife skyline. There is also sadness that the Queen Elizabeth will be leaving us, but no doubt she will be back very soon for adjustments following the sea trials and refits into the future.

The carriers are a great way to measure the current state of the MOD, central as they are to the stated aims of the strategic defence and security review. This capability will involve the deployment of many of the UK's premier platforms and people: the Type 26 frigates, the Type 45 destroyers, the Astute class submarines, the P8s, and, not least, the F-35Bs that will fly from the flight decks of the carriers. In the previous Parliament, I asked many questions about the composition of the carrier group and the platforms that make it up, and I intend to continue that during this Session—not that I often got an answer from the Minister. The Government have been exceptionally vague on the individual elements of the carrier group and whether they will even be able to deploy both carriers simultaneously.

The time constraints imposed on me today mean that I will not be able to go into all the issues around the deployment of the carriers. However, three issues need

to be discussed in future debates: first, the manning levels within the Royal Navy; secondly, the problems around the F35B; and, thirdly, the Government's ongoing failure to deliver a shipbuilding strategy. First, on manning, as in the NHS, a 1% pay cap is having a detrimental effect on the ability of the services to keep the personnel they need in post. The Royal Marines are already being sacrificed for this. The submarine service is allegedly 25% short of full manned strength. We can see that this is far from being an abstract debate.

The F-35Bs represent the most expensive military procurement project in the world. Each F-35B plane costs about as much as 10 DUP MP votes in this place, so it is a great investment from the Government in making sure that this works. The workers in Govan need the reassurance that they can continue their work on the Type 26 frigates. First, there were 13 ships, and that was then reduced to eight, with five Type 31 frigates added in. The Parker report failed to inform us that the shipbuilding strategy would be published, and we now have something quite different. I think that the Minister is in the process of announcing three frigates, but we will wait to see how that comes out next week.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: Is it not incumbent on all of Scotland's elected Members of Parliament to hold the Government to account on the roll-back of that promise of the 13 ships that were supposed to be built on the Clyde and in Scotland?

Douglas Chapman: Certainly every single MP who represents a Scottish constituency should be fighting for these ships, fighting for these jobs, and making sure that commitments given in previous years are upheld and delivered in full.

In conclusion, I will fight my hardest on behalf of the Rosyth workforce, to make sure that as many jobs as humanly possible come to our constituency, but we cannot forget the workers on the Clyde and elsewhere across Scotland who depend on MOD contracts to ensure that we have a fighting force fit for this century.

6.35 pm

Jonathan Ashworth (Leicester South) (Lab/Co-op): On behalf of Her Majesty's Opposition, may I associate myself with the tributes paid by Members on both sides of the House to the extraordinary efforts of our public servants who have been tested in recent weeks and months and who never faltered? They make us proud, and we pay tribute to them today.

It is my happy task to congratulate the six hon. Members who have made their maiden speeches today. My hon. Friend the Member for Stockton South (Dr Williams)—a Labour gain in the general election—will bring to our debates considerable clinical experience from which we will all benefit. As someone who recently ran the London marathon, I may join him for the 6 o'clock boot camp to which he has invited us—but only if the Secretary of State comes along as well.

We also heard fine maiden speeches by three Conservative Members, each of whom follows in the footsteps of parliamentarians who have made immense contributions to public life. On the basis of their maiden speeches, the House will be confident that all three of them will also make a huge contribution to public life in the years ahead.

May I also pay tribute to the hon. Member for Edinburgh West (Christine Jardine), who made an excellent maiden speech? I believe she also made a point of order earlier this week, so she is quickly finding her feet in this place.

The hon. Member for South Antrim (Paul Girvan) made an excellent speech. He said that he was worried that he was not articulate, but he was incredibly articulate. He talked about his concerns for the agricultural industry in his constituency. Given how valuable his vote is going to be in the House of Commons, I think he will get the investment he will be calling for.

A number of retreads also made fine speeches. It is my pleasure to welcome back to the House my hon. Friends the Members for Keighley (John Grogan) and for Vale of Clwyd (Chris Ruane) and the right hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Sir Edward Davey).

An immense number of Members spoke in the debate. I cannot do justice to all the contributions, so I apologise in advance, but a few of them interested me. The right hon. Member for Mid Sussex (Sir Nicholas Soames) made a typically fine, gracious and thoughtful contribution. I was interested to hear him say that he believed we should abolish tuition fees for certain subjects. He is almost a Corbynista, it would seem. We will send him a "Jez We Can" T-shirt in the post.

I mean no discourtesy to the right hon. Member for East Devon (Sir Hugo Swire), but I did not realise that he is now on the Back Benches. I remember his time as a very good Foreign Office Minister. He made a very thoughtful speech, and on that basis I think he deserves to be elevated back to the Front Bench. The hon. Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston) made a typically thoughtful contribution. I hope that in the coming weeks she will be suitably elevated to a position that enables her to speak more widely on NHS matters.

Members of my own party also made some excellent speeches. My hon. Friends the Members for Dudley North (Ian Austin), for Wirral West (Margaret Greenwood) and for West Lancashire (Rosie Cooper) all talked about the disastrous fragmentation of the national health service and raised deeply serious concerns about the way in which outsourcing takes places. I hope that the Secretary of State will respond to them when he sums up. It is noteworthy that more Labour than Conservative Members spoke in this debate. When it comes to the NHS, it seems that Tory MPs know they can no longer defend the indefensible.

With that in mind, may I pass on my personal congratulations to the Secretary of State on his reappointment? I did not expect to see him in place—I am not sure whether he expected it either. When an anonymous Tory MP learned of the Secretary of State's reappointment, they were said to be baffled and told *The Huffington Post*:

"He was the most toxic thing on the doorstep among public sector workers".

I do not know whether that Tory MP is in the Chamber tonight, but if they are, let me tell them that we are delighted that the Secretary of State is still in place, and we will be reminding public sector workers in every constituency of that.

I also wish to send my warm regards to David Mowat and Nicola Blackwood. They were dedicated public servants, and I would be grateful if the Secretary of State could pass that message to them.

[Jonathan Ashworth]

We have a national health service with waiting lists close to 4 million; 26,000 people waiting for more than two months for cancer treatment; 560,000 people waiting on trolleys in corridors; the 18-week target downgraded and abandoned, a move in breach of the NHS constitution and the 2012 regulations; and vacancies for 40,000 nurses, for 10,000 GPs and for 3,500 midwives. We have seen applications for training plummet following the axing of the bursary, and today the Secretary of State stands accused of renegeing on his promise to fund new nurse training places.

What was in the Queen's Speech for the NHS and social care? Nothing, and no attempt was made to rise to the challenges that our NHS faces.

Alex Norris (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op): Health and social care integration is prized on both sides of the House. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is jeopardised by Government plans to base it on pounds and pence, not the needs of people?

Jonathan Ashworth: I welcome my hon. Friend to his place, and he makes a valid point.

We will engage constructively with the Government on mental health, but if they genuinely want to improve mental health provision, why not ring-fence the money going to CCGs and end the scandal of the raiding of child and adolescent mental health budgets to plug wider gaps in the NHS?

We welcome the measures on patient safety, and we will engage positively with them.

During the election, in secret, the NHS was told to carry out something called the capped expenditure process. Up and down the country, local NHS bosses were asked to "think the unthinkable"—rationing of treatment, cuts to services and the closing of wards. I challenge the Health Secretary to tell us, here and now, when he learned of the capped expenditure process. When did he order the NHS to introduce it? When did he sign off the plans? Why was the NHS told to keep it secret? I challenge him to abandon the capped expenditure process and give the NHS the money it needs.

The Gracious Speech ignored hard-working public sector workers. For seven years they have been expected to do more and more on less and less. Nurses have been forced to use food banks to make ends meet. The Health Secretary told the NHS Confederation that he had sympathy for underpaid NHS staff, but sympathy will not put food on the table. Nor is it good enough for the Prime Minister's press spokesperson to brief the lobby after Prime Minister's questions that the issue is under review, but then say three hours later that the policy has not changed—a U-turn on a U-turn. The Government cannot even do a U-turn competently. What a shambles. It could be described as weak, unstable and chaotic. Public sector workers deserve a lot better.

This is a self-defeating policy. To all the Conservative Members who have spoken out and said that public sector workers deserve a pay rise, I say we can give them a pay rise tonight if those hon. Members join us in the Lobby. The Gracious Speech should have been an opportunity to take action to support our hard-pressed public sector workers. Instead they will get nothing, and

No. 10 has confirmed today that the policy has not changed. A pay rise for nurses, paramedics, police officers, firemen and women—for all public sector workers who live in all our constituencies—is fair and affordable. It would also mean Barnett consequential for Northern Ireland. On behalf of the 5 million public sector workers, including the 1.2 million in the NHS, I proudly support our amendment and urge Conservative Members to join us in the Lobby tonight.

6.44 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr Jeremy Hunt): I thank the Opposition for choosing to have this debate on security, health and social care. Like the Home Secretary, the shadow Home Secretary and the shadow Health Secretary, I want to start by paying tribute to the amazing work of our emergency services in the recent terrorist atrocities. There are many stories, but two in particular sum up for me just how brilliant they were. The first was of an anaesthetist who picked up his daughter from the Manchester Arena when the bomb went off. He checked his daughter was safe, dropped her off at home and then went straight to work at Stepping Hill hospital. He worked through the night, and it was only in the morning that his colleagues realised he had actually been there when the bomb went off.

I also want to mention the paramedics who arrived on the scene at London Bridge. They arrived minutes after the incident. Gunfire was still happening and they thought they were being fired at, but they walked straight into that gunfire. When I met them, they said they were just doing their job, but I think that shows that there is no such thing as "just a job" in the NHS; it is a vocation. On behalf of the whole country as well as this House, I want to thank them for showing us the NHS at its best. I want to record the fact that it is not just in times of tragedy that our NHS is there for us; it is there seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

We have had a good and wide-ranging debate this afternoon. I congratulate, as the shadow Health Secretary did, the Members who made their maiden speeches; we heard some fantastic ones. I start with my hon. Friend the Member for Hitchin and Harpenden (Bim Afolami). It is great credit to him that his mother is a pharmacist and his father is an NHS doctor. It is marginally less credit to him that he became a lawyer, but only marginally. He spoke with great passion and fluency about the importance of education. It was an excellent and moving first contribution to this House.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Colin Clark), a notable Conservative gain in the election. He spoke with great eloquence about the attractions of his constituency, including castles, beaches, restaurants and a golf course owned by the President of the United States. As for his campaign to get the Scottish Government to do more to deal with NHS staff shortages in his area, it is unusual for me to be on this side of the argument, but I can wholeheartedly support his campaign.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Alex Burghart) for his excellent speech. A teacher of medieval history, he taught us about the 9th century church in his constituency and the need to learn the lessons of the peasants' revolt against excessive taxation. I can assure him that on the Conservative Benches we do not need to learn those lessons; we have reached enlightenment.

I thank the hon. Member for South Antrim (Paul Girvan) for his beautiful panegyric to his stunning constituency. He spoke very powerfully against witch hunting in the military and very powerfully in favour of the Union; both positions will have strong support on the Government Benches.

I welcome to the Labour Benches the hon. Member for Stockton South (Dr Williams). It is excellent to have another doctor in the House. He is, I think, the first ever Member to invite all hon. Members to join him at his 6 o'clock boot camp. As the shadow Health Secretary said, I feel as Health Secretary that I should set an example and join him, but unfortunately I have an unavoidable diary clash; that is a phrase he will learn to use as a new MP, I am sure. His passion for dealing with health inequalities came through loud and clear, and did him great credit.

I also want to thank the hon. Member for Edinburgh West (Christine Jardine). She talked about the majesty of the three bridges across the Forth. For a couple of my teenage years, I grew up under one of them. She was absolutely right to want to reassure EU citizens working in the NHS of the vital importance of their role. I hope the Prime Minister's comments this week will give them reassurance that we are seeking a deal that gives them the same rights to live and work here as UK citizens.

I apologise for not being able to mention all of the many other contributions, but there were some important themes that I want to touch on. A number of Members talked about the possibility of developing a more cross-party consensus on difficult issues around health and social care. The right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) spoke powerfully on that point, as did my right hon. Friend the Member for East Devon (Sir Hugo Swire) and my hon. Friend the Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston). I would make this point. Governments of all colours always seek to get consensus on difficult policy issues, and this Government are no different. However, it takes two to tango, and we have had two elections in a row that the Labour Opposition have tried to turn into referendums on the NHS. If those on the Opposition Front Bench are willing to engage, then we on this side of the House are most certainly willing to do likewise.

Yvette Cooper: On an issue on which I hope there will be consensus across the House, the Secretary of State will, I hope, have heard the words of the hon. Member for North Antrim (Ian Paisley), who said that whether women from Northern Ireland can get an abortion in the English NHS is a matter for the English NHS. Will the Secretary of State agree to change the rules, so that Northern Ireland women do not have to pay in England for an abortion, if they need one?

Mr Hunt: I agree that all women, in all parts of the United Kingdom, should have the same rights to access healthcare. I note that a consultation on this matter is about to happen. The most important thing is that the voices of the women of Northern Ireland are listened to in that consultation.

We had powerful speeches on mental health, in particular from my hon. Friend the Member for St Albans (Mrs Main) and the hon. Members for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow (Dr Cameron) and for Makerfield (Yvonne Fovargue), but also from many others. Mental

health is a very big priority for the Government, particularly children and young people's mental health, because half of all mental health conditions become established before the age of 14. It is particularly important to have better links between the schools sector and the NHS if we are to crack this problem. We have a Green Paper coming up later in the year that will seek to address that.

We also had a number of important speeches on the workforce and morale, including from my hon. Friends the Members for South West Wiltshire (Dr Murrison) and for Lewes (Maria Caulfield), a doctor and a nurse respectively, who spoke with great authority. We also heard from Opposition Members, including the hon. Members for Barrow and Furness (John Woodcock), for Halifax (Holly Lynch), for Sedgefield (Phil Wilson) and for Halton (Derek Twigg), who touched on issues around GP recruitment. On pay, all Members will recognise that whichever party is in power, we have to do the right thing for the economy. People will recognise that in the very difficult period that we have just had, it would not have been possible to increase the number of doctors by nearly 12,000 and the number of nurses in our wards by nearly 13,000 if we had not taken difficult decisions on pay. What I can say is that we will not make our decision on public sector pay until the pay review body has reported. We will listen to what it says, and to what people in this House have said, before making a final decision.

I want to mention what my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley South (Mike Wood) said about his battle against sepsis. Everyone in this House, on all sides, is totally delighted that he won that battle, but how typically selfless of him to use his speech to talk about the 44,000 people every year who do not win their battle against sepsis. We will look carefully at what he said about a national sepsis registry. I also thoroughly agree with what my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid Sussex (Sir Nicholas Soames) said about leadership in the public sector and the NHS. I look forward to more discussions with him about that.

On security, the shadow Home Secretary basically tried to turn an argument about public safety into an argument about austerity. However, I would gently say that for a shadow Home Secretary to protest about austerity in policing when she herself wanted to cut MI5 and the Met's special branch, and when her leader wanted to cut the armed forces, is patently absurd. What she never mentioned is why we got into austerity in the first place: a global financial crash, made infinitely worse by profligate spending and a failure to regulate the City of London by the last Labour Government.

The shadow Health Secretary, the hon. Member for Leicester South (Jonathan Ashworth), spoke eloquently about the NHS.

Ian Austin: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr Hunt: I am going to make some progress. The shadow Health Secretary talked about underfunding of the NHS. He did not, of course, mention the new £43 million emergency floor at Leicester Royal Infirmary, which opened in April and is benefiting his constituents. There are indeed funding pressures in the NHS as we deal, like all countries, with the pressures of an ageing population, but they would be a whole lot worse if we had followed the advice of the Labour party in 2010

[Mr Hunt]

and cut the NHS budget; or followed the advice of the Labour party in Wales, which did cut the NHS budget; or followed the advice of the Labour party in 2015, when it promised £5.5 billion less than the Conservatives. The difference between this side of the House—

Jonathan Ashworth *rose*—

Mr Hunt: I will just make my point. The difference between this side of the House and the other side is not the desire to fund the NHS, but the ability to fund it through a strong economy, and that is exactly what we did. By 2014, we had created 2 million more jobs and the fastest growth in the G7, and what was our first priority? The NHS. Its budget has gone up by £6 billion in real terms since 2014. That is a 7% rise, and it is £2.6 billion more than the Labour party promised in 2015.

Jonathan Ashworth: Our advice was to put an extra £7 billion into the NHS this year, but will the Secretary of State tell me whether he thinks it fair that the people of Northern Ireland will receive an extra £1 billion—which I do not begrudge—while there is not a penny piece of extra investment for the English NHS? Is that fair?

Mr Hunt: Let me tell the hon. Gentleman that our manifesto was very clear: it referred to an extra £8 billion for the NHS, funded by the strong economy that Labour can never deliver.

When the hon. Gentleman talked about problems in the NHS, and problems in care in the NHS, it sounded as if all those problems had started with the Conservatives. He did not mention the most challenging and difficult problem that his party left behind: the legacy of atrocious care at Mid Staffs, Morecambe Bay and many other trusts. Unlike the last Labour Government, we did not sweep those problems under the carpet. We did the opposite: we introduced the toughest inspection regime in the world. Thirty-five trusts went into special measures, and 20 exited from those special measures. Wrexham Park, George Eliot, Hinchingsbrooke, Cambridge, Morecambe Bay, Tameside and East Lancashire went from special measures to good standards. The proportion of NHS patients who say that their care is safe has never been greater.

Stella Creasy: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. The Secretary of State has just announced a consultation on access to abortion in English hospitals, but as far as anyone is aware, no such consultation exists. Can you inform us whether there will be a written statement on the consultation, given that Members on both sides of the House are concerned about the issue and no information has been given, and whether we will be allowed to test the will of the House on the matter?

Mr Speaker: I have had no notification on that subject, but knowing the hon. Lady as I do, I feel sure that she will return to it before long.

Mr Hunt: This is the difference between the two parties. The Labour party wants to use the NHS as a political football. We want to make it better for patients, and that means difficult decisions to grow the economy so that we can fund the NHS, and difficult decisions to

raise standards. The party of the NHS, however, is not the party that uses it to milk votes; it is the party that fights to make it better for patients. That is why it is the Conservative party that is making those difficult decisions. It is the Conservative party that is on the side of patients. It is the Conservative party that is seeing the highest standards of care for cancer, mental health conditions, strokes, heart attacks and nearly every major disease category that we have ever seen in the history of the NHS. It is the Conservative party, not the Labour party, that is the party of the NHS.

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 309, Noes 323.

Division No. 1]

[6.59 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane	Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Abrahams, Debbie	Cowan, Ronnie
Alexander, Heidi	Coyle, Neil
Ali, Rushanara	Crausby, Sir David
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Crawley, Angela
Amesbury, Mike	Creagh, Mary
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Creasy, Stella
Ashworth, Jonathan	Cruddas, Jon
Austin, Ian	Cryer, John
Bailey, Mr Adrian	Cummins, Judith
Bardell, Hannah	Cunningham, Alex
Barron, rh Sir Kevin	Cunningham, Mr Jim
Beckett, rh Margaret	Davey, rh Sir Edward
Benn, rh Hilary	David, Wayne
Berger, Luciana	Davies, Geraint
Betts, Mr Clive	Day, Martyn
Black, Mhairi	De Cordova, Marsha
Blackford, Ian	De Piero, Gloria
Blackman, Kirsty	Debbonaire, Thangam
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta	Dent Coad, Emma
Blomfield, Paul	Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet
Brabin, Tracy	Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Dodds, Anneliese
Brake, rh Tom	Doughty, Stephen
Brennan, Kevin	Dowd, Peter
Brock, Deidre	Drew, Dr David
Brown, Alan	Dromey, Jack
Brown, Lyn	Duffield, Rosie
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Eagle, Ms Angela
Bryant, Chris	Eagle, Maria
Buck, Ms Karen	Edwards, Jonathan
Burden, Richard	Efford, Clive
Burgon, Richard	Elliott, Julie
Butler, Dawn	Ellman, Mrs Louise
Byrne, rh Liam	Elmore, Chris
Cable, rh Sir Vince	Esterson, Bill
Cadbury, Ruth	Evans, Chris
Cameron, Dr Lisa	Farrelly, Paul
Campbell, rh Mr Alan	Farron, Tim
Campbell, Mr Ronnie	Fellows, Marion
Carden, Dan	Field, rh Frank
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	Fitzpatrick, Jim
Champion, Sarah	Fletcher, Colleen
Chapman, Douglas	Flint, rh Caroline
Chapman, Jenny	Flynn, Paul
Charalambous, Bambos	Fovargue, Yvonne
Cherry, Joanna	Foxcroft, Vicky
Clwyd, rh Ann	Frith, James
Coaker, Vernon	Furniss, Gill
Coffey, Ann	Gaffney, Hugh
Cooper, Julie	Gapes, Mike
Cooper, Rosie	Gardiner, Barry
Cooper, rh Yvette	George, Ruth

Gethins, Stephen
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet
 Glindon, Mary
 Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Goodman, Helen
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Gray, Neil
 Green, Kate
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Grogan, John
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanson, rh David
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayman, Sue
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Mr Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Hermon, Lady
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hoey, Kate
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Hosie, Stewart
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, Diana
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, Mr Kevan
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Gerard
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Laird, Lesley
 Lake, Ben
 Lamb, rh Norman
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lee, Ms Karen
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Stephen
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lucas, Ian C.

Lynch, Holly
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Mann, John
 Marsden, Gordon
 Martin, Sandy
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMahan, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 O'Mara, Jared
 Onasanya, Fiona
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Albert
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pidcock, Laura
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Pound, Stephen
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rashid, Faisal
 Rayner, Angela
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Emma
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rodda, Matt
 Rowley, Danielle
 Ruane, Chris
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Ryan, rh Joan

Saville Roberts, Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Sherriff, Paula
 Shuker, Mr Gavin
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Eleanor
 Smith, Laura
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Sobel, Alex
 Spellar, rh John
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeting, Wes
 Stringer, Graham
 Sweeney, Mr Paul J.
 Swinson, Jo
 Tami, Mark
 Thewliss, Alison

Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turley, Anna
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, Valerie
 Walker, Thelma
 Watson, Tom
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Williams, Hywel
 Williams, Dr Paul
 Williamson, Chris
 Wilson, Phil
 Wishart, Pete
 Woodcock, John
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:

Nic Dakin and
 Jeff Smith

NOES

Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Allen, Heidi
 Andrew, Stuart
 Argar, Edward
 Atkins, Victoria
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, Stephen
 Baron, Mr John
 Bebb, Guto
 Bellingham, Sir Henry
 Benyon, rh Richard
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, Jake
 Blackman, Bob
 Blunt, Crispin
 Boles, Nick
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bowie, Andrew C.
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Brady, Mr Graham
 Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, Conor
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Cartledge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Mr Christopher
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Cleverly, James
 Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Cox, Mr Geoffrey
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crouch, Tracey
 Davies, Chris
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty, Leo
 Dockerill, Julia
 Dodds, rh Nigel
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Ms Nadine
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, Oliver

Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Duddridge, James
 Duguid, David
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, Mr Philip
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Evennett, rh David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Sir Michael
 Fernandes, Suella
 Field, rh Mark
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gale, Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, rh Mr David
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl
 Girvan, Paul
 Glen, John
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodwill, Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Luke
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Bill
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Greening, rh Justine
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, rh Mr John
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heappey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hinds, Damian

Hoare, Simon
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Howell, John
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hurd, Mr Nick
 Jack, Mr Alister
 James, Margot
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Mr Bernard
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Keegan, Gillian
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kerr, Stephen
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lamont, John
 Lancaster, Mark
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, Sir Edward
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Little Pengelly, Emma
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Maclean, Rachel
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, Scott
 Masterton, Paul
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Ms Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, Amanda
 Mills, Nigel

Milton, rh Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moore, Damien
 Mordaunt, Penny
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, Caroline
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 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Paisley, Ian
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 Patel, rh Priti
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 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Mike
 Penrose, John
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 Pow, Rebecca
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 Prisk, Mr Mark
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 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Andrew Griffiths and
Mrs Heather Wheeler

Question accordingly negated.

7.15 pm

The debate stood adjourned (Standing Order No. 9(3)).

Ordered, That the debate be resumed tomorrow.

School Funding Formula (London)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Christopher Pincher.)

Mr Speaker: If, inexplicably, there are right hon. and hon. Members who do not wish to hear the debate on the school funding formula in London, I hope that they will courteously leave the Chamber quickly and quietly, so that we can all listen to the right hon. Member for Twickenham (Sir Vince Cable).

7.16 pm

Sir Vince Cable (Twickenham) (LD): Mr Speaker, may I express my appreciation for being able to speak from these Benches again, after a two-year lapse, and to take advantage of the real privilege we have of being able to raise in an Adjournment debate matters of acute concern to our constituents? I wish to raise the issue of school funding, which proved to be one of massive importance during the election campaign, not just to me and my constituents, but to many others.

Let me give some examples of the kind of problems that have surfaced. I have visited three primary schools in the past week, one of which has already had to seek a parental contribution of £120 a head from each parent in order to balance its budget. Another had to put a proposition to the parents to go on to part-time schooling for one day a week, but that has subsequently been withdrawn in favour of a parental contribution and redundancies. This pattern is now being repeated throughout my borough and many others.

Tom Brake (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): I can confirm that we face exactly the same issues in the London Borough of Sutton, and I believe that every secondary head has written to me expressing concerns, for instance, about requiring schools to cut back on the A-level options that are available. Does my right hon. Friend hope, as I do, that the Minister for School Standards will respond positively and set out how London can benefit from the bonanza that was available to the Democratic Unionist party in the past couple of weeks, so that we can see the right level of funding in our schools as well?

Sir Vince Cable: My right hon. Friend anticipates a point I was going to make, but he is absolutely right to say that this problem is widely shared. Several elements have contributed to this anxiety in the schools sector, one of which is that we have had flat or falling funding in nominal terms per pupil, certainly over the past couple of years—it is a small fall but it is significant. Much more seriously, there has been a very big increase in costs. Costs that were previously borne by central Government are now being offloaded on to individual schools. Some of them are obvious ones, such as national insurance contributions, which have added a couple of percentage points to the payroll—that is 80% of the cost of a typical school. The increase in pension contributions is another.

One particularly bizarre item causing considerable puzzlement in schools is the apprenticeship levy. I can perhaps claim some authorship of the original ideas behind the levy, from the coalition years, but none of us ever intended that it would apply to schools. The training of teachers, and indeed other professionals, does not go

through an apprenticeship route. It appears that this is being introduced because people in maintained schools are regarded as council employees, and of course the whole direction of Government funding is to move in the opposite direction. In addition, there is a completely bizarre distinction between academies and non-academies. I wonder whether the Minister, in discussions with his colleagues, can lift what is not a massive but an extremely irritating and, at the margin, onerous burden on schools. It is something that would help significantly, and the burden is clearly inappropriate.

The consequence of these changes, together with the new funding formula that the Government have mooted, is very significant indeed. The National Audit Office has estimated that, between 2014-15 and 2019-20, which is when the funding formula comes in, there will have been an 8% real cut overall in English schools. The Education Policy Institute, which has done a parallel study and is broadly in favour of the principle of the funding formula, notes that the cut is something in the order of 6% to 11% in the narrower period of 2016-17 to 2019-20, with more than half of primary and secondary schools facing cuts of that magnitude.

Let me take the discussion very specifically to the funding formula, which is how I couched this debate. I have no objection—I do not think that any of us possibly could have—to the principle of trying to achieve fairness in the allocation of funds. It is a perfectly desirable objective. Although there is never likely to be much of a consensus on this, striving to achieve better fairness in distribution is a perfectly acceptable philosophical principle. I am not coming here to make a particular whinge about my own Twickenham constituency and borough, because, as the figures net out, we are not significant losers. Indeed, on some calculations, there may be a small gain, but that is not the case in many parts of inner London, which will be hit very severely. None the less, there are some very serious problems with the funding formula as it is due to be applied, and I just wanted to raise them with the Minister in the hope that he can give us some confidence that they will be addressed.

My first concern is that, clearly, it is much easier to introduce a new funding formula when budgets overall are flat or rising than when they are falling. It is a simple matter of common sense. Some secondary schools in my constituency face 3% real cuts to meet the funding formula. If that were done at a time when their budget was flat and others were rising, one can see how they could accommodate it, but imposing on already very stressed financial budgets real cuts as a consequence of the formula is just making this deeply, deeply unattractive.

The informed estimate is that if the Government were to bring in the funding formula while ensuring that no school actually loses in absolute terms, it would probably cost them £335 million. That sounds a lot of money, but, as my right hon. Friend has pointed out, in relation to some of the other transactions of the past 48 hours it probably is not all that significant. Can the Minister clarify a commitment, which I think was made in his party's manifesto, that the Government will ensure that no school is absolutely worse off as a result of the formula? That would certainly help to lubricate the whole process.

My second concern is different and has nothing to do with money. It is about the centralisation of decision-making that is a consequence of this new formula. At present,

[*Sir Vince Cable*]

there is a significant degree of flexibility for local authorities in moving money within the funding blocks, particularly within the school block. That enables local authorities to take account of local circumstances. In my particular case, we have a significant number of problems in the secondary sector. This involves a significant number of outer borough pupils, the fact that we have a large number of pupils who go into the private sector at 11 or thereabouts, and more challenging demands on the secondary sector. There is an understanding locally that, effectively, there should be a cross subsidy from primary to secondary. That is the result of local circumstances, and people understand that and accept it. Under the funding formula, such local, particular concerns can no longer be taken into account. One of the practical consequences in my area is that the secondary schools, which have particular needs, will be very savagely hit, because the cuts will fall on them disproportionately. As I understand it, there will be very little capacity in the Department for Education or with regional commissioners to handle the kind of local negotiation that would be required to take account of such particularities. I ask the Minister to try to ensure that as we move to a new funding system, it does not become hopelessly over-centralised. There is a real danger that we have a Soviet style of financial allocation that takes no account of local circumstances.

My third concern is about special needs and disadvantaged pupils who fall within the special educational needs block. As the Minister knows, funding for that at a local level is a complete mess. Local authorities are not funded up to anywhere remotely near the level that is required to meet the special needs of statemented pupils. The new plan system, which was passed in the last Parliament, requires substantial funding, which is simply not available. Local schools are having to use out-of-borough private providers of special needs education, which is often very high cost. Indeed, one of the things the Government should think about is a Competition and Markets Authority referral for some of these institutions.

Whatever the reasons, local councils have run up very large deficits on their special needs budgets. They are having to use school block money in order to support it. Many schools are in great difficulty as a result of the financing of special needs, so much so that schools that were regarded as centres of excellence are now trying to deter people from coming because of the extra cost involved, and a pass-the-parcel system is developing with special needs, which is deeply unhealthy, and completely inimical to good schooling.

A fourth concern I have about the proposals as they currently stand is that all kinds of perverse incentives are built into the rather complex formula that the Department has evolved, one of which is that it penalises high achievement. I happen to represent a borough where 50% of schools are regarded as “outstanding” and the other 50% “good”. It is a very high achievement area. Parents have very high expectations: schools deliver. Under the formula, high achievement will be penalised, and the funding is being redirected to schools in which there is low achievement. One of the utterly perverse consequences is that schools in London, particularly in inner London—areas such as Hackney, Lewisham and Lambeth, which 20 or 30 years ago were regarded as

dreadful sink schools—are now very high-achieving schools in terms of value added, and those schools will need significant amounts of funding.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): The right hon. Gentleman is making a very good point. Certainly in Wokingham, which has very low per-pupil amounts and good-performing schools, we feel there is a problem. Was not the idea of the reform to have a higher absolute amount for every pupil in the country, because there is a basic cost wherever you are being educated?

Sir Vince Cable: Yes, indeed. The right hon. Gentleman makes the important point that it is not just a question to read having a basic amount of funding, but an evidence base for what the cost of running a school actually is. I worry that as the formula is currently devised, there is no evidence base. Wild guesses have been made about the differential costs of secondary and primary schooling, and we need objective studies of what it costs to run a school, so that the formula can work well.

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con) *rose*—

Sir Vince Cable: I just want to round up and come to a conclusion, to give the Minister a plentiful opportunity to reply.

My final point is that in addition to all the difficulties I have mentioned, there is a high level of uncertainty about how the new formula will be applied. Some of our secondary schools, which will face deep cuts, are protected up to a point by the maximum 3% cut—the floor that has been introduced—but we do not know for how many years that will continue. If they take painful corrective measures now, will they have to continue to do so? There is uncertainty about how the growth of pupil numbers will be accommodated. I believe that a system of retrospective prompt rebating could easily be set up and would make the planning of school finances much easier.

To round off my comments, I think there is an acceptance on both sides of the House that funding distribution needs to be looked at in a fair framework. That cannot happen in the current environment of large-scale cuts across the board, and I sincerely hope that the Minister will look at some of the other points that I have made about the need for much more decentralisation and flexibility in decision making, which will make it much easier to carry the reform through.

7.30 pm

The Minister for School Standards (Nick Gibb): May I begin by congratulating the right hon. Member for Twickenham (Sir Vince Cable) on his first speech in this Parliament and welcome him back to the House of Commons?

The Government want to ensure that all children, regardless of where they live, receive a first-class education. Over the past seven years, we have made significant progress. There are now almost 1.8 million more children in schools that are rated good or outstanding compared with 2010. Thanks to a curriculum that ensures that all children are taught the core knowledge that they need to be successful, to the promotion of evidence-based teaching practices such as Asian-style maths mastery

and systematic synthetic phonics, and the hard work of hundreds of thousands of teachers, standards across England are on the rise. According to the latest international figures, secondary school pupils in England outperform pupils in the other nations of the United Kingdom.

The anachronistic way in which funding is distributed across the country is not fair and is in need of reform, so over the past six months I have spent a lot of time meeting teachers, headteachers, parents, governors and hon. and right hon. Members to discuss fairness in the school funding system. As a result of those conversations, I have never been more convinced of the need to grasp the nettle and address the unfairness of the current funding system. The data that are used to allocate funding to local authorities are over a decade out of date. Over that period, for example, the free school meals rate has almost halved in Southwark and has more than doubled in Dorset, but the funding that each local authority receives has not responded. It is not right that local authorities with similar needs and characteristics receive very different levels of funding from central Government. That results in a situation where, for example, a school in Barnsley would receive 50% more funding, with no other change to its circumstances, if it were situated in Hackney. That is not a rational, fair or efficient system for distributing money to our schools.

That is why the Government have gone further than any previous Government in reforming school funding, and why the Queen's Speech made it clear that we are determined to introduce a fairer distribution of funding for schools. In doing so, we will ensure that all schools in England are funded on a consistent and transparent basis that reflects local needs. We will set out our plans shortly, and, as outlined in our manifesto, we will make sure that no school budget is cut as a result of the new formula. That will be particularly important for six schools in the right hon. Gentleman's constituency. The other 23 schools would all see a rise in funding as a result of the national funding formula. I hope that that addresses one of the concerns that he expressed.

In March 2016, we launched the first stage of our consultation on the national funding formula. We asked for views on the principles that should underpin it and its overall design. Those principles included using robust data to ensure that funding is matched to pupil characteristics and the importance of transparency in the way in which funding is allocated. Over 6,000 people responded and there was widespread support for reforming the current system and for the principles that we set out, including the issue that the right hon. Gentleman raised of low prior attainment, which he queried. Allocating extra funding for pupils who begin school behind their peers is, I believe, absolutely right. There is no perverse incentive, because it is the child's attainment in the predecessor school that is relevant: nursery school if they are going to primary school, or primary school if they are going to secondary school.

Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con): It is absolutely right, of course, that we should invest in pupils with low prior attainment, but does the Minister agree that that should not be at the expense of schools that, for whatever reason, do not hit the criteria on low prior attainment, English as an additional language or free school meals? They should have the funding they need to provide a full, rounded, liberal education.

Nick Gibb: I accept my hon. Friend's point. We have had many discussions on these and other issues—regarding not only schools in his constituency, but 40 schools across the country. I feel strongly that schools with children who come from deprived backgrounds, with all the challenges they bring, should receive extra funding through the formula in addition to the money that comes through the pupil premium. I also strongly believe that we need to ensure that children who start school behind their peers catch up. Funding, I hope, will help ensure that they do. My hon. Friend is right, however, that we want to ensure that schools without any of those characteristics are properly funded. We can do that when a strong economy is generating the revenue to pay for those funds.

Bob Blackman: One of the issues that the right hon. Member for Twickenham (Sir Vince Cable) did not raise was rising rolls, particularly in London. The birth rate and the influx of people coming to London with young children require schools to accommodate more children, but the money lags. Will the Minister consider that aspect? If schools are not going to lose out over all, the per-pupil funding will be crucial in London to make sure that money goes to the schools as rolls rise.

Nick Gibb: My hon. Friend is absolutely right: as pupil numbers rise, so funding for schools will rise as well, because it is based on a per-pupil approach. We are spending record amounts on school funding—£41 billion this year—and that is set to rise further as pupil numbers rise.

In December last year, we launched the second stage of the consultation on the detailed design of the formula. As part of the consultation and to ensure maximum transparency, we published detailed illustrative impact data for all schools and local authorities, and that enabled us to hold a truly national debate during the three months of the consultation. During that period, as I said, I met parents, teachers and governors. Both the Secretary of State and I met hon. Members from across the House. We received more than 5,000 letters on the national funding formula and held more than 10 debates in the House. We received more than 25,000 responses to the consultation itself.

Tom Brake: I thank the Minister for meeting me and the heads of Wilson's School and Carshalton High School for Girls a few months ago. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Sir Vince Cable) said, irrespective of what the Government do about the funding formula, significant funding pressures come from the apprenticeship levy, pensions, national insurance and the additional recruitment costs that schools face because of the shortage of teachers. How will the Minister address those cost pressures?

Nick Gibb: The right hon. Gentleman has anticipated my comments, as he did his right hon. Friend's. I will come to those issues. On the apprenticeship levy, schools can use apprenticeship levy funds not only for training support staff, but for training teachers. We are developing a teacher apprenticeship and the Government have asked Sir Andrew Carter to help develop a high-quality teaching apprenticeship to enable schools to draw down funding available through the apprenticeship levy.

[Nick Gibb]

We will publish our response to that consultation in due course. We will build on the strong support for the basic objective of reforming the current system as well as addressing the detailed issues and concerns raised throughout the consultation. We remain committed to working with Parliament and bringing forward proposals that will command consensus.

The right hon. Member for Twickenham raised the issue of introducing a national funding formula at this moment. We felt that at a time of constraints on budgets it was even more important to introduce such a formula to ensure that the unfairnesses are ironed out—more important than when budgets are rising.

Not only do we want the system for distribution to be fair; we also want to ensure that every school has the resources it needs to deliver a world-class education for every child. We have protected the core schools budget in real terms since 2010. We have given record levels of funding for our schools, and we set out plans to increase funding further in our manifesto, as well as continuing to protect the pupil premium to support the most disadvantaged pupils in our schools.

Mike Kane (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): Will the Minister give way?

Nick Gibb: I will not.

We recognise that schools are facing cost pressures and we will reflect on the message that people sent at the election about the funding of our schools. We also know that how schools use their money is important in delivering the best outcomes for pupils. We will continue to provide support to help schools to use their funding in cost-effective ways. The Government have produced tools, information and guidance to support improved financial health and efficiency in schools. Those tools are available in one area of the gov.uk website.

Layla Moran (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD): I am a school governor at a local primary school in my constituency. You say that we need help to find efficient ways of spending the money in the school. I have to tell you, from personal experience, that, as a group of experienced governors, we have done absolutely everything we can to be as efficient as we possibly can. The next thing to go will be teaching assistants and teachers. I have respect for what you say but—I am sorry—I just do not think that any more tools will help. What would help is more money. That is what we need.

Mr Speaker: Order. May I just say very gently to the hon. Lady, who is already well and truly making her mark, that the word “you” implies the Chair, and I have not made any statements about any of these matters? The hon. Lady is new, but extremely articulate, and I know that she will get to grips with these things very quickly.

Nick Gibb: I understand the hon. Lady’s point, but there are ways in which we can help schools to become more efficient with the available tools such as reviewing the level of efficiency, investigating levels of expenditure against other similar schools and other benchmarking tools that are on the website. The best way for schools

to know what is effective is to share best practice. There are case studies on the gov.uk website, showing, for example, how a school in Leicestershire supports other local schools to develop a strategic three-year budget plan and thinks through its staffing model to best meet the curriculum. It also shows a school in Barnsley that has made significant savings by introducing a more efficient working pattern for support staff, and a school in my county of West Sussex that used a data-led approach to designing its curriculum and strategic staffing plans.

Earlier this year, we introduced a schools buying strategy to support schools to save more than £1 billion a year by 2019-20 on their non-staff expenditure. The strategy includes the introduction of school buying hubs, which are regional units designed to communicate with and provide procurement support to all schools in the area. The hubs will provide expertise and specialist advice on procuring and managing catering and cleaning contracts, for example, to help to deliver better value in school buying. Alongside procurement advice, they will provide market intelligence, help with complex contracts, and promote local collaboration and aggregation.

The Government are building a digital buying platform to enable schools to compare prices more easily and to access a wide range of suppliers. School business management is an important and increasingly skilled profession. To support school business managers and help them to share their market knowledge, we will provide support to create new school business manager networks in areas of the country where they do not already exist. We will also create a network leaders forum to bring together leading members of the many networks, creating face-to-face opportunities to share knowledge and best practice on a national basis.

We will also provide schools with more access to better national deals. We have introduced a new deal on multifunctional devices—printers and photocopiers—this year. On average, schools could save more than 40% by using this arrangement, and up to 10% by making use of our national energy deal. The Department will work closely with schools—including the school the hon. Lady is a governor of—and suppliers to ensure that deals are easily accessible to schools and tailored to their needs.

Improved procurement will help free up resources available for teaching pupils, but to maximise these resources, it is also essential for schools to deploy their staff effectively and efficiently. This can be achieved through reducing unnecessary workload—that is where the Government have a key role to play—and making use of the full set of resources on the gov.uk website that support schools’ efficiency and financial health.

We are continuing our extensive work with the profession, teaching unions and Ofsted to challenge unhelpful practices and reduce workload, so that teachers can concentrate on teaching, not bureaucracy and paperwork. In February, we published the findings of the 2016 teacher workload survey, an update on how we are meeting our commitments to tackle workload, and details of further steps we will take, including an offer of targeted support. Earlier this year, we also published the school workforce planning guidance to help schools to make well-informed decisions about their staffing structures, and schools should always carefully consider their individual context and the mix of staffing roles they require.

In summary, this Government will continue to support England's schools by providing more funding than ever before, by making sure that the funding is distributed fairly and to where it is needed most, and by helping schools to achieve more with that funding, with a focus on sustaining and improving the rapid progress our children and young people are making under this Government.

Introducing fair funding will be an historic and necessary reform—the biggest change to school funding for well over a decade. Thanks to the determination of this

Government to address issues of unfairness in our society, we will have a clear, simple and transparent system that matches funding to children's needs and the schools they attend. It will enable all schools, regardless of where they are situated in the country, to provide the very best education for pupils and an excellent education system.

Question put and agreed to.

7.46 pm

House adjourned.

Written Statement

Wednesday 28 June 2017

TRANSPORT

EU Transport Council

The Secretary of State for Transport (Chris Grayling):

The only Transport Council under the Maltese presidency (the presidency) took place in Brussels on 8 June. The UK was represented by the UK's deputy permanent representative to the EU, Katrina Williams.

The Council adopted a general approach on lorry and bus driver training (driver CPC directive) as well as Council conclusions on road safety and the EU's maritime priorities. All three were widely supported by member states. The UK intervened to support the road safety conclusions, welcoming the elements related to safer road infrastructure and connected and autonomous vehicles, and highlighting the UK's safer road fund.

Under any other business, a range of items were discussed. The Commission presented its new mobility package of proposals which aims to modernise the road transport framework and strengthen the competitiveness and social standards of the EU road haulage sector. Some member states supported stronger social standards in the road transport sector while others felt the Commission's proposals did not sufficiently support liberalisation in the sector. A number of member states called for the political and geographical balance of the proposals to be carefully considered.

The presidency provided information on the progress of the trilogue discussions with the European Parliament

on professional qualifications in inland navigation directive and the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) regulation. Overall member states welcomed the substantial efforts of the Maltese presidency in negotiations to date with the European Parliament.

The Commission presented an overview of the "Open and Connected Europe" aviation package which was published on the morning of the Transport Council. The package includes a proposal to revise regulation (EC) No. 868/2004, guidelines on airline ownership and control, guidelines on public service obligations and best practice on minimising air traffic control disruptions.

Sweden provided information on her approach to protection against acts of terror in road transport in light of the terrorist attack that occurred in Stockholm in April. The UK intervened to express its solidarity and emphasise the importance of this issue and of sharing best practice, supported by other member states. Those who intervened offered condolences to the UK following the London Bridge attack on 3 June.

In addition, the Commission updated the Council on recent developments on aviation security and the Netherlands asked the Commission to provide information on their work on social issues in aviation. Luxembourg urged member states to speed up the implementation of the European rail traffic management signalling system (ERTMS) and presented the work she had done to develop a blue-print EU cycling strategy. Germany flagged the high-level dialogue on connected and autonomous driving that would take place in Frankfurt on 14 and 15 September and the Estonian presidency presented its work programme for its presidency beginning 1 July 2017.

Over lunch Commissioner Bulc led a discussion on an initial strategy at the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from ships.

[HCWS15]

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