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**HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY  
DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**Thursday 3 May 2018**

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# House of Commons

*Thursday 3 May 2018*

*The House met at half-past Nine o'clock*

## PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## Oral Answers to Questions

### EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION

*The Secretary of State was asked—*

#### Negotiations

1. **Gavin Newlands** (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): What recent progress he has made on negotiating the UK's exit from the EU. [905107]

4. **Mr John Whittingdale** (Maldon) (Con): What progress he has made on negotiating the UK's future relationship with the EU. [905114]

6. **Antoinette Sandbach** (Eddisbury) (Con): What recent progress he has made on negotiations on the UK leaving the EU. [905117]

7. **Hannah Bardell** (Livingston) (SNP): What recent progress he has made on negotiating the UK's exit from the EU. [905118]

10. **Stephen Gethins** (North East Fife) (SNP): What recent progress he has made on negotiating the UK's exit from the EU. [905127]

11. **Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): What progress he has made on negotiations to agree the terms on which the UK will leave the EU. [905128]

**The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union** (Mr David Davis): Clearly, great minds think alike today, Mr Speaker.

We have made significant progress in negotiating our exit by agreeing on the terms of a time-limited implementation period and locking down entire chapters on the financial settlement and citizens' rights. Negotiations are ongoing. My officials are in Brussels this week, discussing a number of issues, including issues in the agreement such as Euratom, data and intellectual property rights and the future partnership. They are discussing how we should progress the future economic partnership and how we can progress the negotiations swiftly and in parallel. Northern Ireland—particularly human rights, state aid and, to some extent, agriculture—is also being discussed. Today, in Brussels my officials are discussing the future of the security partnership.

**Gavin Newlands:** There is now a clear consensus in this Parliament that, at the very least, the United Kingdom should enter into a customs arrangement with the EU post Brexit, but after another indecisive Brexit Cabinet Sub-Committee meeting, the Government, after two years, have still failed to reach an agreed position on the customs issue. Every 42 days, the Government lose a Cabinet Minister, and the Secretary of State is 6:1 third favourite to be the next to go. Those are good odds, if you ask me. If the eventual will of the Cabinet and the Prime Minister is to seek a customs arrangement with the EU, will the Secretary of State resign?

**Mr Davis:** I am not sure whether it is constitutional to discuss my resignation, but I will say that I do not take it to be imminent.

The simple truth is that this is a complex and important issue, which will affect our country for generations. It has a direct effect on the sensitive issue of Northern Ireland and the peace process there, which we are committed to protecting at all costs. It is therefore no surprise that it will take some time to nail down the policy.

**Mr Whittingdale:** Conservative Members are confident that my right hon. Friend will achieve the best possible outcome for this country in the negotiations and will continue to serve this country for a long time thereafter. Will he confirm, however, that his task will not be made any easier—indeed, it will be made considerably harder—by some of the amendments to the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill that have been passed in the other place? Does he agree that they will need to be repealed when they come back to this House and that the Lords will press them at their peril?

**Mr Davis:** I thank my right hon. Friend for his forecast, or his good wishes—one or the other—

**Mr Speaker:** Have it framed.

**Mr Davis:** I have some much more pertinent things than that to frame, Mr Speaker.

My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. The European Union (Withdrawal) Bill is essential and is in the national interest. Some of the amendments passed in the upper House—and the upper House does a very important job, as a reviewing House, in improving the quality of legislation—could have the effect of undermining the negotiation. That is a matter of critical national interest, and we will have to deal with it accordingly.

**Antoinette Sandbach:** Does the Secretary of State agree with the finding of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee that there is currently no technological solution to the problem of the Irish border?

**Mr Davis:** We have said categorically that there will be no physical infrastructure or related checks and controls at the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic. We have set out clear commitments in relation to the border and have put forward two potential customs models, to which the hon. Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire North (Gavin Newlands) alluded.

I have always said that the best solution to the Northern Ireland border issue will be reached through the deep and special partnership between the United Kingdom

and the European Union, recognising the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland. As the European Commission has itself acknowledged, solutions to the border issue cannot be based on precedent.

**Hannah Bardell:** Given the fankle that the Secretary of State and the Government have got themselves into in the other place, have not the EU negotiations now descended into a game show parody? The question is, is it “Deal or No Deal”, or has the whole situation just become a bit “Pointless”?

**Mr Davis:** The hon. Lady clearly memorised her question before she heard my answer. A huge amount of incredibly important work is under way, most notably on Northern Ireland. I would not reduce that to a parody.

**Stephen Gethins:** The Secretary of State will be aware that universities in the UK punch well above their weight in terms of research funding, not least the universities of Dundee and St Andrews. Given that universities across Europe are planning for the next framework programme, what plans has he to ensure that those in the UK will have access to the same levels of funding on 1 January 2021?

**Mr Davis:** The Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr Walker), has visited Dundee and is very much across that issue. We have given undertakings in relation to guaranteeing the funding of the universities, but if the hon. Gentleman is interested, he can certainly discuss this with me explicitly, so that we can deal directly with the issue of the universities in his constituency.

**Sir Desmond Swayne:** With what level of confidence does the Secretary of State estimate the probability of our leaving the customs union on 31 December 2020?

**Mr Davis:** Will 100% do?

**Sir Desmond Swayne:** Excellent.

**Mr Davis:** Let me make a serious point here. The issue of leaving the customs union plays directly to the issue of how we manage our future export and trade arrangements. Almost 60% of our exports are now going to the rest of the world. That is not surprising because both the International Monetary Fund and the European Commission itself have said that the vast majority of growth in world trade will come from outside the European Union. It is our explicit aim to make the most of that, and that means we have to leave the customs union.

**Stephen Timms (East Ham) (Lab):** Will the Secretary of State set out for the House the characteristics of the customs partnership that he is discussing with his right hon. Friends, and given that according to reports that is the Prime Minister’s preferred way forward, what are the reasons for holding back on it?

**Mr Davis:** There are two models. The streamline model essentially uses conventional techniques used around the rest of the world, including electronic pre-notification, the use of authorised economic operators and a whole series of other technical mechanisms. The alternative proposal—the new customs partnership—is

a brand-new idea; it has never been tested anywhere in the world and involves, essentially, charging the common external tariff when goods enter the country and then rebating that. Both approaches have merits and virtues, and both have some drawbacks, and that is why we are taking our time over this discussion.

**Mr David Jones (Clwyd West) (Con):** Given that membership of the European Union necessarily means being in the single market and the customs union under the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice, does my right hon. Friend agree that, to keep faith with the British people, this Parliament has a positive duty to ensure that upon withdrawal we cease to be subject to all those arrangements?

**Mr Davis:** My right hon. Friend is correct: what we are doing, after all, is carrying out the judgment of the referendum, which was to take back control of borders, laws and money. During the referendum, both sides made it very plain that real removal from the EU means real removal from the customs union and the single market.

**Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab):** They might be over-represented in the Secretary of State’s ministerial team, but supporters of the European Research Group constitute less than 10% of the membership of this House. Why are the Government putting their red lines before the interests of the country?

**Mr Davis:** I wish the hon. Gentleman a happy May Day this week, but he is basically putting—how can I express this in parliamentary language?—a non-fact in front of the House. The case is very simple: the Government are deciding on the future customs arrangements on the basis of the best interests of the United Kingdom.

**Paul Blomfield:** I am grateful for the right hon. Gentleman’s May Day wishes, and I am sure that he will be celebrating as well. The Engineering Employers Federation says that being outside a customs union “would condemn the manufacturing sector to a painful and costly Brexit.”

Does he really think that is a price worth paying to keep the ERG happy?

**Mr Davis:** I am not going to take lectures from a party that has had 11 different positions on this so far and whose own—[*Interruption.*] I am speaking through the Speaker, thank you very much. And a party whose own policy has been roundly criticised in singularly unparliamentary language by its own shadow Secretary of State for International Trade, the hon. Member for Brent North (Barry Gardiner).

### Space Industry

2. **Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD):** What recent assessment he has made of the effect of leaving the EU on the UK space industry. [905108]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Suella Braverman):** The UK space industry is a global success story, leveraging our expertise and talent to deliver ground-breaking products and

services, and we want a UK space industry that captures 10% of the global market by 2030, creating 100,000 new jobs—astronomical levels! Ministers from across the Government have carried out extensive engagement on EU exit, and this has included engagement with the space sector. We have been clear in our desire to continue our involvement in EU space programmes, including Galileo, provided that the UK and UK companies can continue to participate on a fair and open basis.

**Jamie Stone:** I thank the Minister for her answer. Whatever the future holds for us in the UK, we are going to have to play to all our strengths, intellectually and economically. She will be aware that Her Majesty's Government are currently considering the northern part of Sutherland in my constituency as a possible space launch site. Jobs do not exactly grow on the trees in that part of the world, and I would warmly encourage the Government to go down the route of developing the site there. It would mean a great deal to me, to my constituents and to an area that needs the help.

**Suella Braverman:** The hon. Gentleman raises a crucial point relating to the development of our domestic space strategy, and Scotland has a strong heritage in the sector. For example, Glasgow has built more satellites in the past two years compared with other European cities, and we also have the Prestwick aerospace park, Strathclyde University and many companies breaking new frontiers. We want the UK to reach space from our own shores, and we recently passed the Space Industry Act 2018, which is the first key step towards licensing the first missions from the UK into space. Brexit will not pose a barrier to our journey into space.

**Mr John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con):** The ancients named the planets after their gods. In affirming that the United Kingdom will continue to lead geo-galactic enterprise and innovation across the continent, will the Minister explain how, goddess-like, she changed her name and tell us what role she intends to play in promoting the United Kingdom in this place, in the Government, on earth and across the cosmos?

**Suella Braverman:** My right hon. Friend sets the bar very high. I thank him for his question, for his stellar contributions and his work with the space sector, and particularly for his work on the Space Industry Act, which, as I said, has paved the way for our domestic policy. His reference to my goddess-like status is slightly exaggerated, but I would expect nothing less of him. Even in this space age, it takes a brave woman to follow tradition and change her name following marriage. He is right to suggest that the UK's historic strength in the space sector will be secured as we leave the European Union and develop our own new partnership with our allies across the channel. It is in that spirit, boldly going where no woman has gone before, that I can tell the House from the Dispatch Box that, as of today, I am pleased to be known as Suella Braverman.

**Mr Speaker:** We are delighted for the hon. Lady, and we congratulate her on that. I would also say that, in the 25 years that I have known the right hon. Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Mr Hayes), he has always inhabited his own galaxy and been the most shining star in it.

**Norman Lamb (North Norfolk) (LD):** I should like to add my congratulations to the Minister. With regard to the Galileo programme, it is reported that the procurement process will freeze out UK participation in the programme. I know that the Science Minister met representatives of the European Space Agency on Monday. Will the Minister provide an update on efforts to freeze the procurement and sort out this mess, because 400 jobs in this country are dependent on getting it sorted out?

**Suella Braverman:** I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his question. The Government have been clear that there is mutual benefit in the UK's involvement in Galileo, and we are working hard with our European partners to deliver this outcome. However, as the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy made clear in his letter to Ministers in the other 27 EU member states on 19 April, that involvement must be on terms that the UK considers acceptable, including being fair and open to the UK and UK industry. That is why the Prime Minister has announced that she will task engineering and space experts in the UK to develop options for a British global navigation satellite system that would safeguard our position in terms of navigation and timing information.

**Ian C. Lucas (Wrexham) (Lab):** Successful space businesses such as Airbus provide thousands of jobs in the UK, and their success has been built on an open, free supply-chain system with the EU. How will the Minister obtain the agreement of EU partners for the continuation of that system?

**Suella Braverman:** There has been considerable engagement with Airbus. The Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr Walker), has met representatives from Airbus, and I have visited its site in Portsmouth. We want full access to Galileo, including the crucial secure elements that will help to guide British missiles should they be needed to keep us all safe. This is a commercial matter for Airbus, so it would be inappropriate for me to comment, but I can say that the Government have been in close contact and will continue to work with the entire UK space sector to do all that we can to ensure that the UK is able to contribute fully to the Galileo programme.

### Northern Ireland/Republic of Ireland Border

3. **Karin Smyth (Bristol South) (Lab):** What recent progress he has made on securing an agreement with his EU counterparts on border arrangements between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland after the UK leaves the EU. [905110]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Robin Walker):** Officials are undertaking an intensive work programme with the European Commission and the Republic of Ireland to negotiate in detail all the issues and scenarios set out in the joint report at the March Council. As the Government made clear in the joint report published in December, we are absolutely committed to avoiding a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland, including any related checks and controls, as the UK leaves the EU.

**Karin Smyth:** At the previous DExEU questions, my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Jenny Chapman) and I generously invited the Secretary of State to visit Northern Ireland. It was a bitter blow that he refused our offer, but we were pleased that he did manage to visit. Will he or the Minister tell us what people on the border thought about his proposed solution?

**Mr Walker:** As the hon. Lady acknowledged, the Secretary of State did indeed visit Northern Ireland last week, as did the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister. I have also visited on several occasions, including visiting the border and speaking to cross-border businesses. Everyone understands the importance of having frictionless movement of people and goods across that border. That is the aspiration of both the UK and the Republic of Ireland, and it is something that we will continue to pursue through the talks.

**Mr Gregory Campbell** (East Londonderry) (DUP): Monsieur Barnier was at the border last week, and I am afraid that his diplomatic skills were found wanting yet again. Does the Minister agree that Monsieur Barnier should, in the intensive discussions that he is having, take some time to look at the massive hole that will be left in the EU budget after we leave and perhaps turn his mind to the political problems that there will be in Hungary, France, Germany, Poland and elsewhere, with the far right turning away from Europe, after he is done with ours?

**Mr Walker:** The hon. Gentleman makes a powerful point. We need to ensure that we progress the negotiations in the interests of the United Kingdom and have a strong, friendly partnership with the EU after we leave. That should be our focus, and issues relating to the Irish border are a key part of that engagement.

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): It is now over 15 months since the Prime Minister promised that the Government would as a priority bring forward a practical solution to the question of the Irish border. Will the Minister enlighten us on when we might get that practical solution to consider?

**Mr Walker:** We have put forward several proposals, which we are still in the process of discussing with the Commission. It is vital that we have agreed on a number of key areas in the joint report, such as the common travel area, the single electricity market and funding in Ireland, and it is right that we get the talks right so that the right language is written into law at the end of the process for both sides to follow.

**Peter Grant:** The Minister and his colleagues are good at telling us what the Irish border will not be, but we are still no closer to having any idea about what it will be. This question could easily have been linked to the previous one, because the Government's proposed solution still belongs in the realms of science fiction. If the Minister cannot tell us when we will get to see the practical solution that was promised as a priority, will he at least give us an end date—an absolute guarantee—by which, as a matter of confidence, the Government will have brought forward something that is practical or, at the very least, credible?

**Mr Walker:** As I said, the talks are continuing, and we are seeking to reach agreement on the full text of the withdrawal agreement by October this year, as has been set out many times by both the Commission and the UK Government.

**David Hanson** (Delyn) (Lab): Has any expenditure been made or contracts entered into by any Department in relation to any equipment that might constitute monitoring at the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland?

**Mr Walker:** We have been absolutely clear about there being no infrastructure at the border, so I am pretty certain that the answer to the right hon. Gentleman's question is no.

**Jenny Chapman** (Darlington) (Lab): Sixty Conservative MPs are attempting to determine the outcome of this decision. They are attempting to bully the Prime Minister into their preferred option. Will the Minister, who I know approaches this issue with particular care, take this opportunity to explain to his colleagues why their preferred option, the so-called "max fac" or maximum facilitation option, is not suitable?

**Mr Walker:** I simply do not recognise the hon. Lady's characterisation of the discussion. The reality is that we have put forward two options in the customs paper, both of which are designed to facilitate the most frictionless border between Northern Ireland and the Republic. The max fac option, combined with issues such as the local trade exemption, could provide a solution in that respect. As the Secretary of State has said, both options are still under consideration.

#### Non-UK EU Citizens

5. **Alex Cunningham** (Stockton North) (Lab): What progress has been made during negotiations on agreeing new arrangements for the rights of non-UK EU citizens after the UK leaves the EU. [905115]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union** (Suella Braverman): As hon. Members will be aware, we have reached a reciprocal agreement with the EU that safeguards the rights of EU citizens in the UK and the rights of UK nationals in the EU. This agreement, highlighted green in the withdrawal agreement, means that citizens who are resident before the end of the implementation period will be able to continue living their lives broadly as they do now. The Government are now focusing on the successful domestic implementation of this agreement, and we are seeking further details on the steps that member states are taking to protect the status of UK nationals resident in the EU.

**Alex Cunningham:** Following yesterday's debate about the Windrush generation and the Prime Minister's decision to hide the whole business behind a cloak of secrecy, what plans does the Minister have to talk to the Home Secretary to ensure that the process to deal with EU nationals will be open and transparent, and to ensure that their right to remain is fully protected, so they do not fear removal at some unknown date in the future?

**Suella Braverman:** Like the new Home Secretary's parents, my parents came to this country in the 1960s as immigrants from Commonwealth countries, and they too could have been caught up in the Windrush episode. I would not be standing here as a proud Member of the Conservative party and of this Government if I had any doubt whatsoever about the commitment of the Prime Minister and the Government to resolving this issue quickly and ensuring it is not repeated.

It is with that confidence that we are learning and implementing the settlement scheme for EU citizens, which will be efficient, simple, user friendly and reliable, to ensure that the rights of EU citizens post Brexit are safeguarded rigorously and robustly.

**Meg Hillier** (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op): I admire the Minister's confidence, but I wonder whether she has had conversations with her colleagues in the Home Office, which has now declared an amnesty on Commonwealth citizens and is having to implement a helpline and support for the Windrush generation. That will extend to others, and the Home Office is also having to introduce, by November, the new fast-route EU citizens settlement programme. Does she seriously believe that, practically, the Home Office and the Government have the resources to deal with this, and can she reassure my constituents?

**Suella Braverman:** The UK has been clear that EU citizens in the UK will be able to enforce their rights directly in UK courts, and that will be fully incorporated into UK law in the withdrawal agreement. We have also agreed there will be an independent monitoring authority to oversee the implementation and application of citizens' rights and of that agreement in the UK. The authority will be able to receive complaints from EU citizens and their family members, and it will be able to conduct inquiries. Those robust mechanisms, rights and frameworks will be given legal status in the withdrawal agreement and in the implementation Bill.

**Mark Tami** (Alyn and Deeside) (Lab): My constituent is currently working on a five-year project in France, and his Bulgarian wife is staying with him. What is her status, post Brexit, to return to stay in the UK with her husband and their two children?

**Suella Braverman:** As an EU national married to a UK citizen, if she has been here for the requisite number of years before the implementation period, her rights will be broadly the same as they are now. We want to ensure that she will have the same abilities and rights as she is able to enjoy today.

### Fisheries Policy

8. **David Duguid** (Banff and Buchan) (Con): What discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on negotiations on fisheries policy for when the UK leaves the EU. [905123]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Steve Baker):** We continue to have regular conversations with ministerial colleagues across Government on all aspects of exiting the EU, including on fisheries policy. The Government have been

absolutely clear that when we leave the EU, and at the end of the implementation period, we will be an independent coastal state, managing our fisheries and controlling access to our own waters.

**David Duguid:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his response. He will have seen the joint statement released by the Scottish Fishermen's Federation and the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations earlier this week. Will he join me in backing the clear, clean and achievable goals that the UK-wide fishing industry is united behind?

**Mr Baker:** I can tell my hon. Friend that I have read that statement with care and that we do share its ambitions. Ministers fully understand and recognise that fishing is of totemic importance to not just the fishing community but the UK as a whole—this goes way beyond its contribution to GDP. We take that knowledge forward as we go into these negotiations, working to deliver that status as an independent coastal state, with all that that entails.

**Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): In order to demonstrate that Scottish fisherman will not be treated as expendable once again, have the Minister's discussions focused on control of Scotland's waters being given wholly to Scotland?

**Mr Baker:** As we go forward, we will continue to work with the devolved Governments to ensure that there is a settlement that works for the whole of the United Kingdom.

**Martin Vickers** (Cleethorpes) (Con): Notwithstanding what the Minister has just said and his colleagues have repeated many times, there are lingering doubts among the fishing community in my constituency and in neighbouring Grimsby. Can he give an absolute assurance that no further concessions will be made?

**Mr Baker:** My hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (David Duguid) are both fierce champions of the fishing cause, and I am sure that they will continue to hold us to account. I say to them that the Government fully understand and recognise the totemic importance of fishing. We will take that understanding forward to negotiations, as we work to become an independent coastal state. I very much look forward to my colleagues on this side of the House perhaps one day standing here as fisheries Ministers, operating our own independent fishing policy.

**Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): I know my hon. Friend the Minister will recognise that the common fisheries policy has been a disaster for the south-west fishing industry over the past 45 years—it has declined to the point where even if quotas were repatriated, we probably could not actually use them. Will he reassure me that in his discussions with his colleagues he is making sure that we will rebuild the industry, providing the support to do so, to ensure that when powers are repatriated we can actually take advantage of them?

**Mr Baker:** We will certainly work to take advantage of new powers as they are repatriated. After we have left the common fisheries policy, its two main pillars—mutual

access to waters and the EU allocation of quota—will fall away. Once we have taken back control, I look forward to the regrowth of our own fishing industry, particularly as I originally hail from Cornwall.

#### Customs Union

9. **Sir Henry Bellingham** (North West Norfolk) (Con): What assessment he has made of the effect of the UK remaining in the customs union on its ability to negotiate new free trade agreements throughout the world after the UK leaves the EU. [905126]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Suella Braverman)**: We have been clear that we are leaving the EU's customs union and single market in March 2019. Only by doing so will we be able to set out our own tariffs on goods, deliver our own trade policy with the rest of the world and open markets for UK businesses. All of these are golden opportunities for our nation that will enable more growth, prosperity and jobs—I am sure my hon. Friend will be looking forward to this opportunity.

**Sir Henry Bellingham**: I am delighted I have got the services of the dynamic new young Minister. I am very grateful to her for reinforcing the point that if we stay in the customs union, that will mean that Brussels retains control of our trade policy. Will she tell the House and explain to me why, given that we have the sixth largest economy in the world and English is the language of international trade, some people are so nervous about the UK having its own trade policy?

**Suella Braverman**: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. We have so many strengths in our country, which make us well placed for our future outside the EU and its customs union. Some 90% of future global growth will come from outside the EU. We had record high foreign direct investment last year and exports up by 10%, with unemployment down, inflation down and growth up—all of this is despite Brexit.

**Thangam Debbonaire** (Bristol West) (Lab): Does the Minister agree with this from the Institute for Fiscal Studies:

“Get a sense of scale, throw in some simple arithmetic and sprinkle a basic understanding of trade and it is obvious that the economic costs of leaving the customs union must outweigh the benefits?”

**Suella Braverman**: No.

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): Will the excellent Minister explain something to me? Say we have our own trade policy with Nigeria, or another developing country, and its food is coming into this country with no tariff. If that country is suddenly told that it has to pay a tariff of 30%, 40% or 50% because that is the EU external policy, but that it might get that back at some time in future, is this new customs partnership a good idea?

**Suella Braverman**: The Government set out the two options in our policy papers last summer, and one of those options will be adopted in due course. Free trade has brought unprecedented prosperity to some of the poorest countries in the world. My hon. Friend referred to developing countries: free trade has lifted more than 1 billion people out of poverty by increasing choice and

lowering prices for consumers. It will enable us to forge trade agreements with some of the poorer countries in the world, thereby incentivising them to capitalise and industrialise, and to be sustainable and not dependent on aid. This is a great opportunity.

**Jonathan Edwards** (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): Is not the reality that trade deals with, for instance, the US and Australia would require concessions on regulatory standards that would create impenetrable trade barriers with Europe? When it comes to trade policy, surely one bird in the hand is better than two in the bush.

**Suella Braverman**: By leaving the single market, we will regain control of our laws and regulatory regimes, which will enable us—Parliament and the Government—to set the terms on which we negotiate any future trade deals with other countries. Let us be clear: we have a trade surplus with countries outside the EU. There is excessive and impressive demand for British goods out there. We need to open our markets so that our businesses can expand their sales and capitalise on this opportunity.

**Jeremy Lefroy** (Stafford) (Con): It is one thing to negotiate free trade agreements—I very much support that ambition—but it is a completely different thing to benefit from them. To do that, we need a much stronger trade network around the world, particularly throughout Africa, where that network is potentially declining. Will my hon. Friend speak to the Chancellor and the Secretary of State for International Trade to ensure that our international trade network is enhanced and not diminished?

**Suella Braverman**: My hon. Friend raises an important point. All those who work at the Department for International Trade are highly focused on how we can forge better links with new markets and new partners through our trade envoys and working groups. This heralds a new beginning and new opportunities for our country; I cannot understand why the Opposition will not welcome it.

**Matthew Pennycook** (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab): Research into the Government's own EU exit analysis was carried out last month by the House of Commons Library, and it suggests that leaving the customs union and ruling out a new comprehensive EU-UK customs union will create new customs barriers that could cost the economy billions over the next 15 years. Does the Minister accept that assessment? If not, what does the Department now put the cost at?

**Suella Braverman**: That analysis does not represent Government policy—it does not assess the Government's preferred objectives. We are working towards a free trade agreement with the EU that will be as frictionless as possible, so that our businesses can continue to trade with and sell their goods into the EU, and vice versa. That is going to be good for the economy, good for the hon. Gentleman's constituents and good for the country.

#### Farming Policy

12. **Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con): What discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on negotiations on farming policy for when the UK leaves the EU. [905130]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Steve Baker):** We continue to work closely with Ministers and officials from all Departments, including DEFRA, to further our preparations for our exit from and new partnership with the EU. The Secretary of State continues to have regular conversations with his Cabinet colleagues on all aspects of exiting the EU, including agriculture. All Ministers are clear that leaving the EU means leaving the common agricultural policy and making our own decisions for our own farmers' benefit, for the first time in around half a century.

**Tom Pursglove:** I am grateful to the Minister for that answer. I regularly meet farmers in Corby and east Northamptonshire who are excited about the opportunities ahead to redefine and reshape our agricultural policy. Can the Minister confirm that they will be directly involved in that process?

**Mr Baker:** Yes, I can. If we are to redesign our country's agricultural policy, it is of course right that we seek input from our farmers. Our consultation paper, which can be found on the Government's website, seeks views on plans for a more dynamic and self-reliant agriculture industry, as we continue to compete on the world stage, supplying products of the highest standards to the domestic market and increasing exports. I strongly encourage not only farmers but everyone who cares about the food that we eat to contribute before the consultation closes next Tuesday.

**Nic Dakin (Scunthorpe) (Lab):** The food and farming industry is already facing challenges in recruiting the skills and labour needed to keep that sector going. What will the Government do to ensure that those skills are there and that the labour force is there through and beyond Brexit?

**Mr Baker:** We are taking back control of our borders, but we should always welcome people who come here to contribute to our economy. We have asked the independent Migration Advisory Committee to look carefully at how we can reach this goal. Its report is due in September and it would be wrong to pre-empt it.

**Nick Smith (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab):** When will we see a seasonal agricultural workers scheme for UK farmers to ensure that our crops do not rot in the ground?

**Mr Baker:** At the moment, farmers have access to European economic area migrants. I look forward to the Migration Advisory Committee's report. The Home Office is of course perfectly capable of instituting a seasonal workers scheme, should one be necessary, in due course.

### Internal UK Trade

13. **Emma Little Pengelly (Belfast South) (DUP):** What steps his Department is taking during negotiations on the UK leaving the EU to maintain the integrity of the UK. [905131]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Robin Walker):** In December, the joint report of the UK and the EU reached a balanced set of commitments that reiterate both our commitment to avoiding a hard border and our clear position on preserving the constitutional and economic integrity of the United Kingdom. Internal trade between

Northern Ireland and Great Britain is of critical importance to Northern Ireland's economy. In 2015, goods sold from Northern Ireland to the rest of the UK stood at £10.7 billion.

**Emma Little Pengelly:** It is essential to the integrity of the United Kingdom that there are no barriers to internal UK trade, including between Northern Ireland and our biggest market, Great Britain. Can the Minister confirm that, for this Government, this is an absolute red line in all of the negotiations?

**Mr Walker:** I agree with the hon. Lady: we have absolutely set out that we will not accept any internal barriers within the internal market of the United Kingdom. It is important, in that respect, that the UK Government have been able to reach a deal with the Welsh Government to work together to make sure that we are able to implement frameworks. I welcome the fact that that deal is open to the Scottish Government and to a restored Executive in Northern Ireland.

**Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab):** Does not the integrity of the UK depend on the Good Friday agreement and the Good Friday agreement on the consent of the people on both sides of the border, both of whom voted to remain in the European Union? That consent, therefore, is dependent on an open border, and that open border can be maintained only by our continuing membership of the customs union. Is not that the irresistible logic of the position?

**Mr Walker:** No, it is not, and the hon. Gentleman's former party leader has pointed out that the customs union is not the determinant of addressing the border. We are very clear in our commitments, both to the Good Friday agreement and to there being no hard border on the island of Ireland, and we are also very clear in our commitment to the principle of consent, to which he referred. That principle of consent must be respected by both sides in this negotiation.

**Mr Speaker:** I call Mrs Moon.

**Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab):** I am fine, thank you.

**Mr Speaker:** Remarkable self-denying ordinance on which I congratulate the hon. Lady, but we may hear from her at a later point in our proceedings.

### Topical Questions

T1. [905132] **Karin Smyth (Bristol South) (Lab):** If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

**The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr David Davis):** Since the last departmental questions, the Government have been making progress towards our aim of securing a deep and special partnership with the European Union. Our aims and objectives for this agreement are clear: respecting the referendum and the need to keep control of our borders, money and laws; ensuring that our relationship endures and does not need to be constantly revisited; protecting jobs and security; demonstrating our values and the kind of country that we want to be; and strengthening the union of nations and the people who make up the United Kingdom.

**Karin Smyth:** The joint report in December talked about a mapping exercise with regard to cross-border co-operation. I asked the Prime Minister, and I have written to her, to understand what this mapping exercise demonstrated. I have had a letter this week from Minister Baker telling me that I cannot have the list of those 140 areas in the mapping exercise. Mr Speaker, what do I, as a Member of this Parliament, have to do to understand what those 140 areas are? I could go to the EU, I could go to the Irish Government, and I could perhaps even stand on the border and conduct my own survey. It is absolutely unacceptable for me as a Member of Parliament to receive this letter.

**Mr Davis:** The hon. Lady should have kept up with some of the events that have been happening over the past week or two. The Chairman of the Brexit Committee wrote to me and asked—and indeed asked me again when I appeared in front of the Committee—whether the Committee could have that list and the support for it. We have said, yes, as soon as it is complete, as soon as we have cleared the release of it with the European Union—which has, by the way, turned down freedom of information requests on the subject. That list will be available as soon as it is complete.

T3. [905134] **Peter Aldous** (Waveney) (Con): As this country will be an independent coastal state managing and controlling access to our own waters with effect from 1 January 2021, is the Minister able to provide an assurance that such access for EU fishing vessels will not be part of the Brexit negotiations?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Steve Baker):** My hon. Friend will have heard my earlier answer. We are clear that future negotiations over trade must be separate from negotiations over access to waters. There would be no precedent to link the two, and we will continue to take this position in our negotiations on the economic partnership with the EU. The joint statement from the SFF and NFFO that was mentioned earlier made the normal position clear—that total allowable catches, quota shares and access arrangements should ordinarily be agreed through annual bilateral agreements.

**Keir Starmer** (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab): When I was reading the Sunday newspapers over the weekend, I was not entirely sure that we would see the Secretary of State in his place today. This morning he says that his resignation is not imminent—I am not sure what message he is sending to his colleagues—but can I assume that his presence signals that he thinks that he won the argument with the Prime Minister yesterday and that a customs partnership with the EU has now been taken off the table?

**Mr David Davis:** My first advice to the right hon. and learned Gentleman is not to believe everything he reads in the papers—even about himself, let alone about me. Secondly, I made it clear earlier that the Government are spending some time, rightly, on ensuring that we get absolutely the best outcome that will preserve the United Kingdom without creating internal borders, and that will deliver the best outcome in retaining the trade that we have with the European Union and opening up opportunities with the rest of the world. That is why we are taking time to get this right.

**Keir Starmer:** Let me take that discussion to Northern Ireland. In December the Prime Minister made a solemn promise that there would be no hard border in Northern Ireland. That was spelled out as no infrastructure, no checks and no controls, and I know that the Secretary of State and his team take that seriously. If, on serious and sober analysis, the only conclusion is that delivering on that solemn promise requires the UK to be in a customs union with the EU, does the Secretary of State agree that that would therefore be the only position for any responsible Government to take?

**Mr Davis:** The Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr Walker), gave Labour Members some guidance on that earlier when he cited their former leader, who has taken a lot of interest in this issue, bearing in mind that he oversaw the last part of the peace process and takes it very seriously. In March this year, he said of the customs union:

“the truth is that doesn’t really resolve your problems. By the way, it doesn’t really resolve your problems in Northern Ireland, either.”

David Trimble, who was made Nobel laureate for his part in the peace process, also said that in pretty stark terms.

T7. [905140] **Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): As the Minister will know, one of the opportunities of leaving the EU is the chance to explore potential UK membership of the Trans-Pacific partnership. Can my hon. Friend confirm that the exit deal that the Government are seeking to negotiate with the UK will allow that?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Suella Braverman):** As we design our independent trade policy, we have the chance to explore many options all around the world. Asia-Pacific is a region of great economic importance for the UK, and the Department for International Trade is closely following the progress of the comprehensive and progressive Trans-Pacific partnership.

T2. [905133] **Nick Smith** (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): The United Kingdom will have no role in approving new drugs through the European Medicines Agency during the transition period. Will the Minister confirm that that will have no impact on regulatory standards or patients’ access to vital medicines?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Robin Walker):** I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman’s first statement. We have negotiated to ensure that we will be able to continue to work with agencies including the EMA during the implementation period. The EU has included specific language about being able to call on UK expertise, so we intend to continue co-ordination. As the Prime Minister has also set out, we are seeking, as part of our future partnership, a strong relationship with the EMA beyond our exit from the EU.

**Mr John Whittingdale** (Maldon) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that when the so-called WAIB—withdrawal agreement and implementation Bill—becomes law, we will be committing ourselves to a financial settlement that will be binding in international law?

Does he therefore agree that we should seek to obtain as much detail as possible in the political declaration while we still have that leverage?

**Mr David Davis:** Of course, what will be binding in international law is what is written into the withdrawal agreement, and I would therefore expect Parliament to have views on what conditions should be in it.

T4. [905135] **Gavin Newlands** (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): As we have heard, 60 Tory MPs have delivered an ultimatum to the Prime Minister threatening to bring down the Government—although I do not think the Government need any assistance in that regard at the moment—if they continue to seek a customs partnership with the EU countries. When did the Secretary of State first become aware of that document?

**Mr Robin Walker:** I am not aware of the document to which the hon. Gentleman refers.

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): I wonder whether the Secretary of State has ever reflected on the fact that if David Cameron had kept his promise of staying in office, implementing the views of the British people and triggering article 50 immediately after the referendum, we would nearly be coming out of the EU now, and I would probably be arranging having a statue of David Cameron in my constituency. Does the Secretary of State get the feeling that the public are fed up with how long this process is taking and wish we could just get on with it a bit quicker?

**Mr David Davis:** I have been asked today to give careers advice to myself and now to past Prime Ministers, from which I will demur. Had we triggered article 50 immediately after the referendum, we would have had to absorb 40 years of European Union law into British law almost in a geological nanosecond—a very, very short time. It would not have been easy to do. Although my hon. Friend is right about the departure date, it might have been a lot more uncomfortable than it is going to be.

T5. [905136] **Emma Little Pengelly** (Belfast South) (DUP): Currently, less than 1% of our non-EU exports and imports are manually checked. That means that over 99% are processed with technological and electronic solutions. Does the Secretary of State agree that this is the way forward post Brexit, despite the cynicism of some, including about the Irish border?

**Mr Robin Walker:** The hon. Lady makes a very important point. It is important that we continue to look at all the investment in technology that we can make to ensure that our trade with the wider world is as frictionless as possible, and we need to look at these solutions with regard to the deal between the UK and the EU as well.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): The amendments passed in the other place on Monday night were those of a wrecking Chamber and not a revising Chamber, were they not?

**Mr David Davis:** No; the House of Lords is a revising Chamber and it does a very important job that I have, in my past, depended on from time to time. I agree, however, that some of the proposals—for example, to

put timetables into the negotiating arrangements, at which point control is taken away from the Government—would be a gift to the negotiators on the other side.

T6. [905137] **Joanna Cherry** (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): The 3million is an organisation representing EU nationals living in the UK. Last month it submitted 128 questions to the Home Office concerning the UK Government's proposals for settled status. I realise that things are pretty chaotic at the Home Office at the moment, but what discussions has the Minister's Department had about responding to the very real concerns of the 3 million EU nationals living in the United Kingdom?

**Suella Braverman:** The hon. and learned Lady raises an important point. There has been extensive consultation, dialogue and discussion between Ministers at the Department for Exiting the EU and diaspora groups. I met members of the Romanian diaspora at the Romanian embassy, and the Under-Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr Walker), has recently met members of the French diaspora. We have this engagement, and it is important. People can rest assured that the position of EU citizens will be safeguarded through the legislation due to come through Parliament in the autumn.

**Jeremy Lefroy** (Stafford) (Con): I declare an interest as a trustee of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. Post-doctoral research fellows are a vital part of this country's research base, and they come from all over the world, including from the EU. What discussions are my right hon. and hon. Friends having with the Home Office to ensure that our future immigration policy is based not on salaries—post-docs often receive pretty miserly salaries compared with their qualifications—but on the skills that we really need in this country?

**Mr Robin Walker:** I regularly attend the higher education and science working group chaired by my hon. Friend the Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation, where we discuss these issues, and we have been feeding into the work being done by the Migration Advisory Committee and the Home Office on that front. The Prime Minister made it clear that we will want to continue to attract key talent from around the world, and Britain will want to continue to be a scientific superpower in the years to come. It is essential that we get our policies right on this.

**Helen Goodman** (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): The Government's own analysis shows that if we leave the customs union, unemployment in the north-east will go up to 200,000, so why did the Secretary of State argue against a customs partnership yesterday afternoon and what is he going to say to the 160,000 people who lose their jobs?

**Mr David Davis:** I have two points in response to that. First, the hon. Lady is presuming what my arguments were yesterday at the Cabinet Committee. As far as I am aware, the minutes are not published. Secondly, what she refers to is not Government policy or indeed Government estimates.

**Julian Knight** (Solihull) (Con): Jaguar Land Rover in my constituency employs 9,000 people. Will the Minister assure me that securing the supply chain will be at the centre of our post-Brexit trading relationship with the EU and beyond?

**Mr Baker:** Of course I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. We are seeking a deep and special partnership with the European Union, including trade that moves with the least possible friction. I look forward to Jaguar Land Rover's future success.

**Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab):** To follow on from the previous question, the thousands of families in my constituency whose income and prosperity rely on the Ford engine plant are also deeply alarmed about the refusal to remain in the customs union. A large number of parts come in from Europe to create the engines built in Bridgend, which are then exported to Europe. How does the Minister envisage those supply chain needs and Ford's just-in-time policy being met?

**Mr Baker:** Both sides have agreed that we wish to have tariff-free access to each other's markets. The hon. Member for Belfast South (Emma Little Pengelly) referred to the tiny proportion of our imports that need to be physically checked. With a degree of mutual recognition, which has been outlined by the Prime Minister, these things can be delivered through the terms of our future economic partnership, and I am confident that it is in both sides' interest to ensure that supply chains can continue uninterrupted.

**Ruth George (High Peak) (Lab):** Businesses in my constituency tell me that they need the preferential trade rates with 88% of countries in the rest of the world that they currently enjoy as part of the EU. How do the Government propose to equal or exceed those preferential rates before our businesses lose contracts to EU competitors?

**Suella Braverman:** The EU currently has many international agreements with third countries, and it is the policy, agreed in the withdrawal agreement, that we will adopt a continuity approach, so that all those international agreements to which we are party by virtue of our membership of the EU will continue to apply after we leave the EU.

**Tom Pursglove (Corby) (Con):** In Corby and East Northamptonshire, people voted overwhelmingly to leave and therefore to control our own borders, spend our own money, make our own laws and determine our own trade destiny. At this stage, how would my right hon. Friend judge the negotiations against that scorecard?

**Mr David Davis:** What my hon. Friend has described is the exact purpose of the negotiations. We are seeking to retain as much as possible of the existing European market, and at the same time open up all the rest of the world. If I may, I will refer back to the question asked earlier about Ford. One of the companies that we visited in North America, on the Canadian border, was Ford, because it is state of the art in dealing with cross-border component traffic to support car manufacturing. It is very good at that, and it will be in Europe too.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD):** Can the Secretary of State explain to the House how the transitional arrangements he has negotiated for our fishing industry will work in relation to the renegotiation

of the EU-Norway-Faroes deal on mackerel? Can he tell the House who will lead the negotiations and when that will happen?

**Mr Baker:** During the implementation period, for the whole of 2019, we will apply the agreement reached at the Fisheries Council in December 2018, where we would be fully involved in that agreement as a former member state. For the 2019 negotiations, which apply to 2020, we have agreed a process of bilateral consultation between the UK and the EU ahead of negotiations with coastal states in the Fisheries Council. From December 2020, we will be negotiating fishing opportunities as an independent coastal state.

**Jo Stevens (Cardiff Central) (Lab):** In my constituency, there are three universities and tens of thousands of students. We could remain a member of Erasmus+ when we leave the EU. Will the Minister confirm that we will do so?

**Mr Robin Walker:** The Prime Minister has set out that she believes there are great opportunities to continue to co-operate together on education and culture. We will of course need to look at what the next stage of the Erasmus+ scheme covers, but we see enormous benefits from it for students from the UK, so it is an area in which we are likely to seek further collaboration.

**Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab):** British Governments have repeatedly, and quite rightly, gone to European Council meetings and come back having persuaded their colleagues in other countries in favour of strong sanctions against Russia and the Putin regime. How will we be able to do that in the future when we are no longer sitting at the table or in the room?

**Suella Braverman:** As the Prime Minister made clear in her speech in Munich, our commitment to collaboration and partnership with our European partners on security and defence is unwavering. We have made it clear that we want to develop a new framework with the EU that ensures we can continue to work together to combat the common threats that we face. Our position in NATO obviously remains unchanged, and that underpins our worldwide influence in security and defence.

**Meg Hillier (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op):** One of the key players in discussing and settling the EU financial settlement is the European Court of Auditors. As a member state, we have Phil Wynn Owen as our representative, but as it stands, he is set to leave the European Court of Auditors come 29 March 2019. Will the Secretary of State add to his negotiating list the need to make sure we have a full British representative on the European Court of Auditors during the transition period?

**Mr David Davis:** All of the implementation period issues are currently under discussion. I am not sure, frankly, that we will put the hon. Lady's proposal at the top of the priority list, but we certainly aim to cover issues such as audit in the joint committee.

**Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP):** Can the Secretary of State name one country that has said, "As long as you leave the customs union, we'll give you a much better free trade agreement than you have or could have had?"

**Mr Davis:** No, it is the other way around: a number of countries have made it very plain that if we are still in the customs union, they will not do a trade deal with us.

**Stephen Timms** (East Ham) (Lab): The European Union set out a very clear negotiating position at the beginning of this exercise. The Government are still being undermined by their inability to make up their mind, and the Secretary of State has told us that it is going to take a bit longer to decide about customs. The whole negotiation is supposed to be concluded by October. How many weeks longer will it be before our Government have a clear position on customs?

**Mr Davis:** The clarity of the position of not being a member of the customs union is absolute, and has been since the beginning, unlike the right hon. Gentleman's party, which has had a number of different positions on this matter. Frankly, it is incredibly important that we get this right—not just for trade, which is massively important, but for the extremely sensitive issue of maintaining the peace process in Northern Ireland—and I do not undertake to put an artificial deadline on something so important.

**Thangam Debbonaire** (Bristol West) (Lab): People from the EU27 working in my constituency and Bristol West constituents living and working in the EU27 tell

me that they are worried about their pensions post-Brexit. What are the Government doing to protect my constituents' pensions?

**Mr Robin Walker:** The citizens' rights element of the withdrawal agreement that we have reached in its entirety with the EU covers the continuity of pension provisions and the accumulation of contributions between member states. This is an issue on which we have reached agreement, and we look forward to being able to provide full certainty to all those constituents.

**Nic Dakin** (Scunthorpe) (Lab): The threat by the US Administration to impose steel tariffs has been robustly resisted by the EU. How will the UK work with its EU partners in the future to preserve both free and fair trade in steel?

**Mr Baker:** Our future trading relations are subject to negotiation, as the hon. Gentleman knows, but I have no doubt that it is in all our interests to work together on free trade agreements, working against anti-competitive distortions and having a fair trade defence regime. One of the reasons why we need to leave the customs union is of course so that we can have our own trade defence regime, and I feel quite sure we will continue to work with our partners and our neighbours to ensure that we take care of these issues.

## Business of the House

10.34 am

**Valerie Vaz** (Walsall South) (Lab): Would the Leader of the House please give us the forthcoming business?

**The Leader of the House of Commons (Andrea Leadsom):** The business for the week commencing 7 May will be as follows:

MONDAY 7 MAY—The House will not be sitting.

TUESDAY 8 MAY—Remaining stages of the Secure Tenancies (Victims of Domestic Abuse) Bill [*Lords*], followed by consideration of Lords amendments to the Nuclear Safeguards Bill, followed by motion relating to a statutory instrument on criminal legal aid.

WEDNESDAY 9 MAY—Remaining stages of the Data Protection Bill [*Lords*] followed by motion relating to a statutory instrument on education (student support).

THURSDAY 10 MAY—Debate on a motion on redress for victims of banking misconduct and the FCA, followed by debate on a motion on compensation for victims of Libyan-sponsored IRA terrorism. The subjects for these debates were determined by the Backbench Business Committee.

FRIDAY 1 MAY—Private Members' Bills.

The provisional business for the week commencing 14 May will include:

MONDAY 14 MAY—Second Reading of the Haulage Permits and Trailer Registration Bill [*Lords*].

It does not happen often, but today it appears that there is competition for the highlight of the week that is business questions, and some Members seem to think they should be elsewhere. Voters across England will be casting their votes in council and mayoral elections, and we should celebrate again our vibrant democracy. All of us in this place know how much courage it takes to put oneself forward for election, and I am sure the whole House will want to join me in wishing good luck to all candidates today. I also say a big thank you to all the volunteers who man the phone banks and do the leafleting and canvassing. They do so much to support free and fair elections in the United Kingdom.

**Valerie Vaz:** I thank the Leader of the House and associate myself with her comments about all those public servants out there. I am not sure what is happening in Northamptonshire, but I do not think they are having elections. I also thank her for presenting the forthcoming business, but we still get only a week and a day. As I am sure she will agree, it is very beneficial to Members to know what is coming up, because they want to prepare.

I wanted to make a point of order about this, Mr Speaker, but I did not want to misuse the system: many people are upset about what the Leader of the House said last week about the Criminal Legal Aid (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2018. At business questions, she accused the Opposition of being “tardy” in making a request for the debate on the statutory instrument “having prayed against the SI one month after it was laid.”

In reality, however, it was prayed against well within time. She also wrongly claimed that it had been

“too late to schedule a debate within the praying period without changing last week’s business”.—[*Official Report*, 26 April 2018; Vol. 639, c. 1030.]

But she and I both know that we have done that many times, and sometimes I have been monosyllabic in agreeing with the change of business.

At Justice questions last week the Lord Chancellor said that the Government are waiting for information from the Labour party. Will the Leader of the House please correct the record and say that the Opposition had prayed against the regulations, and that there was nothing else that we needed to do? They were prayed against on 22 March, and the praying period ended on 20 April. The Opposition were waiting for action from the Government. She will know that time stops on a statutory instrument when the House is not sitting for more than four days, so perhaps there was some confusion about that. Will the Leader of the House please correct the record and say that that had nothing to do with the Opposition?

My right hon. Friend the Member for Enfield North (Joan Ryan) has prayed against the Immigration (Guidance on Detention of Vulnerable Persons) Regulations 2018, No. 410, and the Detention Centre (Amendment) Rules 2018, No. 411. When will that debate be scheduled? The statutory instruments were laid two days before the Easter recess.

It seems that the Government are playing KerPlunk with our money resolutions, pulling out Bills at will—[*Interruption.*] Hon. Members remember it! The Prisons (Interference with Wireless Telegraphy) Bill has got its money resolution, but there is nothing about the Property Boundaries (Resolution of Disputes) Bill, which was ahead of that Bill. When will we have a money resolution on the boundaries Bill?

I thank the Leader of the House for her letter on the statutory instrument tracker. She has made good progress on that, but the Hansard Society got in touch with me and said that it took them about seven years to get a unique statutory instrument tracker. It is very good and people have used it, so I wonder if there could be co-ordination between the two so we can do what you want to do, Mr Speaker, which is to make the House open, accessible and transparent to everyone.

I do not think the Leader mentioned the debate on nurses’ bursaries on Wednesday. I hope that is still on, because it is a vital debate. We are against the abolition of postgraduate nurses’ bursaries, which are so important to upskilling people and dealing with the skills shortage. A debate would be timely, because a Macmillan Cancer Support report published on Monday revealed that hospitals in England have vacancies for more than 400 cancer nursing specialists. Macmillan’s chief of nursing, Dr Karen Roberts, is concerned that cancer nurses are being run ragged and that some patients may not be receiving the specialist care they need. We all know someone who has been through the whole process—I know of two friends—and cancer nursing specialists are absolutely fantastic when people are going through such a difficult time. They need help and support, and we cannot have them doing two or three jobs at the same time. May we have a statement from the Secretary of State for Health on the problems facing the NHS cancer workforce?

The breast cancer screening scandal is taking place on the Health Secretary’s watch, and according to the King’s Fund, there is a £2.5 billion funding gap in social care. There has been no statement on the collapse of Allied Healthcare, which is one of the biggest providers for the elderly and the vulnerable. We need to know

what impact assessment has been made, because the company is currently in a voluntary arrangement that means that it does not have to pay into the pension fund. May we have an urgent statement on that next week?

Last week I raised the article in *The House* magazine on restoration and renewal, which announced that the shadow sponsor board should have 12 members, with five external members, including the chair, but a majority of parliamentarians representing the main parties of both Houses. External members of the board will be appointed and a former first civil servant commissioner will chair the panel. I would be grateful if the Leader of the House could say when that decision was made and who made it. She will know that the Olympic sponsor body was chaired by the noble Baroness Jowell, so there was always accountability to Parliament. Representatives of all the main parties chair Select Committees and carry out their roles with distinction. A non-parliamentarian chairing the sponsor body is not recommended in the joint report and was not in the motion, so will she please make a statement to update the House on what has actually been agreed on restoration and renewal?

The Leader of the House may have some influence over the members of the Brexit Cabinet Committee, so will she suggest that, instead of just talking in that Committee and positioning themselves as the next Prime Minister, they actually visit the borders in Ireland and Dover? They could practice their power stance—you can't see it, Mr Speaker, but I am doing it right now and it is quite scary—and we could enjoy our bank holiday. The Leader of the House and I have scheduled a sunny day for the spring bank holiday—we wish everyone a very happy and restful weekend.

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Lady raises a number of issues, and I will try to address each one.

As the hon. Lady will know, it is perfectly normal for the Government to give as much notice as possible of future business while still being able to meet the changing schedule.

I am glad the hon. Lady is pleased that the Government have brought forward time to debate negative statutory instruments that have been prayed against. She asks specifically about the statutory instrument on nursing bursaries. That has been brought forward for discussion next Wednesday. She says that the Criminal Legal Aid (Remuneration) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 were not too late in being brought forward. I gently remind her that the convention is that where a reasonable request has been made for Government time for a statutory instrument that has been prayed against, the Government will seek to give that time. These are all parliamentary conventions, but she will appreciate that there was not much time and it would have required an emergency change to the business for me to have been able to comply. I hope that that settles that issue.

The hon. Lady asks about money resolutions on private Members' Bills. I was delighted to bring forward for debate the money resolutions on various private Members' Bills, and others will be coming forward in due course.

The hon. Lady asks about the statutory instrument tracker. As she acknowledges, I wrote to her telling her about the tracker, which the Parliamentary Digital Service

is bringing forward to enable Members to have more information in a more timely fashion about statutory instruments, and I am glad she welcomes it.

The hon. Lady asks about nursing. I am delighted, as I am sure she is, that there are 12,900 more nurses on our wards than there were in 2010 and that the Government have introduced the nursing associate role and the nursing degree apprenticeship, both of which routes mean that people can train and earn as they learn. We have committed to training up to 5,000 nursing associates in 2018 and up to 7,500 in 2019. That is good news for our fantastic NHS and will provide more support for our hard-working nurses, who are under pressure.

The hon. Lady raises the issue of breast screening. She will be aware that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health came to the House yesterday to make a statement—as soon as he found out what had happened—and has commissioned an independent review of the NHS breast screening programme to look at these and other issues, including processes, IT systems and further changes and improvements that could be made to the system to minimise the risk of this happening again. The review is expected to report in six months, and as she will know, my right hon. Friend has also promised that every woman failed through this error, if registered with a GP, will be contacted by May. It is incredibly important that we put this right.

Finally, the hon. Lady asks about restoration and renewal. A paper on governance went to the House of Commons Commission a couple of months ago. She was at the meeting of the Commission where the papers were circulated, discussed and agreed to. The Commission has, therefore, agreed the governance arrangements.

**Sir Nicholas Soames (Mid Sussex) (Con):** Will the Leader of the House arrange an urgent debate on the need to take immigration issues out of the Home Office and establish a new Department to deal with them? These issues go back to the hangover from the end of empire and go forward to the development of a robust and effective programme after Brexit that is consistent with an open and confident Britain, and to the introduction of a digital identity platform. Does she agree that this is first-order business and requires serious consideration?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My right hon. Friend raises the very important issue of the immigration system. He will be aware that the Prime Minister and the previous Home Secretary have apologised unreservedly for the mistakes made in the case of the Windrush generation. It is incredibly important, as was made clear in yesterday's Opposition day debate, that we improve the systems, and very often changes to Government can actually hold us back. The package of measures to bring greater transparency for Members and constituents includes monthly updates to the Chair of the Home Affairs Committee with the latest position on detention, removals and deportations. There is also the independent external oversight and challenge of a lessons-learned review that is already under way to establish how members of the Windrush generation came to be entangled in measures designed for illegal immigrants, why that was not spotted sooner and whether the right corrective measures are now in place. As he will be aware, the new Home Secretary has asked for a report and will bring it back to the House before the summer recess.

**Pete Wishart** (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): I thank the Leader of the House for announcing the business for next week.

I cannot believe how busy it is around here today—haven't you all got local elections to attend to? I wish all the candidates in today's local elections in England all the very best. There is a titanic struggle going on between the party of Brexit and the, um, other party of Brexit. There is another titanic struggle going on this country—around the Cabinet table, between those who are opposed to a customs union and those who are really, really opposed to a customs union. Meanwhile, our heroes in ermine continue to thwart the Government on the repeal Bill. The people's aristocrats—the people's donors and cronies—are showing a great example of what taking back control looks like. Will the Leader of the House tell us how much time she is prepared to set aside for Lords amendments? There are now 10 for us to address. Is she prepared at this stage to look at using the Parliament Act if the people's peers continue to defy the Government?

And well done to the Government—they actually came out to play yesterday in an Opposition day vote. They bravely trooped through the Lobby to stop the Government disclosing details about the Windrush victims. Well done the Conservative party! Are we now going to see a new approach from the Government? Are they now prepared to play a proper democratic role in Parliament and vote on all Opposition debates when Divisions are called? It is called “democracy”, Leader of the House, and it is a vital component and cog in what is called “a Parliament”.

Lastly, we are not what I would call inundated with critical Government business. We are grateful that the Leader of the House will look at some of the money resolutions for private Members' Bills, but is there not a case for having more time available for some of the private Members' Bills that we are considering? Some excellent Bills are kicking around, particularly the one presented by my hon. Friend the Member for Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Angus Brendan MacNeil). Let us give them some more time—let us see if we can find a bit more parliamentary time to progress these Bills. It would be a popular move; will the Leader of the House support it?

**Andrea Leadsom:** It is fantastic to see so many of our Scottish colleagues across the House here today, more than punching above their weight, as they always do. The hon. Gentleman is having his usual dig at the other place, which does not surprise me. Nevertheless, although he will appreciate that I may not agree with them, I certainly uphold its right to improve and scrutinise legislation. Their lordships fulfil a very important role, and of course, we will ensure that there is a good and appropriate amount of time for this House to scrutinise the amendments that they have put forward.

The hon. Gentleman talks about the fact that the Government voted yesterday. I remind all Members, as my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said, that putting right the very seriousness unfairness to the Windrush generation must not mean taking resources away from the teams who are working very hard in the Home Office to help those who have been affected. That is why the Opposition's motion was rejected; it was a deliberate party political attempt to distract the Home Office from putting right what is a great unfairness. We cannot allow ourselves to be distracted from that work.

The hon. Gentleman raises the legislative programme. I can tell him and all hon. Members that so far, we have introduced 27 Bills. In fact, it may even be 28—that number might be one out of date; I need to track down that last introduction. That is a very good number of Bills this far along in a Session. Eleven Bills have already been sent for Royal Assent. We have passed hundreds of statutory instruments in each House and seven draft Bills have been published. In addition, there are six Brexit Bills before Parliament, with others to come, so I simply do not accept that there is any lack in the legislative programme. We look forward to bringing forward further Bills in due course.

On the hon. Gentleman's point about private Members' Bills, I point out that there has been some great progress, including last week in the Mental Health Units (Use of Force) Bill from the hon. Member for Croydon North (Mr Reed). The money resolution has been agreed for the Prisons (Interference with Wireless Telegraphy) Bill—another very important Bill—and I congratulate the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant), whose Bill completed its House of Commons stages last Friday with Government support. Of course, the Government are delighted with the proposals from the hon. Member for Westminster North (Ms Buck) and my hon. Friend the Member for East Worthing and Shoreham (Tim Loughton) on their Bills as they approach Committee stage. There is a lot more to be done, but we are making progress on some very good private Members' Bills.

**Douglas Ross** (Moray) (Con): May we have a debate on the Career Ready scheme? That would allow me to highlight the fact that, at the recent UK national awards, not one but two of the winners were from Moray. Jennifer Walker from Milne's High School won the UK science, technology, engineering and maths award, following an internship with Chivas Brothers, and she is now looking to have a career in the distilling industry. We are also extremely proud in Moray to have the overall UK winner, Kiara Ross, from Elgin High School. She had a troubled early period at school—she was excluded several times—and was about to leave education altogether. Following her involvement with Career Ready, she now has four offers for university and is looking to pursue a career in law. Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating Kiara and Jennifer on their outstanding successes and everyone in Moray who is involved in the Career Ready project? We can see that it really does transform lives.

**Andrea Leadsom:** Those are brilliant achievements by Jennifer and Kiara, and I am delighted to extend my sincere congratulations to them. My hon. Friend often brings the successes of his constituents to this place, and he is an excellent champion for Moray.

Career Ready's annual awards recognise individuals who demonstrate outstanding commitment to the Career Ready programme, including the programme in Scotland. Having had seven apprentices myself during my seven years in Parliament, I have loved being able to help smart and committed young people to get as much as possible out of their apprenticeships before graduating to an exciting role in life.

**Ian Mearns** (Gateshead) (Lab): As you will remember, Mr Speaker, last Thursday, a Backbench Business Committee debate had to be withdrawn because of

pressure on time resulting from statements and urgent questions. The debate had been nominated by the Liaison Committee, and I hope that it will be possible to reschedule it as soon as possible. The subject was the use of plastics.

I echo the warm wishes expressed by the Leader of the House for people who are standing in local elections today. Before first coming to the House, I served on Gateshead Council for 27 years, being elected and re-elected on nine occasions, so I know about the stresses that candidates undergo on days such as today. I wish them all the very best, particularly my own party's candidates in Gateshead.

There has been an application to the Backbench Business Committee for a debate on 14 June, which will be time-sensitive. I will write to the Leader of the House about it, but I hope that it will be possible for her to think ahead so that a debate can be secured on that day.

**Andrea Leadsom:** Let me say first that 27 years on a local council is a fantastic record. Many people in the country have achieved enormous public service, and we salute them all.

The hon. Gentleman asks about the rescheduling of debates. Last week, he asked me if we could secure time for the “third time lucky” debate on the treatment of small businesses. I am delighted to see that the Backbench Business Committee has now rescheduled that debate. I look forward to receiving the hon. Gentleman's letter about the sensitive nature of 14 June.

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): May I also wish candidates luck today? Most of them will lose. The first time I stood for Parliament, I lost by a mere 36,000 votes to Mr Neil Kinnock, so my message to them is “Keep trying”.

Money resolutions should follow Second Readings as night follows day. A sitting of the Public Bill Committee considering the Parliamentary Constituencies (Amendment) Bill is scheduled for next week, but it will go nowhere, because we have no money resolution. The Leader of the House said that we would have money resolutions “shortly”. To ensure that Parliament is transparent, may we have some clarification of these terms? Does “shortly” mean within the next six months; does “soon” mean within the next 12 months; and does “the autumn” mean some period before 31 July?

**Andrea Leadsom:** As my hon. Friend is aware, the House has approved 13 sitting Fridays for private Members' Bills in the current Session, in line with Standing Orders. During a debate on 17 July 2017, I said:

“Given that we have...announced that this will be an extended Session, we will... expect to provide additional days”.—[*Official Report*, 17 July 2017; Vol. 627, c. 636.]

I pointed out that in the extended parliamentary Session of 2010-12, the House had agreed to four extra days for private Members' Bills, which were approved “at a later date”, during 2011. In line with Standing Orders, remaining stages of Bills will be given priority over Second Reading debates on any additional days provided for private Members' Bills. I am already discussing with business managers when those proposals can be presented, and will let the House know in due course.

**Danielle Rowley** (Midlothian) (Lab): Yesterday, I met the Minister for Employment and asked him whether the Department for Work and Pensions had any plans to consider automatic split payments of universal credit. I did not receive a positive response, but this is a serious issue for my constituents and for many charities that work with the victims of domestic abuse. I am sure that the Department would benefit from hearing voices on both sides of the House. May we have a debate on the issue, in Government time?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am sympathetic to what the hon. Lady says, and many Members have raised issues and concerns about UC. I encourage her to raise the specific point about split payments at the next opportunity at Department for Work and Pensions questions, or indeed to seek an Adjournment debate as it is a specific proposal for improving fairness, particularly to women suffering domestic violence.

**John Lamont** (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) (Con): I was lucky enough to attend the NHS Borders Celebrating Excellence awards in Kelso on Saturday evening; it was a wonderful event, paying tribute to the dedicated hard-working NHS staff across the Scottish borders. Will the Leader of the House allow a debate to pay tribute not only to those who were nominated and won awards at that event, but to the NHS staff across Scotland and the United Kingdom who work so hard to keep us fit and healthy?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and I congratulate all the winners and nominees of the Celebrating Excellence awards in Kelso. He mentions the debt of gratitude we owe to all NHS workers, and I am sure that all of us in the House would agree that our doctors, nurses and carers do so much for us and we must always be grateful to them. We are pleased that the latest NHS staff survey shows that more staff would recommend the care their organisation provides to their own family and friends than ever before, which is good news for morale within our NHS.

**Jessica Morden** (Newport East) (Lab): My constituent Malcom Richards was the victim of a financial scam advertised on the internet, losing £39,000 in a bitcoin scam that purported to be backed by members of “Dragons' Den”. This is a similar issue to that raised by Martin Lewis in his challenge to Facebook. May we have a debate in this House to highlight such cases and make sure that internet-based companies that take paid advertising know that they have to take their responsibility for protecting the public seriously?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Lady raises a very important issue. The problem of financial scams is persistent, and it seems that the scammers constantly find new ways to attack people. I encourage the hon. Lady to write to the Financial Conduct Authority on this point and to raise it at Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport questions on 10 May to find out what more can be done to ensure that these companies play their part in not allowing these scams to be put on to their platforms.

**Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con): The new Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government clearly has some quite big decisions to make in respect of Northamptonshire County Council and particularly

[Tom Pursglove]

the way forward in restructuring local government, which to my mind needs to be led by the existing local authorities engaging thoroughly with the communities they represent. Has the Leader of the House had any indication that there will be a statement next week?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend will appreciate that the new Secretary of State has had quite a significant task in getting his feet under the table, but I know he is determined to come forward with a new proposal, and he will be doing so in due course, as soon as he can once he has been able to consider the options.

**Dr Lisa Cameron** (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): May we have a debate on Finn's law, which would protect service animals harmed in the line of duty? Finn was a police dog who sustained multiple stab wounds from an assailant and saved his owner's life in the line of duty. However, little can be done currently under the law as dogs are seen as property. So may we have this urgent debate to change the law and protect the service animals that serve us so well?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Lady is right to raise this issue, and I know that all Members will be very sympathetic to the subject she raises. We are a nation of animal lovers, and do so much in their duty to help and support us. I encourage the hon. Lady to seek an Adjournment debate so that she can raise this issue directly with Ministers, to see what more can be done to protect service animals.

**Julian Knight** (Solihull) (Con): May we have a debate on the urgent need for new clean diesel cars to play a full part in the medium term in this nation's transport needs, especially in the light of the recent 1,000 contract worker job losses at Jaguar Land Rover in my constituency?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend raises an important issue. We need to protect the quality of our air in the United Kingdom, and he will be aware that the Treasury has brought forward proposals to promote cleaner fuels as well as to eradicate the use of fossil fuels in transport altogether. Nevertheless, he is right to point out—as he often does—the need to support those who did the right thing, as they were encouraged to do by the last Labour Government, in turning to diesel. Of course we are now dealing with the consequences and the impact on air quality in this country.

**Mr Paul Sweeney** (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op): I want to thank you, Mr Speaker, for the kind words that you, the Leader of the House and the shadow Leader of the House have said about our predecessor, Michael Martin, this week. I know that those words have meant a lot to his family at this difficult time. In the best tradition of my predecessor, I want to raise a constituency issue. I should like to congratulate City Building, based in the heart of my constituency, which is now one of Scotland's largest construction companies and operates the largest apprenticeship programme in Scotland. I congratulate the company on achieving the Queen's award for enterprise in the sustainable development category. It is the only company in Scotland to achieve that award this year. Will the Leader of the House arrange a debate

in Government time to celebrate and debate the great companies that have won the Queen's award for industry, to help to promote those companies internationally?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on again paying tribute to his constituency predecessor, who served the House very well over a long period. I am also delighted to join him in congratulating the firm in his constituency on its award and all those companies that achieve the Queen's award for industry and contribute so much to the strength of our economy. Finally, I would like to mention this Government's target of 3 million apprentices during this Parliament. We already have 1.2 million new apprentices, which is giving many more young people the chance to have a decent career.

**Jeremy Lefroy** (Stafford) (Con): May we have a debate on flexibility in our mental health services? The Government are rightly committed to increasing resources in those services, but that needs to happen alongside flexibility. A constituent of mine finds it incredibly difficult to get appointments at the time of day that is suitable for her condition, which tends to mean in the afternoon. She is almost always offered appointments in the morning. May we have a debate on this, because it is vital that we not only commit more resources to mental health services but ensure that those resources are sufficiently flexible for the needs of patients?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend raises an incredibly important point, and I am sure he will welcome the fact that this Government are committed to parity of esteem between mental and physical health. Spending on mental health has increased to a record £11.86 billion, with a further £1 billion on top of that by 2021. Nevertheless, he is right to say that we need to look at flexibility and access, and I can tell him that, by 2020, every patient arriving at A&E experiencing a mental health crisis will have access to psychiatric liaison, so that they can get to the right treatment as quickly as possible, which of course includes flexibility in timetabling.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael** (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): We had an excellent debate in Westminster Hall yesterday on the subject of plastics in our oceans. The one point on which there was unanimous agreement among the 17 Members who took part was that it was ridiculous for us to be debating the reduction of plastic waste when we ourselves were surrounded by the little plastic cups that we use in Westminster Hall and in Committee rooms. Surely, it must be possible for Members in Westminster Hall and on the Committee corridor to be given proper glasses. That would make us feel as though we were just as good as the Leader of the House and the shadow Leader of the House.

**Andrea Leadsom:** The right hon. Gentleman is exactly right to raise this issue. I can tell him that a number of Members decided to give up plastic for Lent, which was quite a challenge in this place, as he rightly suggests. Before Lent, they wrote to the Administration Committee asking it to look into eliminating single-use plastics, and it has committed to doing that. As I understand it, we are now using up existing supplies before moving to new arrangements, so I think progress is being made. I should also like to take this opportunity to point out that, later this year, we will publish a new resources and waste strategy setting out how we will work towards eliminating all avoidable plastic waste by 2050.

**Jo Stevens** (Cardiff Central) (Lab): Last week, the Public Accounts Committee described the Government's management of the rail franchises as a "multi-faceted shambles causing untold misery for passengers." May we have a debate in Government time about ending passenger misery on Europe's most expensive railways and bringing them back into public ownership?

**Andrea Leadsom:** Franchising has seen £6 billion of private investment put into our railways, but rail passenger numbers have doubled since 1997-98. The Government are committed to investing nearly £48 billion on maintenance, modernisation and renewal to deliver better journeys and fewer disruptions. The railways have never been so popular, and the Government are doing everything we can to improve the system. The hon. Lady's solution of taking over the railways is no solution whatsoever. She might not, but I can certainly remember the days of enormous delays and appalling service. Her solution does not propose how services would be paid for or improved or how to deal with the demands of modern passengers, but the Government's proposals do.

**Chris Stephens** (Glasgow South West) (SNP): May we have a statement from the Government on the current Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency dispute regarding changes to the driving test and the appropriate risk assessments? Does the Leader of the House believe that it is acceptable for the DVSA to reject Department for Transport advice and refuse ACAS talks to resolve the dispute?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman raises an important point. If I remember rightly, there is a big employment issue in his constituency with DVLA staff. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps that is not correct. Well, I encourage the hon. Gentleman to take up the issue, perhaps in an Adjournment debate, but I have every sympathy for what he says.

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): I am so chuffed that the Government are now adopting all my legislative proposals that I have another one. We should have an acquired brain injury Bill to guarantee that anybody who has a traumatic brain injury and receives hospital treatment then gets a rehabilitation prescription, so that they can be brought back to as full a life as possible. I know that the Leader of the House is sympathetic, but if she is not quite convinced of my Bill, perhaps she could come to the meeting on concussion in sport on Tuesday morning that has been organised by the all-party parliamentary group on acquired brain injury or to the lobby meeting that we are organising on Wednesday afternoon in Committee Room 17 after Prime Minister's questions—I know she is free—to push for this change.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman is delighted with the progress of his private Member's Bill. He has raised the important issue of acquired brain injuries before, and ABI can be devastating not only for the victim but for their family and friends. He is right to keep pressing for a change, and I am very sympathetic. If he wants to bring forward specific proposals, I am sure that Ministers would be keen to hear them.

**Nic Dakin** (Scunthorpe) (Lab): North Lincolnshire Council is removing its core funding grant for Citizens Advice North Lincolnshire at short notice, thus jeopardising

the excellent work that it does locally. May we have a debate on the value of Citizens Advice and the importance of local councils supporting their citizens advice bureaux?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I join the hon. Gentleman in congratulating citizens advice bureaux on their amazing work. In my constituency, they provide advice on how to switch energy supplier or how to claim to benefits. They really do go above and beyond, and I know that many people heavily rely on them. As it is a specific constituency issue, I encourage the hon. Gentleman to raise the matter at departmental questions or to seek an Adjournment debate.

**David Hanson** (Delyn) (Lab): Mr Speaker, you may have noticed that Liverpool made the champions league final last night and, indeed, Arsenal may make another European final tonight. However, because both those European events are not listed, nobody will be able to view them on free-to-air television. Only those with BT Sport or, as in my case, those who are travelling to Kiev on 26 May will be able to watch. In congratulating Liverpool and, hopefully, Arsenal, will the Leader of the House arrange an early debate to ensure that we can widen the listing for such events?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The right hon. Gentleman points out that some major sporting events are on free-to-air television, but the champions league is not one of them. I certainly encourage him to seek ways to raise and promote the idea that such things should be included on free-to-view TV. Having stood for election in Knowsley South in 2005 and having had the great pleasure of meeting the great Stevie G, who is sadly no longer in the team, Liverpool has been my football team, but I must yet again point out to you, Mr Speaker, that rugby is the best game as far as the Leadsom household is concerned.

**Jamie Stone** (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): I raised this in my maiden speech, and the issue remains the same today. Far too many of my constituents are having enormous problems accessing adequate broadband connectivity. A group of constituents living near the Queen Mother's old holiday home, the castle of Mey, came to see me last weekend about this very problem.

It would be churlish of me to point the finger at the Scottish Government, and of course I will not do so today, but let me put it this way: somewhere in the interface between the Scottish Government and the UK Government things are not right, and far too many of my constituents are losing out. Does the Leader of the House agree that broadband is for all the UK, regardless of which part of the UK we live in, and borders are completely pointless? Does she agree we should have a debate on this important issue?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the delivery of broadband is key to modern infrastructure. He will be aware that, only recently, there has been a debate on the roll-out in Scotland. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport originally provided funding through the Scottish Government for the roll-out in Scotland, but it has decided to go via local councils in the next wave of funding to try to improve and speed up the roll-out of broadband. I completely agree that the delivery of broadband is essential, and I encourage the hon. Gentleman to seek the co-operation and urgent attention of the Scottish Government.

**Helen Goodman** (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): Last Saturday, I met a group of constituents who have bought homes on a new estate. They are now being charged huge and spiralling maintenance fees by a firm called Gateway, which was founded by the developer Persimmon. I understand this is happening on thousands of new estates across the country, so may we have a debate in Government time on what we can do about it?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Lady raises an issue that affects many, and I am also aware of the problem of these fees being charged completely unfairly. The Government are looking closely at this, but she might wish to seek an Adjournment debate to ensure the matter has the urgent focus it deserves.

**Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): My constituent Yvonne Sommerville is a special operations paramedic and an RAF reservist. Because of a medical condition, which does not affect her vision, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency has refused to renew her public service vehicle licence, taking away her right to drive ambulances. Despite that, her employer—the Scottish NHS—and specialist consultants say she is fit to drive. This is putting a personal strain on her and is having an impact on the NHS, although she is still allowed to drive paramedic vehicles. Of course, she is now not allowed to drive buses for the RAF. May we have a Government statement on how we can tackle and challenge such DVLA decisions and standards?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman raises a very concerning constituency issue, and I am sure he will appreciate that safety, and therefore taking a cautious approach, is vital in all these matters. We have Health and Social Care questions on 8 May, where he might want to raise the difference of opinion between the organisation offering the licence and the organisation requiring the services of his constituent. I entirely sympathise that this is a difficult issue for his constituent.

**Mrs Madeleine Moon** (Bridgend) (Lab): Mr Speaker, I am sure you will share my horror that this year's Kidney Cancer UK patient survey found that over 51% of kidney cancers are diagnosed as a result of an unrelated scan. There is a huge problem with GPs not identifying and finding early treatment for kidney cancers, some of the photographs of which are pretty horrific. May we have a statement about what the Government are doing to raise awareness of kidney cancer and to develop a simple, cheap and effective test that will give early diagnoses and allow treatment to take place?

**Andrea Leadsom:** This is, of course, an incredibly important health issue. The hon. Lady will be aware of the enormous advances in cancer care, both from a medical point of view, and with the Government's commitment to the cancer drugs fund and to improving the speed of diagnosis and treatment of different cancers. She is highlighting a specific cancer, a subject that would lend itself very much to an Adjournment debate or a Westminster Hall debate, so that hon. Members who have similar constituency concerns can raise them.

**David Linden** (Glasgow East) (SNP): May we have a debate in Government time about how the Department for Work and Pensions treats people? My Shettleston

constituent Ciara Steel was diagnosed with Asperger's at 15 and a half, but now that she is over 16 she has been called back again for an assessment to check that she still has it. May we have a debate about this very serious issue?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am very sympathetic to the issue the hon. Gentleman raises. Of course, we look carefully at ensuring that checks on people who have ongoing conditions are not unnecessarily burdensome, but he raises an important specific point, which he might want to raise at Health questions.

**Thangam Debbonaire** (Bristol West) (Lab): My constituents are very concerned about matters relating to immigration: they are concerned about what will happen to EU27 citizens post-Brexit and to UK citizens working in the EU post-Brexit; they are concerned about immigration law relating to those who have arrived from the Commonwealth between 1948 and 1973; and they are concerned about refugee rights. Will the Leader of the House have a word with her newly appointed Home Secretary colleague to ask him whether he will bring forward the White Paper on the immigration Bill sooner rather than later? Will there be proper time for debate on the immigration Bill, so that we can debate these issues properly in this place?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am sure all hon. Members will be pleased to see that the new Home Secretary is the son of immigrants to this country and has made clear his personal commitment, based on his own experiences, to ensuring fair and sympathetic immigration procedures.

On the hon. Lady's specific question, we are considering a range of options for the future immigration system, and based on evidence we will set out initial plans and publish a White Paper in the coming months, with a Bill to follow. That new system will be based on evidence, including from the Migration Advisory Committee, and on engagement with a range of stakeholders, including businesses, universities, the devolved Administrations and NHS leaders. It is clear that people in the UK want this Westminster Government to be in charge of our borders, but to have a sympathetic and fair-to-all immigration system, and that is what we intend to have.

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): This afternoon's Order Paper shows a Westminster Hall Back-Bench debate on the impact of social care on NHS provision. Members got barely 24 hours' notice that this debate was going to be held, which obviously made it difficult for the Whips Offices to arrange speakers—yes, I was one of those who succumbed to the charms of those in the Whips Office and agreed to speak. Ironically, given that it looks as though the main Chamber business will finish well ahead of schedule, had that debate been scheduled in here it could have started as soon as the rest of the business had finished. As things stand, there is a good chance that everything else will have finished and that debate will then be carried on in a complete vacuum, giving very little prominence to an important subject. First, will the Leader of the House explain why Members received so little notice that that important debate was taking place? Secondly, will she look at the procedures of the House to see whether there is a way in which Westminster Hall business can be brought forward, as can business of the Chamber, if time and circumstances should permit?

**Andrea Leadsom:** Today, as I mentioned, some Members have unfortunately not been able to accept the offer of a debate, so there is a particular reason why today short notice was given—scheduling business has been rather last minute. In response to the hon. Gentleman's more general point about whether business can be brought forward in this Chamber when business stops early, I can say that that would be a dangerous precedent, on the grounds that it would presume, in effect, that time for debate on certain topics in this place would be shortened. That is why the Government and the business managers always seek to ensure that adequate time is given for debate, and that we do not try to second-guess how many Members will want to speak and for how long.

**Nick Smith** (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): The national health service throughout the UK sends a wide range of reminders to patients for procedures such as inoculations for children and screening for cervical and, of course, breast cancer. It is crucial public health work. May we have a statement to provide reassurance to people throughout the UK that all the systems for contacting patients are working effectively?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman is right that there is a wide range of screening activities in the NHS, and that notices and reminders are sent out frequently for all sorts of different screening programmes. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care set out yesterday, there will be a review of the lessons learned, which could of course be applied to forms of screening other than the failed breast cancer screening programme that we need to take urgent steps to rectify.

**Gavin Newlands** (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): I have a constituent with dual UK and Venezuelan citizenship who has been unable to acquire a UK passport because of the UK Government's one-name policy. She has tried to change the name on her Venezuelan passport to her married name, but because of insurmountable problems, including corruption and complete estrangement from her ex-husband, she has been unable to do so. May we have a debate on the UK Government's rules on the issuing of passports, which are preventing my constituent from receiving the passport that is rightfully hers?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman raises a serious constituency issue. I encourage him to raise it directly with Home Office Ministers.

**Stephen Gethins** (North East Fife) (SNP): May we have a debate on the future of the defence estate in Scotland, particularly in respect of the investment that has been promised at Leuchars in my constituency? We need to ensure not only that that is a long-term investment but that any investment is family friendly, so that service personnel who travel with family members have the right resources to be able to settle in.

**Andrea Leadsom:** We all pay tribute to the excellent work of all our armed forces, wherever they are based throughout the United Kingdom. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is committed to ensuring the wellbeing of our armed forces, wherever they are posted. The hon. Gentleman raises an important point about the longevity of the new arrangements in his constituency; I encourage him to seek a Westminster Hall or Adjournment debate so that he can raise those issues directly with Ministers.

## Point of Order

11.27 am

**Nick Smith** (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Will you advise us on the best way to introduce money resolutions, so that the Parliamentary Constituencies (Amendment) Bill, which is in the legislative pipeline, can be brought forward as soon as possible?

**Mr Speaker:** The answer to the hon. Gentleman is that money resolutions are brought forward only on the say-so of Ministers. That is the way the system works. I am conscious of some unease on this matter—an unease that should have been heard, and must be heard, on the Treasury Bench. People are awaiting such resolutions, and it would be appreciated if colleagues felt confident that there was a logic and reasonableness to the decision-making process. Nevertheless, I must say to the hon. Gentleman that it is not a decision-making process in which I am involved. The Leader of the House is seated on the Treasury Bench and will have heard what the hon. Gentleman had to say.

## Backbench Business

### May Adjournment

11.28 am

**Ian Mearns** (Gateshead) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered matters to be raised before the May adjournment.

Earlier, I listened to Ministers saying that EU citizens' rights would be defended robustly after Brexit, but I have also heard this week from Members of the European Parliament representing the north-east of England that EU negotiators are sceptical about such assertions because of what has happened with the Windrush situation.

I am currently dealing with a case of an EU citizen who is being denied benefits, despite the fact that she has been resident in Gateshead for 27 years. Kim Voogel came to the United Kingdom from the Netherlands in 1991. She has never been back to the Netherlands since then, and the Dutch Government have confirmed that they have no record of her ever going back to the Netherlands over the entirety of that period. She has worked on and off over that time, because her ex-husband was the main breadwinner in the family, and she has given birth to and raised three children, all of whom are still resident in Gateshead. Following a head injury after falling from a ladder, which has given her some mild brain damage, she had to reapply for universal credit, having transferred from employment and support allowance. In the transition between benefits, she has been refused universal credit because the Department for Work and Pensions said that she could not prove that she had been resident continuously in the United Kingdom for 27 years.

**Mark Tami** (Alyn and Deeside) (Lab): My hon. Friend is making a very powerful case. Does he agree that these sorts of cases affect not only the individual involved, but the whole family, particularly the children?

**Ian Mearns:** I could not agree more with my hon. Friend.

Despite the fact that this lady has three children, only one of whom is now in his 20s; despite the fact that she has been receiving child benefit for those children throughout the entire period; and despite the fact that she also has a work record, having worked in between having her children, she has been refused universal credit. Part of the reason for the refusal is that the online application form asked when her children came to the United Kingdom with her. Of course, they did not come to the United Kingdom; they were born here. Therefore, she has failed the permanent residency test and been refused universal credit, despite living here for 27 years.

With such cases occurring now, the assurances that have been given by Ministers about the rights of EU citizens following Brexit sound really quite hollow. There is a big job of work to be done. It is not just the Home Office that needs to recognise the rights of EU citizens; other Government Departments, such as the Department for Work and Pensions must do so too. This lady's case needs to be resolved, and resolved quickly and positively. She deserves nothing less than that.

Last Saturday, 28 April, we celebrated Workers Memorial Day. It is an important day for us all to celebrate; I and dozens and dozens of people attended a very moving service in Saltwell park in my constituency. There is a permanent memorial for Workers' Memorial Day in Saltwell park, and I congratulate not only Gateshead Trades Council, but Gateshead Council, on erecting it.

The whole point of Workers Memorial Day is to help people realise that many workers die, receive injuries, or develop life-threatening illnesses owing to circumstances at work. I am glad to say that the number of people who die owing to injuries at work has dropped dramatically over the years since we have introduced a plethora of health and safety legislation. However, when I hear Members on the Government Benches talking about freeing up the labour market and getting rid of red tape, I do honestly wonder whether that actually means getting rid of vital health and safety regulations that keep our workers safe.

**Chris Stephens** (Glasgow South West) (SNP): The hon. Gentleman raises a very important point. Does he share my concern that the numbers of staff based at the Health and Safety Executive have been reducing year on year since 2010?

**Ian Mearns:** That is a concern. As well as my duties as Chair of the Backbench Business Committee and as a member of the Select Committee on Education, I am a member of several parliamentary trade union groups, including the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union, which, with the Health and Safety Executive, has been struggling to get recognition for a condition known as baker's asthma. I understand entirely the hon. Gentleman's point. The HSE is working under great pressure to conduct the work that it must do.

**Nic Dakin** (Scunthorpe) (Lab): I join my hon. Friend in congratulating all those responsible for arranging Workers Memorial Day, including Councillor Tony Gosling in my area, who worked with the Scunthorpe Baptist church and Berkeley Junior School to hold a fantastic celebration of the work of trade unions in improving health and safety with their employers. The young people from Berkeley Junior School will take that message with them through their lives, and that will really transform health and safety in the future.

**Ian Mearns:** I entirely concur with my hon. Friend's comments.

Workers Memorial Day is important, but it comes with a vital message. As we prepare to leave the European Union, when so much power will be handed back to Ministers, the protection of health and safety regulations and law is so much more important now than it has probably been for an awful long time.

**Nick Smith** (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): I am a former night worker at Brace's bakery in Oakdale in south Wales, so I congratulate my hon. Friend on the important work he is doing with the bakers' union.

**Ian Mearns:** I thank my hon. Friend for those kind comments.

In commemorating Workers Memorial Day, we have to do two things. We remember the dead and we fight for the living, and it is so important that that fight continues.

In the last pre-recess debate, I raised the issue of a vexed question that is threatening the provision of a safe environment for adults with learning disabilities. A big problem has occurred because there is a lack of recognition that sleep-in workers who look after people with learning difficulties should be paid the minimum wage. A court case concluded that individuals who look after people with learning difficulties and carry out sleep-in duties should be paid the minimum wage, and that that minimum wage payment should be backdated by about six years. This is making providers—many of which are in the voluntary, not-for-profit and charitable sectors—very worried because the overall bill, which has not been provided for by central Government or through central Government grant by local government, could amount to £400 million.

There is a real danger that some providers will hand back contracts—in fact, this is already happening—and local authorities could end up having to deal with people who are no longer being provided for by the charitable or not-for-profit sectors. This case is really quite worrying. Providers are being told that they will have to pay back the £400 million bill by March next year, but they quite clearly do not have the means to do so. Organisations such as Mencap have expressed severe concern about what will happen to people with learning difficulties should the provision cease.

I also chair the all-party parliamentary group for footballer supporters, which we established because we felt that, although there is a very good all-party parliamentary football group, it mainly looks at the interests of clubs, leagues and football associations across the United Kingdom. The APPG for football supporters has great support from fans around the country and Members of the House. The secretariat is provided by the Football Supporters Federation, which has been campaigning on a number of things with the all-party group. For instance, a couple of years ago we ran a campaign called Twenty's Plenty, which was about the cost of tickets at away games in the premier league. The premier league came to a deal on that, and the maximum cost is now £30, so the campaign was clearly a success. Having travelled to away games in London against sides like Arsenal, Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur and paid in excess of £50 at some of those grounds, I am glad to say that now, because of the campaign, the maximum that clubs can charge is £30. That is a very welcome change.

A campaign that is coming to prominence at the moment, which has seen 110,000 signatures added to a parliamentary petition, is for safe standing in top-tier football grounds. We all know that after the Hillsborough disaster, the Taylor report brought in all-seater stadiums, and I think we have all welcomed the new safer environment in football grounds because of that. Unfortunately, however—or fortunately for those who like the atmosphere at football grounds—fans regularly stand in all-seater stadiums, particularly in the away end, where there will invariably be people standing in their droves at any championship or premier league ground. We see that week in, week out at over 40 grounds.

Safe standing may well be the solution. Rail seating, for instance, is an engineering-based solution that has been tried and tested north of the border by Celtic in Glasgow. The other night, we had a presentation at the all-party group by the safety officer of Celtic football club, Mr Ronnie Hawthorn. I thank him for coming

[*Ian Mearns*]

down from Glasgow to give that presentation, which was really illuminating. The debate in Westminster Hall as a result of the petition is due to happen on 25 June. I hope that the Government take very seriously the suggestions being put forward by football fans up and down the country. You might have seen, Mr Speaker, that the other night I made a brief appearance on “Sky Sports News” talking about this issue. I understand that “Sky Sports News” probably attracts one or two more viewers than Parliament Live TV, so I was happy to get the message out there.

I also chair the all-party parliamentary group on rail in the north. There has been some correspondence between north-east MPs and the Department for Transport following a report produced by the Institute for Public Policy Research about differentials in levels of transport infrastructure investment between London and the regions of England. The report, which looked at forecast expenditure, including the Transport for London budget, shows that up to five times as much is spent on transport for people in London per head of population than it is in places like the north-east of England. That is clearly unfair and unsustainable.

That is also fettering the growth of the economy in places like the north-east of England. I am sad to report that, together with uncertainty around Brexit and some problems in the motor industry, that means unemployment is continuing to rise in my constituency of Gateshead, even though we are constantly told that employment is at an all-time high. Unemployment in my constituency is currently about 6%, and youth unemployment stays stubbornly high. We therefore need those differentials in transport infrastructure investment to be eroded, so that people in the north-east can be held in the same esteem as their counterparts in London in the way in which Government expenditure is handed out for investment purposes.

Lastly, it would be remiss of me not to mention, as we are now in May, the launch of the Great Exhibition of the North on 22 June, which is being hosted in Newcastle and Gateshead. It has an 80-day programme, which will culminate in September with the Great North Run and will show off all that is great and good about the north of England. I am sure the Minister has already said that he is looking forward to coming to Gateshead and Newcastle for that festival. It will be a great festival, celebrating the architecture, culture, industry, innovation and creativity of people all across the three northern regions. So please, from 22 June, get north and come to Newcastle and Gateshead for the Great Exhibition of the North.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, and I wish all staff in the House a very pleasant May day celebration and weekend.

11.45 am

**Bob Stewart** (Beckenham) (Con): I wish to raise two matters in my short speech. The first is young criminal barristers and their existence, and the second is the advice being given to security personnel at the moment.

Let me start with the matter of young criminal Bar barristers. I have become increasingly concerned about the precarious way in which young criminal Bar barristers must exist, and in particular about the very small amount

of pay and allowances they receive. Gone are the days when most criminal law barristers came from moneyed backgrounds and could exist on peanuts because they were extremely well supported by their generous families—lucky them.

**Sir Edward Leigh** (Gainsborough) (Con): Forty years ago, I was an impecunious young criminal barrister. Typically, I was sent off to magistrates courts and Crown courts all over outer London and less salubrious parts of London, and I was paid £4 a day, four years in arrears. Life was tough then too. I did not come from a wealthy family. My father was a civil servant, and I had to live at home with my poor parents until I was 32. It has always been very tough for those starting at the criminal Bar.

**Bob Stewart:** I thank my great friend—my honourable and probably learned Friend too.

**Sir Edward Leigh:** Not learned at all, no.

**Bob Stewart:** He is not learned. I accept that point, but anyway, I am thinking of the young entering the profession now.

**Mr Speaker:** It may be that the hon. Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh) is not, in the parliamentary sense, learned, but I think we can all agree that he is distinguished.

**Bob Stewart:** Mr Speaker, as ever, you put me properly in my box and, as ever, I take a spanking without any problem.

**Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con): Too much information.

**Bob Stewart:** Indeed. I think this is one of those debates.

Let me get back to the main point, which is that it is a bad omen if young men and young women trying to be criminal law barristers are finding it very difficult. I am making this speech because earlier this week, I met a young barrister from my constituency who has had to leave the criminal Bar because she simply could not afford to live while working within the system. She was originally from the midlands, from a family of farmers, and she and her siblings were the first generation of the family to go to university. Her parents were totally supportive of her wish to be a barrister, a dream she told me she had had since she was 12 years old. She loved lawyer dramas on television, and her mother told her that her urge to be a lawyer had probably come from watching too much of the American law drama “Ally McNeal”, because she had a superb mobile phone.

**Ian Mearns:** “Ally McBeal”.

**Bob Stewart:** I stand corrected. It is hard to keep going.

My constituent studied law at Liverpool University and then applied for the Bar exams. Fully supported by her parents, she reluctantly came to London because there were more pupillages here. In 2008 she took the Bar exams, which cost her £15,000 of debt, not including accommodation. I gather that only about a third of people who pass the Bar exam now manage to get pupillages, and it took her three years to get hers.

During that time, my constituent worked for various agencies and did paralegal jobs to get relevant experience to help with her application. For some of that time she was on the minimum wage, but she eventually managed to get a criminal paralegal role in north London that paid about £14,000 a year. She did that to gain experience and advance her chances of getting a pupillage. However, the experience that really managed to get her a pupillage was doing voluntary legal work abroad. She was able to get a scholarship to cover her flights from the Inns of Court—well done them—and she managed to get someone to help her pay the rent on her flat in London while she was abroad. That allowed her to exist on that money while she was out of the country, because she was in free accommodation.

The young lawyer finally started her pupillage in October 2011. Although she had been warned that she would receive very little money, she was ignorant of just how little it would be. She told me that, during her first year, she received £16,285.38, but her travel expenses of well over £5,000 were not covered, so in effect she had to exist in London on about £10,000. In that year she could take only five days of holiday, she could not be sick, and she worked late nights and weekends constantly. For a young person, she had little social life. She travelled all over the country to various courts, and on most days she had to represent two clients, often in different courts, working through her lunch break and preparing for further clients late into the night.

My constituent told me that there were simply no breaks at all, but it was her vocation and the job she really wanted to do in life. However, she found that she could not live at that pace and, with so very little money, it was just not sustainable. She had to look at a different area of law, rather than criminal work. To start with she thought she could use that to subsidise what she really wanted to do, which was working at the criminal Bar. However, when she moved to a different area of law, her salary tripled almost instantly and she had more time for herself. As a result, she now practises in that area, and has largely left criminal law. She never thought she would make such a decision, but it was largely forced on her by circumstances. She wants to have a family life and bring up children, and she honestly felt that there was little chance of that happening for her at the criminal Bar. How sad is that?

My constituent came to me earlier this week because she feels that what has happened to her is wrong both for individuals and for the profession itself. People who try to be criminal law barristers normally have a massive calling. They know it may not pay half as much as other parts of their profession, but they feel that it is where they can do most good and what they should be doing. Being paid £10,000 for working all hours that God sends, and having to worry so much about money, is simply wrong for someone with responsibilities like hers. Despite the fact that my learned friend—my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh)—existed on peanuts when he was a young barrister, if this continues we will simply not have enough criminal law barristers, and we will certainly not have ones of the quality that defending in the public arena deserves. Is it an exaggeration to suggest that the criminal justice system could collapse? It is certainly in crisis if my young constituent is typical.

My constituent asked colleagues to provide her with their financial experiences as they strove to get into the profession, and she gave me the examples of five of her friends. None made more than £20,000 in their first year, and they all had to spend a huge amount of that on travel. They also had considerable debts to repay. Young criminal law barristers often do not even receive the minimum wage. That is wrong for them and most definitely wrong for a profession that we need to be as good as possible. Justice will be best served when those who argue for it are also the best, and we need well-motivated, driven people who care that we get things right in our criminal courts. Someone needs to look closely at what is happening, so that we do something about it before it is too late.

**Sir Edward Leigh:** The problem is that compared with their colleagues in other legal work, criminal barristers are massively underpaid, which is all down to cuts in legal aid. The Government have to address that issue: do they want a first-class justice system—what is more important that defending people's freedom?—or do they not? In order to have a proper justice system we need a proper legal aid system, and that means taking difficult decisions in other areas of Government spending.

**Bob Stewart:** I think there will be a debate on these issues next Tuesday, and I might take part. I entirely agree with my honourable and very good Friend, and I thank him for raising that point.

My second topic is something that struck me as I passed by the television monitors this morning. If there is a terrorist incident in our wonderful building, we are told to “run, hide and tell”. I was slightly shocked by that, and I asked a policeman whether that is also the advice they are given. The police officer said, “Yes, but don't worry, sir, that is the last thing we would do. We would not run, hide and tell.” If that is the way we are telling security personnel to conduct themselves, I am extremely concerned about what the implications might be if someone did not run, hide and tell, but instead ran towards the incident, put themselves in danger and was hurt. Does it mean that the Government might say, “Your advice and instructions were ‘run, hide and tell’ and you did exactly the reverse. Therefore we will not give you compensation”?

This issue concerns me a great deal. I do not believe for a moment that the people responsible for our security would do such a thing as “run, hide and tell”. I spoke with the Chair of the Defence Committee a few minutes ago, and he said that he wanted to comment on that point, so I will sit down.

**Dr Julian Lewis:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I am frankly surprised that common-sense advice from the point of view of an untrained civilian should be extended—if indeed it is—to those who are professionally engaged in maintaining the security of this place and those who work in it. Of course we expect people to rise to the occasion when they are on duty, and we expect those who are not charged with being on duty to keep out of the way of those who are. How concerned is my hon. Friend at the prospect that people who work in the security field are beginning to think that they might pay some sort of financial penalty if they do what most of us would admire, and tackle the danger rather than hide from it?

**Bob Stewart:** I thank my right hon. Friend for that intervention, which I forced on him.

That is the worry. We cannot have our security personnel thinking, “If I do this and I am hurt, I might suffer financially.” That would be wrong. Actually, I think the advice is slightly wrong for everyone. If any of us see a situation where someone is in danger, I think we should think, “I’ve got to help.” That is the first thought that should go through our minds.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is good to see you in the Chair. You are, I believe, an honorary colonel of the Royal Army Medical Corps. It is great that Members of Parliament are honorary colonels of regiments. I hope there will be many more.

I am amazed that people have put up with me here for eight years. [HON. MEMBERS: “Nonsense!”] It is a real privilege to be here, and I think the staff of this place are second to none. I would like to thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Mr Speaker, the Clerks, the cleaners and all the staff here who make this place run.

**Chris Stephens:** Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the staff he talks about deserve a decent pay rise this year over and above 1%?

**Bob Stewart:** What a Pooh trap! I would love to give them a big pay rise, but thank goodness that decision is above my pay grade.

My father took me to Sandhurst when I was 17 and three quarters. He said, “Robert, remember that everyone gets a stomach ache.” He meant that I should never be impressed by people. His second point was his most important: “Always look after the people for whom you have responsibility.” We have a responsibility to the staff of this place, and we are very lucky that they are of much higher quality than someone like myself.

12.3 pm

**Chris Stephens** (Glasgow South West) (SNP): For reasons that are not yet clear to me, the Scottish National party Whips Office always asks me to lead on behalf of the SNP for whingefests, as these debates are uncharitably referred to.

**David Linden** (Glasgow East) (SNP): Speaking on behalf of the SNP Whips Office, we would never suggest that my hon. Friend is anything but a whinger. Will he join me in paying tribute to the staff in the SNP Whips Office—Anne Harvey, Christopher Mullins-Silverstein and Kieran Reape—for all their hard work?

**Chris Stephens:** I thank my hon. comrade for his cheek. Yes, I do want to place on record the hard work of my hon. Friends and the staff of the SNP Whips Office.

**Thangam Debbonaire** (Bristol West) (Lab): As we are handing out accolades to those who work in Whips Offices, I cannot remain seated. On behalf of the Opposition Whips Office, I associate myself with the comments made by the hon. Member for Glasgow East (David Linden). But this is not a whingefest—of course not. It is the perfect opportunity for Members to place on record constituency issues before the Adjournment.

**Chris Stephens:** I fully agree.

I think that the main reason I was selected, however, was that this is the May day Adjournment and the May day public holiday is of course the workers public holiday—we should not forget that. I fully endorse the remarks of the hon. Member for Gateshead (Ian Mearns) about international Workers Memorial Day, which I commemorated on Glasgow green last Saturday. Many trade unions are making a clear case that this is not just a male issue and that many women workers have unfortunately died as a result of work-related disease or injury. As someone with a proud tradition in the trade union movement, I have seen a fellow Unison steward pass away as a result of an asbestos-related disease, and so, on international Workers Memorial Day, I remember my colleague and friend Tom Begley.

As we are heading into workers day, I want to mention some issues that are important to working people in this country and that I believe the Government should consider when we return. The Government’s response to the Taylor review will be an important issue in the next couple of months, but I have real concerns about their direction of travel in rolling back on employment tribunal decisions on the status of workers, as suggested in the Taylor review. I commend to the House the Workers (Definition and Rights) Bill, in my name and supported by every Opposition party in the Chamber. It is important that we address the status of workers in the context of the Taylor review and consider the issue of zero-hours contracts, which, sadly, are still booming in the UK. One of the simplest tests is this: if it were up to me, someone would only be allowed a zero-hours contract if there was a collective signed agreement with a recognised trade union. If there was, I think that we would see their numbers reduce.

Following on from my rather naughty intervention on the hon. and gallant Member for Beckenham (Bob Stewart), it is appropriate to mention not just the pay of the wonderful staff of the House of Commons but public sector pay in general. In response to a question I asked yesterday, the Prime Minister suggested that the public sector pay cap had been abolished, while admitting that every other Department had budgeted 1% for its staff. Either the public sector pay cap has gone or it has not, and I think we heard yesterday that it has not.

**Thangam Debbonaire:** The hon. Gentleman is making a very eloquent speech. Does he agree that the workers May day holiday would be an ideal time for the Government to stand up and say, “Yes, we will unfreeze the public sector pay cap and fully fund it across all public services.”?

**Chris Stephens:** The key point is funding, but yes it would be a perfect opportunity for the Government to say that they will fully fund a decent pay rise for public sector workers across the board. Let us not forget that these are the workers who are collecting the tax and trying to put right a broken social security system and a broken immigration system—I will come to that later.

I have always argued for the retention of people’s jobs, not just in the public sector but in the private sector, and I want to raise once again an issue I have raised in several debates: the Ministry of Defence’s nonsensical position in procuring three fleet support ships through international competition. From a written parliamentary answer I received last week, which was covered by the *Daily Record*, we now know that these three fleet support

ships will have armaments, sensors and Phalanx guns, which will be used for defence. If that is the case, my contention is that it is a warship and these three fleet support ships should not be procured through international competition. There are enough shipyards in the UK to build these ships—to block-build them in the same way as the Aircraft Carrier Alliance does—and I hope that hon. Members agree that the ships should not be exposed to international competition. They should be built in the United Kingdom.

**David Linden:** As I am sure my hon. Friend will remember, in the run-up to the Scottish independence referendum of 2014, a leaflet was distributed in his constituency saying that separation would shut shipyards and spell doom. Does he agree that has proven to be absolutely nonsense and that indeed, under the UK Government, we are seeing threats to shipyards?

**Chris Stephens:** I thank my hon. Friend for reminding me of my predecessor's leaflet. He raises an important point. I refer the House to Monday's *Daily Record* editorial, which says that the UK Government have bent, cajoled and run away from the commitments that they made on shipbuilding prior to the independence referendum. We are still waiting on the 13 ships that were promised, eight of which we were told would be built on the Clyde and five of which may be, or maybe not—they are, of course, the Type 31e frigates.

In the news in the past few weeks, we have seen how brutal and hostile the immigration system is in the United Kingdom. As someone with a large number of asylum seekers in my constituency—about 40% of my caseload is based on immigration cases—I have very real concerns about how the Home Office handles these cases, but principally, there also seems to be a lack of Home Office staff who are willing when it comes to Members' inquiries. I hope that the Government and Home Office will address that issue.

Those who seek sanctuary in this country—many of them are women, many of them are fleeing sexual violence, and for many of them, when they see a gentleman in uniform, it means something completely different to them than it does to other people—should not live in fear of trying to become citizens of this country. They want to come here and make a contribution, and it is important that we allow them to do so.

I hope that the Government consider looking at the issues around social enterprises. I have a case in my constituency of a gentleman who wants to join a social enterprise when he gets his status, yet the Home Office is saying that a social enterprise is not enough to help his case. I think that is a complete nonsense. We should be encouraging the creation of social enterprises, and if those who are seeking sanctuary in this country want to help and get involved in that, that is important.

I will end with a key concern raised by the hon. Member for Gateshead: the principal issues of regulation. In our exchange earlier, we talked about the cuts to the Health and Safety Executive, but there have also been job losses in the Equality and Human Rights Commission, which is there to regulate human rights and equality. We are now seeing cuts in the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, and we have a ridiculous situation: ACAS staff want to go on strike, but who is going to conciliate the conciliators? That is the position the Government have found themselves in.

For many, tomorrow is happy Star Wars Day, because it is May the fourth—May the fourth be with you, Mr Deputy Speaker—but there are also two important anniversaries tomorrow. When I was at Thales UK on Monday, I was asked, “What happened 25 years ago on 4 May?” I innocently put up my hand and said to the audience, “Well, that will be the 25th anniversary of Partick Thistle football club beating Rangers 3-0 and remaining in the Scottish Premier League at the expense of Falkirk and Airdrieonians”—I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow East (David Linden) for reminding him. It will also be the 25th anniversary of Thales UK moving into Linthouse. Thales, of course, formerly traded as Barr and Stroud, where my gran and grandfather met—they were happily married for 61 and a half years—but what I did not realise until Monday was that the current Thales site was the former site of Alexander Stephen and Sons shipbuilders, where my father was an apprentice along with the famous comedian, Billy Connolly.

On behalf of the Scottish National party, I hope that all Members enjoy May day, the workers public holiday.

12.14 pm

**Sir Edward Leigh** (Gainsborough) (Con): I am glad that I am following my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Bob Stewart). He spoke about pressure on one part of the public service sector and, in particular, about the cuts in legal aid. He made the very fair point that the criminal justice system relies crucially on talented young people wanting to enter it and receiving appropriate remuneration. I want to make a similar point about the whole public sector.

I shall argue that spending is overstressed in large parts of the public sector. I shall talk about defence for a short time, and then about transport and police funding in my own constituency. This will not—I hope—be just one of a series of speeches in which Members ask for more and more public spending, because I am also committed to lower public spending. I am going to take it on the chin and argue that we cannot devote an ever-increasing part of public sector spending to overseas aid, health and social security.

Let me start with defence. I am going to make some political points. They may not be points with which everyone will agree, but I feel that they need to be made. The fact is that the Ministry of Defence is underfunded. During the cold war, we were spending 5% of our national wealth on defence; even after the peace dividend, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, we were still spending 3%; and we continued to do so until the advent of the Labour Government in 1997. We are now hovering around 2%, and there is a general consensus that we must increase that percentage. That will, of course, involve difficult decisions.

We cannot increase spending on defence unless we are prepared not to spend as much as we would like in other areas, such as health. I understand that certain senior people in the Government may well question whether that is politically possible—whether we could argue the case before a general election. I would argue that not only is spending more on defence in an increasingly dangerous world the right thing to do, but it is a politically sensible and popular thing to do.

**Thangam Debbonaire:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for being so courteous with his time. He is making some interesting points, but I ask him to reflect on this.

[*Thangam Debbonaire*]

Does he not agree that cutting the spending of the Department for International Development, which he has mentioned, would be counterproductive? Would it not increase the potential reason to spend more on defence? One of the ways in which we reduce our security concerns about other countries is investing in those countries. That is in our interest, as well as being altruistic.

**Sir Edward Leigh:** The hon. Lady leapt to her feet too soon. I am not going to argue that DFID's spending should be cut; I am going to argue that we should spend on DFID what we can afford to spend, and what we need to spend. We should not link the arbitrary aim to spend 0.7% of GNP on aid, which is now enshrined in law, with the very different aim in respect of defence spending.

**Chris Stephens:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Sir Edward Leigh:** I will come on to DFID, but as the hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene, I will of course give way.

**Chris Stephens:** Is there not another important point to be made about defence spending? It can be kept within the UK, and if there is an increase, money will come back to the Treasury in the form of workers' income tax and national insurance because of the jobs that will have been created.

**Sir Edward Leigh:** There is, of course, a serious argument to be made—and I accept what the hon. Gentleman has said—about the value of defence spending in terms of jobs, particularly in areas such as Lancashire.

As I was saying, some senior people in the Government might argue that, while increasing defence spending was probably the right thing to do because defence was underfunded, it might not be politically sustainable. I am reminded, sitting next to my right hon. Friend the Member for New Forest East (Dr Lewis), that in the early 1980s there seemed to be an unstoppable campaign in favour of unilateral nuclear disarmament. We worked very closely with Lord Heseltine, who was then Mr Michael Heseltine, in the Coalition for Peace through Security. He is a first-rate politician and made excellent arguments, calling it one-sided disarmament. That 1983 election hinged very substantially on defence, and the Conservative party won it. Political parties have to major on, and argue on, the areas in which they are strongest, and every public opinion poll suggests that the Conservatives are trusted most on defence, so this is one of our strong areas and it is not an area that we should feel that we are continually criticised because we are not doing enough.

I am also reminded by my right hon. Friend the Member for New Forest East that these arguments have raged back and forth for many years. In the early 1930s, the Conservative party lost a by-election in Fulham, and there was a peace candidate—a Labour candidate, I think—standing for the Opposition. George Lansbury was leader of the Labour party; he famously in the 1930s wanted to abolish the RAF entirely. There was an understandable, almost universal, desire for peace in the 1930s—part of the Oxford Union debates and many

other factors, with people remembering the carnage of the first world war—and rearmament was not considered to be a popular policy, although clearly after 1933 when the Nazis came to power in Germany it was necessary; and I am thinking now of what is going on in Russia.

So it was necessary to rearm but that was perhaps unpopular, and Baldwin, who was a very successful Conservative Prime Minister, gave the “appalling frankness” speech in the late 1930s when he was criticised for not rearming early enough. We only started rearming in 1936 or thereabouts and almost left it too late; we only won the battle of Britain by a whisker. When Baldwin was criticised, he gave the “appalling frankness” speech. He said, “Look at what happened in that Fulham by-election. What would have happened to the Conservative party if we had advocated increased defence spending when it was so unpopular?”

I am not saying we are in as dangerous a position now as we were in the 1930s, but defence spending is an insurance policy. This is all about the value of deterrence, and we cannot know what the threats of the future will be. What we do know, however, is that Russia is increasingly proactive and is probably run by a criminal mafia regime. We know that there is an existential threat to the Baltic states, too, and one lesson of history from the 1930s, particularly from our pledge to Poland in the late 1930s, is that there is no point in giving pledges to defend a country in eastern Europe unless we have the means and will to carry them out.

I would argue in terms of our commitment to the Baltic states that, while admirable in every respect and while underpinned by the NATO alliance—treaties and article 5 and everything else—unless we are prepared now to commit real hardware to their defence, we could be in an extraordinarily dangerous situation in which Russia would believe she could intervene and undermine those states and could even intervene militarily, because by the time she achieved a successful military intervention it would be too late and our only recourse would be to nuclear weapons.

We clearly cannot rely entirely on nuclear weapons, therefore. There must be a whole range of deterrents at all levels. That is why at the moment the armed forces are struggling: the Royal Navy is struggling, and there are threats to various regiments. I will leave it there, but I earnestly implore the Government to take heed when even the former Defence Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Sir Michael Fallon), who has just left his post and who was a very careful pair of hands who honestly defended the Government while he was Secretary of State, argues that we need to spend at least 2.5% of our national wealth on defence and we are simply not spending enough.

That is one area where we have to make difficult decisions. We have already talked about legal aid, and we are talking about the difficult decisions we have to make on defence, and now we have to take difficult decisions in our own constituencies. Earlier this week, Lincolnshire Members of Parliament held a meeting with the Policing Minister. Lincolnshire is one of the lowest funded police authorities in the country—it is in the bottom three or four—and for 35 years we have been having meetings with Policing Ministers and begging for more resources. I understand the pressure that the Minister is under. He tells us that, officially, austerity is now finished with regard to policing. All our constituents

want more policing, but we have to provide the funds. We have already heard mention of the security threats in London, and it is difficult for a Policing Minister to transfer resources from the capital city to a rural county such as Lincolnshire, even though there is plenty of crime in Lincolnshire that I could talk about. I could even talk about my own personal experience of crime. It is a real issue. We clearly have to increase the resources for police funding.

In traditional Conservative counties, there are other things that people feel are underfunded. When they look at Scotland, at Northern Ireland and even at some of the big urban areas, they see fantastic internet connections, good roads and good police funding in their terms, and they wonder why the rural counties are so underfunded. My plea to those on the Treasury Bench is that they should not forget the rural counties and the real pressures that we face. Yes, there is crime, but also our roads in Lincolnshire are full of potholes. This is an important point, because people are driving at 50 or 60 mph in the middle of the road to avoid potholes, and 500 people are being killed or are injured in some form on our roads locally. These are really important issues, and the Government must address them. They must not forget the pressures that people face in rural counties.

**David Linden:** The hon. Gentleman has mentioned the excellent public services that we have in Scotland. The reality is that if we want good, well-funded public services, we have to take some quite difficult decisions on tax. There is a member of his own party, who cannot be here today for reasons unknown, who regularly rails about the fact that higher earners in Scotland—that includes myself as a Member of Parliament—pay a little more tax, but as a result we get better services. Will the hon. Gentleman join me in saying that it would be sensible for his party to look into increasing tax for those who are much better off?

**Sir Edward Leigh:** I will not join the hon. Gentleman in advocating ever-increasing levels of the tartan tax. I remain a strong Conservative, and I believe in the value of deregulation and a low-tax system. Earlier in my speech I made pleas for higher Government spending, both in Lincolnshire and on defence, so—to be fair to Treasury Ministers—how is all that going to be paid for? We cannot increase borrowing, and I would not argue that it is right to increase taxes.

There is another matter that I am really concerned about. I understand that the Government are now looking closely at a significant increase in real-terms spending on the NHS. I am of an age at which the NHS is terribly important to me and my family. I have no private health insurance. Indeed, earlier this week, I had a small procedure on my face under the NHS, which was beautifully carried out. I have no complaints against the staff, but I am very worried about this proposal, which Ministers are apparently considering, to dramatically increase the amount of money spent on the NHS in real terms.

I remember what happened during the period of the Labour Government. Of course such measures are popular in the short term, but the more we increase spending on the NHS in real terms, the lower the productivity becomes. I have spent quite a lot of time talking to consultants and doctors—I am at the age where I do that—and they all, to a man and a woman, bewail the level of bureaucracy

and incompetence in the NHS. They are not arguing for more public funding in real terms, although it has to increase by a certain amount in real terms every year because we are an ageing population and we understand all the pressures. They all say that what drives them mad is the level of bureaucracy in the NHS, and it worries me that if we substantially increase NHS spending in real terms, we will simply add to that level of bureaucracy, even though Ministers assure us that that is not their aim.

**Thangam Debbonaire** *rose*—

**Sir Edward Leigh:** I will give way to the hon. Lady. Nobody else has a solution, but perhaps she does.

**Thangam Debbonaire:** The hon. Gentleman is being extremely generous. I do not have a solution, but I caution him to be careful what he wishes for, because that so-called bureaucracy includes data, IT and back-office functions. We heard from the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care only yesterday about what happens when an IT system does not have good scrutiny or governance. We must be careful what we wish for.

**Sir Edward Leigh:** It is a question of quality. Is it really necessary to have 30,000 people employed by the NHS, who have never been doctors or nurses and who have never met a single patient, earning over £100,000 a year? We of course need a level of good-quality management, but we must trust the people on the frontline. Whenever we talk to doctors and nurses they say, “Trust us. We are professionals.” They are the people that members of the public want to see. They are the ones with the vocation and the professionalism to look after us.

The hon. Lady makes a fair point and, like all arguments, we could take it to extremes, but in my view there are two models for the NHS. There is the traditional model that I grew up with in the 1950s and 1960s, and there is a newer model with evermore systems, targets, internal markets and the rest. My personal view—this may surprise the hon. Lady—is that the old-fashioned model probably worked better, because it put more competence and more control in the hands of nurses, doctors and consultants.

I am now going to say something that will probably be even more unpopular. I wonder why our Government are not prepared to bite the bullet and consider alternative funding for the NHS. With an ageing population, we must encourage people to put more of their own resources into their health. How are we going to do that? We could do it through general taxation and increase overall spending, but I have argued against that, or we could do what previous Conservative Governments have done. The Major Government and the Thatcher Government—I do not think the Major Government were particularly right wing—gave tax relief for people of pensionable age towards private health insurance. That is anathema to the Labour party, but it would actually put more resources into health. Most people of retirement age simply cannot afford private health insurance, because they pay for it from their taxed income. However, if we gave tax relief for private health insurance, as previous Conservative Governments have done, we would not be saying that we are against the NHS or devaluing it; we would be trying to encourage the people who are going to use healthcare more often to put more of their own resources into healthcare.

[*Sir Edward Leigh*]

I am worried that if this massive real-terms increase in healthcare spending happens, we will be approaching the levels of health spending per head that we see in Germany or France. The fact is—let us be honest about this—that if we are going to be ill, we would much rather be ill in Germany or France. I know that the NHS is a kind of religion for many people, but the health services under the social insurance systems of France and Germany do work better. They cost more, but the people feel that they have real control over their healthcare. They pay large amounts of tax, but they feel that they have some kind of ownership of their healthcare—some kind of right. When something goes wrong, they are not just enmeshed in a vast bureaucratic machine; they believe that they have some right to treatment through social insurance. Indeed, in Germany, they do get that.

**Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con):** My hon. Friend is making an interesting argument, and if I manage to catch Mr Deputy Speaker's eye, I will talk about that myself. I want to bring to my hon. Friend's attention a constituent of mine who had a baby in Germany, as a member of the armed forces, and then had one in the UK. She said that the experience in the UK was so much better than that in Germany that she would not recommend that anyone have a baby in Germany rather than the UK.

**Sir Edward Leigh:** I stand corrected, but I think it is a generally accepted fact. We all know from our friends and relations, and from public debate, that the health system in Germany is superb. I am sure there are glitches and areas where we might outperform it, but generally the system there works well.

The Government have to be honest in addressing how we will meet the needs of an ever-ageing population and the desire of that ageing population for ever-new levels of treatment. We have to devise new systems to encourage people to put more of their own resources into healthcare, as I do not believe we can do that out of general taxation.

Before I sit down, I promised to make a point about DFID. Nobody values the work of DFID more than I do. DFID is doing tremendous work throughout the world, but its budget—I say this as a former Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee—is under strain, not from underfunding but from an arbitrary link in legislation to a particular proportion of national wealth. The link simply does not work, and it creates all sorts of stresses and strains.

I am not suggesting to the hon. Member for Bristol West (Thangam Debonnaire) that we cut overseas aid spending; what I am suggesting is that we get rid of this arbitrary link in legislation and have the best, the most high quality, the most free from corruption and the best-targeted overseas aid budget in the world, which I am sure is our aim and what we are achieving in large areas. Imposing such an arbitrary device on spending, which must result in a splurge of spending towards the back end of the year, cannot be right.

**David Linden:** The hon. Gentleman, as ever, is being incredibly kind in giving way. I declare an interest, having taken part in a national delegation to Tanzania a couple of months after I was elected.

I disagree entirely with the hon. Gentleman. As a Scottish nationalist, it is not often that I am inspired by seeing the British flag and seeing UK aid, but I remember going to visit a school in a rural part of Tanzania and seeing a child read a book about understanding the dangers of malaria, which was funded by UK aid. What the hon. Gentleman is suggesting would mean fewer books for children like that little boy in Tanzania, so I disagree entirely with him.

**Sir Edward Leigh:** We all know about the wonderful work being done on malaria, and we all know about the work of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. It is terribly important that we do not have people on one side of this debate arguing that overseas aid is wrong, corrupt and does not work and people on the other side saying, "We believe in it so much, and we are so worried there is some threat to it, that we need an arbitrary device to ensure that the budget increases, sometimes massively, every year." Equally, if there were a recession, the budget might go down. It simply does not work. Anyway, I have made that point.

My last point is about social security. What worries me about my own Conservative Government is that an ever-increasing share of public spending is taken up by the NHS, social security and overseas aid, which is producing massive distortions and difficulties in other areas of spending that are absolutely vital—we have talked about defence, the police and the criminal justice system, and there are many others. The system is becoming skewed.

As a loyal Conservative and as someone who believes in Conservative values, if the Government are going down this path of giving an ever-larger part of the national cake to those three areas—the NHS, social security and overseas aid—I have to ask how they will pay for it. It is no longer possible to borrow, so they will have to pay for it with higher taxation. If it is indeed true that we will have this massive increase in real-terms NHS spending, we will need an increase in taxation, which would be lethal to the Conservative movement.

People vote Conservative because they want low taxes, and this is why I will be going off in a moment to vote Conservative in Westminster. People are voting for strong defence, strong law and order, low taxes and a pro-business environment. If we continue to increase spending on the NHS, social security and overseas aid, we will simply pave the way for a Corbyn Government. That is what I do not want to do, at all costs. Let us be true to ourselves, let us take the difficult decisions and let us be Conservative.

12.39 pm

**Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con):** I am most grateful to follow the speech of my distinguished colleague, my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh). I very much agree with him on a lot of areas, but I shall start with a point where I might pose a little challenge. I believe we wish, as a country, to be strong on defence. I absolutely agree with him on that and think that what my right hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Sir Michael Fallon) has said about a minimum of 2.5%—and possibly even more—is right. I am very proud that Stafford is host to three signals regiments and the tactical supply wing of the Royal Air Force. If we are to be a global Britain, punching above our weight by maintaining a proper diplomatic representation

around the world, which is vital as we leave the European Union, and at the same time we are to ensure that our citizens have high-quality public services, be they in respect of law and order, health or social care, we cannot be an absolute low tax economy. The two things do not add up. If we look at the percentage of GDP that we spend on our public services and compare that with what happens in France, which has a similar global profile to the UK, we see that our figure is much, much less.

At this point I wish to raise the issue of our health service. I declare an interest, in that I am married to a doctor, and I am the father of a doctor and the brother of a doctor.

**Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con): So where did it go wrong?

**Jeremy Lefroy:** My right hon. Friend may very well ask!

If we look at the World Health Organisation's report on people's perceptions of access to good quality healthcare in 2013, under a Conservative-led coalition Government, I am glad to say, we find that 82% of France's population and 85% of Germany's felt they had access to good quality healthcare, whereas in the UK the figure was 96%. For all its faults, and there are many, as I know personally from my constituency experience, our system is held in high regard and it provides almost everybody—96% is not 100%—with access to high-quality healthcare.

**Bob Stewart:** In my constituency, when an ambulance goes by with its alarms going off, this usually signals a heart attack or a stroke and someone being rushed to a really good hospital. The NHS is the place you want to go if you have a heart attack—private healthcare does not even start to deal with strokes and heart attacks. We are really well served by the people who do this.

**Jeremy Lefroy:** My hon. and gallant Friend is right about that. As far as I know, we will not find an accident and emergency department that is privately run in the UK. If there is such a department, we are probably talking about only one or two. It is not possible to do that because of the cost of running A&E departments. Parliamentary colleagues in France will talk about healthcare deserts in parts of rural France, where people cannot get access to the highest quality of healthcare that they want. I am not trying to play us off against France or Germany here; I am just trying to state a few facts, as we tend to run ourselves down sometimes.

I wanted to start by discussing the health service because it is now five years since the Francis report on the Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust, which is in my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock Chase (Amanda Milling). That was a very difficult time for us all in Stafford. I am still very proud of the Stafford people and the Cannock people, who put so much into the work to preserve health services in Stafford and Cannock during that time. I am also proud of the work that has been done since then, and of the people who stood up and pointed out the real problems that were going on at the time, which needed to be corrected. If we consider what has happened since then, we see that patient safety has become an absolute priority for the NHS and for this Government, and I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend

for taking that on. If we look at the recommendations in the Francis report, we can see that most of them are now in place. When I talk to colleagues from around the country, they say, "You know, that Francis report made a huge difference for my local hospital". It made a difference not just for Stafford or Cannock, but for hospitals throughout the country, where patient safety has gone to the top of the agenda.

I pay tribute to the staff of the County Hospital, as Stafford hospital is now known, for what they have done over the past five years. In the past couple of weeks, more than 96% of patients in our A&E have been seen within four hours. That is well above the national target. I am most grateful to the staff for achieving that. Other things must still be done—there are more services that I want to see back in the hospital, or brought to it and the Stafford area for the first time—but I put on record my thanks to everybody who has made that happen over the past five years.

To return to the general point about the health service, it is quite true that they have a different system in Germany and France, and there are merits in that. It is a different system that requires co-payments: people have health insurance, whether it is largely state-funded, as in France, or done through private or co-operative health insurance systems, as in Germany. People still pay often several hundred euros a year on average to access healthcare when they need it. It is a serious issue and a political debate that we need to have. I am not necessarily saying that my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough's points should be disregarded—not at all; they should be considered very seriously—but we have to look into what is sustainable.

**Nick Smith:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the 96% support for the NHS throughout the country is fantastic, but does he agree that the future challenges for the NHS are the modern killers that are out there now, such as obesity and related diabetes, and the conditions related to old age, such as dementia? The NHS now has to bend itself to deal with these new conditions.

**Jeremy Lefroy:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right, although I should say that that 96% referred to access to high-quality healthcare, rather than support for the NHS. I thought I should make that distinction. It may well be that the NHS has 96% support, but I was talking about access to high-quality healthcare.

The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right that diabetes, cancer and other conditions are clearly the issues. The health service has to adapt; I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough that it can be far too monolithic. Often, we see really good, inspired leadership that makes a real difference in some places—perhaps it even comes from those paid £100,000 a year—but in other places we see some very uninspiring leadership. It is often very much about who is taking on the challenges at the local level and what their motivations are. We clearly have a great deal more to do on that.

Time is short, so I shall move on from the NHS after one final point. I fully agree with the cross-party report published last week by my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles) and other colleagues from the Labour party and the Liberal Democrats. It contains 10 points on how to have a sustainable health system. I have been talking about most of those 10 points

[Jeremy Lefroy]

in this place for the past five or six years, so I would agree with them, wouldn't I? Still, there is an awful lot in there for the Government to look at and perhaps take on. I return to the initial point: if we want high-quality services and a strong defence, along with funding for other issues of great importance to our constituents, we will have to pay a little more. The question is whether we pay that through a national health insurance system—a progressive system—through direct taxation or through contributions. Those questions have to be asked. I am in favour of a fully funded system, which may mean that we have to do it through the proposed national health insurance system.

The second thing I wish to talk about is General Electric, which is the largest private sector employer in my constituency. At the end of last year, it announced several hundred job losses, and the consultation on that is currently ongoing. It is a very serious situation. I praise General Electric and its predecessor, Alstom, for their investment in Stafford. They have built two new, modern, state-of-the-art factories, which will provide security for many people in my constituency.

For those facing the prospect of redundancy, it is vital both for them and their families, and indeed for the country, that we see how we can ensure that their skills—often very high skills—are best employed elsewhere. In that context, I want to raise again the matter of the Swansea Bay tidal lagoon, which I and other colleagues have been pushing for. If we are to have a power manufacturing sector in this country, we must be at the forefront of modern technologies, and that is one of them. I urge the Government to come forward with a positive decision on that as soon as possible.

My third point is a local matter. I am very glad to see two of my Staffordshire colleagues—my hon. Friends the Members for Burton (Andrew Griffiths) and for Cannock Chase—on the Front Bench at the moment. I know that they will probably agree with me on most, if not all, of these issues. We have already heard about potholes. Being a rural county, we have the same problems in Staffordshire. Potholes are not just an inconvenience; they are a menace. When cyclists go into potholes that are filled with water, they can suffer very serious injuries, as some of my constituents have. Cars suffers great damage, which brings loss either to the county if there is a claim or to the individual whose car has been damaged. We need to see more money put into that area, both at a local and a national level. After the winter that we have just had, it is a priority. I would like to see the Secretary of State for Transport coming forward with some supplementary funding for potholes for local authorities as soon as possible, because, as we already know, a stitch in time saves nine.

Bus services in rural areas are suffering. My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough did not mention this issue, but he has probably been affected by it as well. Clearly, we do not want buses running around empty and wasting a lot of money, but there must be ways of ensuring that our villages and small towns, which are becoming ever less connected with the major centres of population, see a reversal in the situation. We need innovative thinking. Perhaps we should go back to a situation in which councils, as in Nottingham, which

runs a very fine public transport service, say, “We will have to step in and fill the gap to ensure that our communities are connected.”

Finally as far as local councils are concerned, I wish to raise the issue of breaks for carers. Carers across the country, and certainly in Staffordshire, perform an absolutely magnificent job. We need to ensure that they can have the breaks that they need, especially those who cannot afford them. They need to be able to get away from time to time. I welcome the fact that Staffordshire has supported such breaks and continues to do so, but the funding is too little. We need to see greater funding in this area and more innovative solutions to ensure that money is wisely spent and available to as many of our carers as need help.

Clearly, on the national scene, the debate is dominated by our leaving the European Union. I will not go into the principles on either side, but I will make points on four areas. Frictionless trade for the manufacturing industry in Stafford and the west midlands is essential. I was recently at the Honda factory in Swindon, and heard very clearly how important it is for us to have seamless trade, in and out, for components. The factory operates, as does almost all manufacturing industry in the automotive sector and others, a just-in-time policy. Such firms cannot have delays at borders.

Another critical area is data, as the Exiting the European Union Committee heard when we took evidence in the City of London. With the EU's understandable fixation on data protection—we are, of course, putting that into our own law—the City is very concerned that we ensure that data issues are sorted out well in advance of our finally leaving at the end of 2020. It is vital that this is done, because data is at the core of not just financial services but every business.

Financial services companies have a concern about contracts that go beyond the end date of our membership of the European Union. That is a serious issue, because if we do not have the rules on contracts in place, there is a risk that contracts will not be able to be fulfilled and that people will not be paid such things as life assurance or pensions.

**Sir Edward Leigh:** My hon. Friend and I fought the last general election on a Conservative manifesto that stated in clear terms that we should leave the customs union. I hope that he shares my view that it is absolutely essential that we fully support the Government's desire to leave the customs union, and that we have the right and the ability to make free trade deals with other countries.

**Jeremy Lefroy:** I absolutely agree that we need to be able to make free trade deals with other countries. The corollary to that is that we cannot be in the customs union, as my hon. Friend said. At the same time it is vital, as the Prime Minister has made clear, that we have frictionless trade and that our industries—not only manufacturing, but agriculture and many other industries—across the country can continue to operate without the hindrance and costs that might be caused by certain arrangements. I have every confidence that the Prime Minister and the Government will come up with the correct decision and conclusion, which may not be one that my hon. Friend and I are currently thinking of.

**Ian Mearns:** The manufacturing industry in the north-east of England relies heavily on frictionless trade, because so many components for Nissan vehicles, for example,

come in or go out to other plants partly assembled. There are 7,000 or so people working at Nissan, but 35,000 people in the supply chain. Without frictionless trade, many of those jobs will be in real jeopardy.

**Jeremy Lefroy:** The hon. Gentleman makes my point exactly. My first job after university was working in the motor industry in Bridgend for Ford, which the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mrs Moon) mentioned earlier today in the House. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. It is vital that the interests of those workers and millions of other workers across the country in similar positions are taken into account.

My final point is about access to the high-quality staff that this country needs at all levels. It is quite right that we will be taking back control, but taking back control does not necessarily mean having a highly restrictive immigration policy. It means having an immigration policy that is suitable for the needs of our country, but one over which we have control. Mr Deputy Speaker, thank you very much for your forbearance.

12.57 pm

**Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con): My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy) is one of the most decent and good-hearted Members in any part of this House. It is therefore a pleasure, as well as a privilege, to follow him in this short debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh) and I are acquaintances and friends probably going back longer in our political association with one another than either of us does with any other Member of the House. We began to work together politically in 1981 and, as he said in the somewhat reflective part of his contribution, the issue on which we were working was to counter the dangerous and widespread movement for one-sided nuclear disarmament that was in its heyday at that time at the height of the second phase of the cold war. He rightly paid tribute to the work of Lord Heseltine, as he now is, and others who fought and won that battle. They not only won the argument but won the election on the basis of the strength of the argument, because of the commitment of the British people never to leave this country wide open to aggression from undemocratic and, indeed, dictatorial states.

At the time when my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and I were waging that political campaign, my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Beckenham (Bob Stewart) was engaged in somewhat more dangerous activities, fighting to defend the integrity of the United Kingdom and the security of its citizens in Northern Ireland. Some time ago, he and my hon. Friend the Member for Filton and Bradley Stoke (Jack Lopresti) raised the question of the legal persecution of soldiers who had fought in Northern Ireland in an attempt to mount a successful security operation against enemies who were bound by no accepted rules, norms or laws of conflict. In that counter-terrorist campaign up to 40 years ago, they had to make sometimes life and death decisions in fractions of a second in a form of conflict for which, for the most part, they were entirely untrained. Now, up to 40 years later, as my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Beckenham and my hon. Friend the Member for Filton and Bradley Stoke have made clear, they find themselves in peril of being brought before the courts in

relation to actions that have often been investigated over and over again without there being enough evidence available for any proper prosecution to be brought forward.

**Bob Stewart:** I thank my right hon. Friend and you, Mr Deputy Speaker—a colonel of the Royal Army Medical Corps, of course—for allowing me to intervene.

I was involved in fatality shootings in Northern Ireland in my time, but every single time there was a fatality, it was investigated. If it was considered right by the Royal Ulster Constabulary, it would send in an investigation team to check that we had acted legally. I tell fellow Members this: we were so constrained by the yellow card—the rules for opening fire—that we almost thought about it as we went to sleep. It weighed heavily on us in those milliseconds before we opened fire. So it is very hard on us, all these years later, to face the prospect of revisiting these incidents when they were properly investigated at the time and we were told that there was no case to answer.

**Dr Lewis:** Everything I have heard about the conduct of my hon. and gallant Friend, not only in Northern Ireland but in Bosnia and in other dangerous parts of the world, testifies to one single unanimous assessment: that he was an inspiration to the troops he led and that they would follow him anywhere. It is quite right that he has done so much in his time in this House to repay that admiration and to honour the trust that they rightly put in him. What concerns me is that we are not repaying the debt that we owe to servicemen, who in those days were very young who were put in an invidious position in a counter-terrorist environment in circumstances for which they had received no special training.

The Select Committee on Defence has looked into this matter in some depth, and we had an extensive debate on the subject on 25 January in Westminster Hall. I do not propose to rehearse the arguments made there. I just wish to remind the House of something that I have pledged constantly to keep reminding it of—that there will be no end to this process until the Government have the determination to bring in a statute of limitations for all terrorist-related incidents up to and including the date of the Belfast agreement. I have had many conversations with many people about this, including Sinn Féin MPs, who had their own concerns that also have some power and force to them. For them, there is the issue of many unresolved deaths for which inquests have not yet been held.

I believe that there is a basis for a comprehensive solution to that problem. People would be best able to get to the root of what happened to their loved ones if other people, on any side of this multifaceted and horrible conflict, could come forward to explain to the best of their ability what they remember of those circumstances so long ago, without fear of finding themselves in a state of self-incrimination. We have the example of what happened in South Africa and the lesson taught to us by Nelson Mandela.

In the course of the Defence Committee's inquiry into these matters, we took evidence from eminent professors of law. They said that we could not have a statute of limitations that favours only one side in a conflict, because that could be interpreted as the state legislating for its own impunity, but they emphasised that if we were to combine a statute of limitations with

[Dr Julian Lewis]

what they call a “truth recovery process” for everybody, that could indeed be entirely legitimate in the face of any form of international legal regime.

The reason for my raising this issue yet again today is my concern about one particular point. The previous Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (James Brokenshire), whom we all welcome back into the Cabinet in another capacity following his successful surgery, initiated a consultation exercise that is supposed to be going ahead. He specifically said that the option of introducing a statute of limitations on the basis I have described would be included in that consultation exercise. I do not expect the Deputy Leader of the House to be able to respond today, but I do expect him to take away my concern about the suggestions that that option may not now be included in the consultation when it eventually happens. That would be a retrograde step.

As we have seen with Brexit, we cannot always have our cake and eat it. Sometimes we have to decide whether we are going to have—in other words, keep—our cake or eat it, and we cannot put off the point of making that direct choice forever. If that is true of Brexit, it is also true of the ongoing problem of the vulnerability of our armed forces to one-sided prosecution. The Government need to grip this matter. They have an opportunity to, and I hope that they will.

1.7 pm

**Karin Smyth** (Bristol South) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for New Forest East (Dr Lewis), who made a serious and important contribution.

We are here just before the recess, while our colleagues are across the country for the local elections. In the spirit of us all being here together, I would like to wish them all good luck in those elections. I am pleased to be joining my colleagues slightly earlier than I anticipated here in London before returning to Bristol, where we do not have elections this time round.

As hon. Members have mentioned, today is May day. It is also Workers Day, or Labour Day—indeed, may it be a very good Labour weekend. I draw the House’s attention to the fact that a former Tory-led Government tried to get the day moved to October, but fortunately that was thwarted, and we are hopefully all going to enjoy some sunshine. May Day means one thing for Labour, but it currently means something quite different for the Conservatives, as “mayday” is often a cry for help. In the three weeks since Easter, the Government have managed to have two national scandals and a resignation, so we look forward to a more peaceful time following the recess.

We have perhaps not had the quantity of debate today that we thought we might, but we have certainly had some good quality. My hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead (Ian Mearns) talked movingly about his constituent, Kim Voogel, from the Netherlands. He highlighted that the issue we have been talking about recently with regard to the Home Office is not confined to the Windrush generation, and I am sure the Government have listened to that. The work that is affecting people now is undertaken by several Departments, including the Department for Work and Pensions, and that is certainly something I have experienced.

My hon. Friend also talked about Workers Memorial Day. It is a very important day and we do not pay enough attention to it. One of my earliest memories as a child is of returning from the Christmas holidays and learning that a family friend had been killed by a collapsing trench on a building site, leaving a very small family and devastating the community. We have moved a long way since those days, largely thanks to the work of the trade union movement, but this is a good day on which to commemorate the people who, sadly, have died on building sites in particular.

The hon. Member for Beckenham (Bob Stewart) talked about criminal barristers. I have a number of friends of middling years or younger who are barristers, and I think he made an extremely important point about what really amounts to a crisis at the criminal Bar. The hon. Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh) intervened to speak about legal aid, and I agree that the legal aid changes have not helped the situation. The legal aid system does a very important job and is much undervalued and under-resourced. I wish him good luck in continuing to raise that issue.

The hon. Member for Beckenham also mentioned “run, hide and tell”. I am a former emergency planner for the NHS—I will come on to my career as a lifelong bureaucrat in a moment—and I am concerned that Members are not always as cognisant as we should be about the role that emergency planning plays in this place or about our duty to ourselves, and our staff and visitors, when it comes to understanding what we should do in a crisis. That is a really important point.

The hon. Member for Glasgow South West (Chris Stephens) also spoke about Workers Memorial Day, and he mentioned the Taylor review. I highlight the fact that he is quite right to raise the confusion about the public sector pay cap, and the Government really have been dancing on the head of a pin about whether there is a cap any longer. This is about the wages of real people with families to feed, and it is important for them to have clarity about what they are to expect from their employment in the coming years.

The hon. Member for Gainsborough talked about defence and its importance as an insurance policy. He mentioned the 1983 election, which is not one that Labour Members remember very fondly, although it was my first election as an activist. He also made a serious point about learning lessons from the 1930s.

I was not going to speak about my lifelong career as an NHS bureaucrat before entering Parliament—I joined the service in the late 1980s—but I cannot resist doing so. It is a service, not a religion, but I recognise that it has not always performed in the way it should have done. I praise my colleagues, particularly in NHS management, who have actually done an excellent job over many years. We have one of the least managed systems in the world, in proportion to the size of the service, as has been proven in many studies over the years. I am very happy to discuss that with the hon. Gentleman, who I know is a very eminent former Chair of the Public Accounts Committee.

Not everything is always done well, of course, but the NHS has made massive strides in productivity in recent years. We are now concerned about the level of funding, including in relation to safety, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy). We have come a long way, and we must now be very careful that

we do not go backwards with some of that work. I want formally to praise the marvellous work done by NHS managers across the country.

The hon. Member for Gainsborough may not know this, but there is a new all-party group on clinical leadership and management. I am very proud to be a part of it, along with the hon. Member for South West Wiltshire (Dr Murrison). I do not know whether the hon. Member for Gainsborough is interested, but we are having an interesting meeting with the lead from NHS England after the recess, and if he wants to come along, I am sure he would be most welcome. As I have said, the hon. Member for Stafford reminded us about the importance of the Francis report. Making sure that those changes happened required clinical support, but also very dedicated senior and superior management support.

I very much look forward to coming back after the recess, when, as Members may not have noticed, we will debate the Haulage Permits and Trailer Registration Bill.

**Nick Smith:** Before my hon. Friend moves on, may I congratulate her on her important work as an emergency planner in our national health service? Does she agree that it was our public health workers who supported our military personnel in Salisbury after the recent nerve agent attack?

**Karin Smyth:** I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend. In fact, one of the joys of travelling from Bristol each week is that I meet so many of my former colleagues on the train. [*Interruption.*] Other Members have perhaps had the same experience. Indeed, I met one of my former colleagues who now works for Public Health England, and we discussed the way that it had to respond to that incident. People had just come out of a severe weather crisis in the south-west, and Public Health England is not currently well-resourced. It then had to respond quickly to an unprecedented international attack and deal with the interplay between local and national when managing that serious incident. I think that we will consider that issue in future. Public Health England now has a huge area to cover on the ground, and I know that my hon. Friend takes a particular interest in that. We could be here until 5 o'clock this evening if I were to talk about the NHS more generally, but we have elections to fight, so I will move on.

I have been working on the Haulage Permits and Trailer Registration Bill with colleagues in the Lords and the Minister, including work on trailer registration for light trailers following the tragic death of a young boy, Freddie Hussey, in my constituency in 2014. I look forward to the debates on that important Bill.

We are all looking forward to a couple of days off once we have knocked on those doors. Let me tell anyone who is coming to the west country that there are a number of festivals going on in Bristol, and I understand that a big festival is on in Exeter. I will be trudging down the M5 from Bristol with my family to enjoy a lovely weekend in Cornwall. I wish all hon. Members and staff of the House a happy May Day bank holiday weekend.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** I call the Deputy Leader of the House, Paul Maynard.

1.16 pm

**The Lord Commissioner of Her Majesty's Treasury (Paul Maynard):** You have promoted me inopportunistically, Madam Deputy Speaker. I can claim no such role, but I shall do my best.

I was struck with surprise when I learned that there was yet another pre-recess Adjournment debate so soon after the last one. We are only having one day off—how can we deserve this treat? I do not think we do. As the debate wore on, however, I noted that demand always grows to meet supply, and Members willing to speak kept creeping out of the oddest corners.

We have had a fascinating debate. It reminded me of my childhood trips to Woolworths, surveying the pick 'n' mix selection and not knowing quite where to begin. However, I have to start with the Chair of the Backbench Business Committee, and I pay tribute to his 27 years in local government. I cannot believe that the Conservative party ever had the temerity to oppose him on the ballot paper. Surely we gave him a free ride—I hope we did.

The hon. Gentleman raised an important case that I hope he has shared with the Department for Work and Pensions. It concerns the important matter of how we treat EU citizens in the future. We have always said that we want to provide certainty for individuals and businesses. We have been clear in our statement about EU citizens who arrive in the UK during the implementation period, and there has to be reciprocity. UK nationals who move to the EU must be treated similarly, and we are clear about that and have reached a firm agreement with the EU.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned the importance of clarity regarding any application for any form of benefits. As a former member of the Work and Pensions Committee, I know all too well that we need a constant process of review, and the DWP must never let up reviewing its application forms. Those forms must be clear, and I know that when they are 80 pages long, their very length can put some people off applying, particularly if they lack the functional skills required to fill them in adequately. That in itself is not acceptable, and I share the hon. Gentleman's concern to ensure that those forms are clear.

I also agree with the hon. Gentleman about Workers Memorial Day. In my time as a Rail Minister, I was conscious that Network Rail and the wider rail industry had gone for many years without any casualties on the network. The importance of maintaining that was not just a matter for those working on the railways; it had to go to the top of Network Rail and be a priority for its chief executive and for me as Rail Minister. Indeed, we always discussed that issue, because the moment we do not pay attention to health and safety is the moment when problems can start to emerge several years down the line. I welcome the hon. Gentleman's points on that issue.

I have also been briefed on sleep-in workers, and I know that the Government are working closely with social care providers to try to find a solution to the problem. They are also working with the EU Commission, which is currently placing limitations on what the solution might eventually look like. Work is ongoing, but I hear the hon. Gentleman's point.

I was glad to hear about the all-party group for football supporters. The hon. Gentleman will know that the Blackpool Supporters Trust is perhaps one of the more active groups, given our own travails at Blackpool

[Paul Maynard]

football club. I know he has had a good season as a Newcastle United fan. I hear the point about safe standing. If I may raise a point with him, I was perturbed to read earlier in the week that the obligation to produce match day programmes might be dropped by the Football League. That would be a great tragedy for the many of us who treasure those items.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned rail in the north. He tempts me into a full hour's response. It might help the hon. Member for Bristol South (Karin Smyth) to not go canvassing if I were to embark upon that. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the Institute for Public Policy Research figures, which come up every year. They are what they are, but they do not capture schemes that are centrally funded but delivered locally. Another aspect is how to capture spending in one region that benefits another region. I am reliant on the west coast main line. How should spending on Euston be reported? It benefits those from the north-west who seek to go to London on business, but it does not appear as investment in the north-west.

I hear the hon. Gentleman's point about the north-east. I can assure him that it is not overlooked. I took great personal care to make sure it got the money for the new Metro trains.

**Ian Mearns:** I am very grateful for the funding for the Tyne and Wear Metro, but I just remind the Minister of a presentation that was given to the all-party group for rail in the north by Network Rail about two or three years ago, which showed its plans for the next five-year control period investment plan. It showed a scheme in Preston and the northern hub in Manchester. On the east side of the map there was an arrow next to York which said "To Scotland", but there was nothing at all for the north-east of England.

**Paul Maynard:** I have always been very clear that northern powerhouse rail has to include Newcastle. The north does not stop at York any more than it stops at Manchester—Liverpool needs to be included, too. I look forward to visiting Gateshead for the Great Exhibition of the North.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Bob Stewart) was his characteristic self. He made a number of important points on issues he has encountered in his surgery. I know the relevant Minister is working with the Bar Council on how to resolve some of those very difficult issues, and I listened with interest to the comments my hon. Friend had to make on that. He may be aware that the Adjournment debate—if we ever get to it; the Minister has been here patiently waiting for several hours now—is about the exclusion of the under-25s from the national minimum wage, so some of the comments in that debate may well appertain to that. He also made a point about the security briefings that are circulated and the issue of run, hide and tell. It is best if I personally refrain from commenting on those issues, but I think we would all want to pay tribute to those members of staff who do all they can to make us safe and keep us safe. They put their lives on the line at times, as we have seen in recent years.

The hon. Member for Glasgow South West (Chris Stephens) and I renew our acquaintance, which I am

most pleased about. I would never call him a whinger! I cannot believe his Whips Office could be so rude—he is anything but.

**Chris Stephens:** I thank the Minister for giving way and for renewing our acquaintance. In the previous Adjournment debate I challenged him to give up Conservatism for Lent. Can he tell me how many people in England are going to give up Conservatism today?

**Paul Maynard:** I think the hon. Gentleman might find that we are adding to our numbers across the country as a whole. We are going to see a growth in Conservatism. He mentioned the Taylor review. Great progress is being made on implementing many of its recommendations and I am sure it is a case of "Watch this space". He rightly spoke out on behalf of the Clyde shipbuilders who do such a fantastic job as part of our shipbuilding industry, building our Type 26 frigates and guaranteeing thousands of jobs. He also mentioned the importance of getting immigration controls right, a theme over the past week at least. My only observation is that humanity and dignity should be at the heart of everything we do as a Government. We overlook at our peril the fact that we are dealing with individuals and their lives. We do not have to be harsh to be tough. We need to make sure we apply the rules, but that we do so with the understanding that we are dealing with people's lives and the lives of their families.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh) made a characteristically thoughtful contribution. He will join me, I am sure, in recognising the importance of meeting our NATO commitments at the very basic level, as well as ensuring that we assess the changing threat scenario. He mentioned the range of emerging scenarios. It is important that the Government keep abreast of the developing and changing scenarios and of the correct response, which might not always now be heavy artillery or heavy armour but might be in the field of IT or some other such field. He will also note the many NATO forces on the eastern flank, which many in the all-party group on the armed forces visited in Estonia back in January. I am sure also that the Policing Minister heard his powerful case when they met last week. I know there is a strong rural lobby looking to rebalance spending, and that argument will continue.

I was surprised that my hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy) were the only two Members to mention potholes. Those who have been on doorsteps across the country will have heard about little else, given the winter we have had. They were right to demand extra spending, which is why the Government have put forward a further £296 million in this Parliament, but it is also for local councils to think carefully about how they go about filling in the potholes. The quality of the work has to be right. I get frustrated when I see potholes filled in and then drive along a week later and find they have reverted to potholes again because the quality of the material was not good enough. I recognise the great danger they pose to cyclists as well. I will draw on the example of Lancashire, which I know most about. When the council sees a particular level of pothole work, it goes back and adds it to the following year's resurfacing schedule to make sure the problems are solved for the long term.

I pay tribute to everything my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford has done on the NHS in his time here. He is truly a champion for his constituents—and I do not just say that because I am standing at the Dispatch Box. He will have heard from the Prime Minister herself before the Liaison Committee a commitment to developing a longer-term funding settlement for the NHS. It is right that we do that and in a way that, I hope, can draw on cross-party support. The most effective and important social changes in our country are always underpinned by cross-party support, and I hope that that will be the case here. I know he is working hard with General Electric to deal with its issues in Stafford, and he might also be aware that we passed the Bus Services Act 2017 shortly before the last election. That Act is designed to help local councils apply greater granularity to local bus services.

My hon. Friend also mentioned carers' breaks, which is an issue close to my heart for two reasons: first, because the first Delegated Legislation Committee I ever sat on was about putting in place those provisions—of course, they were not ring-fenced at the time, hence it is at the discretion of local councils—and secondly, because I know how important it is from the work done in my own constituency by Blackpool carers centre. Avid fans of “DIY SOS” might have seen that centre being renovated on a special a few months ago. The importance of carers' breaks is underestimated. These people do what they do out of love, not a desire for financial recompense, and they need a respite break now and again to recharge their batteries. The importance of carers' breaks cannot be overestimated.

My hon. Friend mentioned frictionless trade and the Prime Minister's commitments. I have no doubt that he will have many more opportunities to discuss such matters in the weeks and months to come. As a former Rail Minister, I dealt with Brexit in relation to the channel tunnel, and that demonstrated to me the importance of our “just in time” delivery network to keeping our automotive sector running, to which the channel tunnel is critical, so his point was well made.

The final colleague to participate was my right hon. Friend the Member for New Forest East (Dr Lewis).

I pay tribute to his noble campaigning down the years on nuclear defence—he is truly a legend.

My right hon. Friend will not be surprised to hear that we have always been clear that as part of our work to implement the Stormont House agreement, we will seek to ensure that the new legacy bodies are under legal obligations to be fair, balanced and proportionate. The current process is not working for anyone, including victims and survivors. We want to reform it so that there is no prioritising of deaths caused by the security forces. At the same time, we want to ensure that our veterans, the overwhelming majority of whom served with great distinction in Northern Ireland, including my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Beckenham, are not unfairly treated or disproportionately investigated. I have noted my right hon. Friend's specific query and will make sure that my officials bring it to the attention of the relevant Department.

Finally, I thank the hon. Member for Bristol South (Karin Smyth), the shadow Deputy Leader of the House. It must be an odd position to hold, given that there is no one to shadow; none the less, she performs her role with great distinction as she chases shadows around the Chamber. I pay tribute to her involvement in the NHS, and I am sure that that brings great insight into what occurs. From a personal point of view, I have great fondness for all our four Bristol MPs for different reasons, and I think the Public Accounts Committee is much poorer for not having her on it. She is almost wasted in her non-role of shadowing no one at all, but she brings distinction wherever she goes.

The hon. Lady thinks that May day might be a distress signal—far from it, I think that May day should be a celebration for all around the country and a well-deserved day off. On that note, I observe more widely to colleagues that while the south-west may be one alternative, where else would someone go on a May Day bank holiday than the prom at Blackpool? I would be appalled if anyone went anywhere else.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered matters to be raised before the May adjournment.

## National Living Wage: Under-25s

*Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Wendy Morton.)*

1.30 pm

**David Linden** (Glasgow East) (SNP): I hope that you have made yourself comfortable for my four-hour speech, Madam Deputy Speaker, as I intend to take us up to half past 5. I can see some people panicking. They should not worry—I will not do that.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to raise the UK Government's disappointing decision to exclude under-25s from the national living wage. Before I do so, however, it is important at the outset to make a clear distinction between the UK Government's so-called living wage and the real living wage. The fact is that the UK Government's living wage is a con trick, and at just £7.83 an hour, their con trick living wage falls desperately short of the real living wage, as set by the Living Wage Foundation.

The Living Wage Foundation takes into account the cost of living and other factors and recommends that living wage employers pay a minimum of £8.75 an hour, or, for London, £10.20 an hour—so straightaway we have an issue whereby the Government's so-called living wage is not actually a living wage. However, the real issue I want to press the Minister on relates to the deliberate and discriminatory decision to exclude under-25s from being paid the national living wage.

**Chris Stephens** (Glasgow South West) (SNP): Does my hon. Friend not find it ironic that if there were local elections in Scotland today, someone aged 16 could vote in them, yet they would not qualify for the adult rate of the national minimum wage?

**David Linden:** Indeed. My hon. Friend tempts me down the route of talking about taxation without representation. Perhaps we can return to that in the next four hours, but I shall press on with my speech for the time being.

At the moment under UK law, the only safety net that someone under 25 has is the national minimum wage. That means that if they are aged between 21 and 24, they can be paid just £7.30 an hour. Someone aged between 18 and 20 can be paid just £5.90 an hour, and someone aged under 18 can be paid just £4.20 an hour. Even worse, an apprentice can earn as little as just £3.70 an hour. I will return to the issue of apprenticeships later.

The Government and no doubt the Minister will be at great pains to tell us today that the reason wages are lower for under-25s is that they want more jobs to be created. They say that lower wages reduce youth unemployment, but I would argue that the economic evidence does not back that up. When we drill down into the research, we see that only two countries in the European Union have separate minimum rates of pay for over-25s. One, of course, is the United Kingdom, and the other is Greece, where youth unemployment is at 40%.

The Government like to say that the UK has hit record levels of employment and that they are doing good work to tackle youth unemployment. However, I want to convince the Minister today that the UK Government

should take a different path and instead follow the lead of the Scottish National party Scottish Government. Our fair work agenda is not just warm words; it is concrete action to lift people out of poverty and into prosperity.

First, the SNP Scottish Government are a living wage employer and pay their staff a real living wage of at least £8.75 per hour. Secondly, we have the Scottish business pledge, which has attracted support from hundreds of companies that have signed up to nine key principles, which include paying a real living wage, not using zero-hour contracts and investing in youth. I want to focus particularly on that third principle of investing in youth.

At 16 years old, I decided to leave high school and begin my working life. I never went to college or university but instead undertook an apprenticeship with Glasgow City Council. Ten years on from completing that apprenticeship, I am immensely proud to have been elected as an MP, providing a voice again for my home community. However, one thing that I am not willing to do is come here and simply pull the ladder up behind me. Pay equality matters to me, not just because I am a young MP and a former apprentice, but because I believe, with every fibre of my being, that work is the best route out of poverty. The Prime Minister has said the same herself. She says that she wants to build a country that works for everyone. I presume that by "everyone", she means people under the age of 25. That is why the Government must take action urgently to ensure that people are paid the real national living wage, regardless of their age.

The UK's Equality Act 2010 rightly provides for a number of key protected characteristics. It prohibits discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, sexual orientation or disability. How, therefore, can we be in this ludicrous position in which people under 25 are paid less simply for being a particular age? We would not say that someone should be paid less because that person was a woman; we would not say someone should be paid less because that person was black; we would not say that someone should be paid less because that person was gay; and we certainly would not say that someone should be paid less because that person was disabled. The UK Government, however, operates a system under which employers are actively encouraged to pay under-25s less because they are younger.

**Chris Stephens:** Is it not another economic fact that those under 25 often face the same costs as those over 25—for example, rent or other housing costs, food costs, utility bills and the like?

**David Linden:** My hon. Friend has made a powerful and valid point, which I shall come to later.

I hope very much that when the Minister comes to the Dispatch Box, he will not trot out the usual lines, which fall apart when subjected to any scrutiny. Let me deal with one or two of them now. For example, Ministers tell us that younger workers have less experience and should therefore receive less pay. Unfortunately, younger workers do not get a discount on their shopping, fuel or rent when it comes to paying their bills. One area in which young people do qualify for help is housing benefit, but only after a recent screeching U-turn from the Government on their abhorrent policy of excluding 18 to 21 year-olds.

The discriminatory exclusion of under-25s from the national living wage takes no account of how people actually live. For example, by the time I was 25—which was actually not that long ago—I had already been married for three years. I owned a house, and I was a father. I urge Ministers to look at the actual data rather than rehashing old arguments, and to consider the economic case for including under-25s in the national living wage.

**Kirsty Blackman** (Aberdeen North) (SNP): The point that my hon. Friend is making about experience is very important. When I was 18 I started work in a pub on the same day as someone who was 25. Neither of us had worked in a pub before, so we had exactly the same level of experience, but the 25-year-old was eligible for the 25-year-old's minimum wage, while I was paid the 18-year-old's minimum wage. Does my hon. Friend agree that that was just unfair?

**David Linden:** Absolutely. That is what drives the Scottish National party's fair work agenda. It is about fairness, and about lifting people out of poverty. I thank my hon. Friend for her powerful intervention.

**Chris Stephens:** The example given by my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen North (Kirsty Blackman) was indeed powerful. Is this not another powerful example? If a 17-year-old is working in a fast-food restaurant flipping hamburgers next to someone who is 37 and doing the same job, there is a massive disparity between their wage rates.

**David Linden:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. What he has said takes us back to the central point that a fair day's work should result in a fair day's pay.

If the Minister looks at the data, he will see that 2.5 million young people do not live with their parents. That is 2.5 million young people paying for shopping, rent and utilities. Statistics from the Office for National Statistics show that approximately 20% of mothers are under the age of 25. The discriminatory exclusion from the national living wage means that they must get by on poverty pay.

The current national minimum wage—and we should bear in mind that that legislation was passed in the last century—is not only a clear example of direct age discrimination, but an example of discrimination based on class. It flies in the face of the very concept of social mobility. How can a 22 year-old first-year apprentice on a miserable £3.70 an hour be socially mobile? That is what the law currently allows, as is stated on the UK Government's website. That is what an employer who is thinking about employing an apprentice is encouraged to do.

A recent report by KPMG showed that one in five people are struggling to escape from low pay. For example, one in four women earns less than the real living wage. Put simply, that means skipping meals, living in debt and using payday loans just to get by. The fact is that there is a solid evidence base out there that makes the case for equal pay for under-25s.

**Kirsty Blackman:** Does my hon. Friend agree that there could be a positive impact on productivity? If people are having to work extra jobs and cannot afford

to eat, they will be less productive, but if they were paid a living wage, they would do better work for their employers as a result.

**David Linden:** My hon. Friend makes a powerful point. If an employer pays someone under 25 the real living wage, that sends a message of real encouragement to the employee; there is clearly a productivity point here.

I commend and thank the Young Women's Trust, which produced an excellent report last year entitled "Paid Less, Worth Less?" I have placed a copy of the report in the Library of the House this afternoon, and its testimonies make pretty stark reading. I will share just one today. It comes from Katie, a 19-year-old from Newcastle:

"I was a customer service apprentice in a small shop—only me, another apprentice and my manager worked there.

I had to do a lot—serve customers on the till, clean the store, display the products, update the online store, pack and post online orders and more.

I was paid £2.73 per hour, which went up to £3.30. I got paid on a Friday at the end of the month. The next week I was skint.

I remember one day I had 40p for dinner, so I got one doughnut from M&S.

My manager noticed and offered to buy me a McDonalds.

I felt so stupid.

A quarter of my monthly income was spent on bus fare getting to and from work. It was a struggle."

It is sometimes easier for us in this House to focus on statistics rather than people, but Katie's story succinctly and eloquently outlines the pay inequality that still exists in the UK in 2018.

Katie is not the only one. Only last week, following an oral question from me in this House, the Chancellor wrote to inform me that there are approximately 22,000 apprentices in the UK being paid just £3.70 an hour. Surely no self-respecting Minister thinks £3.70 is a decent hourly rate; I do not think any of us would be happy to turn up here and get paid just £3.70 an hour.

There are also particular sectors in the employment market where deliberate wage depression is a major issue and could have a major impact on the sustainability of business, particularly when free movement of people is restricted post Brexit. These sectors include retail and hospitality, which are often largely staffed by young people.

I would hope that the Minister would distance himself from the comments made by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport who back in January 2016 said younger workers would not get a pay rise because they are "not as productive" as older workers. It would take a particularly brave Minister to repeat that, especially on an election day.

Finally, the Minister might be worried about how businesses would react to under-25s being included in the national living wage. However, let me assure him that there is clear polling evidence from YouGov, on a sample of some 4,000 HR managers; they think that young people should be paid the same as older people for work. Some 79%—that is four in five—of employers think there should be equal pay regardless of age, as do 77% of small and medium-sized organisations. Some 80% of employers also said that young people make

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a bigger, or the same, contribution as older workers, and that on the whole younger workers came with a fresh perspective and injected some energy.

Most employers when asked said they would not cut back on hiring young people if the national living wage was extended to under-25s. Indeed, the New Policy Institute found in a report commissioned by Unison on the topic that, historically, raising wages for people under the age of 21 in the UK has not harmed their employment outcomes. So the evidence is clear and so is my message to the Government today.

**Chris Stephens:** Does my hon. Friend agree that the policy is a false economy, too, because if those under 25 were given the real national minimum wage rate, that would boost the economy as it would boost the spending power of those aged under 25?

**David Linden:** My hon. Friend is right: giving under-25s that spending power would boost the economy and could help kick-start the economy.

**Kirsty Blackman:** As an employer, I have taken on a number of young people on internships, and I have paid the real living wage, not the Government's pretend living wage, regardless of their age. I found that they made a very valuable contribution to my office and a real positive difference. Has my hon. Friend got experience of doing similar?

**David Linden:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for leading me down that particular path, which I had not quite thought of. She will be aware, as will my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow South West (Chris Stephens), that I am going through the process of recruiting for the first ever John Wheatley intern—a young person will come to work in my office. I believe passionately that if we are to get more people into politics, we need to open up that process; it cannot just be the same people taking on political interns. When I started the process of advertising for that internship, I was conscious of the need to advertise it at the real national living wage. Last week, I set up seven or eight interviews, and I am sorry to have to tell the House that I got a phone call this afternoon to inform me that one of the young guys I was due to interview had sadly passed away. I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Scott, who is no longer with us.

The evidence is clear for equalising the national minimum wage to include the under-25s, and my message to the Government is also clear: if we want to build a country that works for everyone, we need to end this discriminatory pay inequality. The Government need to pay a real national living wage, and they need to pay it to the under-25s too.

1.45 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Andrew Griffiths):** It is a great honour and privilege to respond to this debate, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Glasgow East (David Linden) on securing it. I am pleased to be able to contribute to it as the Minister responsible for the national minimum wage and for the national living

wage, of which the Government are hugely proud. There have been age-specific minimum wage rates in one form or another since the national minimum wage was introduced by the Labour Government in 1999, and lower pay rates have always been in place for younger workers because the priority for them is to secure work and gain experience. A higher minimum wage for young people could adversely affect employment levels for that group by dissuading employers from taking on less experienced workers.

It was remarkable that, in the 17 or so minutes for which the hon. Gentleman spoke on this issue, he failed to mention the facts—the actual unemployment rates among young people—even once, so let me bring them to his attention. Unemployment is higher among young workers than among older workers. Specifically, between December last year and February 2018, unemployment among those aged 25 and over was at a record low of 3%, yet among 18 to 24-year-olds the unemployment rate was 10.3%, and more than one in four 16 and 17-year-olds are unemployed. The hon. Gentleman says that we should focus on individuals rather than on statistics, but those statistics clearly show the impact that his policy would have on those young people's ability to get into work.

**Chris Stephens:** The Minister highlights the UK Government's appalling record on youth employment. Can he explain to me—we have asked this question repeatedly—why the Conservative Government took the decision to introduce an additional age tier to the national minimum wage rates, and why the age of 25 was picked?

**Andrew Griffiths:** The Government have always listened to the expert advice. In particular, we listen to the Low Pay Commission, which is made up of employers, academics and experts in the field and trade union representatives and is specifically devoted to protecting the rights of workers, including young workers. It is the commission that says that this policy is right and that sets the lower rates after considering all the facts.

**Kirsty Blackman:** The Minister has laid the stats before us, saying that the unemployment rate is 3% for over-25s and over 10% for under-25s. Does he not agree that that shows that the system he is presiding over is broken, and that something needs to be done to fix it?

**Andrew Griffiths:** No, I think it shows two things. It shows that the hon. Lady does not understand the labour market, and it shows the difficulties that young people have in demonstrating that they have the necessary skills, in gaining the necessary experience and in convincing employers to take a risk in taking them on and giving them an opportunity.

The hon. Member for Glasgow South West talked about our record in relation to unemployment. I will just remind the House that we are seeing record levels of employment in this country, and that unemployment rates are lower than we have seen for 40 years, so I will take no lessons from him.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Andrew Griffiths:** I think I have given way quite enough, so I will make a little progress. Forgive me, but I am sure that Members will have an opportunity to come in shortly.

Academic evidence shows that the youth labour market is much more sensitive to economic shocks than the labour market in general, and that young people can be exposed to longer-term scarring effects from prolonged spells of worklessness than others. As I said, the independent Low Pay Commission backs up that research. Its 2015 report, which I urge the hon. Member for Glasgow East to educate himself with, cites New Zealand research that found a 3% to 6% fall in the employment rate for 16 to 17-year-olds two years after a 28% increase in the real value of their minimum wage. The hon. Gentleman talked about fairness, but there is nothing fair about making it harder for young people to get on the jobs ladder.

**David Linden:** The Minister will remember that I referred to Katie, a young girl who was struggling to get the bus fare to go to work. How does that tie in with what he says? She is struggling to get to work; she does not have the pay to get to her job. Is that part of the reason why young people cannot get into work?

**Andrew Griffiths:** I recognise the hon. Gentleman's point, but it would be even more difficult for Katie were she not to have a job. That opportunity, that experience, that foot in the labour market is hugely important. The hon. Gentleman would deny Katie the opportunity to get vital work experience and make her way in the jobs market.

We are rightly more cautious about young people when setting the pay floor, and a lower minimum wage for younger workers is in keeping with international comparators. The hon. Gentleman referred to two countries, but let me clarify something and educate him a bit. Just under two thirds of OECD countries that have a statutory minimum wage have special rates for young people. Minimum wages are adjusted for young workers in France, Ireland, Belgium and Luxembourg, among many others. He may want to look into that.

Pricing young people out of the labour market by setting their minimum wage too high would be detrimental to the workers whom the policy was intended to benefit. That said, the Government set only the minimum pay threshold, and I commend businesses that choose to pay their younger workers higher rates of pay, and in some cases pay them the higher national living wage. Indeed, in April last year, 88% of 16 and 17-year-olds, 90% of 18 to 20-year-olds and 92% of 21 to 24-year-olds were paid above their age-applicable minimum wage. Those are the facts, whether the hon. Gentleman likes them or not. As a matter of fact, 86% of 21 to 24-year-olds were paid at or above £7.50 an hour, which was the national living wage for the over-25s.

**Chris Stephens:** The Minister is doing his best to do a pantomime villain routine, but he seems to be confusing himself. Will he clarify whether he is suggesting that under-25s are better off working in the public sector? Will he confirm that in his Department the under-25s get the same rates of pay as the over-25s?

**Andrew Griffiths:** I will confirm to the hon. Gentleman that not once in this debate has the Scottish National party mentioned the impact that such a change would have on businesses.

**Several hon. Members rose—**

**Andrew Griffiths:** I have given way plenty enough; we will move on.

The Government have increased the national minimum wage for young people to record levels. As I am sure the hon. Member for Glasgow East is aware, last month the Government gave the lowest-paid workers an above-inflation pay rise, as the national living wage and all the national minimum wage rates increased in real terms. The national living wage increased by 33p, to £7.83, meaning that a full-time worker on the national living wage will see their annual earnings rise by more than £600. Following increases to the personal allowance threshold and the minimum wage, a full-time worker earning the national living wage will be taking home over £3,800 a year more after tax. That is something this Government have delivered and are incredibly proud of.

**Kirsty Blackman:** Will the Minister give way?

**Andrew Griffiths:** I think I have given way enough.

The national living wage will rise further to reach 60% of median earnings in 2020, subject to sustained economic growth. We have awarded younger workers in receipt of the national minimum wage the biggest hourly pay rise in more than a decade. In particular, 20 to 24-year-olds saw a 33p increase in their hourly rate to £7.38, meaning a full-time worker in that age group will see their earnings rise by £600 a year, like those aged 25 and over in receipt of the national living wage. Those aged 18 to 20 saw an annual increase of 5.4% to £5.90, and those aged 16 and 17 are now entitled to a minimum of £4.20 an hour, an annual increase of 3.7%. Finally, apprentices aged under 19, or those aged 19 and over in the first year of their apprenticeship, saw an increase of 5.7%, the largest annual increase of all the hourly rates. In total, we believe that more than 2 million workers, 400,000 of whom are young workers under 25, have directly benefited from the latest increases in the national minimum wage.

**David Linden:** Will the Minister give way?

**Andrew Griffiths:** For the last time.

**David Linden:** My previous dealings with the Minister were in Committee on the Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill, and I came into the Chamber today with a due amount of respect for him. The patronising tone he has taken in this debate demeans his office, and I hope he will reflect on that afterwards.

**Andrew Griffiths rose—**

**David Linden:** The Minister should have a wee seat, because I am not finished.

Will the Minister put it on record that a 21-year-old first-year apprentice can still be paid just £3.70 an hour? Would he be happy being paid £3.70 an hour?

**Andrew Griffiths:** I spend a lot of time talking to apprentices, and I see the vast contribution that apprenticeships make to those young people. Apprenticeships provide them with the opportunity to earn and learn, to gain

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vital experience and to have on-the-job training while following a vocation. That is hugely important. I have spoken to apprentices, and they value the apprenticeship scheme. They are building their careers thanks to it.

Raising the national minimum wage forms part of our long-term industrial strategy to boost productivity and to create good jobs and greater earning power for all parts of the United Kingdom. That is absolutely central to creating an economy that is fair and that works for young people.

All the increases were recommended by the independent Low Pay Commission, in line with the annual remit issued by the Government. The world-renowned LPC brings together business and worker representatives to form a consensus on the appropriate minimum wage rates. As ever, I thank the LPC for the extensive research, consultation and analysis it undertakes throughout the year to inform its recommendations.

Previous LPC reports discussed various pieces of research showing that higher youth wage rates can have a negative impact on employment rates. Consequently, in the annual remit, the Government asked the LPC to recommend the highest increase in national minimum wage rates that were possible without damaging the employment prospects of low-paid young workers by setting them too high. The Government will continue to take the LPC's advice when setting all the wage floors in order to ensure that minimum wage rises are balanced between rewarding workers and ensuring that they are not priced out of employment. We are not complacent, and that is why I am pleased that the LPC will conduct a review of whether the current structure of the youth rates best supports our aim. I look forward to the LPC's advice on the matter in spring 2019.

I recognise the hon. Gentleman's concerns about young people, but the Government are committed to supporting them. Specifically, the Department for Education

is reforming technical education by introducing T-levels to equip young people with the relevant skills to reach their potential, and the Department for Work and Pensions has launched the youth obligation support programme for 18 to 21-year-olds who are making a new claim for universal credit. The programme provides valuable intensive support to help people move into work. The DWP announced at the end of March that all 18 to 21-year-olds in receipt of universal credit will be entitled to claim support for housing costs, and that change is currently in the process of being implemented.

This Government are committed to building an economy that works for everyone, including young people. By having a lower national minimum wage for under-25s we are protecting young workers, to help them gain crucial experience, as well as supporting their transition and progression from education into the jobs market. Getting on to that all-important first rung on the jobs ladder has to be the priority. The independent Low Pay Commission will continue to make recommendations on the national minimum wage, and I look forward to its advice in spring 2019 on whether the current structure of the youth rates best supports the youth labour market. This Government have the economy, the country and the interests of young people at their heart.

**David Linden:** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. During his speech, the Minister perhaps inadvertently misled the House by saying that France has different pay levels for young people. What opportunities are available for him to correct that, as I believe it is not actually true?

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** I am sure that if the Minister felt he had inadvertently misled the House, he would say so.

*Question put and agreed to.*

2 pm

*House adjourned.*

# Westminster Hall

Thursday 3 May 2018

[DAME CHERYL GILLAN *in the Chair*]

## Social Care Provision and the NHS

1.30 pm

**Dame Cheryl Gillan (in the Chair):** Unfortunately, the hon. Member for High Peak (Ruth George) was delayed, but I have taken advice and now that she has arrived, I think it is in the interests of the House and all hon. Members present if we proceed with the debate.

**Ruth George (High Peak) (Lab):** I beg to move,

That this House has considered the effect of social care provision on the NHS.

Thank you, Dame Cheryl. I was moved to initiate this debate by the experience that I had just after Easter, when I spent a 12-hour shift with colleagues in the ambulance service based at the depot in Buxton; they are trained and very experienced paramedics. I have had a lot of cases involving constituents who have been concerned about ambulance waiting times—the time that it takes ambulances to get to patients in our very rural area—so I spent a day with staff to see what the pressures were.

I expected those pressures to be on the NHS, but what I found from spending a day with the ambulance service and the excellent and hard-working crews, who said that it was not in any sense untypical, was that we spent the day going around seeing elderly patients in their own homes. They might have had family carers or received occasional visits from professional, paid carers, but they were left on their own for a lot of the time. They often had ongoing health conditions that flared up from time to time and caused them and their carers great concern, and that would escalate to calling out an ambulance. I therefore spent a lot of the day sitting in the back of an ambulance and talking to elderly patients. That was quite a pleasant way to spend a day—I like talking to older people and have helped with care for my own family—but it is not really what we want our paramedics to be doing.

I receive calls from constituents about their family members who have to wait in dire circumstances at times. In one recent case, an elderly lady had had a stroke. The GP was begging for an ambulance to come to her, but it took five hours for it to get there. Unfortunately, that lady subsequently died. We cannot say that that was because of the delays in the ambulance arriving, but a lot of time is taken up by ambulances travelling around to elderly and isolated people, and that is happening more and more.

Age UK says that there has been an increase to about 1.2 million in the number of people who need care but whose care needs are not being met. It is a vicious circle, which ends up impacting on our NHS. The winter crisis seems to be going on and on. There are almost 4 million people on hospital waiting lists. Every week at my constituency surgeries and coffee mornings, I see constituents who are waiting for treatments such as

hip replacements. I saw a lady in Buxton who had been waiting almost a year for a hip replacement. She used to be an avid walker of the countryside, but now is practically housebound. That has obviously impacted on her quality of life.

There are also waits to see a GP. We have gone from waits of 48 hours, as a maximum, eight years ago to waits of two weeks now. People have to book an appointment some way ahead; and often, if people phone any time after about 8.20 in the morning, the surgery will say that it has no appointments left, even for two weeks' time. People have to say that it is an urgent case in order to be seen and then they are seen more quickly. The situation is impacting on GPs as well.

In accident and emergency departments, only 85% of people are seen within four hours. At my local hospital, Stepping Hill, patients are queuing on trolleys in the corridors and are given a bell to ring if they feel that their condition is deteriorating, because there are just not enough staff even to keep an eye on them. The staff rely on patients themselves being able to give an alert if they feel that they are in urgent need of care.

I saw the impact of the long ambulance waits in A&E. They are backed up, sometimes seven at a time, outside our hospitals while they wait to be able to discharge patients. The staff now face an overtime ban, despite the great demands on their service. Even two weeks into the financial year, they were already banned from overtime, so young trainee paramedics are staffing ambulances on their own at night, which is not what I want to see in my constituency and not how we should be treating the staff.

BBC 2's "Hospital" programme showed what is happening in A&E at the moment. We saw a frantically overstretched service and every hospital bed full, but staff estimated that 80% of the patients should not actually have needed a bed; they should have been in social care. This comes back to the cuts in social care.

According to the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, £6.3 billion has been cut from social care budgets. Nationally, 400,000 fewer people are receiving social care, more than a quarter less than in 2010, despite increasing demand. In Derbyshire, my county, the number of people needing care has risen by more than one quarter, from 32,000 to 40,000 people.

Social care cuts do not make good television, though. They are invisible to the outside world. Patients are not lined up, queuing on trolleys. No one could really make a drama about it, but it is a crisis in the homes of the 1.2 million people who need and are waiting for care and cannot get it. We see that crisis only when we step inside the NHS, with paramedics or GPs who have to visit those elderly patients or in A&E departments. Then we see the people who are falling through the gaps in social care. That is echoed in my own constituency, where one of the GP surgeries tells me that 19 patients in one small town are on a waiting list for a care package. They are either in hospital, taking up a hospital bed, or at home with family carers, who are struggling to cope.

Palliative care is particularly difficult. At the end of life, patients typically need four or five short visits a day. Particularly in a rural area, that is very hard for our care services to cope with in the way they are financed and paid for. The lack of palliative care means that patients are stuck in hospitals where they are often many miles

away from their loved ones. In a tragic recent case, one of our GP surgeries told me about an elderly gentleman crying to the GP because he had never been separated from his wife before. They were both in their 80s. She was terminally ill in hospital and he could not get to see her. That GP surgery pulled out all the stops. It got its district nurses to go in and allow that lady to go home for the final few days of her life. However, they cannot do that for every patient. The NHS simply does not have the resources and it impacts on other patients it needs to see.

The surgery in Hope in my constituency in the rural Peak district tells me that patients are being cared for in the community by relatives much more than used to be the case. That is good for the individuals in many ways. That is where they want to be. However, it puts more strain on GPs having to visit more frequently those patients with more complex needs. A poll by MediConnect in 2010 found that almost nine in 10 GPs believe that the reductions in social care are leading to extra pressures on their surgeries, which is leading to extra pressures on GPs. Buxton is seeking to fill six GP vacancies out of a total of 12 across the town. That is not sustainable.

That also leads to extra pressure on A&E departments and increased delays in discharges from hospital. In 2016-17, there was a 12-month average of 188,000 days of delayed care, which is 73,000 more than the four years from 2010 to 2014, when the situation was fairly stable. The King's Fund has estimated that patients waiting for a care package in their own home accounted for the largest number of delays—in other words, more than 20% of all delays in discharge.

The cuts to social care are creating more expense for our NHS, but it would be cheaper to resolve such cuts. The NHS spent approximately £168 million on delayed transfers of care for patients awaiting a home care package in 2015-16. That could have funded more than 5 million hours of home care in that year—431,000 hours a month or nearly 15,000 hours a day—helping thousands of patients to stay in their own home with the care they need.

The Multiple Sclerosis Society has done a lot of work on the issue, because sufferers of MS frequently need care but a lot of that need is not being met. It says that in 2015-16, emergency hospital admissions for people with MS in England cost the NHS a total of £46 million. A large proportion of that emergency care was for problems that could have been avoided with proactive, preventive care, and earlier diagnosis and intervention in the community. For example, 14% of emergency admissions were for urinary tract infections, costing more than £2,500 per patient, which could have been avoided.

The reductions in social care are not simply down to Government cuts, hard as they have been for local authorities to sustain. There have also been huge increases in demand of more than 25% in the past eight years. The cuts to local authorities—they are gradually cutting the amount paid to care homes and to carers who provide care to people in their homes—are having a detrimental impact on the whole sector. It is really coming to a crisis point. A 2017 survey of directors of adult social services found that 39% had home care providers ceasing to trade in the previous six months and that 37% had contracts handed back.

My constituency of High Peak has real difficulty recruiting staff to work in care services. The staff do an absolutely fantastic job, but the pay is very low. Over half of staff nationally are on zero-hours contracts. Particularly in expensive rural areas, such as the Peak district, one cannot afford to live on the wages of a care worker. Ironically, however, there are more and more elderly and infirm people in those areas. In High Peak, our volunteer services run a professional, not-for-profit care service arm, but it is operating at a loss and has to cross-subsidise its care services from other services, which it cannot afford to do much longer.

This is a particular problem in rural areas. Patients are scattered, meaning more travel time and extra costs for companies. Our private care companies, the agencies, cherry-pick the areas they will cover, so they avoid the very rural areas, which cost them far more in mileage and travel time. A Rural England report found that rural councils pay 13% more on average than predominantly urban councils, but they still report more problems in commissioning services. Several home care businesses commented that they did not feel that councils paid enough and that was reflected in the handing back of contracts. Everyone says that council providers are needed, which would not cherry-pick based on areas that are profitable.

Even though Derbyshire is one of the few areas where our Labour-run council kept on directly employed care staff on the proper living wage, it cannot recruit enough staff, so we have to rely on agency staff. There are about 90,000 vacancies across the country for agency social care staff. They are at an absolute premium and our local jobcentres are always trying to recruit people into care jobs, but it is not for everyone. It is a difficult, often gruelling job, both physically and emotionally. It pays very little. Care workers often have to be able to run their own car and find their own way around. They have to like older people—the patients. That is a hard thing to do, particularly if they are caring for a parent or have other caring responsibilities. It is a lot for anyone to take on. It is no wonder that the turnover of care workers is running at nearly four in 10 every year.

Funding cuts are now having a detrimental impact on care quality as well. One in five adult social care services received the poorest overall ratings from the Care Quality Commission and almost one quarter of services had the poorest ratings for safety. Some 22% required improvement and 2% were deemed inadequate. The Government, however, do not seem to be seeking to tackle those problems of quality. Skills for Care, the skills organisation for care services, has a budget of only £21 million, or £14 per care worker, whereas Health Education England has a budget of £4.6 billion. The National Audit Office criticised the Government for failing to have an up-to-date workforce strategy for the care sector—the last workforce strategy was produced in 2009, under a Labour Government.

Last November, the Competition and Markets Authority did a study of care homes, which stated that, in general, care homes are struggling. Local authority-funded homes, which are now very much in the minority, cover their operating costs but not their total costs. That suggests that while those care homes may be able to operate in the short term, they may not be able to undertake future investment to update their existing capacity, prevent closure or increase their capacity for local authority-funded residents. The Salvation Army runs excellent not-for-profit

care homes, including one in my constituency. When I visited the home over the Easter recess, the increasing gap between the rate paid by the local authority and the amount it costs to run a care home was highlighted to me.

All those cuts impact on the NHS and then the NHS cuts, as part of a vicious spiral, impact back on social care. As I have said, our own north Derbyshire clinical commissioning group is £24 million in the red, a huge sum for a relatively small CCG. It has been taken into special measures by NHS England and cuts are being imposed. Our specialist dementia care assessment unit has closed. The support that went to the families and patients who went into that ward on an ongoing basis is no longer there. The staff who were at threat of redundancy had a huge number of skills in adult mental care, mental health service care and specialist dementia care. The respite beds on that ward have also closed. One patient with early-onset dementia was managing at home, with one week in six of respite for his wife, but he now needs full-time nursing care, as his wife cannot cope at home without that week of respite.

Rehabilitation beds are no longer a halfway-house option, because they are being closed as well. Even worse, patients are being sent home from acute care without a care package in place. Many end up with infections or have a downturn in their condition and end up back in hospital unable to cope. It becomes a spiral that impacts on family carers at home.

Carers are struggling. They do an incredible job. The Carers Trust estimates that there are 5.5 million unpaid carers in England and 2,300 in High Peak alone. People do not often meet carers who are caring for someone with a long-term condition, because they are isolated. When I visit the GP surgery or the hospital with my family, I can sit down and talk to some of the carers about the isolation that they experience and how difficult it is because they cannot stop, because they love the person they are caring for and feel that they have no other option.

Some 61% of carers report having a long-term health condition. They are more likely to report problems with depression, pain and mobility, but they do not attend their own health appointments. The Carers Trust found that 57% had cancelled or postponed a health appointment because their caring role took precedent over their own health. It is no wonder that 81% of older carers surveyed said they felt lonely and isolated.

The Government are looking to do more work on carers, and have commissioned studies such as the 2014 Department of Health impact assessment, which estimated that spending an extra £300 million on carers in England would save councils £430 million in replacement care costs and would result in “monetised health benefits” of £2.3 billion. Each £1 spent on supporting carers would save councils nearly £1.50 in replacement care costs and benefit the wider health system by nearly £8. However, the money to put into those services and to make that sort of investment is not there, because the NHS, social care and local authorities are firefighting. Of course, the greatest impact is on the patients who do not receive the care they need and are left isolated, confused and sometimes in pain.

The MS Society says that one in three people living with multiple sclerosis do not get the support they need with essential everyday activities such as washing, dressing

and eating. That has an adverse impact on their physical and mental health, resulting in a greater reliance and increased pressure on the NHS, which already faces significant financial and demographic strain. I hope hon. Members can see that it adds up to a vicious circle of lack of investment and funding and constant cuts. People who provide services are trying to do their best with what they have, but constant cuts in one area are offset by the other; cuts in social care lead to an increased reliance on the NHS, while cuts in NHS services lead to huge extra costs for long-term care in nursing homes or by carers.

I am pleased that the Government have combined health and social care into a single responsible Department, but until councils and the NHS are not simply trying to drive down costs to meet their savings targets by offsetting against each other, and until we have combined budgets at a local level, the vicious circle will not end, and the problems for patients and their carers, and the strain on the health service as a whole, will not end either. I hope the Government will listen and take action.

1.55 pm

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): I am pleased to be able to speak in the debate. For obvious reasons, I will not do a traditional summing-up, because I could not sum up the contribution of the hon. Member for High Peak (Ruth George) anything like as eloquently as she delivered it. I am pleased that she made it to Westminster Hall, and I thoroughly commend the decision to use discretion to allow the debate to go ahead. It would have been sad if the important points that she has made had not been heard. It is unfortunate that a number of circumstances mean that very few people are here, and that the debate will probably get very little publicity, because she has raised an issue of significant concern to a great many people throughout the United Kingdom.

Social care and health are wholly devolved to the Scottish Parliament, so it is not my place to tell or suggest to the Government what they should do, but I will make some comments about what is happening and what appears to work in Scotland in the hope that the Westminster Government will consider it. I do not do that by way of the “We’re good and you’re bad” kind of politicking that we see too much of, but as an attempt, in goodwill and good faith, to allow our experiences north of the border to help address the situation down here. The hon. Lady has raised issues that apply in all four countries of the UK and, I suspect, in a lot of other countries as well.

When I was a wee boy, my granny was an old lady. She hardly ever went out, but occasionally she managed to walk up to the wee shop to get some shopping. She was a very devout Catholic, and when she was fit, she would walk the half mile or so to the local church to attend mass. That was about it. She would be picked up and taken out to family events and then taken back home again. At that time, my granny was five years older than I am now. She was younger than a significant number of Members of Parliament—nobody in this debate, obviously, is over 60.

That is an illustration of how much the world has changed for the better. When people get to be 60, particularly women who are widowed, as my granny and far too many women were at that age in the old days, they are no longer expected just to sit at home and

[Peter Grant]

wait to die, or drink tea and watch the television. People of all ages expect to be allowed to lead a full and fulfilling life. People with significant medical conditions and disabilities are entitled to expect the same. As a society, it is incumbent on us to help them achieve that. To do that, we have to accept that there will be consequences; that sort of quality of care does not come cheap.

It is sad that when we debate healthcare or social care in almost any form anywhere in the United Kingdom, it can far too quickly turn into the usual Punch and Judy politics. Often we do not have the chance to have an open and honest debate about what changes are needed to make the system fit for purpose in the 21st century, and what the consequences are in relation to how much we are prepared to pay for it.

Positive changes in medical technology mean that people who would have been lucky to live to five years old some 40 or 50 years ago now live to 80. That is a great success story, but it also creates challenges. For example, a lot of adults with Down's syndrome will outlive their parents. We cannot expect mum and dad to be lifetime carers, because they will not always be there. The fact that so many people are living so much longer is a great success story, but we have a responsibility to accept the consequences of that success.

There has been a lot of progress. In 1998 I started working with the then Fife health board. Fife has a population of about 350,000 people. At any time, about 1,000 of those people would be in-patients in a psychiatric hospital or in a hospital for people with learning disabilities. Today, rather than being in four figures, sometimes that number does not even get to two figures—it is usually in the tens and occasionally it is down to single figures. There has not been a reduction in the number of people with those significant mental health or mental disability problems—if anything, there has been an increase—but they are looked after in a much more appropriate way. They are looked after as human beings at home, or in an environment that feels as close to being a home as possible, rather than in a massive institution with hundreds of in-patient beds.

That is overwhelmingly what elderly people and people with long-term illnesses, and their families, tell us they want. That should be the gold standard. We should aim to fund and support services—whether we call them social care or healthcare services does not matter—that allow people to live in their own home, beside their own family and friends, for as long as possible. A critical factor in succeeding in that aim must be breaking down the boundaries that we have artificially created between different services. The hon. Member for High Peak rightly pointed out that if any one part of the system starts to come under pressure, that very quickly has a knock-on effect elsewhere.

In Fife there have been some quite surprising, and surprisingly wide, cultural differences between the council and the health board, which we have had to work on to ensure that the approach to looking after people and doing the job, rather than worrying about bureaucracy, was consistent. That means that there has to be an absolute, publicly stated and oft-repeated commitment from leaders at the very highest levels in our services, whether they are political, managerial or clinical, that

the person receiving the service is the person who matters most. We should be prepared to change our organisations, to change the way we work and to change the way we ask our services to work, so that they suit the patients, rather than expecting patients to squeeze into the artificially narrow boxes we sometimes try to create for them.

The model used in Scotland has been known as local health and social care partnerships, which give a direct voice not only to the statutory agencies, but to voluntary third sector organisations and commercial providers, because they have a part to play, however uncomfortable some of us might feel about that. The model also gives a voice to staff organisations and staff representatives in trade unions, and to representatives of patient groups, who are the people who know best what does and does not work. That is done so that decisions are taken in the round and solutions can be found regardless of whether a service will be provided by the council, the health board or somebody else. What matters is that the service is provided and that we never forget who the service is being provided for.

Although today's debate is entitled, "Social Care Provision and the NHS", that could equally well have been turned the other way round, because if there is a problem in health service provision, social services and the local council will come under pressure very quickly as well. That could be extended further, because one of the reasons why social services are under so much pressure is that a lot of the unofficial support services are under pressure now. A lot of people are isolated from their families, as family members can live a long way apart. Local services, such as libraries, are also closed, so that old folk do not have a library to go to one or two days a week, just to have a chat, whether or not they borrow a book. Post offices are also closing; people are being expected to do things anonymously online instead of having a wee chat with someone down at the post office. Our dear and much-lamented friend, Jo Cox, was very keen to emphasise the scourge of loneliness in our society. I think that loneliness, in all its forms, is creating a lot of the pressures on the public services that we are talking about today.

Those services face enormous challenges in all our nations, but if we still really believe in providing a good standard of living for all our people—a standard that I am fortunate enough to enjoy and that I would always expect—we must be prepared to make hard choices. And people like me, who are on well above average earnings, must be prepared to pay a wee bit more in order to achieve that good standard for all. In Scotland, for example, for a number of years we have had a guarantee of free personal and nursing care for any elderly person who needs it. From 2019 that guarantee will also apply to younger people with long-term and serious disabilities. That change is known as Frank's law, after Frank Kopel, a former professional footballer with Dundee United, whose case became the focus of a long and successful campaign in Scotland.

We need to be honest and admit that these things do not come for free. Demographic changes mean that even if we think we are increasing spending above inflation, we might not be doing enough to keep up with an increase in the number of people who need such support and, very often, an increase in the complexity of that support. However, almost every time we talk about social care or healthcare services, whether in this Parliament, the Scottish Parliament or council chambers,

it turns into a Punch and Judy show. That happens far too often, and it is just not what people need. Whether it happens here or in council chambers the length and breadth of the land, opposition parties and politicians will always quote stories of things that have gone wrong, as well as the official statistics, and it is surprising how often the official things we measure in the health service are measurements of failure. Why do we not measure success instead of failure?

Opposition parties will come out with the stories to prove that things are going badly; Governments and council administrations will cite numbers to prove that they are spending lots of money on a problem; and all too often nobody actually talks about whether the services—the care that we are providing—are of good quality or not, and nobody talks about the difference that we are making and should be making to people's lives. That kind of debate is happening, often in less high-profile and less public forums than this one, such as think-tanks or universities. Sometimes councils and health boards have discussions that are not particularly open to the public, to try to tease out these problems.

We need to be prepared to have an open debate about our individual and collective political philosophy. For example, how do we establish the balance between universal provision and means-testing? What standard of care and support do we think every single citizen of these islands is entitled to receive? What quality of life, or what compromises or reductions in quality of life, do we think it is acceptable to impose on somebody simply because of a disability or long-term illness? If the answer is, "We're not prepared to accept imposing any reduction in quality of life," then we, as Members of one of the Parliaments of these islands, have got to find ways of ensuring that there is no reduction.

If Members want to see how not to have a debate about the difficulties that our health and social care services are facing, they should look at Prime Minister's questions yesterday. Frankly, I thought it was appalling that, although very serious issues were being raised, on one side it was all about how bad things were and how many failures there have been, and on the other side it was all about how much money is being spent, and nobody seemed to be talking about what we need to do to sort these issues out.

I enjoy a good political barney as much as anybody. With this subject, however, and possibly more than with any other subject, we need to stop being politicians and remember that we are human beings and we are here to represent human beings. The people who rely on these services, whether they are provided by councils, health boards or anybody else, are entitled not only to get the services they deserve, but to hear an open and honest debate. That will not necessarily come up with all the correct answers, but at least people will know that we have the courage to face up to some difficult questions.

I look forward to the House having the opportunity to have such a debate in the near future, and I sincerely hope that all 650 Members in the House will take that opportunity and have the kind of debate that the public need, rather than the kind of debate that all too often politicians like to deliver for them.

2.7 pm

**Barbara Keeley** (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab): Thank you, Dame Cheryl, for calling me to speak; it is an honour to serve while you are in the Chair.

I, too, am glad that we are actually having this debate, now that we have all got here, and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Ruth George) on securing this important debate and on the way that she opened it. It is never easy for someone if they are rushing in at the last minute, because they were delayed by something outside their control. Nevertheless, what we heard from her was a comprehensive review of the issues in social care in her constituency, which I found very useful.

In addition, I thank the hon. Member for Glenrothes (Peter Grant), who is the Scottish National party spokesperson, for a thoughtful contribution. Broadly, I do not disagree with him, but part of the difficulty for Opposition parties is that we have some very substantial disagreements about spending priorities, which is what we end up talking about quite a lot.

Before discussing the effect of social care on NHS provision, which is the topic of our debate today, I pay tribute to both our hardworking NHS staff and the 1.4 million dedicated staff working in care, many of whom—as we heard in my hon. Friend's contribution—are on low pay, undervalued and overworked. I keep that point in front of me, because it is a very important aspect of social care.

Nurses Day is on 12 May and I pay tribute to the outstanding patient care that nurses give, in the diverse roles that nurses have in healthcare teams, ranging from acute care, which is clearly very important to patients, to Marie Curie nurses in palliative care—there are not enough of them—and to Admiral nurses in dementia care, who are very important too.

Today's debate is an important opportunity to discuss the interaction between social care and services provided by the NHS, but it is always important to keep in mind the positive role that social care plays in the lives of older people and younger people with care needs, because it helps them to live independent lives. The Secretary of State recently told a conference of social workers:

"We need to do better on social care."

I agree with him, but the Government have had eight years to do better on social care and yet things have got worse. My hon. Friend rightly pointed to the eight years of cuts to council budgets, which have meant that more than £6 billion has been taken from social care budgets since 2010. That is a serious factor.

My hon. Friend talked about how Government cuts to local authority funding have had an impact on social care services in Derbyshire. I understand that there has been a 40% budget cut already, with further cuts happening this year. She also outlined how the clinical commissioning group, which is an important body in the work on integration and commissioning, is now in special measures because it is in the red. In whatever spirit we are approaching this debate, we have to take it on board that cuts have consequences. As we have heard, cuts to social care budgets have consequences for the NHS. For example, they tie up ambulance paramedics when they could be getting to stroke patients—patients they need to get to. Cuts have consequences for the quality of care and the burden that falls on family carers. I will refer to each of those issues.

We have heard about the diminishing care fees that councils are able to pay in light of cuts. That has further destabilised a care sector that, we have to face it, has

[Barbara Keeley]

been described as “perilously fragile”. The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services reported last year that two thirds of councils had seen care providers close in their areas, and that care providers handed contracts back to more than 50 councils. The Competition and Markets Authority has warned that many care homes could find themselves forced to close or to move away from local authority-funded care. As my hon. Friend said, local authority funding is only just covering day-to-day running costs. Just this week in Trafford, care provider Ampersand Care has closed two homes, blaming chronic underfunding of care for older people. It claims that it cannot provide safe care at the rates offered by Trafford Council. Those closures will see 78 residents face the upheaval of moving from their current home. The reality of our unstable care market is that such instances are becoming commonplace. In fact, just a few weeks ago the same care provider closed a care home in Swinton in Salford, which is my local authority. Now that care provider has only one care home left in the country.

There is a growing funding gap in social care that must be filled. We would not be suffering quite so badly from these issues if we addressed that. The Local Government Association has estimated that our social care system needs an immediate injection of £1.3 billion to fill the gap, and the King’s Fund reports that that will rise to £2.5 billion by 2020. What Members said about the different views people have was interesting. Cuts to social care have led to what the Secretary of State recently described as “unacceptable variation” in the quality of services. We will never address the future funding of social care while we have a quality problem. If we are expecting people to pay more, why should they pay more for services that are not good quality?

As my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak said, one in five care facilities receives the lowest quality rating from the Care Quality Commission. My party’s research revealed that more than 3,000 care facilities with the lowest quality ratings continue to receive the lowest ratings, even after being re-inspected by the CQC. The care facilities find themselves unable to get out of that situation. Cuts mean that providers have less money to pay staff and to invest in training or building renovations, and that can lead to what we are seeing now. Facilities are getting trapped in a cycle of poor quality care provision.

Care staff, who so often are underpaid, undervalued and overworked, are under intense pressure as a result of cuts. My hon. Friend spoke about the challenges with social care in her own constituency, much of which is rural. Many of the problems she described relate to staffing, and they are not isolated examples. Rural England’s 2017 report, “Issues Facing Providers of Social Care at Home to Older Rural Residents” discusses the challenges facing social care provision at home for people in rural communities. Rural populations are typically older. There is a lack of specialist housing for older people and housing stock is older, which may mean it is difficult to heat. Those challenges are compounded by difficulties in recruitment and retention, as we have heard today. Home care staff are typically being employed on zero-hours contracts and receiving payment for actual contact time only and not for travel time. That is true in London and Salford, but in rural

areas, where the distances are much greater, that lack of paid-for travel time is a different issue. It could make the difference between people being prepared to work in care or not.

In addition, rural social care has to contend with such factors as a small pool of potential employees, competition from other employment sectors and a mismatch between the locations of care staff and those of people who need care. My hon. Friend gave an important example of one town where 19 people are waiting for a care package. Other national trends affecting the care sector also affect rural areas. They include: low pay, few career opportunities or chances to gain skills, and the increasingly complex needs of people in need of care.

People who need care in rural communities need the Government to think ahead and monitor emerging trends properly to ensure that there is proper coverage in their areas. Worryingly for the future of provision in these areas, Rural England’s report

“found scant regard to rural proofing”

in the sustainability and transformation plans that it had seen. Moreover, it said that:

“published statistics seldom provide, or...facilitate, any rural analysis.”

That needs to be rectified if rural social care needs are to be more than just an afterthought.

We have heard that a lack of good-quality care places an additional burden of caring on unpaid carers. Older rural residents are more likely to provide some form of care to one another—24% of people in rural areas do that, as compared with 18% in urban areas. The issues for carers are more marked in rural areas. I have worked on carer issues since 2002, when I worked as an adviser to the then Princess Royal Trust for Carers, which is now the Carers Trust. That work included the then largest ever national survey of carers to assess the impact of the Labour Government’s carers strategy, which was published in 1999, on carers’ lives. I researched and published three reports on the needs of carers. I wanted to highlight that work from before I was elected to underline how important a national carers strategy is to carers.

I want to raise with the Care Minister how carers have been treated by the Government in recent months with the abandonment of the promised carers strategy. Their needs are being subsumed into the Green Paper on social care for older people, and I want to highlight how one carer feels about that. Katy Styles is a carer and a campaigner for the Motor Neurone Disease Association. She contributed to the Government’s consultation on the national carers strategy because she hoped that her voice would be heard, alongside the 6,500 other carers who also contributed their views. She told me:

“Not publishing the National Carers Strategy has made me extremely angry. It sends a message that carers’ lives are unimportant. It sends a message that Government thinks we can carry on as we are. It sends a message that my own time is of little worth.”

Katy Styles started an e-petition on the issue. It is e-petition No. 209717, which is titled:

“Government must publish a Carers’ Strategy and not a Carers’ Action Plan”.

She sent me this message yesterday:

“Whilst unpaid carers save the UK economy an estimated £60 billion annually, this government fails to value our contribution.

As unpaid carers struggle financially, government fails to give them a reasonable allowance. Whilst unpaid carers spent precious time informing a Strategy, that time and effort was wasted as that Carers Strategy was apparently scrapped. That's how much carers' lives matter.

A national strategy would set the tone on how society should value and support carers. Without a strategy, carers have no hope of being valued and supported."

I support Katy Styles and her campaign. She and other carers do not have much time to spare, and when they do respond to a Government consultation, their input should not be abandoned. As I mentioned last week in our Opposition day debate, this Government have launched more than 1,600 consultations since 2015. More than 500 of those consultations have not yet been completed, and it is sad to note that that includes the carers strategy.

Thinking of ourselves as a group of politicians, we have to be careful that we do not over-consult people. We cannot throw out consultations and reviews as things for people to respond to and then not care whether they get any review of their input or not do anything with what they say. The day that people feel it is not worth putting their time into consultations will be a serious point for us as politicians. It is important that people believe that their input is valued and that we take what they say into account.

I have only been a remote carer, but I feel that I have worked enough with carers to understand their issues. We should take what they say seriously. I hope the Minister can say more than what she has said in the past, which is that a carers action plan will be published shortly. Can she tell carers such as Katy Styles why the planned carers strategy was abandoned?

The funding crisis in social care also has an impact on the growing number of people who are in need of care, but get no care at all, as the hon. Member for Glenrothes mentioned. We know that more than 1.2 million people, many of them isolated and lonely, are now living with unmet care needs. Recent research has recognised that living in rural areas may exacerbate the social isolation of older residents, and of course that goes for their carers too. As the King's Fund has stated:

"Access to care depends increasingly on what people can afford—and where they live—rather than on what they need."

The impact of the lack of social care on NHS provision is most regularly seen in the context of delayed transfers of care—my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak talked about the situation in Derbyshire. Although the figures for delayed transfers of care attributable to lack of social care have dropped in recent months, they reached record highs under this Government, causing thousands of people to be stuck in hospital while waiting for arrangements to be made for their care at home, or for a place in a care home. The latest figures, from this February, remained stubbornly high relative to the same period in 2015 or 2011.

It is also open to question whether people are getting the care they need in the community when they are discharged from hospital, a point I raised in last week's debate. A recent report from the British Red Cross showed that older people could become stuck in a vicious cycle of readmission to hospital because of a lack of adequate care in the community. Reductions in delayed transfers of care will mean very little if there is insufficient social care to support people when they are discharged.

As my hon. Friend said in her speech, a lack of suitable care at home for patients needing palliative care means that people have to remain in hospital to the end of their life, sometimes with heartbreaking consequences. I was glad to hear that at least one person managed to get his wife home for those last few days, because that is very important. However, if many other family members cannot reach the hospital to visit, that is very serious.

The 2015 national survey of bereaved people by the Office for National Statistics found that, while only 3% of those who stated a preference wanted to die in hospital, nearly half of the 470,000 people who died in 2014—some 220,000 people—died in hospital. A 2016 report from Marie Curie found that hospital admissions at that point were unsustainable, and too many people who were approaching death spent long periods in hospital due to a lack of alternative social care support.

I hope the Minister will address that point, and perhaps shed some light on what is being done to reduce the number of people who are denied a choice at the end of their life, in line with the Government's response to the choice review, which said that the Government

"will put in place measures to improve care quality for all"

and

"will lead on end of life care nationally and provide support for local leadership, including commissioners, to prioritise and improve end of life care".

From the examples that we heard from my hon. Friend, it sounds as if there remains some way to go on that in Derbyshire.

The social care system now badly needs sustainable funding from central Government, both for the future of the NHS and for the many people who now rely on social care. I remind those few hon. Members who are here that, at the 2017 election, Labour pledged an extra £8 billion for social care across this Parliament, with an extra £1 billion to ease the crisis in social care this year. It is important to keep looking at that figure, because that would have been enough to begin paying care staff the real living wage. It would have helped to ease the recruitment crisis that my hon. Friend has talked about in her area of High Peak, and would have enabled more publicly funded care packages for people with different levels of need. Most importantly, it would have allowed us to offer free end-of-life care to all those who needed it.

I believe we need urgent action to avert the care crisis, and the time to act is now, both for the sustainability of the NHS, which as we have heard is really being affected by shortages of social care, but most importantly for the people who depend on care to live independent, fulfilled lives.

2.24 pm

**The Minister for Care (Caroline Dinenege):** It is a great pleasure to serve under your stewardship, Dame Cheryl. I thank the hon. Member for High Peak (Ruth George) for securing the debate and setting out the issues so articulately. I congratulate her on making it to the debate, and I thank you, Dame Cheryl, for allowing it to take place. It would have been a great concern to us all if that had not happened.

As hon. Members will know, I am relatively new to my role as the Minister for Care in the Department of Health and Social Care. That is why I am really grateful for the chance to focus on the interface between social

[*Caroline Dinenage*]

care and health, and to outline how integration is absolutely at the heart of what we do. The renaming of the Department of Health as the Department of Health and Social Care must be more than just a change of title; it must provide a sense of direction and a change of culture. We know that health and social care are umbilically linked, and that one is a key driver of the other.

We recognise that many of our challenges stem from the very good news that people are living longer, which is to be celebrated. Worldwide, the population aged 60 or above is growing faster than all other age groups. In developed countries the proportion of the population aged 65 and above is expected to rise by 10% over the next 40 years. That means that, in England, by 2026 the population aged 75 and above, which currently stands at 4.5 million, will rise by 1.5 million. By 2041 it will have nearly doubled.

People's expectations and wishes are also changing. The traditional model of social care is based on care homes, but we know that increasingly people want care to be delivered in their own homes. We want to encourage people to live independently and healthily in their homes, where many people want to stay. We know that nine in 10 older people live in mainstream housing, and that only 500,000 of those homes are specifically designed for their needs. Adapting homes to make them more suitable is therefore incredibly important. The disabled facilities grant has a vital role to play. Home adaptations and investment can be incredibly effective. Not only do such adaptations allow people to lead independent healthy lives, but our analysis shows that for every £1 spent, more than £3 is recouped, mostly through savings to the health and care system. Housing that enables people to live independently and safely allows us to reduce the number of people who need to go into hospital or have other social care requirements.

We have to look at the way we provide and fund services for the long term. Complex conditions must be addressed, and we must move to a system in which care, whether social care or health care, is individually tailored to people's needs. The hon. Member for Glenrothes (Peter Grant) put it beautifully when he talked about how we need to stop using social care and our health service as a political football. We need to champion where there is good practice, not just talk about where it is bad. We need to look at how we can produce much more person-centred care, where we address an individual's needs. We need to celebrate the amazing places up and down our country where it is going right, and we need to support the incredible workforce in this country—both the informal workforce, and the dedicated hospital and social care workforce. A number of pieces of work are ongoing. As the hon. Gentleman said, we need to have the courage to tackle the difficult questions, and that is what is happening.

A number of key pieces of work are happening at the moment to address many of the issues that the hon. Member for High Peak raised. Many of those issues will be tackled in the forthcoming Green Paper. We have an ongoing workforce strategy that is taking place jointly between Health Education England and Skills for Care. In order to address the challenges of our ageing population, we need to attract more people

into the workforce. We need to ensure that they are properly rewarded for their work, that there is continuous development within that work, and that we attract people from a much more diverse range of backgrounds.

As the hon. Member for Worsley and Eccles South (Barbara Keeley) said, we also have a carers action plan, which is to be published shortly. She spoke about her constituent, Katy Styles.

**Barbara Keeley:** The person I was talking about is not a constituent; she is a national campaigner for the MND Association, and she has an e-petition. It is important to note that she is running a national campaign.

**Caroline Dinenage:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady for clarifying that. I would say to Katy Styles that the decision about whether it is called a strategy or an action plan was taken before I was in my role, but an action plan sounds to me like a much more positive thing.

Actions speak louder than words. We are talking about not just a sense of direction, but what we are doing and how we intend to do it. That is why the carers action plan will be a really important piece of work. I massively value the work of carers up and down the country—indeed, my mother was one—and I want to ensure that we properly recognise and reward what they do. We must be doing what we can, and not just through the Department of Health and Social Care but in collaboration with colleagues across Government, to help and support carers and ensure that the issues they face on a daily basis are tackled.

**Barbara Keeley:** It is worth clarifying this point while the Minister is talking about the action plan. I told her that I did that piece of work years ago on the first national carers strategy, which came out in 1999 and went right across Government. The difference I see is that that was signed by many Departments, with commitment from those Secretaries of State, but the action plans under the coalition, and those we have seen recently, are just signed by Social Care Ministers; they are very much smaller things. Departmental action plans are not the same as cross-Government national strategies, and I understand why carers feel that strongly.

**Caroline Dinenage:** The hon. Lady has a surprise coming—this action plan is signed by Ministers from across Government.

The hon. Member for High Peak raised cost pressures. We can all admit that local authority budgets have faced pressures in recent years. They account for about a quarter of public spending, so they have had a part to play in dealing with the historic deficit that we all know we inherited in 2010. That means that social care funding was inevitably impacted during the previous Parliaments. However, with the deficit now under control, we have turned a corner.

Thanks to a range of actions taken since 2015, the Government have given councils access to up to £9.4 billion of more dedicated funding for social care from 2017-18 to 2019-20. Local authorities are therefore now estimated to receive about an 8% real-terms increase in access to social care funding over the spending review. In Derbyshire, the hon. Lady's local council has seen an increase of £33 million in adult social care funding from 2017-18 to

£201.8 million, which is above the 8% figure—it is a 10.3% increase on the previous year. The Care Act 2014 places obligations on local authorities and the extra funding is designed to help them meet those obligations.

**Ruth George:** I did not want to turn the debate into a political tit-for-tat, but I do not want my constituents in Derbyshire to think that suddenly there is a £33 million increase and everything is rosy for social care. The council has seen its funding cut by £157 million over the past seven years. Unfortunately, that increase is a drop in the ocean. In particular, the rise in the cost of the living wage impacts on care costs. What the council is getting back is nothing like what it has lost.

**Caroline Dinanage:** I have already recognised the fact that all local authorities have had to make some really tough decisions. We know it has been difficult for everybody. Taking that action to control the deficit and get the country's finances under control has meant that we have turned a corner and we are now beginning to put that funding back in. I do not think we can deny that there were years that were very difficult for all local authorities. There is dedicated funding in adult social care; the funding goes to a specific cause, which is really important, and allows local authorities to support and sustain a more diverse care market. It also goes on to help relieve pressure on the NHS, including by supporting more people to be discharged from hospital as soon as they are ready.

The money is already beginning to have an impact. Delays of transfers out of hospital due to adult social care hold-ups have reduced by more than a third over the past 12 months, freeing up 820 beds. A key tool in developing more and better out-of-hospital services is the better care fund, which is a mandatory, national programme for integrating health and social care. It joins up services so that they are designed around people's needs, enabling them to manage their own wellbeing and to live as independently as possible. By mandating the pool of funds, the better care fund has helped to join up health and care services and incentivise local areas to work better together with increasing amounts of funds being used in that process. Some 90% of local leaders have reported that the better care fund has helped them to progress integration in their areas.

We know that the burden of care cannot and should not continue to fall simply on hospitals. We need to move care into the home and into the community. There are great examples of how that is working in practice up and down the country. Public Health England, the Chief Fire Officers Association, the Local Government Association, NHS England and Age UK already have a joint working approach to establish how local fire and rescue services, for example, can be commissioned to check on people in their homes, to check on the safety of people's homes, and to check on things such as trip hazards—all things that can lead to people being admitted to hospital or needing the support of social care services. They work together to encourage joint working around intelligence-led early intervention and, in doing so, reduce preventable hospital admissions.

Evidence has indicated that longer hospital stays for older patients can lead to worse health outcomes and an increase in their care needs on discharge. We know that for a healthy older adult, 10 days of bed rest leads to a

14% reduction in leg and hip muscle strength and a 12% reduction in aerobic capacity, which is the equivalent of 10 years of their life, which is a massive incentive to make sure we get people back into their own homes and active as quickly as possible, in the interests of their own wellbeing.

I am particularly interested in understanding how intermediate care—step-up and step-down services—can reduce the impact of health crises on individuals. A relatively minor infection or a temporary worsening of a chronic condition should never spiral into a prolonged hospital stay with a detrimental impact on long-term quality of life. The real goal of integrating health and social care is not simply a benefit to the system, but an emphasis on person-centred care. We need multi-disciplinary teams working around a person to maximise the effectiveness of interventions, and therefore minimise disruption to the individual.

The hospital to home programme brings together practitioners across health and social care to develop solutions for more patient-centred care, focusing on how to keep people at home. It shows how urgent and emergency care services, community services, primary care and social care can all work together to make sure that people get the right care at the right time and, crucially, in the right place. That partnership goes through everything that local partners do, whether providing interlocking services or commissioning the right pattern of services.

How can we push forward these aims and create a sustainable settlement for social care? In March, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care outlined seven principles for the Green Paper on care and support and for adult social care reform, and he put a key focus on the need to integrate services around the individual for a seamless, whole-person approach to both health and care. We have committed to publishing the Green Paper by the summer, and when it is published there will of course be a full public consultation, through which we want to seek the broadest possible range of views. I look forward to the contributions of Members under that national discussion.

**Dame Cheryl Gillan (in the Chair):** The hon. Member for High Peak has a couple of minutes to wind up if she so wishes.

2.37 pm

**Ruth George:** I will not take up that much of hon. Members' time, but I will thank Members who have contributed to the discussion. I am pleased to have had the opportunity to have this discussion today—thank you, Dame Cheryl, for allowing me to do so. I hope it opens the door to looking more broadly at the impact of health and social care services on one another, and on patients and their carers.

**Dame Cheryl Gillan (in the Chair):** I am most grateful to the Clerk for his advice in Westminster Hall today. I am very glad that we were able to have the debate.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered the effect of social care provision on the NHS.

2.38 pm

*Sitting adjourned.*



# Ministerial Corrections

Thursday 3 May 2018

## DEFENCE

### EU Defence: Permanent Structured Co-operation

*The following is an extract from European Committee A on EU Defence: Permanent Structured Co-operation on 26 April 2018.*

**Mark Lancaster:** We are clear that PESCO should strengthen the relationship with NATO and promote an open and competitive European defence industry, from which the UK will potentially benefit. As the hon. Gentleman knows, 17 projects have been proposed. We are particularly interested in the Dutch-led infrastructure project. [*Official Report, European Committee A, 26 April 2018, c. 10.*]

*Letter of correction from Mark Lancaster:*

An error has been identified in my speech in European Committee A on 26 April 2018.

The correct response should have been:

**Mark Lancaster:** We are clear that PESCO should strengthen the relationship with NATO and promote an open and competitive European defence industry, from which the UK will potentially benefit. As the hon. Gentleman knows, 17 projects have been proposed. We are particularly interested in the Dutch-led **military mobility** infrastructure project.

*The following is an extract from European Committee A on EU Defence: Permanent Structured Co-operation on 26 April 2018.*

**Mark Lancaster:** There is no direct comparison between the MPCC and NATO. It is not an operational headquarters. On scale, just to start, the established posts of the co-ordination cell for the three training missions number 35 posts, of which I understand currently just 12 are filled. With 12 posts filled, that does not have the feel to me of an organisation that is challenging NATO for operational control of EU missions. There are already five nationally-led operational missions. Once we leave the EU, it is not for us to dictate to our European partners how they wish to see this go forward, but given that only 12 of 35 posts have been filled by our EU colleagues, I do not sense that there is a massive drive to move it forward. [*Official Report, European Committee A, 26 April 2018, c. 13.*]

*Letter of correction from Mark Lancaster:*

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The correct response should have been:

**Mark Lancaster:** There is no direct comparison between the MPCC and NATO. It is not an operational headquarters. On scale, just to start, the established posts of the co-ordination cell for the three training missions number 35 posts, of which I understand currently just **23** are filled. With 12 posts **gapped**, that does not have the feel to me of an organisation that is challenging NATO for operational control of EU missions. There are already **five nation operational headquarters provided by member states**. Once we leave the EU, it is not for us to dictate to our European partners how they wish to see this go forward, but given that only **23** of 35 posts have been filled by our EU colleagues, I do not sense that there is a massive drive to move it forward.



# ORAL ANSWERS

Thursday 3 May 2018

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Thursday 10 May 2018**

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