

**Thursday  
19 July 2018**

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**HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY  
DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**Thursday 19 July 2018**

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# House of Commons

Thursday 19 July 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—*

#### Access to EU Markets

1. **Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): What steps he is taking during negotiations to ensure that UK manufacturing and services can continue to have access to EU markets after the UK leaves the EU. [906535]

**The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Dominic Raab):** The UK proposes a UK-EU free trade area underpinned by a common rulebook, including on agri-food, but only for those rules necessary to provide frictionless trade at the border. On services, we seek to minimise new barriers to trade, enable UK firms to establish in the EU and continue mutual recognition of professional qualifications.

**Mr Sheerman:** While welcoming the Secretary of State to his new post, may I ask if he shares my view that all Members of this House have a sacred duty to look at the long-term future of the people that we represent? Will he join me in looking at the front page of the *Financial Times*, and did he listen to the radio this morning? He knows that many of our constituents working in manufacturing and in services are deeply distressed and worried about their future.

**Dominic Raab:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. We need to look to the long term, and we need to try to bridge some of the divisions in this country. I believe that the White Paper that the UK Government have published is a principled, pragmatic but ambitious approach that delivers the best deal for the UK but also makes sure that we continue our firm, strong ties with our European friends.

**Damian Green** (Ashford) (Con): May I wish my right hon. Friend well, particularly at the start of his negotiations this afternoon? Amid all this talk of no deal, can he reassure me and the House that it is still the British Government's intention and expectation that they will be able to reach a good deal in these negotiations?

**Dominic Raab:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. He will have seen from the White Paper that we have set out the approach that we are taking—the strategy that we have. I will be out in Brussels today because we do need to step up the pace, the intensity and the heat of the negotiations. But, at the same time, the only responsible thing for the Government to do is to prepare for all eventualities out of these negotiations.

**Hilary Benn** (Leeds Central) (Lab): The Secretary of State will be only too well aware that, without an agreement on a backstop for the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic, there will be no withdrawal agreement. The technical note on customs arrangements that the Government published last month was only half a backstop because, as the paper itself acknowledged, it would need to have added to it something on regulation. Now that the Government have committed to a common rulebook in the White Paper, can the Secretary of State today confirm that that will now be added to the proposal for a backstop so that he can make progress on it?

**Dominic Raab:** The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to talk about the progress that we have undoubtedly made with our European friends on the withdrawal agreement, but to say that issues such as Northern Ireland remain to be resolved properly. He is also right to say that the White Paper and the proposals have a principled but flexible approach that will allow us to make sure that we not just continue the frictionless trade but avoid any issues at the border. We will obviously take forward those negotiations today, and I look forward to discussing this with Michel Barnier later.

**Mr Speaker:** I call Rachael Maskell. [*Interruption.*] I mean Rachel Maclean—I do beg the hon. Lady's pardon and the other hon. Lady's pardon. They are both very distinctive, and it is my fuzzy memory, not their lack of distinctiveness. I do apologise to both of them.

**Rachel Maclean** (Redditch) (Con): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker—[*Laughter.*] Oh, I am sorry, Mr Speaker. It is obviously flattering to be confused with the hon. Member for York Central (Rachael Maskell).

My constituents voted to leave the EU because they did not want our laws to be made by bureaucrats in Brussels—they wanted our laws to be made by our own country. Can the Secretary of State, who I know shares this ambition, reassure my constituents that the Chequers proposal will allow our laws to be made in our country after we leave the EU?

**Dominic Raab:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We have made a narrow exception where there will be a common rulebook for agricultural goods and manufactured goods at the border, but only to the extent that that is necessary to ensure frictionless trade—and even there, elected Members in this House will have the last word. Of course, the UK Supreme Court will finally do what it says on the tin, which is to have the last word on the application of the laws of the land.

**Matthew Pennycook** (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab): Fears that the schism at the heart of the Tory party is driving the country towards a no deal Brexit are once again on the rise, and it is clear that the new Secretary of State is stepping up preparations for such a scenario.

Will he therefore tell the House what specific advice his Department is giving to the financial services sector on how to prepare for an EU departure without a deal?

**Dominic Raab:** I thank the hon. Gentleman. Of course, many of the banks and people in the City are already preparing and are very confident that they can withstand any of the uncertainty in relation to Brexit negotiations. We have been preparing for some time now. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker) for all the preparatory work that he has done. We will be starting to step up some of those preparations. Some of that will become more publicly facing in the weeks and months ahead. That is necessary, and any responsible Government would have to do it. We will obviously set out the details of that shortly.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): But all our manufactures will have to be produced in full accordance with the *acquis*, will they not?

**Dominic Raab:** I understand my hon. Friend's concern, but the common rulebook relates only to those particular rules that relate to the border, to enable frictionless trade. We will ensure, through technical-level consultations, that we have a voice in the formation of those rules. Ultimately, it will be for this House to say yes or no to whether those rules become the law of the land.

### Support for Farmers

2. **Peter Heaton-Jones** (North Devon) (Con): What recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on support for farmers after the UK leaves the EU. [906536]

11. **Michelle Donelan** (Chippenham) (Con): What recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on support for farmers after the UK leaves the EU. [906545]

**The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Dominic Raab):** We work closely with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on farming support. The Government will provide the same cash total in funds for farm support until the end of the Parliament, maintaining stability for farmers as we grow our world-leading food and farming industry in a sustainable way.

**Peter Heaton-Jones:** Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Government's policy is to leave the customs union, leave the single market, leave the common fisheries policy and leave the common agricultural policy, and that the Government are committed to the fact that in that new framework North Devon's farmers will continue to thrive outside the EU?

**Dominic Raab:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Indeed, our White Paper confirms that the United Kingdom will leave the single market and the customs union. Outside the CAP and the CFP, we will be free to develop a domestic agriculture policy that works in the best interests of farmers in North Devon and across the UK, and at the same time we will become an independent coastal state with full control over our waters.

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I have just been advised that the hon. Member for Chippenham (Michelle Donelan) is not here. She has not yet been able to access the building. If she gets here later, I will try to accommodate her, but it means for the time being that the grouping falls.

**Rachael Maskell** (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): The chemicals regulation division of the Health and Safety Executive regulates biocides and pesticides under the EU REACH—registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals—regulation. The pesticides have to be tested within the EU, so we will lose that work on 29 March 2019. Will the Government buy into the new replaced EU body, losing 300 jobs in York and Bootle, or will they be forced into having separate EU testing, placing additional costs on farmers?

**Dominic Raab:** Obviously, that is subject to negotiation, but I understand the concern that the hon. Lady has raised. We will seek to pursue a relationship whereby we are engaged with the regulatory structures in Europe to ensure that we have continuity and stability in that sector.

**Stephen Gethins** (North East Fife) (SNP): I congratulate the Secretary of State on his elevation to Cabinet. A number of leavers suggest that the governing classes or the establishment are calling the shots on Brexit and that that is why it is such a mess. Farmers in my constituency want to know who is calling the shots—is it the Secretary of State?

**Dominic Raab:** No, it is the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. I will be deputising for the Prime Minister in the negotiations. I will be out seeing Michel Barnier shortly, and I hope that I can attest to his full support for the White Paper.

**Jenny Chapman** (Darlington) (Lab): Not so long ago, the Secretary of State, in a burst of youthful exuberance, published a blog—[*Interruption.*] It was not that racy. It included his 10 policies “for a Better Britain”. Policy No. 7 stated:

“We need to deregulate...the common market”.

Does he still agree with his own manifesto for Britain?

**Dominic Raab:** In all those areas, as important as they are and whatever the different views across the House on those sensitive matters, the crucial thing is that elected Members in this House have the last word on the laws of the land. I share her concern about those areas and her interest. Why on earth would she want to abdicate responsibility for law making to Brussels, when in this House we need to be accountable to our constituents?

**Jenny Chapman:** For British farmers to trade successfully with Europe, we must remain on the same level playing field, with common standards and regulations. The president of the National Farmers Union said earlier this year that

“the floor is for our standards to be in line with the rest of Europe”.

Does the Secretary of State agree with the Farmers Union or himself?

**Dominic Raab:** I think that he has welcomed the White Paper—

**Jenny Chapman:** She!

**Dominic Raab:** She has welcomed the White Paper, but I would gently say to the hon. Lady that the CAP's land-based subsidy and the bureaucratic structure that goes with it has held back productivity in this country and has not delivered the scale of environmental improvement we need. When we leave the common agricultural policy, we will make sure that we have the best agricultural but also environmental policy for this country.

**Michelle Donelan** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Let me just say to the hon. Lady that it was a reckless door or barrier—electronic or otherwise—that sought to deny her access to the House, but she is with us now and we look forward to hearing her.

**Michelle Donelan:** Thank you for your patience, Mr Speaker.

Leaving the EU provides opportunities for Wiltshire farmers; hence why they voted to leave. Does my right hon. Friend agree that making our own decisions for farmers to suit farmers will ensure that their interests are better protected?

**Dominic Raab:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We want a more dynamic, more self-reliant agricultural industry as we continue to compete internationally, supplying products of the very highest standard for the domestic market and increasing exports. We also want a reformed agricultural and land management policy to deliver a better and richer environment for Wiltshire and across the UK.

### Economic and Social Rights

3. **Mr Virendra Sharma** (Ealing, Southall) (Lab): Whether the Government plan to take steps to maintain economic and social rights as part of their negotiations on the UK leaving the EU. [906537]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Suella Braverman):** The White Paper published last week makes it clear that the Government are committed to high levels of social and employment protection and proposes a reciprocal non-regression requirement for domestic labour standards. The paper also proposes a mutual commitment to individual rights, noting that the UK will remain a party to the European convention on human rights after it has left the EU. This is also reflected in the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, which maintains existing rights protection as part of EU retained law.

**Mr Sharma:** I thank the Minister very much for her response. In 2009, the Secretary of State said that he did not believe in economic and social rights. How can he guarantee that he will not use Brexit as an excuse to slash protections for minorities and workers?

**Suella Braverman:** The Secretary of State is experienced and has a proven track record not only as a Justice Minister but as a lawyer, and any attempt to undermine his credentials and commitment to the rule of law, civil liberties and now delivering a successful Brexit is fundamentally misguided. The Government have made it clear—not just in the White Paper, but on numerous

occasions during the passage of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act—that leaving the EU does not mean a diminution of human rights.

**Mr Marcus Fysh** (Yeovil) (Con): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred earlier to the mooted common rulebook as very narrow, but when we look at what is necessary for free circulation, it is actually extremely wide. I am concerned that the parliamentary lock in the White Paper is actually unworkable, because there will be the sword of Damocles of a hard border in Ireland should we derogate from any of it. Does my hon. Friend remember that decades of Conservative manifestos have committed to retaining or increasing our autonomy over such regulations?

**Suella Braverman:** I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. I know what an indefatigable campaigner he is for the UK leaving the European Union, and his expertise on this issue is well known. At the end of the day, the common rulebook is going to be subject to a parliamentary lock, and it also reflects rules on goods that have not changed for many decades.

**Paul Blomfield** (Sheffield Central) (Lab): The Minister rightly points out that the White Paper proposes non-regression clauses on environment regulations and on social and employment protections. In 2016, however, the Secretary of State wrote in *The Times* that Brexit was an opportunity to

“ditch”

the

“100 most burdensome EU regulations”.

He took exception to the agency workers regulation, for example, on the grounds that it

“gives agency workers the right to the same basic employment and working conditions as full-time staff”.

Does the Minister agree with the White Paper or with her Secretary of State?

**Suella Braverman:** The Government have been clear in the White Paper that our commitment to rights protection is unequivocal and that how those rules are applied is ultimately a decision for Parliament. May I remind the hon. Gentleman that rights do not emanate from the EU? We have our own rich and proud tradition of civil liberties, such as the Race Relations Act 1965 or the Equal Pay Act 1970, and we acceded to those critical pieces of legislation before our accession to the European Economic Community.

**Tom Tugendhat** (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): I understand my hon. Friend's position on guaranteeing UK rights—indeed, I respect her position, which is that UK rights need no foreign courts to guarantee them. Perhaps she can help me understand how she views the rights of others on our continent. The great achievement of many of our people in the past 50 years has been the extension of those rights, yet today I see lists of Jews being suggested in Vienna, and I hear about the erosion of the rule of law in other parts of eastern Europe. What will be the Government's position on making sure that those human rights still exist?

**Suella Braverman:** I thank my hon. Friend for his question. As I said, we have a long and proud tradition, which predates our membership of the EU, to protecting civil liberties, upholding human rights and enhancing

the position of the individual, whether through the rule of law or our commitment to the ECHR. Brexit will not change that.

#### Withdrawal Agreement Negotiations

4. **Mr John Whittingdale** (Maldon) (Con): What recent progress he has made on negotiations with the EU on a withdrawal agreement. [906538]

16. **Nigel Huddleston** (Mid Worcestershire) (Con): What recent progress he has made on negotiations on the UK leaving the EU. [906550]

18. **Stephen Metcalfe** (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con): What recent progress he has made on negotiations on the UK leaving the EU. [906552]

**The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Dominic Raab):** On 19 June, we published a joint statement on the draft withdrawal agreement, setting out our progress in agreeing the text on a majority of separation issues. Negotiations are ongoing, and my officials are in Brussels. With last week's publication of the White Paper, we hope to intensify negotiations on the future relationship.

**Mr Whittingdale:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the financial settlement contained in the withdrawal agreement is one of our strongest bargaining cards? Will he therefore include in the Bill provisions to ensure that its full payment is conditional on our achieving a satisfactory outcome to negotiations?

**Dominic Raab:** As ever, my right hon. Friend makes a powerful point, and as the EU says, there is no deal until the whole deal is concluded. The withdrawal agreement must come alongside a framework for the future partnership agreement—article 50 requires that—and if one party does not meet its side of the bargain, that will inevitably have consequences for the deal as a whole.

**Nigel Huddleston:** The Secretary of State will be aware that the UK has a near £70 billion trade deficit with the EU, and it is transparently in the EU's interest to get a deal that keeps trade flowing. Is he aware whether European businesses and companies are lobbying EU negotiators and Governments to ensure a mutually beneficial deal?

**Dominic Raab:** My hon. Friend is right. The Government have a regular and productive dialogue with the European business community, and in those discussions we highlight our common interests with those businesses. It is important that their voice is heard because a lot is at stake, not just for UK businesses and jobs, but for European businesses and jobs.

**Stephen Metcalfe:** Does the Secretary of State agree that remaining inside the customs union or the single market would be a breach of the outcome of the referendum and totally undermine the trust of the British people?

**Dominic Raab:** My hon. Friend is right. Not only would it be a breach of the referendum, but every hon. Member, at least on the Government Benches, went into the last election promising our constituents that we

would leave the customs union and the single market. Crucially, the White Paper forges a plan that can deliver that, while maintaining the strong relationship that we want with our European friends.

**Helen Goodman** (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): PPG Industries in my constituency provides 200 jobs. It tells me that if we leave the European Chemicals Agency, it will have to close. Will the Secretary of State commit to the common rulebook and not to making any compromises on that part of the White Paper?

**Dominic Raab:** The hon. Lady is right to point to that issue, but she also mentioned the White Paper. She will know that we are committed to staying with a strong regulatory relationship with our EU partners, for precisely the reasons she gave.

**Nick Smith** (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): Given that so many of his friends and colleagues want to bring down the Prime Minister, how will the Brexit Secretary get his withdrawal agreement through in the autumn?

**Dominic Raab:** The same way that we got the customs Bill through this week—by working hard, listening to all sides and delivering for the people of the United Kingdom.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): My constituency of Strangford depends greatly on the agri-food sector for employment, jobs and opportunities. With reference to the border in Northern Ireland, will the Secretary of State explain how he intends to foster cross-border trade in a safe and effective way?

**Dominic Raab:** The hon. Gentleman will know from the White Paper that we have set out a paradigm that works, not just for trade between the UK and the EU, but that specifically will avoid any return to a hard border in Northern Ireland. We now need to take that proposal to our European friends. I will see Michel Barnier later this afternoon, and I will be sure to convey to him the hon. Gentleman's concerns.

#### International Broadcasting Businesses

5. **Christine Jardine** (Edinburgh West) (LD): What recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on negotiating a deal to support international broadcasting businesses maintaining their UK base after the UK leaves the EU. [906539]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Suella Braverman):** The Department is working closely with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to understand the complexities of the issue relating to broadcasting. Together we are listening to the international broadcasting sector to understand its needs and concerns. I was very pleased to address the Creative Industries Federation in March.

**Christine Jardine:** Is the Minister aware that the Commercial Broadcasters Association has expressed its concern about the lack of clarity in the Government's proposals post Brexit, particularly for international TV channels based in the UK, which are currently worth more than £1 billion to

the economy and provide one in five jobs in the broadcasting sector? At the moment, UK-based international TV channels have a licence for the rest of the EU, and the Commercial Broadcasters Association is concerned that it is not clear whether that will continue. We are already seeing international broadcasters moving, so what steps are the Government taking?

**Suella Braverman:** The Prime Minister's Mansion House speech committed to exploring creative options, with an open mind, to replace the country of origin principle enshrined in the audiovisual media services directive. The UK's position represents the best credible proposal for the future relationship. It reflects the EU's aim, as stated in Council guidelines, of allowing market access to provide services under host state rules.

**Thangam Debbonaire** (Bristol West) (Lab) *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bristol West (Thangam Debbonaire) is leaping to her feet with a vigour and enthusiasm that reminds me of my younger self.

**Thangam Debbonaire:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Given that the advice the Government now seem to be hinting at—that businesses should prepare for a no deal situation—looks an awful lot like the consequences that we remainers were criticised for raising during the referendum as “Project Fear”, does the Minister understand why the creative and digital industries in my constituency, of which there are many, do not trust the Government to negotiate on their behalf one little bit?

**Mr Speaker:** Very creative.

**Suella Braverman:** I know how experienced the hon. Lady is in the arts sector. The White Paper proposes new arrangements for services and for the creative and digital sectors, recognising that the UK and the EU will not have the current levels of access to each other's markets. The EU and the UK included broadcasting in the joint list of topics for discussion in the future framework, which reflects our shared understanding of the importance of the sector as a whole. Obviously, it is the responsible duty of the Government to prepare for all outcomes.

### Rights, Standards and Protections

6. **Mohammad Yasin** (Bedford) (Lab): What steps he is taking to ensure that there is no change to rights, standards and protections derived from the EU after the UK leaves the EU. [906540]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Robin Walker):** The UK has a long-standing tradition of ensuring that our rights and liberties are protected domestically, and of promoting high standards across a range of issues on the international stage. The EU withdrawal Act 2018 will ensure that, wherever practical, the same rights, standards and protections apply after exit. We will not engage in a race to the bottom in the standards and protections we set.

**Mohammad Yasin:** The recent White Paper committed the UK to membership of the European convention on human rights. Will the Minister confirm that the

Human Rights Act 1998, which puts that in domestic law, embodies that commitment to the people of the UK and our European partners?

**Mr Walker:** Yes.

**Mr Speaker:** Well done.

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): One of the most tangible benefits of the EU for my constituents is their ability to travel across the EU and not pay roaming charges on mobile phones. Will the Minister guarantee that once we leave the EU, my constituents will still be able to travel and not pay roaming charges?

**Mr Walker:** The hon. Lady raises an interesting point. I do not see how it relates to rights, standards and protections, but we will be discussing the matter with commercial operators in the sector. A number of key UK providers have already said that they do not intend to apply roaming charges.

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): The question relates to when we leave the EU, and I have a little digital thing on my phone that says that we are going to leave in 253 days' time. There has been a lot of talk in the media today about the Government considering extending the article 50 period and the exit date. Will the superb Minister lay that rumour to rest, and confirm that the Prime Minister will stick to her guns and that we will leave on 29 March next year?

**Mr Walker:** I am happy to reassure my hon. Friend that, as it says in the EU (Withdrawal) Act, and as is clear in the White Paper, we are going to leave on 29 March next year.

21. [906556] **Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): The European arrest warrant is a protection, so will the Minister update us on whether, when we leave the EU, the negotiated position that his Government will arrive at with the EU will give us the same protections that we currently have to arrest and detain criminals, which my constituents are really concerned about?

**Mr Walker:** We are very clear in the security partnership section of the White Paper that we are seeking the same levels of protection. We are seeking to engage with the EU on how these issues can be arranged between us so that we maintain the protections that we have now.

### UK Service Industry

7. **Sandy Martin** (Ipswich) (Lab): What plans he has to negotiate for the retention of market access for EU service providers as part of the future partnership between the UK and the EU. [906541]

17. **Tom Brake** (Carshalton and Wallington) (LD): What steps he is taking to ensure that negotiations on the UK's exit from the EU support the UK's service industry. [906551]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Robin Walker):** The White Paper sets out a comprehensive vision for our partnership

with the EU. For services, our ambitious and credible proposals include guaranteeing that suppliers and investors can operate across a broad number of sectors, enabling firms to establish cross-border services, ensuring that professionals continue to get their qualifications recognised, and establishing a new economic and regulatory partnership for financial services.

**Sandy Martin:** Successive British Governments have expended significant effort and time on negotiating a single market in services in the EU, achieving a 40% increase in services exports since 2010 as a result. How long does the Minister think that it will take to negotiate a similarly open market in services with other parts of the world, and what does he suggest my constituents working in insurance and IT do in the meantime?

**Mr Walker:** The White Paper sets out a number of proposals for the services sector on how we can maintain those benefits, but we have also been growing our services trade with the rest of the world. The hon. Gentleman mentioned a 40% growth in trade with the EU, but there has been a 70% growth in UK services exports to countries outside the EU over the past decade. Our UK services industry is world leading and will continue to be as we go through this process.

**Tom Brake:** In preparing for negotiations, a responsible Government would establish the impact on the services sector of both the Chequers agreement and no deal, so will the Minister confirm how the profitability, job creation potential and ability to export to the EU of the services sector would be affected if either the Chequers proposals or no deal were reached with the European Union?

**Mr Walker:** The right hon. Gentleman will know that the UK has a world-leading services sector. As we have just discussed, it is exporting both to the EU and the rest of the world very successfully. Sadly, the single market in services was never completed. I think that our services sector will remain hugely profitable and a huge success story for the UK throughout this process.

**Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab):** The White Paper says repeatedly that on services, which make up 80% of the UK economy, the Government's proposals will mean less market access for UK businesses to European markets compared with at present. Have the Government made an assessment of the impact of this lower level of market access, either on the volume of trade or the impact on jobs?

**Mr Walker:** As the right hon. Gentleman will know, we have been engaging with businesses across the whole economy, which of course includes our world-leading services sector. It is clear that the advantages that make the services sector world leading are created here in the UK. We will make sure that the services sector has the right arrangements to continue to do business within Europe and to continue to have qualifications recognised but, of course, we are leaving the single market and there will be changes as a result.

#### Contingency Plans

8. **Martyn Day (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP):** What contingency plans his Department has made for no deal being reached on the UK leaving the EU. [906542]

20. **Giles Watling (Clacton) (Con):** What contingency plans his Department is making in the event that the UK leaves the EU without a deal. [906555]

23. **Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP):** What contingency plans his Department has made for no deal being reached on the UK leaving the EU. [906558]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Chris Heaton-Harris):** We have made significant progress in negotiations and are confident that we will secure a deal with the European Union. However, as a responsible Government, we are continuing to prepare for all possible outcomes.

**Martyn Day:** There has been recent press speculation that the Government are considering emergency measures that would include the stockpiling of food and medicines. Will the Minister confirm whether that is accurate? If so, what would be the proposals for the distribution of those stockpiles?

**Chris Heaton-Harris:** Departments' plans are well developed and designed to respond to all scenarios, including the unlikely possibility that we leave the EU without a deal. Some contingency plans have already become evident and more will become public over the coming weeks.

**Giles Watling:** If, in the end, there is no deal, can my hon. Friend assure me that the Government's contingency plans will take into account often overlooked areas, such as Clacton?

**Chris Heaton-Harris:** Clacton, Mr Speaker, is never overlooked by its Member of Parliament.

The Government are engaging with businesses and other stakeholders in every region of the United Kingdom in order to understand the challenges and opportunities that may have an impact on them. Later this year we will consult on the new UK shared prosperity fund, which will give us an opportunity to consider carefully how we should address barriers to growth and tackle inequalities faced by all parts of the country, including rural and coastal areas such as my hon. Friend's Clacton constituency.

**Alan Brown:** The Government's own analysis shows that no deal would be a financial disaster, and this week the Governor of the Bank of England warned that a no deal Brexit would have "big economic consequences" for the UK. The White Paper was a sham: it just talked about "exploring options". Does the Minister agree that the Government need to do a lot more than explore options, and that they should work hard to secure a deal, rather than facing a no deal scenario?

**Chris Heaton-Harris:** Obviously we would much rather have a very good deal with the European Union than not, and most of the work in my Department is focused on that, but we must prepare for every scenario. As for the gentleman whom the hon. Gentleman quoted, let me finish that quotation by saying that the financial consequences for the EU would be far greater.

**Mr Steve Baker** (Wycombe) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on his new position. There is absolutely no one whom I would rather see in his job at this time, and I wish him every possible success.

Papers that are available to my hon. Friend will show that as long ago as October, I was seeking to create a parliamentary moment to galvanise the whole Government to prepare not only for the unwanted contingency of no deal, but for all scenarios, including the end of the implementation period. Will he now use the collective agreement reached at Chequers to go out and galvanise the whole Government to deliver, in the knowledge that that is not something that the Department for Exiting the European Union can direct, and that it will require those at the very top of the Government to mobilise every Department?

**Chris Heaton-Harris:** I thank my hon. Friend for his question, and for leaving me an unbelievable quantity of reading to do because of the diligent way in which, as he rightly says, he prepared for every scenario.

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): I welcome the Secretary of State and the Minister to their elevation to the governing classes. Given that the Minister's predecessor has now chosen to reveal some of what was in unpublished Cabinet papers, I hope we can expect to see the rest published quite soon.

Today Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary for England and Wales warned police forces that they need to be ready for an increase in hate crime after we leave the European Union. Does that take the Government by surprise?

**Chris Heaton-Harris:** I had not heard about that particular report, so I cannot comment on it. What I can say is that, in preparing for no deal, we have already recruited 300 extra staff to police our borders, and we have an ongoing programme to recruit a whole load more.

**Peter Grant:** With the greatest respect, hate crime is not committed by people who cross our borders to come here; it is committed by people who are already here, all too often provoked by irresponsible and inflammatory language from those who really should know much better. I ask the Minister again: did the Government realise before the publication of today's report that Brexit—intentionally or unintentionally—would create a climate in which hate crime was more likely to take place?

**Chris Heaton-Harris:** I am afraid that I do not recognise the basis for the hon. Gentleman's question—I do not believe that in the slightest. I can only point out to him that a group of people called the “cybernats” were not particularly pleasant in the run-up to the Scottish referendum.

**Dr Sarah Wollaston** (Totnes) (Con): Crashing out with no deal looks increasingly likely, particularly as former members of the Government have stated that they intend to undermine a deal. What is needed now is a plain English guide to the consequences of no deal for individuals, families, communities and businesses. Will the Minister commit himself to publishing such a guide so that people can see the consequences and step away from the edge of the cliff?

**Chris Heaton-Harris:** As my—right hon. Friend? [*Interruption.*] It is only a matter of time; everything comes to those who wait.

As my hon. Friend knows, because she chairs the Liaison Committee, the Prime Minister said yesterday that a whole bunch of technical notices would be produced for exactly that purpose.

**Hywel Williams** (Arfon) (PC): We have already heard a great deal about no deal and potential problems at Dover. What are the Government's plans in respect of the second busiest roll-on/roll-off port in the UK, which is Holyhead?

**Chris Heaton-Harris:** The Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr Walker), has already met representatives from Holyhead. I look forward to travelling around the country, visiting such places and listening to what people have to say.

### Fishing Policy

9. **Peter Aldous** (Waveney) (Con): What recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on negotiations with the EU on fishing policy for when the UK leaves the EU. [906543]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Suella Braverman):** We work closely with Ministers and officials from all Departments, including DEFRA, to further our preparations for exit from, and a new partnership with, the EU. This includes discussions on the recently published future framework White Paper and the fisheries White Paper.

**Peter Aldous:** I am grateful to the Minister for that answer. Can she confirm that her Department shares the commitment of the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to the UK having full control of our territorial waters when we leave the EU, with trade in fish and fish products being a completely separate matter, and that there will be no trade deals linked to access to our fisheries?

**Suella Braverman:** The Government are clear that upon our exit from the European Union the UK will be an independent coastal nation free to set our own rules including on access to our waters and fisheries policies, and we seek to agree a process for future annual negotiations with the EU on access and fishing opportunities. I hope that that reassures my hon. Friend that we will be taking back control of this significant sector of our economy.

**Melanie Onn** (Great Grimsby) (Lab): With our leaving the EU next year, access to European funds that have done a great deal for fishing communities around coastal areas will be lost. Will the Government themselves replace those funds in the same way that they propose to deal with funding for farmers?

**Suella Braverman:** I was delighted to visit the hon. Lady's Grimsby constituency earlier this year and I know how energetic she is as a representative of her constituents. The fundamental principle, as set out in the fisheries White Paper and the future framework, is that we—this Parliament—will be in control of how we distribute funding, how we set the rules and how we empower our fishing communities around the country.

**Mr Speaker:** I tell the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Melanie Onn) that I have not visited her constituency recently, but during the general election campaign, in Buckingham, in the market square in Winslow, I did buy, and then consume, fish that was, of course, from Grimsby.

**Martin Vickers** (Cleethorpes) (Con): Notwithstanding what the Minister has said and what her colleagues have said on previous occasions, she will be aware that in fishing communities there are still concerns that the Government will use fishing in some way and make further concessions. Can she give an absolute guarantee that there will be no further concessions on fisheries?

**Suella Braverman:** Again, I was very happy to visit my hon. Friend's constituency as part of my travels as a Minister. Like him, I represent a coastal constituency, where we know that our fishermen work very hard to earn their livings. The Government have been absolutely clear that once we leave the EU and no longer abide by the common fisheries policy, we will be an independent coastal state managing our fisheries and controlling access to our own waters. I hope that that reassures my hon. Friend.

### International Business Community

10. **Jeremy Lefroy** (Stafford) (Con): What steps he is taking to ensure that the Government engage with the international business community during negotiations on the UK leaving the EU. [906544]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Suella Braverman):** The Government have regular and productive dialogue with the international business community, and the DExEU ministerial team has visited 18 EU member states this year alone, meeting businesses to understand their priorities and explain how our proposals enable businesses to thrive. Tomorrow, the Secretary of State and the ministerial team will be meeting business leaders from a number of countries at Chevening House, which is a dedicated opportunity to hear from them.

**Jeremy Lefroy:** One issue that the business community has raised is continuing access to the working and investment capital currently supplied through the European Investment Bank. What arrangements are the Government making to ensure that continued flow of capital to our businesses?

**Suella Braverman:** My hon. Friend is right to point out that investment is crucial for the economic future of our nation and of the wealth creators in our country. The UK believes it may be mutually beneficial to maintain some form of ongoing relationship with the European Investment Bank, and we are exploring those options now.

**Nic Dakin** (Scunthorpe) (Lab): What assessment have the Government made of the costs to international and domestic business of preparing, amidst the chaos of this Government, for all the possible outcomes of new relationships with the EU?

**Suella Braverman:** As has been set out this morning on many occasions, the Government are carrying out extensive preparations for all outcomes. No deal is not

our objective, but we are preparing for that scenario, as is responsible and expected. Our future framework White Paper, however, sets out how we see our economic relationship working with the EU so that UK and EU businesses can continue to trade fruitfully as we leave the EU.

**Wera Hobhouse** (Bath) (LD): Following on from that question, when will the Minister's Department properly publish an impact assessment for all sectors on the impact of a no deal scenario, in contrast to the shambles that we saw at the end of last year?

**Suella Braverman:** The Government have been clear that we will provide the appropriate analysis at the time that a deal is presented to Parliament. Many predictions of impacts and outcomes were made at the time of the referendum, but let us look at the facts. Manufacturing is at a record high, exports are rising faster than imports, and unemployment is at its lowest in 40 years. Let us base our predictions on the facts, not on scaremongering.

### Devolved Administrations

12. **Chris Law** (Dundee West) (SNP): What discussions his Department has had with the devolved Administrations on the content of the White Paper on the future relationship between the UK and the EU, published on 12 July 2018. [906546]

13. **Andrew Bowie** (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (Con): What discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on their preparations for the UK leaving the EU. [906547]

22. **Neil Gray** (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): What discussions his Department has had with the devolved Administrations on the content of the White Paper on the future relationship between the UK and the EU, published on 12 July 2018. [906557]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Robin Walker):** Extensive discussions were held with the devolved Administrations through the Joint Ministerial Council for EU negotiations and the ministerial forum for EU negotiations, which I chair, and at official level, to ensure that their views were taken into account in finalising the White Paper.

**Chris Law:** If that is the case, will the Minister tell the House why the White Paper includes absolutely no mention of how the UK Government will include the devolved Administrations in the development of new trade relationships with the EU?

**Mr Walker:** There are many references, which I was pleased to talk through on the day of the publication of the White Paper with a Minister from the Scottish Government, and indeed a Minister from the Welsh Government, a number of which they welcomed.

**Andrew Bowie:** It will come as no surprise to anyone here that the Scottish National party do not want to make a success of Brexit. They want to wreck Brexit and wreck our United Kingdom, and the implementation Bill is designed to do just that. Can my hon. Friend assure me that he is doing all he can to ensure the

implementation of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 across the whole of the UK, to enable the smooth transition out of the EU that is needed for business and the economy to thrive?

**Mr Walker:** I agree with my hon. Friend, but significant concerns remain about whether UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Legal Continuity) (Scotland) Bill is within the competence of the Scottish Parliament. As he knows, the Supreme Court will be considering that matter next week. I remind the House that the Government have worked hard over the past year to try to secure the support of the Scottish Government for the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018. However, we could not go as far as the Scottish Government would want, because it cannot be right that one legislature in one part of the UK should be able to veto the approach of the Union when there is agreement on the UK-wide framework.

**Neil Gray:** Given that the implementation of the agreements reached between the EU and the UK will be in devolved areas of competency, why was there not proper discussion with Scottish Ministers in advance about how that would happen? When will those discussions take place?

**Mr Walker:** There has been regular discussion between the Government and Scottish Ministers, including ahead of the White Paper, and those discussions will continue. We will continue to work with the Scottish Government in good faith on the arrangements for a future partnership with the EU and on preparations for contingency planning.

**Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP):** I think that the Government are still planning to bring forward a withdrawal agreement and implementation Bill in due course, so will the Minister tell us whether that will require legislative consent from the devolved institutions? Will he also tell us whether he expects it to have to amend or repeal any aspects of the customs and trade Bills that we have been debating this week?

**Mr Walker:** We will be bringing forward more detail on that legislation shortly. This is something that we have already discussed in some depth with the Scottish Government through the ministerial forum for EU negotiations.

### Intellectual Property Rights

14. **Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP):** What steps his Department is taking during its negotiations on the UK leaving the EU to ensure that intellectual property rights in the creative sector are maintained. [R] [906548]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Robin Walker):** UK-owned trademarks and design rights in the EU27 will be unaffected by our withdrawal. Meanwhile, we have agreed to protect all existing EU trademarks, community-registered designs and unregistered designs in the UK as we leave the EU. In place of those EU-level rights, 1.5 million new UK trademarks and registered designs will be granted automatically and for free. The creative industries can therefore be confident that their existing intellectual

property rights will not be diminished, and that the UK will remain one of the best places in the world to protect and enforce IP rights.

**Dr Cameron:** I thank the Minister for that response. It is extremely reassuring, particularly to the all-party parliamentary group for textiles and fashion, which I chair. However, concerns have been raised with me this week regarding EU-wide trademark and design registrations, because they do not feature specifically in the White Paper and could therefore be at risk, once the definition of the EU no longer includes the UK. Can the Minister reassure the industry in that respect?

**Mr Walker:** Yes, I would like to reassure the industry that we have set out in the White Paper that we want to work with the EU to reflect common arrangements in this space. We recognise that the UK is a world leader in fashion, and it should continue to be. We will ensure that trademarks and unregistered design rights are protected in the UK.

### Employment in Scotland

15. **Hugh Gaffney (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (Lab):** What assessment the Government have made of the effect on levels of employment in Scotland of the UK leaving the EU without a deal. [906549]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Chris Heaton-Harris):** We are committed to securing a deal that works for the entire UK, including Scotland. We approach the negotiations anticipating success and neither want nor expect a no deal outcome. The Government are undertaking a wide range of ongoing analysis across a range of scenarios in support of our EU exit negotiations and preparations.

**Hugh Gaffney:** I welcome the new Ministers to their jobs. As we have seen this week, the Government's Brexit plans are in tatters. What assurances can the Minister give the House, my constituents and residents across the country that no deal is in fact the worst of all worlds and that the jobs of hard-working people in Scotland will not be sacrificed to keep this Tory party together?

**Chris Heaton-Harris:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for welcoming me to my new role. If the Labour party had supported us, no deal would have been far away and a deal would have been on the table.

### Association Agreement

19. **Karin Smyth (Bristol South) (Lab):** What assessment he has made of the potential merits of negotiating an association agreement as part of the future partnership between the UK and the EU. [906553]

**The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Dominic Raab):** As we set out in the White Paper, the future UK-EU relationship is likely to consist of several separate agreements covering different elements of economic, security and cross-cutting co-operation, and those arrangements could take the form of an association agreement.

**Karin Smyth:** I thank the Secretary of State for that answer. According to the European External Action Service, an association agreement must offer “a privileged relationship” between the European Union and its partner and must create enforcement bodies that are “competent to take decisions that bind the contracting parties”. Will the Secretary of State confirm that that is now the Government’s aim?

**Dominic Raab:** I thank the hon. Lady for her question. An association agreement is a flexible legal form. It is a term of art in general international law, but it does require binding treaty arrangements. In relation to recourse for dispute settlement, we have set out detailed proposals in the White Paper for arbitration, and that obviously has the advantage, whether it is a three or five-person arbitration panel, of being balanced. The UK and the EU will be able to appoint arbitrators to the panel, so disputes can be resolved with good faith, trust and confidence on both sides.

### Industrial Chemicals Regulation

24. **Maggie Throup** (Erewash) (Con): What progress he has made in negotiations on ensuring continued co-operation with the EU on the regulation of industrial chemicals after the UK leaves the EU. [906559]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Robin Walker):** As set out in the White Paper, the UK seeks participation in the European Chemicals Agency, which will ensure that products go through only one approval mechanism to access both UK and EU markets. Given the sector’s complex multinational supply chains and the well-developed regulatory framework, there is a strong incentive for the UK and the EU to continue co-operation in this area.

**Maggie Throup:** I thank the Minister for that answer. Much of Britain’s manufacturing and engineering sector relies heavily on an uninterrupted supply of industrial chemicals, which are used on the production line to carry out processes such as non-destructive testing. Will my hon. Friend update the House on what progress has been made in negotiations with the EU on the REACH regulations? Will he reassure businesses in Erewash that they will continue to have ready access to industrial chemicals after we leave the EU?

**Mr Walker:** As the hon. Lady says—I recognise this from my constituency, too—chemicals are an important part of production input, and the proposed free trade area for goods, underpinned by a common rulebook, will protect existing supply chains. Our proposals will ensure that products meet the necessary regulatory requirements for both the UK and EU markets, removing the need for regulatory checks at the border, and will mean that existing chemicals regulations and authorisations will remain valid in both markets.

### Topical Questions

T1. [906560] **Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

**The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Dominic Raab):** Last week, the Government published their White Paper on the future relationship between

the UK and EU. Today, I will travel to Brussels to meet Michel Barnier to discuss the negotiations, and I look forward to working with him to secure a deal in the best interests of both the United Kingdom and our European partners.

**Tom Pursglove:** What steps is my right hon. Friend taking to bolster and emphasise the importance of no deal planning across Government?

**Dominic Raab:** Most of our no deal preparation has been developed internally with targeted engagement with the relevant parties, but we are now at the point at which more of that delivery will start to become more public. Over the summer, the Government will release a series of technical notices to set out what UK businesses and citizens in various sectors will need to do in a no deal scenario and to make public more of our preparations. That is the responsible thing for any Government to do.

**Keir Starmer** (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab): Yesterday, the former Brexit Minister, the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker), made a direct threat to the Secretary of State that Conservative MPs on his wing of the party are not prepared to vote for any Brexit deal that does not meet their demands. Talking about the White Paper, he said that 40-plus Conservative Members

“do not like this deal and are willing to vote in line with that dislike”.—[*Official Report*, 18 July 2018; Vol. 645, c. 489.]

Against that threat, and without just saying that it is a great White Paper, what evidence can the Secretary of State point to that suggests the White Paper could command a majority in this House?

**Dominic Raab:** The right hon. and learned Gentleman seems more interested in doing the job of whipping Conservative Members than in coming up with any serious, substantive proposals. We have a White Paper, and I am going to Brussels. We ought to unite the United Kingdom behind getting the best deal for this country and for our European friends.

**Keir Starmer:** Let me follow on. Given the threat that has been issued by the hon. Member for Wycombe, the burning question for the Secretary of State, which will be asked again and again in this House, across the country and, I have no doubt, by Michel Barnier later today, is whether he personally is prepared to face down that threat. What is the answer?

**Dominic Raab:** I am not interested in the media circus or in any of the drama. We have proper scrutiny in this House, and we have relentlessly and unflinchingly focused—I am sure our European partners will be doing the same—on narrowing the differences, accentuating the positives and getting a win-win deal that is good for this country and good for our European friends. The right hon. and learned Gentleman should get behind that effort.

T6. [906565] **Chris Green** (Bolton West) (Con): My electors expect the decision of a general election to be delivered, just as they expect the decision of a referendum to be delivered. Does my right hon. Friend agree that to have a second referendum would undermine the democratic process and that anyone calling in this place for a second referendum should perhaps step down, have a by-election and ask for a second opinion on themselves?

**Dominic Raab:** My hon. Friend makes his point in his usual powerful and eloquent way. Of course, when the referendum legislation was passed it was agreed by all parties that we would respect the verdict of the referendum. That was how we entered into the legislation, that was how the legislation was passed by the House and that was how we campaigned. It would be a shifting of the democratic goalposts and a breach of democratic trust to suggest otherwise.

T2. [906561] **Alex Cunningham** (Stockton North) (Lab): My Stockton North constituency is home to some of the country's most energy-intensive industries, and the future nature of the greenhouse gas scheme is a key business issue for them. The Chequers agreement suggests that we might remain in the EU emissions trading scheme. When will we know?

**Dominic Raab:** Having sat on various Select Committees with the hon. Gentleman, I know that he takes these issues very seriously. We detailed it in the White Paper, and he has the reassurance of the detail in that extensive document. I will be going out to talk to Michel Barnier and our European friends about all these issues to make sure we can take it further forward.

T7. [906566] **David Duguid** (Banff and Buchan) (Con): The repeated commitment from this Government that we are indeed leaving the common fisheries policy is welcomed by the fishing communities of Banff and Buchan and around the United Kingdom. Concerns remain, however, that the position of the European Fisheries Alliance, among others in Europe, is to maintain as much of the status quo as possible. Will the Minister commit to meeting me and representatives of the Scottish fishing industry to discuss how leaving the CFP can lead to this vital industry not just surviving but thriving and growing post Brexit?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Suella Braverman):** I assure my hon. Friend that I share his and the Environment Secretary's view that, once we leave the EU, we will be able to control access to our waters by non-UK registered vessels, which will be a matter for negotiation. Access to markets for fish products will be agreed as part of our future economic partnership, just as with other goods and food products.

T3. [906562] **Helen Hayes** (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): I understand that the Secretary of State, as a member of the campaign committee of Vote Leave—the campaign committee met weekly, according to Vote Leave's website, to agree the leave campaign's strategy—may not want to comment on this week's findings of the Electoral Commission until he has spoken to the police, who are investigating those findings, so I ask him this hypothetical question instead. In a situation in which an organisation has been found to have lied about its spending and to have broken UK law in order to secure a narrow referendum victory, what does he believe the consequences should be?

**Dominic Raab:** Obviously we need to see any of those allegations, any of those cases, followed up by the relevant authorities. I was on the campaign board of Vote Leave. I had nothing to do with the financial

implications, with donations or with anything like that. What I think the hon. Lady is really trying to do is somehow, in a back-handed way, to discredit the outcome of the referendum, which is not going to work. The country voted to leave the EU, and that is what we are going to do.

T9. [906568] **Giles Watling** (Clacton) (Con): As we strike out into this brave new world of global trade post Brexit, can my right hon. Friend reassure me that, whatever the result of the negotiations, this Government will redouble their effort to retain cordial relationships with Europe on both trade and security?

**Dominic Raab:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right; that is what the White Paper sets out. This is about maintaining a strong trading relationship with our EU friends; broadening our opportunity to trade more energetically, with a bit more vim and vigour, with the growth markets of the globe, from Asia to Latin America; and, of course, in those vital other areas of co-operation, including security, making sure that we retain those strong ties.

T4. [906563] **Karen Lee** (Lincoln) (Lab): The European Court of Justice rulings that deemed that on-call working should be calculated as working time have been crucial in ensuring fair pay for residential care workers in the UK. What guarantees will the Government give to ensure that this vital protection will continue after the UK leaves the EU?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Chris Heaton-Harris):** I thank the hon. Lady for her question. She comes from a wonderful city that I used to live in and which voted heavily for leave. People there will therefore be surprised that she is trying to undermine that referendum result. However, I can tell her that there is no intention on this side to undermine any of those workers' rights.

T10. [906569] **Stephen Metcalfe** (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con): More than half the scientists currently working in the UK were born outside it. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is essential that we allow scientists to continue to contribute to this country after we leave the EU?

**Dominic Raab:** My hon. Friend makes a good point. We are ending free movement. We want, in order to restore confidence in our immigration system, to control the numbers of people coming here. We want to make sure we have stronger checks at the border, for security purposes. But it is absolutely right to say that this country benefits from immigration, including in the way he described. The proposals we put forward on mobility will make sure we continue to do so in the future.

T5. [906564] **Danielle Rowley** (Midlothian) (Lab): Does the Secretary of State still believe that EU proposals to promote gender parity in boardrooms amount to "tokenism" and that "inexperienced people" will end up on boards? If not, how will he promote gender equality through the Brexit process?

**Dominic Raab:** I thank the hon. Lady for that question. I am meritocratic to my heart; I do not believe in any discrimination, be it against men or women. Of course we are going to maintain our strong equality standards—

and indeed reinforce them. We do not need Brussels for that; we need active and energetic Members in all parts of this House.

**Vicky Ford** (Chelmsford) (Con): Many Conservative party members in Chelmsford voted leave, but when I met them last week the vast majority supported the Chequers deal and the White Paper. May I urge the new Secretary of State to continue to fight for a deal that delivers for our security and protects jobs?

**Dominic Raab:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. She has a wealth of experience and expertise in all these different areas, and I have listened carefully to the strong contributions she has made in this House every step of the way. She will have seen the White Paper. I believe that, not just in the letter, but in the spirit, it will deliver the kind of Brexit she wants to see: one that is good for this country and good for our European friends, and one that will allow Britain to go from strength to strength.

T8. [906567] **Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): Last week, I visited a family-run company in my constituency that sells extreme sports goods to more than 80 countries. People there told me that reverting to World Trade Organisation rules would cost the company more than £1.6 million in tariffs alone. They also told me they had had overtures made to them by the International Trade Secretary and by the Secretary of State's predecessor, on condition that when they met they did not talk about Brexit. When is the Secretary of State going to start listening to such family-run companies and hear about the impact that a no deal would have?

**Dominic Raab:** I thank the hon. Lady for that. She has always been powerful in her contributions, both on the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill and right throughout on Brexit. As she will know from the White Paper, we have a detailed set of proposals that are not only principled, but flexible, to make sure that we not only sustain the strong trade we want with our EU friends but take advantage of the global opportunities to trade more energetically. This will be good for exporters and for cutting the costs of living in this country by reducing prices.

**Julia Lopez** (Hornchurch and Upminster) (Con): Following this week's votes, which make aspects of the White Paper less tenable and certainly less likely to be accepted by the EU, has the Secretary of State had any discussions with No. 10 and within his own Department about modifying the UK's negotiating position?

**Dominic Raab:** Our negotiating position is set out clearly in the White Paper. Obviously, we listen to my hon. Friend, who is a strong campaigner on this issue, with a powerful voice. We are listening to all sides, but what we need to make sure we do now is come together to deliver these proposals, get the best deal for the UK and forge the agreement with the EU. These proposals are a principled and pragmatic way of delivering that.

**Clive Efford** (Eltham) (Lab): The National Audit Office says that unless we at least agree a mutually recognised driving licence, up to 7 million licences may have to be issued in the first year after Brexit alone, and that detailed delivery plans are yet to be completed.

Is that not an example of our unreadiness for falling out of the European Union? What is being done to make sure that drivers can drive on the continent if we come out without a deal?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Robin Walker):** The White Paper makes it clear that on those measures we want to reach arrangements that are in the mutual interests of the UK and the EU. Of course, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said, there will be more announcements on contingency planning in due course.

**Richard Graham** (Gloucester) (Con): On citizens' rights, UK citizens in some EU countries may have to renounce their British citizenship to stay living in those countries. It is unclear whether any of the 1.2 million in the EU will be able to move from living in one country to living in another without making further applications. At the same time, the EU is very reluctant to secure reciprocal voting rights. It is good that our approach is generous, but is my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State concerned about the lack of reciprocity in some areas of citizens' rights? Will he raise the issue with Michel Barnier later today?

**Suella Braverman:** My hon. Friend is right to highlight this issue. The Home Secretary has issued a statement that sets out his disappointment that the EU has not necessarily put into plan the reciprocal arrangements that it agreed to for EU citizens. For our part, we have made it clear that we have agreed the sections of the withdrawal agreement that provide for an exhaustive and comprehensive series of protections for EU citizens. That is on a reciprocal basis and we expect the EU to respond in kind.

**Daniel Zeichner** (Cambridge) (Lab): This week, the Office for Budget Responsibility followed the Institute for Fiscal Studies in pointing out that there is no such thing as a Brexit dividend. Given that the OBR was set up to provide expert advice to the Government, may we have an assurance that there will be no more talk from Ministers of this fantasy Brexit dividend?

**Dominic Raab:** It is clear that when we leave the EU and take back control of our borders, law and money, we will not be paying the gross contributions to the EU. We will continue some domestic payments in the way that we have described, but we will of course be able to take back control of our net contribution and will pay a lot less to the EU as a result.

**Michael Tomlinson** (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (Con): I warmly welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Chris Heaton-Harris) to his new role. Will he confirm that he will continue and build on the good work of my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker), and that he is by no means starting from scratch?

**Chris Heaton-Harris:** I can confirm that I will build on the amazing quantity of diligent work that my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker) has put in place. I only wish he was still on the Front Bench to finish it off.

**Nick Smith** (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): Famers say that crops are rotting in the ground because of a lack of European labour. When will we see a seasonal agricultural workers scheme?

**Dominic Raab:** The hon. Gentleman is right to raise the issue of mobility. We detailed some of the proposals in the White Paper and we will of course take forward the negotiations. As he will know, I am seeing Michel Barnier later today. It is crucial that we make sure that we have a balanced approach to immigration in which we control the numbers coming here and make sure that we fill the skills shortages in the way that the hon. Gentleman has described, while also making sure that we restore public trust by having proper control over our borders and immigration policy.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Colleagues are a rum lot, I must say! I was just about to call the hon. Member for Walsall North (Eddie Hughes) but he has beetled out of the Chamber, poor chap. Admittedly, he was not to know that I was going to call him, but had he stayed, I would have done, and I usually do. It is very odd. As for the hon. Member for Clacton (Giles Watling), we always savour his contributions but he has already spoken at topical questions so cannot do so again.

**Mr Steve Baker** (Wycombe) (Con): Given that HMRC makes available online the documentation for its computable general equilibrium model, will the Department follow suit so that the public can be objectively informed about the shortcomings of such models and so that the model can be fully scrutinised by interested external economists?

**Dominic Raab:** I thank my hon. Friend for the first in what I am sure will be a series of valuable and important forensic contributions. I shall take a good, long, hard look at the matter.

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): Andrew Muirhead Leather in my constituency has been in business since 1840 and relies on the EU for importing rawhides, exporting leather and chemical processing. Will the Secretary of State meet the people from Andrew Muirhead Leather to hear their concerns? They are extremely worried about what a no-deal Brexit would mean for their business.

**Dominic Raab:** We do understand some of the concerns relating to supply chains. If the hon. Lady looks at the White Paper, and in particular at the facilitated customs arrangement, she will see our approach and the detailed way in which we are going to resolve those concerns, not only to maintain that strong EU trade that I understand her constituents need, but to make sure that we grasp the opportunities of Brexit, particularly in respect of global trade.

**Jeremy Lefroy** (Stafford) (Con): I welcome the association agreement with the EU that the White Paper seeks. Will my right hon. Friend therefore also seek a category of associate citizenship for UK citizens with the EU? I think that will be welcomed both by the European Parliament and by many, many millions of people in the United Kingdom who are losing their European citizenship and would like something to replace it.

**Mr Robin Walker:** My hon. Friend raises an interesting point, and I know that it is something that is very dear to the heart of the President of the European Parliament and something that he has discussed. The EU Commission is, of course, running these negotiations with a mandate from the Council and, at this stage, there is no mandate for it to discuss the issue of associate citizenship.

## Personal Statement

10.40 am

**Ian Paisley** (North Antrim) (DUP): I thank you, Mr Speaker, for allowing me to make this personal statement at this time. It is with profound personal regret and deep personal embarrassment that I have to make this statement.

In 2013, in the course of my first Parliament, I failed properly to register and declare two overseas visits. I had no ulterior motive for that genuine mistake. I do recognise how serious a mistake it was. As a Member of Parliament, I know that I have personal responsibility to seek to be above reproach. I acknowledge that registration of such matters and subsequent declarations must be adhered to diligently. I accept my total failure in that matter. I have given an unreserved apology to the House and to colleagues. I take the opportunity to do so again from my place here, and I do it without qualification. I say sorry and apologise for the failings that were identified in the Standards Committee report.

I am disappointed that I was not able to persuade members of the Committee of the weight of my arguments on some of the major matters of mitigation, especially on the issue of paid advocacy. However, I accept the report, but I do so regret its sanctions. I have apologised to the House and to colleagues and I understand that, subject to the decision of this House, I may, from September, be subject to a suspension lasting 30 days.

I take my duties as a Member of Parliament seriously. I believe that I conduct myself with colleagues with integrity and openness, which is why I have such remorse about the matter, as I believe it goes against the grain of who I am, especially how it is portrayed.

It is to my constituents, who have sent me here since 2010, that I make the profoundest of all apologies. They have honoured me with unwavering support to be their voice and I hope that they will continue to have that confidence in me in the future.

We all in this Chamber know that, in public life, if we make mistakes, they are amplified, and rightly so. That is the nature of the job that all of us do and all of us understand that. However, I believe in a politics and in politicians who can admit to human frailty, who can apologise, mean it, and move on, because that is what real life is all about. It is often said that it is how we respond to these challenges in our lives that defines who and what we are, and defines our character and demonstrates to us where the true source of our personal strength rests. The 8th-century prophet Isaiah said, "You were angry with me, that anger has turned away, you comfort me." I hope to learn that lesson.

**Mr Speaker:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for what he has said and the sincerity with which I feel sure the whole House will accept that he has said it. The matter rests there. Thank you.

## ESA Underpayments

10.44 am

**Marsha De Cordova** (Battersea) (Lab) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if she will make a statement on the employment and support allowance underpayments.

**The Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work (Sarah Newton):** In 2017, the Department for Work and Pensions identified an error that had resulted in some claimants being underpaid employment and support allowance between 2011 and 2014 while their claims were being converted from incapacity benefit, a legacy disability payment. The Department proactively informed the House of this problem in 2017 through a written statement before briefing partners and the media.

On 15 March, the Secretary of State tabled a statement setting out how the work to correct the underpayments was progressing. She explained that the Department would supply 400 staff for this exercise to ensure that we could identify as quickly as possible any cases where underpayments had occurred. Yesterday, she tabled a further statement to confirm that this work was under way. Staff are reviewing cases, contacting claimants and making payments. So far, we have paid out over £40 million in arrears.

As outlined in yesterday's statement, the Department has analysed the relationship between official error and section 27 of the Social Security Act 1998 in regulating how and to what point in time arrears can be paid out. As a result of this analysis, we will now pay arrears to those affected back to the date of their conversion to ESA. Where we have already corrected cases by paying backdated arrears to 21 October 2014, we will review these cases again and pay any additional arrears due prior to that date. As planned, the Department will contact all those identified as potentially affected. Once an individual has been contacted and the relevant information gathered, they can expect to receive any backdated payments within 12 weeks. Once contacted, individuals will be provided with a dedicated free phone line on which to contact the Department to discuss their claim.

**Marsha De Cordova:** I want to thank you, Mr Speaker, for granting me this urgent question.

The ESA underpayments were a major error by the Department for Work and Pensions. Dating back to 2011, 70,000 ill and disabled people were underpaid thousands of pounds, after being wrongly migrated from incapacity benefit to the contributions-based ESA and thereby denied additional social security payments, such as the severe disability premium. This meant that people already neglected by the Government's social security system were denied vital support and caused significant hardship.

The DWP was alerted to the error as early as 2013, but, in what the Public Accounts Committee report, published yesterday, described as a "culture of indifference" at the Department, the error was neglected, only to be taken up six years after it had occurred. The Government had claimed they were legally prevented from paying arrears to those underpaid prior to 2014, but in a significant climbdown yesterday, they seemingly pre-empted a legal challenge and committed to paying arrears from the date claimants were migrated to ESA.

Significant questions remain unanswered. How many people does the DWP estimate will be entitled to additional arrears payments? How soon does the DWP expect to be able to identify people affected by this announcement? Will the DWP pay compensation to those who got into debt as a result of the underpayments? When will these payments be completed? What measures has the DWP undertaken to ensure that similar mistakes do not happen again?

The review into the ESA underpayments is just one of six the DWP will be carrying out to identify ill and disabled people to whom it has wrongly denied social security support. Five of those reviews have been undertaken only to pre-empt legal judgments. The latest announcement is yet further evidence of a Department in chaos, and the chaos is chronic, with millions of disabled people affected by the DWP's failures. That needs to be sorted and sorted now.

**Sarah Newton:** I will take each of the hon. Lady's detailed points in turn, but I first want to disabuse the House and the hon. Lady of the characterisation of people working in the DWP that we hear week after week. It simply is not fair. Day in and day out, the staff of the DWP work very hard to support people with health conditions and disabilities. The amount of money that this Government—in coalition and now as a Conservative Government—spend supporting people with health conditions and disabilities has grown every single year since we took office in 2010. We are absolutely committed to ensuring that people get the support from us that they need.

I want to put this issue in context. I fully accept, and have accepted, that these mistakes should not have happened. We are acting at pace to resolve these issues as soon as possible. Yes, some individual cases were raised in 2013, but at that time the Department felt that they were individual cases. It was not that the Department was lacklustre in trying to deal with the issue, as the hon. Lady is trying to portray. In fact, it was the proactive work of the DWP—in ensuring that we look out for fraud and underpayment—that identified this problem, and Ministers in the Department have worked proactively to put the necessary resources in place to resolve the issue as soon as possible. One mistake is one too many, but in actual fact this issue has affected about 5% of the people who made the transfer from incapacity benefit to ESA, and 3% of everyone on ESA. We are sorting the situation out as soon as possible.

The hon. Lady specifically asked how many people are affected. Our initial assessment was that 70,000 people were affected. However, in the light of our decision to go right back to the point at which people transferred from IB to ESA, we are going to look at more claimants—even dormant accounts—to ensure that no one is left out of this exercise, and the number will therefore rise. I will be able to update the House, as I regularly do, once we have taken this action over the summer recess. At the moment, we estimate that we will end up spending around £390 million, but given our further announcement yesterday, I expect the number of people affected—and therefore the amount of money—to go up. People will be paid their full arrears. It is absolutely important to me, the Secretary of State and the whole Department that we rectify the situation as soon as possible.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): The hon. Member for Battersea (Marsha De Cordova) has spoken of a culture of indifference, but the bill for disability benefits this year will be £5.4 billion higher than it was in 2010. Is there an exponential increase in the number of disabled people between whom payments are being spread ever more thinly?

**Sarah Newton:** We are absolutely determined to ensure that everyone with a health condition or a disability is supported so that they can lead as full and as independent a life as possible. That includes supporting people with a health condition or a disability who want to work into work. I am delighted that we have seen 600,000 more people with disabilities in work in the last four years. Of course, we want to ensure that those who are unable to work also get the support that they need.

**Neil Gray** (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): This is the latest in a long line of concessions forced on the UK Government by campaigners and the courts. In this case, I pay tribute to the efforts of the Child Poverty Action Group for achieving this victory for more than 70,000 disabled people in the face of the DWP's "culture of indifference", as described by the cross-party Public Accounts Committee. More than 70,000 disabled people have been denied money that they were due and knock-on support for between four and seven years. They were denied between £5,000 and £20,000, and support for the costs of prescriptions, dentistry and school meals.

Will the Minister advise the House on when this money will be paid out and whether it will be followed by compensation? Has the Department done any work to check whether its mistakes have had any other adverse consequences for those who have lost out, such as increased debt or mental health problems? In the light of the errors on ESA, PIP and universal credit, will the Department carry out a cross-departmental, cross-party review of its social security system to create one that is built on fairness, dignity and respect, as is happening in Scotland, rather than one that is subject to frequent legal challenge?

**Sarah Newton:** May I remind the hon. Gentleman that this action was due to the work of the Department itself? Because it is so important to us to make sure that people are not underpaid, it was our own work that led us to find this error and, as soon as we did, to put in place the actions to ensure that it was corrected.

On the hon. Gentleman's point about the date on which we pay back the benefit, as I said in my statement, all the legal advice that we were given was around section 27. However, having listened to concerns raised by a range of stakeholders, we went back to look at that analysis. We really wanted to make sure that we were doing the right thing by our claimants, and that is when we came forward with the decision that we made yesterday.

In terms of the Department's routine work, of course we welcome the fact that we have two very well-supported Select Committees. Only yesterday, I spoke to the Chairmen of the Public Accounts Committee and the Work and Pensions Committee. I always read with great interest and care any reports that they do. As I said to both Chairmen yesterday, we will seriously consider all their recommendations and report back to them, as they requested, in October.

**Maggie Throup** (Erewash) (Con): May I wish my hon. Friend a very happy birthday? I commend her for finding this issue, moving it on, and getting a solution to it. Does she recognise the important role that so many employers are playing in signing up to the Disability Confident scheme and recognising that people with disabilities are an important part of our workforce for the future?

**Sarah Newton:** I thank my hon. Friend for making such an important point. We must always recognise the really positive contribution that people with health conditions and disabilities make across the whole of society, including at work. I commend her for accepting the community challenge. I commend all Members across the House who will go out into their communities this summer and encourage more employers to provide work experience, internships and employment for the huge talent pool of disabled people that we have in our country.

**Stephen Metcalfe** (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con): Can my hon. Friend confirm that once a claimant has been identified and contacted about their underpayment, they will have access to a free phone line so that they can pursue their claim, and will be paid within 12 weeks?

**Sarah Newton:** Yes, I can make that commitment. We have already started to contact people and we are already making payments. Once we have contacted someone, we will make the freephone telephone number available to them, and we will pay them as soon as possible, but certainly within 12 weeks.

**Meg Hillier** (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op): I welcome the fact that the Minister took action to make sure that the wrong was righted for those people who would otherwise not have had this payment from 2011 to 2014. I congratulate her on that. However, the real concern is that there were warnings from 2013 onwards, both from her staff in the Department and from agencies dealing with these people. She says that the Department found this out, but it took a long time to act. Many people have still lost out on passported benefits, some easy to calculate, like free school meals. Will she, in the light of the recommendations in our report, look closely at the impact of the passported benefits that were lost and consider a compensation scheme?

**Sarah Newton:** I thank the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. Of course, the whole Department will take her report very seriously. The Secretary of State herself wanted to be here today, but she is making a very important speech elsewhere. That is the only reason she is not here herself to really underline the importance of what we are doing in the Department.

The hon. Lady raises a very good point about what more we can do to support frontline staff in the DWP who spot something wrong or feel uncomfortable with something that is happening—perhaps an unintended consequence—and to escalate their concerns so that they are heard by managers and those right at the top of the organisation. As a result of the work that the Secretary of State has been doing since she has been at the Department, with our new permanent secretary, new structures have been put in place to ensure that that

escalation of concerns is appropriately considered across operations, policy and legal, and that appropriate action is taken. I believe that that action will prevent this from happening again.

**Kevin Foster** (Torbay) (Con): I welcome the Minister's answers and the fact that £40 million has been paid out so far. She rightly highlighted the fact that claimants will get a free phone number to contact. Obviously, people listening may have concerns about what their own position might be. Will she update me as to whether she will be working with local advice agencies, such as Citizens Advice, and ensuring that they have information so, if people contact them, they too will be able to give out advice?

**Sarah Newton:** My hon. Friend makes such an important point. I work very closely with a range of stakeholders, including the absolutely outstanding citizens advice bureaux. We will ensure, as we do in all the work we do, that they are fully updated so that they can give their customers good advice. I say to everyone in the House and to everyone listening that if people are struggling to make ends meet or are uncertain about what benefits they might be entitled to, they should go to Jobcentre Plus. There they will be greeted by compassionate, well-informed members of staff who will want to help them.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): As a former shadow Minister with responsibility for disability rights—a very long time ago—I have a keen interest in this, and, as chairman of the Westminster Commission on Autism, a contemporary one. In my time, I have seen a lot of mistakes in this kind of area. The secret is to come to the House, to apologise fulsomely and to put it right. The numbers she mentioned mean a lot of people in every constituency. Will she ensure that she does something fast to compensate them, and to help Members of Parliament, who with Windrush and this issue have an even greater workload in helping their constituents?

**Sarah Newton:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his question and for his vital contribution. His work on autism, along with colleagues across the House, is really important. I always welcome opportunities to meet the cross-party group and I seriously consider all its reports. As soon as we identified the problem and how to sort it out, we were very open, coming to the House and updating it regularly, so that we can sort the problem out as soon as possible and provide Members with the information they need. I am first and foremost a constituency MP and I hold my weekly advice surgeries, so I know MPs' vital role in supporting people through the benefits journey in our country.

**Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con): My hon. Friend is a diligent Minister and I welcome the steps that she has taken to ensure that this is put right, but will she confirm for the House that internal learning has taken place and that future processes will be improved as a result?

**Sarah Newton:** Yes, I can give that assurance. The permanent secretary has been scrutinised and questioned by the Public Accounts Committee. He has made all sorts of commitments to improve the internal processes of the DWP, and, as I outlined in a previous answer, those processes are up and running. This summer I will

visit the operating centre that is undertaking this administrative exercise, and I will be reinforcing to the staff on the frontline not only the importance of their work but how important it is to speak up and speak out if they experience any problems. I will be listening.

**Stephen Lloyd** (Eastbourne) (LD): I thank the shadow disability Minister for bringing the urgent question to the House. The Minister will know that the fact that at least £390 million is owed to tens of thousands of sick and disabled people—the most vulnerable people—is a shocking revelation. I have two questions. First, will the Minister give an estimate of how long it will take for the people affected to receive the money that they are owed? Secondly, with respect, apparently the DWP learned about this 12 months ago but it is only the media that has brought it out into the open. How does the Minister respond to that?

**Sarah Newton:** It was not the media that brought this out into the open; there was a written ministerial statement to this House. We have been acting at speed to make sure that we identify people we have underpaid, and we have already started to make payments. In the original statement, we said that we hoped to complete the exercise within the year, which takes us up to next spring. We are absolutely working as fast as we can to make these payments.

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): The Minister has again been brought to the Chamber by an urgent question, not to make a statement herself. I want to mention that the 100th anniversary is coming up of when George Lansbury and the Poplar councillors went to prison because they refused to cut benefits for the poor and the disabled. Does the Minister feel ashamed that she has had to come here today to explain the culture of indifference in her Department, and what is she personally going to do about it so that the poor and the disadvantaged in our communities do not suffer any more under this Government?

**Sarah Newton:** I gently remind the hon. Lady that we made a written statement yesterday—the third statement we have made—and that we have been open with the House and will continue to be open with the House because this is a matter of such importance to us. I also respectfully point out that she should look at the facts. Each year, we are spending more money supporting disabled people and people with health conditions, and the benefits that support them increase each year. They are not subject to cuts; the rates are increasing each year.

**Dr Lisa Cameron** (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): The all-party group on disability has heard that 28% of those in poverty are disabled, while a further 20% of people in poverty live in a household with a disabled person. Shamefully, nearly half of the poverty in the UK is therefore associated with disability. Does the Minister agree that significant errors of this gravity perpetuate this poverty, and that there must be compensation for the most vulnerable who have been affected?

**Sarah Newton:** Let me absolutely clear: I do not want anyone in our country to be living in poverty. Nobody on the Conservative Benches wants to see anyone living in poverty, which is why we have put so much effort since 2010 into lifting people out of poverty, including people with disabilities. We have been increasing benefits

each and every year, and we will continue to do so. We are also increasing the amount of support for disabled people and those with health conditions who tell us they would very much like to work.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I, too, thank the shadow Minister for bringing this urgent question to the House, and the Minister for a very comprehensive response and for righting the wrong. Well done, Minister. With some 70,000-plus people who have transferred to ESA from another benefit not being paid the full amount of ESA, does the Minister have any idea at this stage of the number of those in Northern Ireland who have been underpaid, and who is looking after the Northern Ireland applicants who are seeking reimbursements?

**Sarah Newton:** Every person who deserves their payment will be treated fairly and equally—I absolutely assure the hon. Gentleman of that—but I will write to him with specific details about people in Northern Ireland.

**Hugh Gaffney** (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (Lab): The DWP—not the staff—is quick to point out and to recover overpayments, but it takes rather longer to correct underpayments. That has taken six years in this case, and underpayments are at the highest estimated level to date. What actions will the Government take to put that right and, more importantly, to make sure that it does not happen again?

**Sarah Newton:** I have repeatedly said that we are very sorry that this happened in the first place, and that we are doing everything possible to rectify the system—not just in this particular case, but to learn across all our benefits. Of course we take underpayments very seriously, and we have a well-resourced team that is taking up that issue.

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): The arrears being paid to people may be quite considerable in some cases. Will the Minister confirm to the House that these will be disregarded for their current benefit entitlement, because people should not lose out now for mistakes that the Department made previously?

**Sarah Newton:** The hon. Lady raises a very important point. I am more than happy to put it beyond any doubt for people who are receiving payments for these underpayments that those payments will be disregarded for the purposes of other benefits.

**Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): Rather than waiting for this failing Department to contact my constituents about any underpayments, how can MPs make proactive inquiries on their behalf? Is the Minister aware that despite the MPs' helpline for universal credit, some DWP offices are hiding behind general data protection regulation and saying that they cannot deal with verbal inquiries? Will she ensure that the MPs' helpline does what it says on the tin?

**Sarah Newton:** The hon. Gentleman makes an important point, and as a constituency MP I understand the important role that we all have to play. I will ensure that he is able to raise constituency cases effectively and swiftly, and if he experiences any specific problems, he should please contact me so that I can rectify them.

## Business of the House

11.10 am

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

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

**MONDAY 23 JULY**—General debate on strengthening the Union.

**TUESDAY 24 JULY**—Debate on a motion relating to the Third Report Of Session 2017-19 from the Committee On Standards, followed by a general debate on matters to be considered before the forthcoming adjournment.

The business for the week commencing 3 September will include:

**MONDAY 3 SEPTEMBER**—The House will not be sitting.

**TUESDAY 4 SEPTEMBER**—Second Reading of the Civil Liability Bill [*Lords*].

**WEDNESDAY 5 SEPTEMBER**—Remaining stages of the Tenant Fees Bill, followed by remaining stages of the Voyeurism (Offences) (No.2) Bill.

**THURSDAY 6 SEPTEMBER**—Business to be nominated by the Backbench Business Committee.

**FRIDAY 7 SEPTEMBER**—The House will not be sitting.

I am also pleased to announce that there will be a debate on proxy voting in the second week of the September sitting.

As we head off for a much needed summer break, may I take this opportunity to wish Members across the House a peaceful and enjoyable few weeks, spending time with their constituents as well as with their families? Most importantly, I sincerely thank all our hard-working parliamentary and constituency staff, and the dedicated House staff, including the Clerks, Doorkeepers, catering staff, security, and all those who do so much to support our work. I wish them all a very restful and sunny recess.

**Valerie Vaz:** I thank the Leader of the House for announcing the forthcoming business, and for the debate on proxy voting, although I still feel that that could have been held next week, rather than waiting until September.

I am not sure why the Opposition half-day debate was taken from us last week when business seems so light for next week. There is no specific debate on Monday, other than on strengthening the Union. I am hoping that that will be expanded to cover all unions—the European Union, for example, or even trade unions—but I am pleased that the Government have found something for us to discuss next week.

The list of ministerial responsibilities has been published for June 2018. My parliamentary assistant has been very assiduous in marking up the list—the green colour represents the leavers, and yellow represents the remainers. As there seems to be lots of movement, will the Leader of the House ensure an updated June 2018 list of ministerial responsibilities before the House rises?

On restoration and renewal, the Shadow Sponsor Body has now been set up and we have a Chair. Sadly, however, the lovely Members in the other place outnumber Members in this place on the body, and I hope that when the legislation comes forward that will be rectified.

Will the Leader of the House say whether there have been any draft instructions to consult, and when the legislation will come before the House?

Later, as the right hon. Lady has said, there will be a debate on the independent complaints grievance delivery report, and I congratulate everyone who took part in that report. My hon. Friend the Member for Brent Central (Dawn Butler), the shadow Minister for Women and Equalities, will be responding. That is appropriate, given that she was at the first meeting in Downing Street, and led for the Opposition on the delivery review. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for York Central (Rachael Maskell) who has used her great expertise as a trade unionist to enhance the quality of the discussion and report. I also add my thanks to all the staff, some of whom had to carry out their own jobs alongside working on this report. I thank all the experts and Members who have been involved and served on both review bodies.

I particularly want to thank the Leader of the House, and acknowledge her determination and commitment to seeing this through. It has not gone unnoticed that there will now be a workable solution. The culture in this place will change.

I am so pleased that the Prime Minister listens to business questions. Today, she is visiting the border. But it is quite confusing, isn't it? There was an agreement. Then there was a White Paper, over which two Cabinet Ministers resigned because they did not like it. The Prime Minister has now agreed to the amendments, so it is not clear where that leaves the White Paper. If it is the same White Paper, why did the two Cabinet Ministers resign? Should we not have a second White Paper, the miserable Brexit plan mark II? What about the other White Paper on the withdrawal agreement, which was due to be published on 18 July? The Vote Office confirmed that the Government have cancelled it. When will it be published?

Will the Leader of the House look again the bizarre situation of the Government not voting against Opposition motions? We have got to the stage where we have an oral statement in certain situations, but yesterday two very important statements, on social care and school funding, were put out in written form. It is not right that we cannot hold the Government to account on those two most important matters. Will the right hon. Lady please review the situation? If the Government do not like the motions, they should vote against them.

The School Teachers' Review Body report is usually published before the end of recess. Will the Leader of the House say when it will be published? Schools are already setting their budgets. They want to know whether they will be responsible for lifting the pay cap. They are already struggling with the funding formula, so I hope they will not be responsible for lifting it and that the money will come from central Government. May we therefore have a statement on the matter from the Secretary of State for Education?

Mr Speaker, I want to add my thanks to you and your office for their unfailing courtesies; the Deputy Speakers; the Clerk of the House for his judgments; the House staff; the Serjeant at Arms and his office; Phil and the Doorkeepers; *Hansard*; the House of Commons Library on its 200th anniversary for its fantastic independent advice, which has integrity running all through it; the police and the security; the cooks and the cleaners; and everyone who keeps this place in working order. I also

want to thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne East (Mr Brown) and everyone in the Opposition Whips Office for all their hard work behind the scenes, and of course everyone in my office.

Yesterday was Nelson Mandela Day. The Nelson Mandela Foundation is dedicating this year to fighting poverty, honouring Nelson Mandela's leadership on and devotion to fighting poverty and promoting social justice for all. He said:

"It is easy to break down and destroy. The heroes are those who make peace and build."

I wish everyone a peaceful recess.

**Andrea Leadson:** I thank the hon. Lady for her very warm words about Nelson Mandela. She is exactly right to pay tribute to him. He did so much in the whole area of truth and reconciliation, and on the importance of peace instead of continuing to wage war against each other. He was so right and he will always be remembered for that.

The hon. Lady mentions Monday's debate on strengthening the Union. There was some discussion yesterday about having the proxy voting debate on Monday. I genuinely feel that it is important we have that debate, so that issues can be raised: potential unintended consequences, and the very key points about when a proxy vote should be used and who it should be used by. I am very keen that all Members get the chance to do that and I am aware that many Members would not be here to take part in the debate if it were on Monday. I hope she accepts that. I will be bringing it forward as soon as possible.

I will look into ministerial responsibilities. I think the hon. Lady means for July 2018, not June 2018.

The hon. Lady also had a question about the Shadow Sponsor Body. We discussed this at House Commission. We are delighted that we do now have the Shadow Sponsor Body in place for the restoration and renewal of the Palace. It is of course right that there are four Lords Members of the Shadow Sponsor Body to only three Commons Members. As she will be aware, it was agreed that the Commons Commission would write to the Lords Commission suggesting that when the body is set up in statute that will be reviewed. She asks when the legislation will come forward. I can tell her that it has been agreed that we will bring forward a draft Bill, through joint scrutiny by both Houses, in the autumn. It is in draft form already. I have been working on it very carefully with the parliamentary counsel over the past few weeks.

I join the hon. Lady in paying tribute to the hon. Members for Brent Central (Dawn Butler) and for York Central (Rachael Maskell) and all those, including the shadow Leader of the House, who have worked so hard on this new complaints procedure. Today, Parliament can be proud; we are tackling our challenges and shortcomings and we want to be leading the world in treating everyone with dignity and respect. Following the debate later today, we will be turning to a new chapter, and I look forward to that.

The hon. Lady asks about the White Paper on the withdrawal agreement, and she will know that that will come forward in due course. We are not quite at the point of the withdrawal arrangements being finalised. It was very important that the Prime Minister's White Paper following the Chequers agreement was brought forward. My views on that are on the record: I believe that it continues to uphold the will of the people.

The hon. Lady asks about voting on Opposition day motions. As I have made clear, we will continue to support the Standing Orders for Opposition days, and when the House does not divide and a motion is passed, the Government will come forward with very specific actions to be taken as a result of a motion passed by this House.

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): I, too, thank everyone who makes this Parliament work, and that relates to the question I would like to put to the Leader of the House. This House relies much on tradition and trust, and a number of things have happened recently that have disturbed me. I was quite ill when we were voting on the EU withdrawal Bill, and there were a lot of votes. I came in to vote and after a number of votes, the Labour Whips agreed to nod me through. That courtesy should be extended to everyone, and I do not think that happened recently. I am very concerned to hear that a pairing was broken, and I am very concerned that we tried to end Parliament two days early, which I think was for party political reasons. May we have a statement from the Leader of the House when we come back, or early next week, on this place and the fact that we must uphold the rights of this House and not hide behind small print because, otherwise, this place will not work?

**Andrea Leadson:** My hon. Friend is of course right to raise any concerns that he has, and I will always be happy to discuss them with him. As I said yesterday in the urgent question, a pair was broken. People were extremely apologetic. It was an error. In addition, I set out again that I absolutely uphold the rights and conventions of this House at all times, and will always continue to do so.

**Pete Wishart** (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): I thank the Leader of the House for announcing the business for next week. Usually, when I get on my feet on a Thursday morning, I gently chide the Leader of the House about the performance of her Government this week. There might be the occasional rhetorical flourish, an over-emphasis here and there perhaps, or even a bit of exaggeration to help to fully describe the current predicament. This week, that is not necessary, because there simply is not a sufficient range of adjectives to adequately describe this dysfunctional Government, the current state of their Brexit disaster and their chaotic stewardship of prosecuting this mad enterprise. The chance of a no deal Brexit has apparently been raised from "possible" to "likely". Let us remember what that means: endless queues at our ports, shops running out of food and hospitals without medicines. May we have an urgent and timely debate when we get back about what all this mad no deal Brexit actually means?

We are coming back next week, and I think we are all delighted about that. I do not know what the Leader of the House was thinking about by trying to adjourn this place five days early and how she thought for a minute that she would get away with it, given that, effectively, we have a leaderless country and an unprecedented crisis. Apparently, we cannot plan our recess to accommodate school holidays throughout the United Kingdom, but we can go into an early recess to help a beleaguered Prime Minister. We will be back to debate strengthening the Union—I presume that it is our Union, and not the associated union of beekeepers. Let us hope that the Leader of the House might clarify that.

[Pete Wishart]

After all these pious apologies yesterday about the breaking of pairing arrangements with the hon. Member for East Dunbartonshire (Jo Swinson), there are stories in the press today that the Chief Whip told three Tory MPs to break their whipping arrangements. Will there now be a full inquiry into what exactly happened? I am just so pleased that the Scottish National party have absolutely nothing to do with this broken whipping arrangement.

There are all sorts of rumours today about the date of the Budget. Will the Leader of the House give us some clarification? Will it be September; will it be November; or will it be at the end of the year?

Finally, Mr Speaker, I wish you and all the staff of the House—all those who work in the place and make it easier for us all to do our jobs as Members of Parliament—a good holiday. I say to you all, “Enjoy it, because this will be the last year in which you will be in the European Union. Next year you will be classed as a ‘European other’, with all the travel misery that that is likely to bring as you go off to the costas and playas.”

**Andrea Leadsom:** Well, Mr Speaker, I rather like bees myself. However, the hon. Gentleman is right to raise the very important debate on Monday, which will indeed be about strengthening the Union of the four nations of the United Kingdom. I look forward very much to seeing all his colleagues in the Chamber as we discuss the means by which we can keep the United Kingdom together—stronger and better together.

The hon. Gentleman asks about the motion calling for an early recess. I can tell him that the idea was suggested by representatives of a number of political parties. It was discussed in the usual channels, and the Government decided to put it to the House so that the House could decide. On Tuesday, it became clear that there was no desire to do that, which was fine, and which is why the motion was not moved. This was about trying to listen to the views of the House.

I am very much looking forward to next week. We have some important business to get through—questions to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, and some interesting debates in Westminster Hall on, for instance, the remit of the Office for Budget Responsibility and nuclear investment—and, of course, we all look forward sincerely to hearing from my hon. Friend the Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess), who for once is not present for business questions, but who is one of the stalwarts of the pre-recess Adjournment debate.

**Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger** (Bridgwater and West Somerset) (Con): I know that you are aware that I go on about local government, Mr Speaker, but I should like to have another go at it now. We are going through a transformation at the moment. Nearly 100 members of staff of Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council have applied for redundancy, and we are in trouble when it comes to actually manning the councils. Local government is under enormous pressure, so please may we have a debate in Government time on where we are going with local government in the United Kingdom?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend often raises local government in his constituency. No doubt he is pleased to learn that oral questions to the Secretary of State for

Housing, Communities and Local Government will take place on Monday, when he will be able to raise the issue directly with Ministers.

**Ian Mearns** (Gateshead) (Lab): I can tell the House that I have some devoted friends who are keen apiarists. We should not mock the beekeepers.

**Pete Wishart:** Blessed are the beekeepers. [Laughter.]

**Ian Mearns:** Just in case Back Benchers are wondering why the Backbench Business Committee has not given them time for a debate on 6 September, as the Leader of the House suggested, it is because on 6 September the business will be agreed by the Backbench Business Committee but determined by the Liaison Committee, so the debate is not in our gift.

I note that in the future business section of the Order Paper—I have written to the Leader of the House about this—the business in Westminster Hall on Tuesday 4 September, the day on which we return from the recess, is still shown as scheduled to begin at 9.30 am. That seems incongruous, and I hope it can be fixed. Members have to make travel arrangements before then.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am looking to my officials, but I believe we have changed that. I believe the motion went through yesterday, but I shall have to check. I was pleased to try and help out, and if those times have not yet been changed, they certainly will be.

I can only agree with the hon. Gentleman: we all love bees. They play a very important part, and I think that the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) should repent of his slightly anti-bee approach.

**The Lord Commissioner of Her Majesty’s Treasury (David Rutley):** He must beehive himself.

**Andrea Leadsom:** He certainly must beehive himself, at all times.

Let me say again to the hon. Member for Gateshead (Ian Mearns) that I look forward to visiting the great exhibition of the north. I think that he will have received my letter informing him that I shall be in his constituency next week and that I look forward to it very much.

**Mr Speaker:** The Leader of the House will be pleased to know that she is right: the list of future business publicly declared has not yet caught up with reality, as both the advice of the Clerks and the enthusiastic nodding of the officials’ heads alike testify.

**Lee Rowley** (North East Derbyshire) (Con): A few weeks ago, the Government announced that they were likely over the summer to consult on changes to the planning process for shale gas and fracking. There is a shale gas application in my constituency, and this is of concern to a number of residents in my part of the world. Will the Minister consider giving Government time for a debate on shale gas and, in particular, proposed changes to permitted development rights?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend is right to raise this issue, and I am well aware that very often constituents have concerns. As an ex-Energy Minister, I can tell him that I am very supportive both of the concept of shale

gas exploration and shale gas as a future source of revenue and energy security for this country and, importantly, of a very robust regulatory environment for shale gas. As he will know, the Government support shale gas exploration, and we are launching two consultations: one on the principle of including shale gas projects in the nationally significant infrastructure projects regime and the other on permitted development rights. We look forward to many stakeholders contributing to those consultations to ensure that planning decisions are fast but fair to all.

**Wes Streeting** (Ilford North) (Lab): Listening to the Leader of the House this morning and looking back at the record for yesterday, twice now she has told this place that what happened with the breach of pairing arrangements was a result of administrative error. If the report in *The Times* newspaper is to be believed, it was a result not of accident, but of design. So when she returns to the Dispatch Box, I hope that she will choose her words carefully, because she may have been set up to mislead the House, however inadvertently, which would be serious. [*Interruption.*] Before Government Members heckle, I will say that some silence and humility might be required, because the idea that pregnant women and new mothers will be cheated out of their vote and representation to save the skin of this shambolic Government is an absolute disgrace and an affront to the House.

To add insult to injury, we now have to wait until September for a debate—a debate—on what should be a sensible arrangement for proxy voting, so will the Leader of the House at least come to the Dispatch Box to confirm that when we debate proxy voting in September, it will be on a motion, because actions will speak louder than words and the Government have shown through their behaviour this week that acting according to courtesies and conventions is not enough because this Government, with their shambolic record, cannot be trusted?

**Simon Hoare** (North Dorset) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** There is no point of order now.

**Andrea Leadsom:** The words of the hon. Member for Ilford North (Wes Streeting) stand for themselves; it is absolutely abhorrent for him to be calling me out in particular when I came to the Dispatch Box yesterday with exactly the regret and sorrow he is now falsely calling for. It is a deep regret to me that that breaking of the pair happened in error. I assured the House yesterday that it was an error that the Chief Whip and the Minister without Portfolio, my right hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Brandon Lewis), had both apologised for.

I can tell the hon. Gentleman that there were three pairs on Tuesday. I myself was one of them; I did not receive any call from anyone telling me to vote. I hope the hon. Gentleman will accept that, because he is calling me something that is not acceptable parliamentary language. I have made absolutely clear my personal commitment to resolving this issue so that new parents can spend time with their new babies uninterrupted. What happened was an error that has been copiously and profusely apologised for, and the hon. Gentleman should be ashamed of himself.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. There are strong feelings on this matter, and I have heard very clearly what the Leader of the House has said by way of her account. I know that she will not, however, cavil, or argue with me, when I say that I am the arbiter of what is parliamentary language, and no unparliamentary language has been used; I am clear about that and the Clerk is very clear about that. The hon. Member for Ilford North (Wes Streeting) has obviously irritated the right hon. Lady, but he used the word “inadvertently”. There is no breach of order; nothing disorderly whatsoever has happened. We do need to be clear about that.

**Jeremy Lefroy** (Stafford) (Con): My right hon. Friend will know from her own constituency experience the problems that people affected by HS2 have in selling their property and not getting a quick resolution. There is no good resolution to this, and that applies even more to my constituents who are affected by the roadworks on the M6 and cannot get anyone to buy their property, the value of which has fallen precipitately as a result of the disturbance. When people are forced into a situation of being unable to sell their properties because Government action—whether in relation to road, rail, airports or anything else—causes the value of the property to plummet, can we ensure that there is justice for them and that they can sell their property at market value or get the appropriate compensation?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend raises an important point about compensation for those affected by Government projects. I encourage him to talk to the HS2 mitigation and compensation forum that I established—back in 2011, I believe—which takes forward particular issues for constituents who are seeking proper compensation for such problems, particularly with regard to selling their homes.

**Chris Elmore** (Ogmore) (Lab): Under new data protection rules, subject access requests to GP practices and NHS services can no longer be charged for. I have received a deputation from GP surgeries in my constituency saying that this is already causing undue cost to them. May we have a statement, either from the Department of Health and Social Care or from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, to explain how they might be able to help with this probably inadvertent issue, because it is costing NHS services money that they can hardly afford?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman raises a really important issue. I do not have the answer right here, but I encourage him to attend Health and Social Care questions on Tuesday, because I am sure that this will be something that Ministers will be keen to try to address.

**Maggie Throup** (Erewash) (Con): Official figures show that house building is booming in Erewash, with the number of completed homes up by 75% and the number of homes under construction up by 70% on the previous year. Does my right hon. Friend agree that this is a vindication of the Government’s housing policy and that it is good news not only for those in the construction industry in Erewash but for those who aspire to own their own homes? Will she grant Government time to debate the benefits to the economy and to the wellbeing of our constituents of building more homes?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I certainly congratulate my hon. Friend on the success in building new homes in Erewash. The Government are absolutely clear that fixing the broken housing market is a top domestic priority for us. Housing needs to be more affordable, and we want people to have the security of a home of their own, which means building many more of the right homes in the right places. We have set out an ambition to deliver 300,000 homes a year on average by the middle of the next decade, and we have an ambitious package of reform to support that.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael** (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): Mr Speaker, you very kindly granted me an urgent question yesterday in relation to the breach of the pair involving my hon. Friend the Member for East Dunbartonshire (Jo Swinson) on Tuesday night. You might recall that I indicated during that urgent question that I had received an apology from the Government Chief Whip, which of course I accepted, but that I did not quite understand how things had come to pass in this way. I indicated also that I would pursue the matter with the Government Chief Whip. I have to tell you and the House that, subsequent to the urgent question, I met the Government Chief Whip and that he offered me a fuller explanation, which I have considered very carefully overnight. Regrettably, I have to say that I still do not understand how this highly regrettable state of affairs came to pass, so today I have a somewhat novel request for the Leader of the House, which is that the Government Chief Whip should come to the Dispatch Box to make a statement himself.

I have been here long enough to know the conventions, Mr Speaker, and I know that the convention is that the Government Chief Whip does not speak in the House, but conventions are exactly that. Ours is a system of checks and balances, and if we take out a check we have to adjust a balance. What happened on Tuesday night did serious damage to the pairing system on which we have all relied over the years, and for that reason I suggest that it is necessary to re-establish the basis of trust and the confidence that agreements will be honoured that we should have this most novel departure. This is not a suggestion that I make lightly, but I hope that the Leader of the House will take it seriously and that this is something that we will see happen.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his measured words, and I am glad that he met the Chief Whip. As I made clear yesterday, I have been absolutely assured that it was an administrative error. I sought to explain to the House that pairing often involves an absence of an hour or two, so the administrative complexity of managing temporary pairings during the course of a day is significant. I also stated that, by virtue of my conversations with my right hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Brandon Lewis), it was absolutely clear to me that he was totally unaware that he was paired with the hon. Member for East Dunbartonshire (Jo Swinson). I texted the hon. Lady to make it clear that I will continue to ensure that her maternity pair is in place and I reassure the House that that is the case. I apologise again for the error and assure the House that it did not change the result, but I will redouble my efforts to ensure that the pairing system remains in place.

**Andrew Bowie** (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (Con): Like me, many in the House will be suffering from football withdrawal symptoms now that the World cup is over, but they need not worry for long, for as I speak the qualifying rounds of the Europa league and Champions league are under way. While smaller teams, such as Hibs and a couple called Celtic and Rangers, are already engaged, one week today sees the battle of Britain game between Burnley and the mighty and, some might say, famous Aberdeen take place at Pittodrie, with the Dons trying to win their first silverware since 1983. In wishing all those teams, but especially Aberdeen, all the best over the next few weeks as they try to qualify for Europe, will the Leader of the House consider a debate on the importance of our national game to local communities and our economy?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am so glad that my hon. Friend has raised the matter of football again, because we have not talked about it much recently, have we? We would all welcome many more debates on football as our England team no doubt makes their way up the world rankings once more. I hope that the game between Aberdeen and Burnley next week will be a cracking match to watch, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising such an important subject.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): I have also been in the House for quite a long time, and I must tell the Leader of the House, for whom I have great respect, that Tuesday's events were cataclysmic for this House's reputation. We are supposed to be the mother of Parliaments, but my constituents think that there was skulduggery on Tuesday night. They do not get messages or texts from the Leader of the House; they read in the newspapers that something dodgy went on and they say, "Why can't it get put right? Why couldn't you have another vote?" This goes to the heart of the reputation of this House. It was one of the most important votes in the history of this House, yet something strange went on that was the responsibility not of the Leader of the House, but of the Whips. I say in all earnestness that things must be put right, and I associate myself with the comments of the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael) who thinks that the Chief Whip should come to the Dispatch Box.

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman who, as he says, has been in this place for a long time knows that there is collective responsibility and that the Leader of the House speaks for the Government, and I have apologised for something that should not have happened. I have been clear about my personal regard for the hon. Member for East Dunbartonshire and that I would not under any circumstances condone anything that would be seen as deliberately breaking a pair. I have been assured that such a thing did not happen and that it was a mistake.

**Chris Green** (Bolton West) (Con): Blackrod Primary School in my constituency has recently been awarded the prestigious Artsmark platinum award. This Government have the right idea in supporting science, technology, engineering and mathematics in our schools, but can we have a debate on upgrading STEM to STEAM to fully appreciate arts, culture and creativity?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I join my hon. Friend in congratulating Blackrod Primary School in his constituency on earning that fantastic award. The Government want all children to have a broad and balanced curriculum, and the creative arts play an important role. We are investing nearly £500 million of funding from 2016 to 2020 for a diverse portfolio of music and arts education programmes that are designed to improve arts provision for all children.

**Rachael Maskell** (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): NHS Property Services has been required to dispose of the Bootham Park Hospital site. The city urgently needs capacity for new health services, yet developers want to move on to the site to build luxury apartments—we have far too many of those. Can we have a debate about public interest in the disposure of public sites?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Lady raises an important issue. Having been to her constituency, I know it is very beautiful and I totally understand that there is a lack of space for things like a new hospital. I encourage her to raise the matter with Ministers at Health questions next Tuesday by asking what they can do to try to help to protect that space.

**Stephen Lloyd** (Eastbourne) (LD): Four weeks ago, Bishop James Jones published a report on the Gosport War Memorial Hospital showing that at least 560 elderly patients had inadvertently died as a result of opiate transfusions. I put it in layman's terms by saying that at least 560 people were killed.

I immediately wrote to the Prime Minister asking that the relatives get the justice they deserve and that the Government implement a criminal inquiry. The term for the Prime Minister to respond to an MP is 20 days, and I still have not heard. Tomorrow is the 20th day. If I do not hear back from the Prime Minister about getting a public inquiry, will the Leader of the House allow a debate in the Chamber on this incredibly important issue?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I completely share the hon. Gentleman's grave concern about those reported deaths due to opiates. He raises an important issue, and I recommend that he seeks a BackBench Business debate so that all Members will be able to share their concerns and the experiences in their constituencies.

**Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): Homebuyers in Woodsend in my constituency have suffered shoddy building work and very poor customer service from Persimmon, which informed them that it is not its policy "to deal with MPs" when I tried to intervene to help my constituents. May we have a debate on the recommendation of the all-party parliamentary group on excellence in the built environment for a mandatory ombudsman scheme for house builders?

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Lady will have heard that roar of approval for her suggestion. All hon. Members are concerned about house building standards, and it is vital that house builders take seriously the need to provide quality products to those who, let us face it, often struggle to afford them. I recommend that she seeks a BackBench Business debate, because I think there would be cross-party support for raising these important matters.

**Hywel Williams** (Arfon) (PC): Wales was due to get £2 billion of EU structural funds between 2014 and 2020, and those funds are to be replaced by the hitherto mythical shared prosperity fund. Forward-looking organisations are now thinking about their planning cycle post 2020, but they are hampered by the lack of any detail. Can we have an early debate on the shared prosperity fund, hopefully preceded by some detail as to its operation?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has raised the question of the shared prosperity fund, and I sincerely recommend that he raises it in Monday's debate on strengthening the United Kingdom. He will, of course, be aware that there has been significant investment in the city deals and growth deals in Wales. Nevertheless, he raises an important point that I encourage him to raise with Ministers on Monday.

**Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods** (City of Durham) (Lab): We are approaching the school holidays, when many children will lose the important contribution that a free school meal makes to their overall sense of wellbeing. Will the right hon. Lady therefore make time for a debate early next week on how the Government can help plug that gap and better support provision to tackle holiday hunger?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Lady raises a matter of great concern to Members right across the House: many children suffering nutritionally during the school holidays. I know of a couple of schools in my constituency whose headteachers worry about that, and the hon. Lady is absolutely right to raise the issue. She might seek an Adjournment debate, if Mr Speaker were happy to grant one, so that she could raise the issue directly with Ministers.

**Patrick Grady** (Glasgow North) (SNP): I am grateful to the Leader of the House for confirming which Union will be discussed in the debate on Monday—it is just as well it is not a debate on the Conservative and Unionist party being strengthened! I notice that almost all the business for the first week back is likely to be subject to the EVEL—English votes for English laws—procedure, so it is ironic that it comes on the back of a debate on strengthening the Union. Is it not time that we at least had a little balance in how the business is presented? Indeed, is it not time we simply got rid of the EVEL procedure altogether?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am a fan of the EVEL procedure. The issue of devolved Administrations and the very many powers that have rightly been devolved to the individual nations of the UK means there is the important need for issues affecting only England or only England and Wales to be voted on by those relevant Members and not by all Members of this House. That is an equal and fair approach to what has been a very beneficial devolution settlement right across the UK.

**Jessica Morden** (Newport East) (Lab): May I ask the Leader of the House whether the Government still intend to publish a draft law of property Bill, which was announced in 2016? It is of particular relevance to the residents of Llandevaud, who next week will see their communal common come to auction because someone has bought up an old manorial title.

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Lady raises an interesting and particular question, and I genuinely do not know the answer to it. [*Laughter.*] There are lots of things I do know the answer to, but that is not one of them. If she would like to write to me, I can take it up with the relevant Department or of course Ministers will provide her directly with the answer.

**Justin Madders** (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): My constituent Lisa Conway recently experienced a burglary at her home. The police ascertained that access was gained to the property by using force to prise open a window. However, her insurance company, Policy Expert, refused to help because it said “forcible and violent” entry was not used to access her property. So may we have a debate on how we can stop companies such as Policy Expert exploiting our constituents through ridiculous legalese in these insurance policies?

**Andrea Leadsom:** First, let me say that I am really sorry to hear about that break-in. Having a home broken into is traumatising for families, and being treated in that way is just appalling. I certainly encourage the hon. Gentleman to seek an Adjournment debate, so that he can raise the particular concerns about that insurance company directly with Ministers.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): The Assam state government in India has asked everyone to prove that they were in the country before 1971. Many of those who came to India without any paperwork are unable to do so. If residents cannot prove this before 30 July they will be declared illegal immigrants. Millions of residents do not have this proof because they had never needed it before. The very serious concern is that, as was the case with the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, this could lead to millions of impoverished Muslims being stripped of their citizenship and deported—or even worse. Will the Leader of the House agree to a statement or a debate on this pressing issue?

**Andrea Leadsom:** This is a very serious issue and, as the hon. Gentleman suggests, it could have urgent and serious ramifications. I encourage him to take it up with Ministers directly in the short period before recess, so that he can find out exactly what they are able to do to help.

**Paula Sherriff** (Dewsbury) (Lab): The Safe Anchor Trust is a charity in my constituency that does wonderful work with people who are disadvantaged through social isolation, age, deprivation and physical or mental disabilities. I have seen at first hand the incredible work the trust does, and I am sure that the Leader of the House would be very welcome were she to take one of its wonderful boat trips. The trust is entirely reliant on volunteers and donations to survive. May we have a debate on how we can support such groups, which are such an asset in our communities?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I join the hon. Lady in congratulating that charity on the amazing work that it does. There are so many voluntary organisations and community-based societies that do so much for us all. I encourage her to seek a BackBench Business debate so that she and other Members can share the excellent examples in their own constituencies.

**Vernon Coaker** (Gedling) (Lab): Can we have a debate or statement on the work of the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, the annual report and accounts of which are published today? The latest figures I have seen have shown a huge increase in the number of potential victims of forced labour: from 2016 to 2017 it rose by some 47%. This is the UK in 2018, and we have huge numbers of people in forced work. It is unacceptable and we need to speak about and debate it much more than we do.

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right: it is appalling that in this day and age there continues to be so much forced labour. I am sure he recognises that in her previous role the Prime Minister did everything that she could, including introducing the Modern Slavery Act 2015, to try to stamp out this absolutely appalling treatment of human beings. The hon. Gentleman is right to raise the issue and I encourage him to seek an Adjournment debate so that he can raise it directly with Ministers.

**Chris Law** (Dundee West) (SNP): We now know from the findings of the Electoral Commission that the Brexit result may have been bought and sold with dark money and gold by a sick parcel of rogues in these nations. Regardless of whether we debated or voted to remain or to leave, it is now being treated as a serious criminal matter, so may we have a debate in this place, as soon as possible after recess, about the validity, legitimacy and, indeed, legality of upholding the EU referendum result?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Electoral Commission is an independent organisation that has made its findings and referred the matter to the police for a criminal investigation, and it is not the policy of this House to comment on ongoing criminal investigations. I have no doubt that there will be many opportunities to raise the issue over the forthcoming weeks.

**Mrs Madeleine Moon** (Bridgend) (Lab): Last week, I visited the Endeavour unit at Parc prison in my constituency. It is a specialist unit set up for ex-serving military personnel and looks to use their experience to deal with reoffending. May we have a debate on Parliament’s and the Government’s ongoing responsibility to ex-serving personnel, and how we can utilise their capabilities, perhaps in reserve units?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Lady is absolutely right to raise the importance that we place on making sure that those who have served us in our armed forces have meaningful and useful jobs and lives when they leave the forces. I am delighted to hear about the work that is being done in her constituency to help them to help others to get off the offending route. The hon. Lady is right that we should do everything that we possibly can. She will be aware that the Government introduced and put into law the military covenant, to make sure that we support our armed forces as far as possible. I encourage her to seek a Westminster Hall debate so that we can talk about what more we can do to support the wonderful people who have given so much to our country.

**Dr Lisa Cameron** (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): Last December, I launched the much-needed campaign for Lucy’s law, to ban third-party

puppy sales in pet shops and to outlaw vile puppy farming. Since then, almost 100 Members from all parties have backed my early-day motion 695.

*[That this House calls for the immediate ban on the sale of puppies by pet shops and other third-party commercial dealers; recognises that implementing Lucy's Law will be a major step forward in putting an end to unnecessary animal cruelty and helping to eradicate forms of irresponsible dog breeding and selling, such as puppy farming, smuggling and trafficking; notes that irresponsible breeding practices, such as puppy farms, are enabled and even encouraged by the third-party trade in puppies that are sold away from their mothers and place of birth in locations such as pet shops; and acknowledges that Lucy's Law will help to protect breeding dogs and puppies by making all breeders accountable and transparent, ensuring consistency with the Government's advice that purchasers should see puppies interacting with their mother in the place that they were born.]*

There was consensus in the Chamber after our debate on the related e-petition, so may we have a statement on the introduction of legislation? It is much needed to protect puppies from odious puppy farmers who seek to undermine their and their mothers' welfare.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I completely agree with the hon. Lady that this is an incredibly important issue. When I was Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Department was looking carefully at the matter, and we brought in new laws on licensing. There is also a knock-on impact for those who purchase the puppies and take them into their lives when they have been deeply damaged and traumatised early in their life. The hon. Lady is right to raise the issue and I encourage her to seek an Adjournment debate so that she can talk to DEFRA Ministers directly about what more can be done.

**Carolyn Harris** (Swansea East) (Lab): For her summer reading, I offer the Leader of the House a copy of the newly published report of the all-party group on home electrical safety titled "Electrical products: setting the course for safety". We are all acutely aware of the importance of protecting our constituents from fires caused by domestic appliances. When the House returns, may we have a debate on a Government strategy to reduce fires caused by domestic appliances?

**Andrea Leadsom:** That sounds like a very sparky report—*[Interruption.]* Sorry. Certainly, the hon. Lady is raising a very important issue. Household fires are devastating, as we saw in the tragic Grenfell disaster, and she is right to raise this very important issue. I sincerely hope that, come the autumn, she can at least seek a Back-Bench debate so that hon. Members can share their experiences.

**Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): A veterinary practice in my constituency has plugged the skills gap by employing an Australian vet on a youth mobility visa, but the problem is that the visa runs out in September. It is well known that there is a shortage of vets in the UK, but the cap on tier 2 visas is causing vets problems in getting visas so that they can continue working. May we have a statement about the merits of exempting vets from the cap altogether, and, more

importantly, about how I can expedite a decision so that Jock Patterson can continue working in my constituency rather than being sent home to Australia?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman raises an important constituency issue, as he often does, and he is right to do so. I suggest that he takes up that specific issue directly with Home Office Ministers or, if he wants to write to me, I can do so on his behalf.

**Hugh Gaffney** (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (Lab): The Leader of the House will know that the housing crisis blights communities across our United Kingdom. Will she find time for a debate on the pay, terms and conditions of the senior management of housing associations? Money should be put into building decent and affordable homes for all our constituents, not filling bosses' pay packets. I want to know what the Government can do about this.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** I call Alison Thewliss. *[Interruption.]* I beg your pardon; I call the Leader of the House.

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss) is very welcome to provide an answer if she should care to do so.

The hon. Gentleman raises a very important issue. He will be aware that housing is the top domestic priority for this Government. We are determined to deliver 300,000 new homes on average every year by the mid-2020s. It is vital that we provide more social and affordable housing. More than £9 billion is going into our affordable homes programme. He raises a very specific issue, which I encourage him to raise at Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government questions on Monday.

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): May we have a debate on the failure of the Indian high commission's consular services in responding to MPs and their constituents? I currently have two relatively simple cases that have been waiting for months, including a constituent who needs to travel to Kolkata for her PhD studies and has been issued with a visa for entirely the wrong dates. The consular services are just not responding; they have asked me to WhatsApp them rather than going through proper channels, and getting a response has been just about impossible.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am very sorry to hear that. That is a challenge because I think what the hon. Lady is seeking is better administrative procedures in other consulates and, obviously, that is not something that the UK Government can influence. However, if she would like to raise that in a written question to Ministers, I am sure that they will take up on her behalf the challenge of trying to influence other consulates in London to the benefit of her constituents.

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): I have been battling for a number of years with Persimmon, the house building company, which has built some homes in my constituency whose gardens have been slipping into the drain. I have been battling for years, and it was only when I said to Persimmon that I was going to raise the matter on the Floor of the House that I was able to get a meeting with Simon Usher, one of its managers in Yorkshire. Since then, the matter seems to have gone cold again. I absolutely support the call of

[Diana Johnson]

my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford and Urmston (Kate Green) for a debate, because I do not think that this is a lone case, and it certainly seems that having an ombudsman would be really effective and something that we would all use.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I can say to both hon. Ladies that when there is clearly cross-House support for a debate, I do try to seek Government time when I can. Obviously time is at a premium, but there is considerable concern about this issue across the House, and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) is absolutely right to raise it in this place. I encourage her to take it up with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on Monday at oral questions.

**Diana Johnson:** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am grateful that you are allowing me to raise this point of order at this time, with the Leader of the House still on the Treasury Bench. It has come to light that PICT, which provides parliamentary ICT support to Members, has seemingly decided, without any prior consultation, to close down Members' second email accounts, claiming it is due to a limited number of licences being available. You will know, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the second email account is a vital tool for MPs in their office management. I ask the Leader of the House to take steps to stop this from happening until there has been a proper consultation and there is proper understanding of what the decision means, and until alternative arrangements have been put in place to allow Members to manage their emails effectively.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** I thank the hon. Lady for her point of order. Although, quite clearly, it is not a point of order for the Chair in connection with proceedings in the Chamber, it is a very important point affecting a great many colleagues in the House. The Leader of the House will have heard the point, and I will make sure that the matter is drawn to the attention of Mr Speaker. Let us hope that by these various means the matter also comes to the attention of those who organise our sometimes reliable and sometimes not reliable IT service.

**Seema Malhotra (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op):** Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. May I request your advice on whether there might be a way, prior to the recess, to bring clarity to this topic so that we know what we might need to plan for over the summer?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I appreciate the hon. Lady's question. Now that the matter has been raised, many people will want clarity as soon as possible. I will try to ensure that an answer is brought by tomorrow, and I am sure that Mr Speaker will also require that, in so far as he is able to do so.

**Sir Desmond Swayne (New Forest West) (Con):** Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It would be a matter of great convenience to some of us to have all email accounts closed down.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** The right hon. Gentleman may say that; I could not possibly comment.

## Relationships and Sex Education

12.7 pm

**The Secretary of State for Education (Damian Hinds):** With permission, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the consultation on the Government's proposals for relationships education, relationships and sex education, and health education, copies of which will be made available on the gov.uk website.

Children and young people today are growing up in an increasingly complex world and living their lives seamlessly online and off. This presents many positive and exciting opportunities, of course, but also challenges and risks. In this environment, children need to know how to be safe and healthy, and how to manage their lives in a positive way. Ensuring that they have this knowledge also helps to tackle problems such as sexual harassment and sexual violence.

That was why, during the passage of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Government acted on the compelling case to make relationships education and RSE compulsory through regulations, and to consider doing the same for elements of personal, social and health and economic education. There was strong cross-party support then, and I am confident that we can continue to work together on these important reforms in that way.

Since the passage of that Act, we have engaged thoroughly with a wide range of organisations. Ian Bauckham CBE has been supporting the Department. With 33 years as a teacher and 13 as a headteacher, Ian has considerable experience in the education system. I thank him for his invaluable support and his advice to me and my predecessor.

Between November 2017 and March 2018, Ian led wide-ranging stakeholder engagement with groups representing teachers, subject specialists, parents, religious bodies, MPs and others. In addition, the Department launched a call for evidence to seek public views from adults and young people. More than 23,000 people responded, and the level of consensus has been encouraging.

I am pleased today to be able to announce the key decisions and to launch a consultation on the detail of the regulations and guidance. For relationships education and RSE, the aim is to put in place the building blocks needed for positive and safe relationships of all kinds, starting with family and friends, and moving out to other kinds of relationships, including those online. It is essential that we ensure that young people can keep themselves safe online—from the basics of who and what to trust, through to how personal information is used and can be used, and how to ensure that online relationships are healthy and safe. A guiding principle is that teaching will start from the basis that children and young people, at age-appropriate points, need to know the laws relating to relationships and sex that govern our society to ensure that they act appropriately and can be safe. This includes lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender relationships, which are a strong feature of the new subjects at age-appropriate points.

The draft guidance sets out core required content, but leaves flexibility for schools to design a curriculum that builds on it as is right for their pupils, bearing in mind their age and religious backgrounds. It enables

schools with a religious character to deliver and expand on the core content by reflecting the teachings of their faith.

I also propose to introduce compulsory content on health education. This supports the findings from the call for evidence and engagement process, in which giving children and young people the information they need to make good decisions about their own health and wellbeing—particularly their mental wellbeing—was a clear priority for many who responded. This directly supports our Green Paper on children and young people's mental health, as well as our manifesto commitment to ensure that all young people are taught about mental wellbeing. The focus on physical health also supports our work on childhood obesity.

Financial education is already on the curriculum in maths and citizenship, and careers education is an important part of our careers strategy. For those reasons, I do not consider that further economic education needs be made compulsory. I am committed, however, to improving the provision of financial and careers education, and will continue to work with stakeholders to do so.

Many schools successfully cover this content in a broader PSHE framework. They should continue to do so, adapting their programme to the new requirements, rather than starting from scratch. Schools are also free to develop alternative, innovative ways to ensure that pupils receive such education, and we want good practice to be shared so that all schools can benefit.

We have previously committed to parents having a right to withdraw their children from the sex education part of RSE, but not from relationships education in primary or secondary school. A right for parents to withdraw their child up to 18 years of age is no longer compatible with English case law or the European convention on human rights. It is also clear that allowing parents to withdraw their child up to the age of 16 would not allow the child to opt in to sex education before the legal age of consent. I therefore propose to give parents the right to request their child be withdrawn from sex education delivered as part of RSE. The draft guidance sets out that, unless there are exceptional circumstances, the parents' request should be granted until three terms before the pupil reaches 16.

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): That was Labour's policy in 2010.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** Order. Do not interrupt a ministerial statement. *[Interruption.]* Order. Just do not interrupt it.

**Damian Hinds:** At that point, if the child wishes to have sex education, the headteacher should ensure they receive it in one of those three terms. This preserves the parental right in most cases, but balances that with the child's right to opt in to sex education when they are competent to do so.

We are keen to hear as many views as possible through the consultation, and I encourage Members and their constituents to respond. The consultation will be open until early November and the final regulations will be laid in both Houses, allowing for a full and considered debate.

This very important change to the curriculum has to be delivered well, and although many schools will be able to adapt their existing teaching quickly, it is essential that schools that need more time to plan and to prepare

their staff get that time. It is our intention that as many schools as possible will start teaching the subjects from September 2019. We will be working with schools, as well as with multi-academy trusts, dioceses and education unions, to help them to do so. All schools will be required to teach the new subjects from September 2020, which is in line with the Department's approach that any significant changes to the curriculum have a year's lead-in time. That will enable us to learn lessons from early-adopter schools and to share good practice further across the sector. We will be seeking views through the consultation to test the right focus for a school support package as we know that it is crucial for schools and teachers to be confident and well prepared.

Our proposals are an historic step in education that will help to equip children and young people with the knowledge and support that they need to form healthy relationships, lead healthy lives, and be safe and happy in modern Britain. I commend the statement to the House.

12.15 pm

**Angela Rayner** (Ashton-under-Lyne) (Lab): I thank the Secretary of State for advance notice and sight of his statement. He is right that Members on both sides of the House have worked on these reforms, including my hon. Friends the Members for South Shields (Mrs Lewell-Buck), for Rotherham (Sarah Champion), for Brent Central (Dawn Butler), for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) and for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips), as well as the right hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mrs Miller) and the Secretary of State's predecessor, the right hon. Member for Putney (Justine Greening), who first committed to implementing these changes.

There is much that we all welcome, but I hope that the Secretary of State will address some unanswered questions. Will he tell us which elements of this so-called mandatory subject are actually mandatory? If this knowledge is the right of every child, how will he ensure that it is available to all, and how will his Department deal with schools' decisions to change or remove parts of the curriculum?

I welcome the statement that children have a right to decide that they want to receive sex and relationships education. All children should be empowered to make healthy, informed decisions, and to know that it is not wrong to be LGBT and not acceptable to experience gender harassment or violence. But can the Secretary of State assure the House that pupils will be able to opt in confidentially if that is their choice? There was only a passing reference to violence against women and girls in the statement, despite evidence of the scale of that problem in our schools and in society. As the curriculum will at all times be age-appropriate, will the Secretary of State tell us why and how the opt-out applies to that part of the curriculum, and will he ensure that children will have the right to opt in to these lessons? Children must know their rights if they are to exercise them throughout their lives.

The Secretary of State will know that nearly half of LGBT pupils are bullied at school, yet fewer than half of them tell anyone about it, and this leads to pupils skipping school. The statistics on suicide attempts are truly shocking. I hope that the Secretary of State is mindful of the trans community, who experience terrible bigotry, yet two in five LGBT pupils are never taught

[Angela Rayner]

anything about LGBT issues at school. Can he guarantee today that LGBT issues will be integrated in the curriculum and not an optional extra?

I welcome the Secretary of State's comments on health education and the inclusion of mental health, but will there be any additional resources for mental health support? Will there be any additional funding for schools' new educational duties, or are they being given new responsibilities when their budgets are already under severe pressure?

Parents tell me that they want their children to be well educated, safe and resilient. I hope that this new curriculum will help us to achieve that, but can the Secretary of State tell us how he will assess the impact of these reforms to ensure that this is the case?

A curriculum must be supported by the teachers who teach it. Will there be any new teachers who are trained to deliver the curriculum, and what new training will be available for all teachers who deliver it? Schools across the country are waiting for the report of the School Teachers' Review Body and the Government's response, even as the clock ticks down to the start of the new academic year. Will the Secretary of State undertake to come back with a statement on that before the House rises next week?

Earlier this week, Mr Speaker congratulated the Mother of the House, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman), on joining the illustrious few of us Members who are grandparents. I am the grandmother to a seven-month-old, and I want to see her growing up happy, healthy and safe. If the House gets this issue right, we can make that more likely. I hope that these reforms will be in place and working well long before she is in school, and I look forward to telling her that we all played a part in making that happen.

**Damian Hinds:** I thank the hon. Lady for the tone and content of her response. I join her in thanking and commending all those on both sides of the House who have been involved in the development of these matters over quite an extended period, particularly during the passage of the Bill that became the Children and Social Work Act.

The hon. Lady asked what was truly mandatory. The only part of the curriculum that it is possible to withdraw from is the sex part of relationships and sex education. If a primary school offered sex education—that is not mandatory, but if it were—the right to withdraw would also apply there.

The hon. Lady asked—it is a reasonable question—how we make sure this actually happens. Schools have an obligation to have regard to guidance, and they do. There is also, of course, the system of Ofsted inspection, which looks at the moral and spiritual development of children.

On how the right to withdraw will operate and the ability of children to opt in, there will continue to be, as I outlined in my statement, a parental right to withdraw. Its nature will change because the age-18 right is no longer consistent with legal precedent. There are cases where the parent wishes to withdraw the child from sex education and the child does not want that, but we are

not expecting large numbers of those. Only a very small number of parents now withdraw their children from sex education; of course, there is sex education in most schools. In that case, the child would be able to access a term of sex education before reaching 16.

The hon. Lady is absolutely right about bullying, including bullying of children who are LGBT. A couple of things are very important and essential in that regard. The first thing is to be talking, from an early age, about the reality of bullying, but also, crucially, about some of the aspects of online bullying, which, by definition, is harder for grown-ups to understand than for children whose daily reality it is. It is also about having the core building blocks, from a very early age, of respect for others, kindness, getting on with people, and understanding that there are differences and that this is something to be celebrated.

The hon. Lady asked about mental health. We are putting considerable resource behind the mental health strategy. We have put out the Green Paper and we will respond before too long.

The hon. Lady asked about new duties being put on teachers and what support would be in place. She also asked specifically about the teachers' pay award. I am not in a position to say something about that today, but it is, as she knows, a process that we are going through. On support for teachers and schools in delivering this new content, we will listen, through the consultation, to what schools tell us. I am open to what sort of support that should be, including how we work with initial teacher training and other training, but also, critically, with regard to the provision of quality materials. A lot of those already exist, but some may not and will need to be developed. We need to make sure that there is a repository where schools can go and reliably find quality materials for teaching these subjects.

The hon. Lady's particular perspective, not only as a mother but as a grandmother, brings something additional to this matter. I join her in welcoming these moves forward and the benefits that they will have for all our children—and grandchildren.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** I call Diana Johnson.

**Diana Johnson:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was expecting to be called last because of my outburst.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Lady is forgiven, and she has an important point to make.

**Diana Johnson:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

My outburst was because I was so flabbergasted that the Government have now adopted the position that this House was debating in 2010 when the last Labour Government were in power. I remember very well the Schools Minister, who is sitting on the Front Bench today, arguing absolutely against the proposals that the Secretary of State is now making. However, having just looked up the biblical verse saying that when one sinner repents there is much rejoicing in heaven, I am really pleased that we are now in the position today where the Government are finally doing the right thing. But why does it have to take another two years to get to the point

where our children and young people can have access to the quality relationships and sex education that we want them to have?

**Damian Hinds:** I welcome what I think were the hon. Lady's words of welcome for what the Government are bringing forward today. Look, this has been a journey. Society changes. It is 18 years since this guidance was last updated. A lot has changed in the world since then, including the online world, and it is right that we reflect that.

The hon. Lady asked why it needs to take two years for children to be able to access good-quality content. It does not. Many schools do much of this today. Through this exercise, we will ensure that it is done comprehensively throughout the system, while also increasing consistency and making sure that children can access quality materials. We will make sure that this is all available from September 2019. As for when it becomes compulsory, I have made a commitment to the profession to give it due time to prepare for significant changes like this. I think that is the right approach.

**Mrs Maria Miller (Basingstoke) (Con):** In 2016, the Women and Equalities Committee called for compulsory relationships and sex education to help to tackle a culture of unacceptable sexual harassment in schools. I am so proud that this Conservative Government have listened and acted after a cross-party amendment to the Bill that became the Children and Social Work Act, so that, after a decade and a half of inaction by Governments of all colours, these proposals are before us today.

I pay tribute to the huge number of organisations that have campaigned on this over many years, including Girlguiding, the Children's Society and Stonewall—the list goes on. There are also individuals who are behind why we are here today, such as my right hon. Friend the Member for Putney (Justine Greening). The Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills, my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Anne Milton), who is in her place, has done huge amounts behind the scenes to make sure that this is happening today. I thank my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for continuing with this work, and the Minister for School Standards, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bognor Regis and Littlehampton (Nick Gibb), for his tenacity in giving us improving standards in our schools and being able to embrace these sorts of ideas, which are challenging for Members across the House.

These are issues of child safety. How will we ensure that we do not have to wait another 17 years for this guidance to be updated? I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be thinking about that, but perhaps he could talk about it further. We also have to get the Government's recommendations put into action, as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) said, and avoid any further bureaucracy. What can parents do now to make sure that the schools that their children are in put compulsory relationships and sex education in place by September 2019 and do not create any further delay?

**Damian Hinds:** My right hon. Friend was correct to identify, as did the hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Angela Rayner), a number of individuals and organisations

that have been instrumental in this process. She could of course have added herself to that list; I commend her for her work.

My right hon. Friend is right about the importance of children knowing about issues around harassment and sexual violence. This whole approach is about building up from the very basic building blocks of respect for others. Then, as things develop and children get older, yes, it is very important to deal with these matters. Page 22 of the guidance states: "Pupils should know" about

"the concepts of, and laws relating to, sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment and domestic abuse and how these can affect current and future relationships."

The hon. Lady asked about how parents can ensure that this is happening in schools, but of course in many schools it is happening. It is important to say that. We want schools to publish their policies on these matters and to encourage parental engagement.

Finally, on updates, yes, it must not be another 18 years before that happens again. We will update the guidance about every three years, because the pace at which the world is now changing—the online world in particular—requires that.

**Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP):** I thank the Secretary of State for making the statement. The issue is clearly a devolved one, but I have done a lot of work on financial education and its importance. It is a shame that financial education is not compulsory, because it is certainly an education that we all—every single person across the United Kingdom—need in day-to-day living. Financial education is not just about maths; it is about mental health, because being in debt at a young age or not knowing how to manage personal finances lies behind much of the depression, self-harm and suicides that we see among young people. Financial education is also key to relationships, because financial abuse can be a key component of domestic abuse. Being able to manage our finances independently is extremely important in ensuring that people can move on from those types of damaging relationships. Will the Secretary of State therefore look at the importance of financial education within the curriculum and ensure that everyone has the day-to-day living skills that they require for healthy and fulfilling relationships and lives?

**Damian Hinds:** The hon. Lady is right about the importance of financial education, and both the maths and citizenship curriculums include financial education content, such as practical aspects of the sort that she outlined. Another thing in the consultation document, although it is not in the headlines of the description, is a question about what more we might do for 16 to 18-year-olds. Now that the participation age is up to 18, when record numbers of people go away from home to university and have to budget and so on for the first time, we are asking what more could be done for 16 to 18-year-olds.

**Andrew Bowie (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (Con):** As has been said, education is a devolved area, but across the UK there is concern that in 2018 one in three young people made new friends online and that, sadly, one in four pupils reported being bullied online, and in the online world there is no respect for devolved or reserved boundaries or indeed for national borders.

[Andrew Bowie]

Does my right hon. Friend agree that keeping children safe online must be a priority of effective relationships and sex education?

**Damian Hinds:** I agree with my hon. Friend. The danger is that we grown-ups talk about helping children to make the distinction between the online and offline worlds, and how a social media friend is not the same as a proper friend, but for children growing up today I am not sure that there is a dividing line between the online and offline worlds—they are both an integral part of self. That makes it even more important to talk, right from the start, about the things that he mentions. From the very beginning, therefore, the curriculum includes online issues.

**Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): I am grateful for the Secretary of State's statement. As he is aware, children and young people with learning disabilities are particularly vulnerable to bullying and indeed sexual abuse. What steps is he taking to ensure very good-quality relationships and sex education in schools for children with special educational needs, as well as in mainstream schools where children with learning difficulties are educated, to ensure that those children are properly protected as well?

**Damian Hinds:** This applies to all schools. In the consultation, I am very open to hearing from special schools, SENCOs—special educational needs co-ordinators—and others dealing with children who have particular needs and requirements in this area about what, if anything, we need to do, in particular about training or materials in that regard.

**Caroline Lucas** (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): I, too, congratulate the Government on making progress on this important issue. There is cross-party agreement on its importance, and I hope that I played a small part with a private Member's Bill that I promoted. In particular, I welcome the Secretary of State's focus on mental health, but I will express two other quick concerns.

First, will PSHE and RSE be made available as free teacher subject specialism training courses? The training will be key, and we need to see it as part of the free teacher subject specialism.

Secondly, on withdrawing children from sex education, I do not think that the Secretary of State's compromise works. All children in all schools should receive PSHE and RSE, and children's rights and safety are at the heart of this. Let us not forget that the guidelines on female genital mutilation for health workers in schools already include withdrawal from sex education as an indicator of risk. I therefore gently ask him to look at the issue again. Children absolutely have to be at the heart of this policy and I am worried that his compromise does not do that.

**Damian Hinds:** I am happy to add the hon. Lady to the list of people who have played a part in this. People of course cannot withdraw from relationships education or from the sex education aspects of the science curriculum, and there are some aspects in the health curriculum, on puberty in particular. On the question of support for

schools, the training needs and so on, we will look at all that through the consultation. I want to hear from schools about what they think is most important.

**Thangam Debonnaire** (Bristol West) (Lab): I, too, welcome the statement by the Secretary of State. I am very pleased to have played a very small part in this, and I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Mrs Lewell-Buck) and the former Member for Crewe and Nantwich who did such great work on the Children and Social Work Bill—I was the Whip.

I want to ask the Secretary of State about child sexual exploitation. From what I understand about the parental opt-out, my concern is that it will contribute to some young women in particular having insufficient knowledge and understanding of what sexual consent means. They might not be able to understand what is taught to them about child sexual exploitation or abuse. Will the Secretary of State confirm whether the consultation has scope to include organisations that are specialists in child sexual exploitation?

**Damian Hinds:** I must add the hon. Lady, too, to the growing list, and yes, and we have already been listening to those expert organisations, some of whom create their own materials to help in teaching, running assemblies and so on. To be clear, it is not possible to withdraw from the parts of the curriculum that are connected with knowing where to get help or about the dangers that exist online and off. As I said, in primary school everyone will be going through relationships education, which will include staying safe online and offline. Relationships education includes awareness of where to go for help and of what is acceptable and what is not. These days, consent is a much broader question than it was, because of the online world, sexting and all such developments, and all children will be made aware of those matters.

**Seema Malhotra** (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): I, too, welcome the statement, and perhaps I may add to the list of those who have campaigned for relationships and sex education in primary and secondary and for some of the updating that has now happened: in my role as shadow Minister with responsibility for preventing violence against women and girls, I have worked closely with my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper).

May I pick up on the particular point about prevention of violence against women? The Secretary of State alluded to some of the things that are in the guidance on abusive relationships, but there is evidence that a growing number of young people—teenagers and those just a little older—are subject to violent relationships. To what extent will resources be provided for specialist training and for organisations such as the Hollie Gazzard Trust—founded in memory of Hollie Gazzard who was 20 years old when she was killed by her ex-partner—to ensure that young people, boys and girls, understand the difference between an abusive and a healthy relationship?

**Damian Hinds:** Yes, this is fundamental. Understanding healthy relationships, what constitutes a positive relationship and what is not reasonable to have happen are the fundamental elements running through relationships education guidance. It starts with one's relationships

with family and friends, and as children get older it goes on to intimate relationships and so on. Specifically on the guidance, I am open to hearing from all organisations, including the one that the hon. Lady mentioned.

**Layla Moran** (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD): I, too, welcome the consultation. It is overdue, but I sincerely hope that the Government will press forward with it. I want to press the Secretary of State one more time on financial education. He may well have seen the harrowing BBC drama this week “Killed By My Debt”, the true story of 19-year-old of Jerome Rogers, who took his own life because of financial debt. The Secretary of State says that financial education should not be made compulsory because it is in other aspects of the national curriculum, but he will know that free schools and academies do not have to follow the national curriculum. How can he guarantee that all children, no matter what school they are in, have the skills they need to manage their finances?

**Damian Hinds:** I did not see the programme the hon. Lady mentioned, but I am very familiar with these issues. Before this job and before I was a Minister in the Government, I used to campaign on issues of financial education, and I very much welcomed the bringing in of more financial education and the shift to make sure that the GCSE included practical maths. As part of the process of looking at the aspects we are talking about today, I have been through that content in detail to check that it does in fact cover those practical aspects in exactly that way. Of course, all schools do maths, so there is not an opt-out in that sense. As I mentioned to the hon. Lady next to her—did I say this to the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas)? I do not know; it was a while ago—I am also considering whether there is more we need do about very practical life skills and preparation for adulthood for 16 to 18-year-olds.

**Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab) *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** Oh!

**Kerry McCarthy:** I am easily forgotten.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** My apologies. The prize for patience and perseverance goes to Kerry McCarthy.

**Kerry McCarthy:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I very much welcome this statement. It is important that we reflect on the fact that this is not just about providing protection for possible victims of sexual abuse, exploitation, bullying and unhealthy relationships, but about reaching out to potential perpetrators, which is why it is important that as many young people as possible are part of this programme.

I want to ask about physical health education, particularly education about food. May I urge the Secretary of State to look at the work of the children’s future food inquiry? It is being carried out by two all-party groups, and it will report early next year. It is one thing to teach children what healthy food looks like, but if they are living in food poverty and do not have access to healthy food, that will not go very far.

**Damian Hinds:** The hon. Lady is right to identify the importance of the physical health parts of this programme. That touches on the obesity strategy, and we know that obesity is a serious problem that we have to face. This is really about empowering children to make good decisions about what they eat and about exercise; it is also about smoking and alcohol, and good decisions in such cases obviously involve just not doing them or, in the case of alcohol, not doing it to excess. Doing so from an early age is incredibly important. I will have a look at the report that she mentioned.

## Points of Order

12.43 pm

**Mrs Madeleine Moon** (Bridgend) (Lab) *rose*—

**Wera Hobhouse** (Bath) (LD) *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** The hon. Member for Bath (Wera Hobhouse) is perfectly in order to raise a point of order and I will come to her in just a moment, but I first call Madeleine Moon.

**Mrs Moon:** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. This morning, a written statement has been released by the Ministry of Defence on the modernising defence programme. It says very little apart from warm words and platitudes, but the issue of great interest across the defence estate is when we are going to have a contractual agreement on the airborne early warning and control capability—the new airborne warning and control system plane—which is vital to our defence and security. There is great concern that there may be an attempt to release the details of a military-to-military sale, rather than of an open tender, during the recess. May I seek your advice and guidance on the protocol, because if the Ministry of Defence is planning to award such a contract, it should do so while the House is sitting so that it can receive suitable scrutiny from Members of Parliament?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her point of order. She is right to use this opportunity in the Chamber to raise the point that concerns her, but I am sure she will appreciate that the time at which any Department releases information or the way in which it comes to a conclusion such as the one she has described is not of course a point of order for the Chair. However, she has taken this opportunity to put her point on the record, and I am sure that those on the Treasury Bench will have noted it. I also have every confidence that if something of significance occurs during the parliamentary recess, the appropriate Minister will come to the Dispatch Box in the Chamber as soon as we come back after the recess. I certainly hope so, but if that does not happen, the hon. Lady will I am sure have a point of order to raise with Mr Speaker.

**Wera Hobhouse:** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. During Exiting the European Union questions earlier, the Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, the hon. Member for Fareham (Suella Braverman), said:

“Manufacturing is at a record high”.

This is factually incorrect. The most recent figures from the Office for National Statistics show that in April manufacturing output fell by 1.4% compared with the previous month, the sharpest fall for five years. Similarly, the UK’s trade balance deteriorated further in April, falling by £2.1 billion. I am still a new Member, and I am perturbed, but is it acceptable for Ministers to make sweeping, unsupported, incorrect factual statements, especially when they encourage us and others to stick to the facts? I would really like your advice.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady for raising her point of order. She notes that she is a new Member. I am not a new Member, and over the decades I have heard hundreds of people use statistics in this place—

**Wera Hobhouse:** A Minister.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I have heard hundreds of Ministers, as well as non-Ministers, use statistics in this place, and every statistic is of course open to interpretation and to being used to put a political point of view, whatever that point of view might be. If it turns out that there has been a factual error, I am sure that the Minister in question will apologise to the House and to the hon. Lady, but if it is a question of the interpretation of statistics—in my experience, it usually is—then that is a matter for debate. The hon. Lady has, however, used the opportunity of raising a point of order to put her interpretation of the facts properly on the record.

## ROYAL ASSENT

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** I now have to notify the House about Royal Assent to certain Bills. In accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, Her Majesty has signified her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

Supply and Appropriation (Main Estimates) Act 2018  
Automated and Electric Vehicles Act 2018  
Haulage Permits and Trailer Registration Act 2018  
Northern Ireland Budget Act 2018  
Domestic Gas and Electricity (Tariff Cap) Act 2018.

## Independent Complaints and Grievance Policy

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** I am happy to inform the House that Mr Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of Sir Kevin Barron.

12.49 pm

**The Leader of the House of Commons (Andrea Leadsom):** I beg to move,

That this House approves the Second Report from the Committee on Standards, Independent Complaints and Grievance Policy: Implementation, HC1396, and the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme Delivery Report and its proposals for ensuring clear standards for all who work in or visit Parliament, and, in particular:

(1) endorses the Behaviour Code and the policies and procedures relating to bullying and harassment and sexual harassment associated with the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme set out in the Delivery Report;

(2) agrees the following amendments to The Code of Conduct:

(i) in Section IV (General Principles of Conduct), after paragraph 8 insert the following new paragraph:

“Parliamentary Behaviour Code

Members are also expected to observe the principles set out in the Parliamentary Behaviour Code of respect, professionalism, understanding others’ perspectives, courtesy, and acceptance of responsibility.”;

(ii) in Section V (Rules of Conduct), add the following new rule as Rule [17]:

“Respect

A Member must treat their staff and all those visiting or working for or with Parliament with dignity, courtesy and respect.”;

(3) agrees the following changes to Standing Orders:

A. Standing Order No. 149 (Committee on Standards)

(i) in paragraph (5), at end insert “save as specified in paragraph (5A) of this Order”;

(ii) after paragraph (5) insert new paragraph (5A) of this Order:

“(5A) It shall be an instruction to the Committee that before dividing on any motion, the Committee should hold an indicative vote of lay and elected members to ascertain the views on the motion of the Committee as a whole and of each member present; that such a vote should be conducted as if it were a formal division; that, as in a formal division, the Chair should not take part in the initial vote but should have a casting vote in the event of a tie; that after holding such a vote the results should be recorded in the Committee’s formal minutes, without question put; and that after holding such a vote the Committee may or may not proceed to a formal division of elected Members.”;

B. Standing Order No. 150 (Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards)

(i) in paragraph (2), at end add the following new sub-paragraph:

“(f) to consider cases arising from the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme”;

(ii) in paragraph (4), at end add the following new sub-paragraph:

“(c) in any case arising from the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme where the Commissioner has proposed remedial action within any procedure approved by the Committee with which the Member concerned has complied or, if the remedy is prospective, undertaken to comply”;

(4) recognises the role of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards to consider cases arising from the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme; notes the arrangements about publishing the details of investigations of such cases to ensure complaints are handled confidentially as set out in the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme Delivery Report; and accordingly agrees that, for consistency and fairness, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards should no longer routinely publish information about individual investigations before those investigations are concluded and accordingly agrees to amend sub-paragraph (b) of paragraph (12) of Standing Order No. 150 by inserting “statistical” before “information” and leaving out “and matters under investigation”;

(5) recognises that Dame Laura Cox QC is conducting an independent inquiry into the allegations of bullying and harassment of House of Commons staff, whose Terms of Reference were published on 23 April 2018; notes that the inquiry relies upon past and present staff members coming forward with information in person or in writing; notes further that the inquiry, while not investigating any individual complaints or reopening past cases, will consider what options are available for resolving current or historical allegations and providing support to those affected; accordingly agrees that a further independent inquiry in similar terms be established, by the Clerk of the House in consultation with the relevant authorities in the House of Lords as appropriate, to consider allegations of bullying and harassment in respect of those individuals including MPs and their staff, where those allegations are not in scope of the Dame Laura Cox QC inquiry; and directs that the inquiry should report directly to the House in time for its findings to be taken into account in the 6 month review of the scheme established under paragraph (6) of this motion;

(6) endorses the proposal in the report that there should be reviews of the new arrangements at 6 months and 18 months, and invites the Leader of the House to propose the establishment of a review body, including staff representation, to the House of Commons Commission for their consideration and agreement, in consultation with the relevant authorities in the House of Lords as appropriate; those reviews should incorporate

(a) the findings of the independent review set up under paragraph (5) of this motion and

(b) the findings of the Dame Laura Cox QC inquiry which deals with matters relating to staff of the House;

(7) directs the Accounting Officer to meet those costs of the inquiry under paragraph (5) and the reviews under paragraph (6) falling to the House of Commons from the House of Commons (Administration) Vote.

Today gives us a new start. Since last November, Westminster has been rocked by allegations of bullying and harassment, and today we demonstrate our determination to put our house in order and ensure that everyone will be treated with dignity and respect in future. This debate and vote comes as a result of the tireless work and dedication of the programme team, who have driven the implementation of the working group’s proposals. The programme team was overseen by a cross-party steering group made up of staff representatives and Members of both Houses. To everyone who has been involved in this process and supported and provided advice, I am extremely grateful. Most importantly, we probably would not be having this debate were it not for the bravery and spirit of those women and men who have chosen to speak out about their personal experiences. We thank them for taking that step on behalf of everyone who has been treated wrongly.

**Lyn Brown (West Ham) (Lab):** As the right hon. Lady would expect, I have talked to my staff about this policy and asked them whether they think it is a step forward. They do, but they also want the House to recognise the Unite branch and give it a role in the reviewing and

[Lyn Brown]

implementation of the procedure, to embed union protection in the workplace. Has that idea been discussed or progressed?

**Andrea Leadsom:** That idea has been discussed a number of times through the working group. It was decided not to include that specific recognition, mainly because there are many different organisations in this place, all of which do a good job. Therefore, there is no non-recognition, but neither is there a specific formalised recognition of the Unite branch within the complaints procedure.

The motion asks the House to endorse specific changes that were identified in the working group's report that was published and agreed by the House in February. Today, the principles of that report will become reality. First, today's motion asks the House to approve the independent complaints and grievance scheme delivery report, and in doing so it will also ask the House to endorse a new behaviour code that makes it clear to all those who come here—whether an MP, member of staff, peer, contractor or visitor—the standard expected of everyone in Parliament.

Secondly, the motion asks the House to eliminate the threat of exposure that prevents many people from coming forward, by ensuring that all investigations are managed confidentially. Thirdly, it will provide the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards with a broader set of powers and make changes to the Committee on Standards, including to the voting role of lay members. Fourthly, it proposes that a further independent inquiry be established, with similar terms to the Dame Laura Cox inquiry, to hear historical allegations about Members, peers and their staff. Finally, the motion will make provision for a full review of those arrangements after six and 18 months.

In addition to the measures in today's motion, the steering group has established two independent helplines—one to deal with bullying, and one to deal with sexual misconduct—as well as independent HR advice for staff, and there is an aspiration to improve the general culture of Parliament, including through a new programme of comprehensive training. Members, staff and the public can rest assured that this new independent complaints and grievance policy puts the complainant at the very heart of the process, while taking care to ensure that the principles of innocent until proven guilty are upheld. The ICGP will be fair and transparent, and I believe it will win the confidence of everyone.

Following an intensive period of implementation, today is the final parliamentary hurdle to getting this much needed new scheme up and running. This is the first step, not the final step, towards the culture change that we all want. That is why we have built in a six and 18-month review of the scheme, to ensure that it achieves exactly what we set out to do. Importantly, the six-month review will take careful account of the findings of the independent inquiry by Dame Laura Cox QC and the further independent inquiry that we are establishing today.

Let me turn to the key elements of today's motion. First, the new behaviour code will apply to everyone on the parliamentary estate. It has been drawn up following extensive consultation with trade unions, staff associations and the public, who were asked for their views about what behavioural expectations we should have of those

working for and within Parliament. It seeks to ensure that everyone in and working for Parliament is respected and valued and that we take a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct. Unacceptable behaviour will be dealt with seriously and with effective sanctions.

Today's motion will also make changes to the Standing Orders for the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards and to the Committee on Standards. We propose that the commissioners of both Houses keep their investigations entirely confidential until such time as there is a finding. That is crucial if individuals are to place their trust in the new system. There is clearly a balance to be struck between public interest in transparency and putting the complainant at the heart of the process by protecting their identity, and that is vital. In deciding whether to publish any findings, the PCS will also put the complainant's wishes at the heart of the decision.

I thank, very sincerely, the right hon. Member for Rother Valley (Sir Kevin Barron) for the extremely thoughtful and collaborative way that he and his Committee came to their position. I must point out, however, that we have had to respectfully disagree on one issue, which is about whether confidentiality should also be observed during an investigation in non-ICGP cases. I would be the last person to want to avoid transparency, but for this scheme to succeed, it is vital that we achieve consistency. The amendment by the Committee on Standards would effectively mean that there is one process for ICGP cases and a different one for non-ICGP cases.

**Caroline Lucas** (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): As the right hon. Lady knows, we have agreed on nearly everything in the report. On this issue, however, I wish to put on record that I did not agree with the position of the group, which was to say that we did not want the amendment tabled by the Committee on Standards. Consistency is not the most important issue, and the optics of this House rolling back transparency are deeply worrying. I would far rather live with a bit of inconsistency, particularly since it essentially means that—quite rightly—MPs are under more of a spotlight. That to me is a much lesser concern than the fact that it looks to the outside world—indeed, to some extent it is true—that we are rolling back transparency at exactly the time we should be expanding it.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am incredibly grateful to the hon. Lady for her considerable efforts on this scheme but, very respectfully, I disagree with her on that point. She and I have had a number of conversations about the matter, and we have always been clear that the confidentiality at the heart of this policy must be observed so that a complainant will have the confidence to come forward. As I am sure Members will appreciate, a difference in process between ICGP and non-ICGP cases will be lost on those who observe it, which will inevitably lead to confusion. People will not think, "Oh well, this procedure must be for one issue, and that must be for another issue." They will just see the naming of an individual, and that will have repercussions for those who want to come forward in confidence to a complaints procedure, feeling that their confidentiality will be upheld.

**Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): I want to endorse what the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas) has said. I am a member of the Committee on Standards, and the right hon. Lady will

be aware that I have added my name to the amendment. We already receive complaints about non-ICGP matters, and I do not think I have seen any evidence during my time on the Committee to suggest that complainants are deterred from bringing such matters to attention of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards. I am concerned, however, that reports often appear in the media, even before the matter has been formally referred to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards. Under the proposal by the Leader of the House, it would be impossible for anything to be on the record that would enable an innocent Member to rebut those allegations in the media. I urge her to consider the amendment, which, as I am sure my right hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Sir Kevin Barron) will soon say, is supported by lay members of the Committee, as well by as non-lay members.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I entirely respect the hon. Lady's views, but I think that she might be slightly misunderstanding. We are talking about confidentiality during the process of the investigation only. Once an investigation is completed, in the event that there have been reports in the media, in a non-ICGP case—as is the case today—the report would be made publicly available. The steering group advocates that all investigations be carried out confidentially to ensure consistency, now that the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards is dealing with extremely sensitive issues that will inevitably be far more open to public scrutiny than in the past.

Right from the beginning, we have sought in this scheme to put the complainant at the heart of the process. All the evidence we have taken demonstrates that confidentiality is a key factor that will encourage victims to come forward. I cannot emphasise that enough. The evidence we have taken shows that, if we do not protect the confidentiality of victims, they will not come forward. We are already in a scenario where too many victims never come forward with their complaints, because they are afraid of being re-victimised by being accused of lying, causing trouble and so on. If we are serious about changing the culture in this place, confidentiality and consistency are vital elements. So again, in thanking the right hon. Member for Rother Valley for his careful consideration, I urge Members to vote against his amendment.

The motion will significantly extend the scope of the independent Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards to consider complaints arising from the scheme. The commissioner will be given access to a wider range of sanctions, enabling her to deal more effectively with many cases through apologies, training, behaviour agreements and so on, as well as ensuring independent oversight of investigations.

Finally, the motion sets out changes to the procedures of the Standards Committee, which will receive both appeals and the most serious cases for its consideration. Its voting system will be amended at its request, so that all members, including all lay members, will have a vote. Should the House accept those changes, detailed guidance will be available online immediately, but I want to outline briefly how the new scheme will work.

For anyone with a complaint, the first step is to contact a confidential helpline, where their issue can be considered and triaged. Where individuals decide to pursue a formal complaint, they will be supported to

access one of two independent services: one to deal with bullying and harassment and a separate one to deal with sexual misconduct. Should a complaint have criminal implications, the steering group has agreed to establish an information-sharing protocol with the Metropolitan police to make them aware, in the interests of safeguarding and ensuring the scheme could not prejudice a criminal investigation, when such a complaint has been made. The protocol will maintain the confidentiality of complainants, who will decide for themselves whether to take their complaint to the police.

For each complaint, the telephone helpline and investigatory service will seek mediation and informal resolutions wherever possible or appropriate. Where that is not the case, an independent investigation will be opened. Complaints of sexual harassment or assault will have access to an independent sexual misconduct advisory service, which is a specialist service that can provide confidential, independent specialist and trained support in relation to sexual misconduct. In the case of complaints against Members of Parliament, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards will oversee the independent investigation. She will apply sanctions as appropriate, or, in more serious cases, refer them to the Standards Committee. The Standards Committee can of course apply sanctions right up to a lengthy suspension, triggering the Recall of MPs Act 2015. Following a decision on any case, there is of course an opportunity for appeal.

When the working group report was published, there were two outstanding issues. I am pleased to be able to provide clarity on them today. First, when the working group started taking evidence last November, we were advised that House staff had access to the respect policy, which was considered to be entirely adequate for their needs. Since then, it has come to light that there have been difficulties with the respect policy, so the steering group has been clear about its desire to give all staff access to the new ICGP scheme. I am very pleased to tell the House that the House of Commons Commission has now agreed that staff of the House of Commons and the Parliamentary Digital Service should be able to access the ICGP from day one.

Secondly, while anyone can call the new helplines with a complaint, investigations under the new scheme can only go back as far as the beginning of this Parliament. The steering group is, however, determined that we should be able to help all those with complaints, no matter how long ago they occurred. Today's motion will therefore establish an independent six-month long inquiry into historical allegations using similar terms of reference to the Dame Laura Cox inquiry. The findings of both inquiries will be taken into careful account when we undertake the full review of the ICGP after six months of its operation.

I want to conclude by making it clear that this is the beginning not the end of our efforts to change the culture of Parliament. With our new behaviour code, complaint scheme and sanctions, this is an excellent step in the right direction. Our ultimate ambition is for a culture where people can work and visit Parliament and take part in our democracy free from unacceptable behaviour and free from bullying or harassment and where individuals are free to thrive and make a difference. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for Parliament. We want to be a role model for legislatures around the

[*Andrea Leadsom*]

world in our determination to tackle our own challenges head on. Many millions of people across the world look to Westminster as a beacon of democracy and freedom. I hope that today will be seen as Parliament leading by example in our determination to treat everyone with dignity and respect. I commend the motion to the House.

1.6 pm

**Dawn Butler** (Brent Central) (Lab): I echo the sentiments of the Leader of the House and thank the programme team and the cross-party steering committee. Some of the programme team are in the House today. I thank them for interpreting our ramblings in all the discussions—both agreements and disagreements. I thank all the specialist advisers, who were informative and progressive, and actually mentioned intersectionality before I had the chance to in a meeting. I thank MPs across the parties and the trade unions—it was a joy to work with all of them. I thank my hon. Friends the Members for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz) and for York Central (Rachael Maskell), and the Leader of the House for her excellent chairing of the committee.

These codes are bringing Parliament into the 21st century. Behaviour or sexual harassment codes will not work on their own, but as a statement of principle, they are an excellent start with regard to our cultural intent, and they set the parameters in terms of behaviour. These codes are needed to encompass our shared mission.

I want to address a few points. Paragraph 18 on page 11 of the delivery report refers to promoting consistency and maintaining quality. Consistency and quality can be achieved only if there are clear and transparent guidelines, not a reliance on discretion. I hope, as discussed by the committee, that at the six-month review stage, we will look into removing discretion from the policy, as that opens the door to unconscious bias. The committee tried to use the most up-to-date language and safeguarding processes. This in itself will be a learning curve to everyone in this place and beyond. At the core of this policy is our mission to change the culture of this House, and, as the Leader of the House said, to make it a safe and progressive place to work.

Parliament is a unique place to work, with 650 micro-businesses in a macro environment of the electorate, our constituents and our constituencies. The constituency office is included in the codes, even though all the issues relating to it have not been resolved.

We have stressed the importance of diversity in the delivery of training and personal development. I think that means that we will be using smaller, specialist and perhaps unconventional providers in Parliament to ensure that we deliver on diversity of delivery. The report makes reference to unconscious bias training, and that is a case in point, because sometimes smaller providers specialise in such areas. It is also vital that decision makers receive additional training, as well as unconscious bias training. I am pleased to say that I look forward to attending the training pilot. As a trained trainer, I will happily dust down my old skills and help the House to design the best training possible. Other Members of the House are encouraged to put their names forward to be part of the reviewing team for training so that we can get the best possible training for the House.

Everyone involved in the delivery of sanctions needs to be fully trained, including the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, the members of the Committee on Standards and, of course, the investigators. The Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards' role has been extended, so training is vital, and the bar for investigating MPs has now been lowered. That was a necessary step in changing the culture of this place, but it will in turn increase the commissioner's workload. At the six-month review, we will probably have to look at whether more resources are needed for her department. The document refers to the good employer standard, and I hope that at the six-month review we will look at implementing employee appraisals. I am not sure whether we concluded our talk on whether exit questionnaires are now routinely used, but they are a vital tool to help an organisation's culture change.

I want this House to be a beacon of good practice. The codes will apply to not only MPs, but all who work in and visit this place. The introduction of the scheme is the beginning of a sustained, well-supported and appropriately resourced approach to promoting a positive and supportive environment for those working in and visiting Parliament. That is something we should all embrace.

We must not lose sight of how much good happens in this place—the opportunities that are offered to people, especially young people, and the work of many, including Mr Speaker, to improve the intersectionality, diversity and inclusion of all, including the LGBT+ community in this place. We must continue to have a supportive environment for everybody who works and visits here.

It is imperative that we incentivise and promote good behaviour. Training and personal development should be viewed not as a punishment, but as a way of contributing to an inclusive and progressive Parliament. After all, who would not want to improve what they do and do it better? That is how excellence is achieved.

Trade unions are often the first port of call, and I feel that Parliament needs to have an official recognition agreement with trade unions. Unite, GMB, the National Union of Teachers and the Public and Commercial Services Union are just a few that have a substantial membership in this place. Trade unions play a key role in workers' lives. They are also a safe place to go to raise concerns, and this process has been substantially strengthened by the input of trade unions. If we are serious about getting this right, trade unions are also central to it.

As long, hard and arduous as the process has been, it has been worth it in the end for the document that we have produced. It all started as part of the #TimesUp and the #MeToo campaigns, and I was part of the very first meeting when the Leader of the Opposition called on the Prime Minister to adopt a cross-party approach to tackle and address the culture of bullying and harassment in Parliament. The Prime Minister agreed with the Leader of the Opposition and today is the result. This process shows what can be achieved when there is a shared goal and a shared commitment. It also shows what can be accomplished when we all work together towards a common endeavour. We can achieve more together than we can achieve alone, and I look forward to the next steps and the successful implementation of the scheme.

1.14 pm

**Mrs Maria Miller** (Basingstoke) (Con): I pay enormous tribute to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. I think that nobody would contradict me if I said that without her skill, implementing this new procedure would simply not have happened. It is easy for all of us to call for action and say, “Something should be done,” but it takes a particular skill to actually deliver that, and I pay tribute to her for having dealt with all the factions that have been at play and bringing us to this successful conclusion today.

It is important that we lead by example in this place and that we act, because people have a right to feel safe wherever they work, whether that is in Parliament or anywhere. I pay tribute to the individuals, particularly the women, who have come forward and had the courage to speak out when many hundreds before them have not. My heart goes out to those who may be listening to today’s debate who have experienced sexual harassment or bullying in this place before these procedures have come forward. I hope that they can find some comfort in the fact that we are dealing with this in such a professional way. Parliament is overwhelmingly a good place to work, but there are instances when that is not the case. It is important for us and we have a responsibility to deal with that.

Although this is in a much broader context, Madam Deputy Speaker, I hope you do not mind my touching on the work of the Women and Equalities Committee. As the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips), my fellow Committee member, will know—she is in the Chamber—we are looking at the issue of sexual harassment at work and the importance of recognising that the issues that we find challenging here in Parliament are part of a much wider context. It is a little disappointing that although back in 2007, organisations such as the Equal Opportunities Commission were looking at sexual harassment in work—it was one of its top-priority agenda items—the Equality and Human Rights Commission did not pick this up when it was established. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will know that the International Labour Organisation is bringing forward an international convention against sexual harassment at work. It began work on that in 2015. These are not new issues; they have been around for many, many years. I am glad that Parliament is leading the way and I hope that others will pick up some of the recommendations that we are putting forward today and, indeed, will be working on this themselves.

The Leader of the House is absolutely right to say that this is the beginning of a process. We need to keep some questions in mind as we move forward to reviews of the process in the next few months and years. It is important that we keep a close eye on the independence of the process from political parties and, in particular, the Whips. This process needs to be independent of that very intricate network that we have in this place.

I would also like to talk about confidentiality. All the evidence that was given to our Select Committee suggests that confidentiality is absolutely vital. The Leader of the House is entirely right to protect that, because the confidentiality of complainants is what matters. This is nothing to do with a lack of transparency regarding the behaviour of Members of Parliament. If we do not embrace that, this system will fail. It is important that others understand that, including perhaps those who

have not looked at this issue in quite the detail that my right hon. Friend has. We are protecting the confidentiality of the complainant.

I would like to ask the Leader of the House a couple of questions. She touched on the issue of complaints about behaviour that predate the 2017 cut-off. This is vital. We ask companies and other organisations to deal with behaviour that is historical, yet it can feel as though this process does not take events that predate 2017 as seriously as those that post-date 2017. I understand the complexities of doing that, but will she reassure me that any complaints that predate 2017 are dealt with in the same way with regard to confidentiality as those that are more recent? That is really important.

Perhaps my right hon. Friend can also think about ways in which we can give more advice to Members about how they deal with issues as they arise. That is another issue with which the Select Committee is having to deal. If an individual Member, or indeed a member of staff, witnesses sexual harassment or bullying behaviour, is that person obliged to report it, and if not, why not? We need to give Members that important advice, because we cannot allow bystanders simply to watch things going on without acting. This is a live issue. The Leader of the House may wish to read the Select Committee’s report when it is published next Wednesday—it deals with tackling the issue in the professions, where people are obviously obliged to behave in the right way.

In March, along with other Members, I attended a session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. There I met a member of the community delegation, who told us that members of the Canadian Cabinet were receiving training on sexual harassment that week. I should like some reassurance from my right hon. Friend that she can use her position to ensure that the same happens here, and happens speedily, right to the top of our organisation.

How we deal with bullying and sexual harassment really matters. This new process will build people’s confidence in the system, and as a result we may see an increasing number of complaints. That is not a sign that our organisation is in trouble. It is completely the opposite: it is a sign that the organisation is getting to grips with a problem, and gaining the confidence of its employees by talking about these issues more openly than has ever been the case in the past.

Again, I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend. This is an extraordinary step forward for Parliament, and I hope that the Select Committee will be able to look at the reviews of the system as and when they are published.

1.21 pm

**Pete Wishart** (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mrs Miller), who chairs the Women and Equalities Committee, and I look forward to the publication of her report next week. I think that it will make a useful contribution to the general debate that we are having about these issues in the House.

Let me start by thanking the Leader of the House for her opening contribution, and congratulating her on the leadership that she offered throughout the deliberations of the steering group. It seems a long time since the group was formed after all the party leaders had met. This has been quite a journey, as I think all of us who have been involved will agree. Certainly, during my 17 years in the

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House, I have not been involved in a piece of work that has been so detailed, so considered and so comprehensively reviewed, and rewritten on several occasions.

That says a great deal about the diligence of all the members of the group, many of whom are in the Chamber today, and the amount of work and effort that we have all been prepared to put in—particularly in trying to get down to London from Scotland on Monday afternoons in time for the meetings with staff. I think that that effort should be recognised. I also thank all the members of the secretariat who are sitting in their Boxes this afternoon for their hard work, and the commitment and the sheer effort that have gone into the delivery of this very good report.

The report is a joint piece of work which has involved Members of this House and the House of Lords, but, most important, it has involved members of staff and trade union representatives, as has already been recognised today. That is a novel and innovative way of working, and I cannot commend it enough: I think it is great. I think the involvement and buy-in of members of staff and their union representatives will give the report more credibility in the House, and that people will be reassured that it was designed not by Members of Parliament but—as the report says—by the parliamentary community. It was designed by the parliamentary community, for the parliamentary community. I hope that that will be recognised, and that the report will be accepted on that basis.

The report is a significant and ambitious piece of work, which I hope will help to redefine the culture in our Westminster workplace. Some appalling incidents and issues arose towards the end of last year, and we recognised then that something awful was happening in our workplace that had to be tackled. The efforts made by all parties in the House to do that properly should be commended. I think that the most important part of the report is the first sentence of the first paragraph, which states:

“It is vital that all those who engage with Parliament, whether working or visiting, are treated with dignity and respect”.

That is an obvious statement, but it cannot be repeated enough. It underpins every other part of the report, and every part of the work that we have undertaken.

In the last few months, we have tried to make sense of the motion that was passed in February, when the House agreed unanimously to proceed. The way in which the workstreams have been designed during those months has been very helpful and useful, enabling us to identify particular issues that needed to be addressed and ensure that there was a practical way forward. Hopefully, we now have a robust and effective regime that everyone in Parliament will be able to endorse and support.

That regime offers a strong foundation to promote better behaviour and improve the culture of Parliament. It delivers the commitments set out in the motion that was passed by the House in February, and, specifically, it helps to deliver a new behaviour code that recognises the need for Parliament to meet the highest ethical standards of integrity, courtesy and mutual respect. That has underpinned the work of the group over the past few months.

There will be an independent complaints and grievance scheme to underpin the code. There will be procedures to deal with reports of sexual harassment, which will

include the provision of a specialist independent sexual violence advocate service and an independent specialist investigator. There will be a system of training to support the code, and work will be done to effect cultural change in order to support its principles. The Leader of the House is right: no other legislature in the world has attempted to do such ambitious work in this regard. Hopefully, it will set a standard for other legislatures not just throughout the United Kingdom but throughout the world, by showing what can be done when everyone gets together and tries to make progress.

There is always more to be done. As the report says, reviews will be held six and 18 months after implementation to ensure that we have made the necessary progress and can address the many issues that will doubtless arise. I am pretty certain that we have not managed to cover everything. I know that there have been many conversations and debates about other matters that could have been included in the report. I think that the reviews will be a useful starting point which will help us to establish whether anything needs to be covered further, and will, I hope, define and determine future work and inform the policies of the future.

Several issues consumed the group. For instance, we spent a great deal of time dealing with the issue of historic cases. I think there was general disappointment that the new scheme could not cover such cases, and we tried at least to do something to ensure that they could be taken up. Legal advice has, of course, been swirling around, and I invite Members to read, in the appendices of the report, about the advice that the group secured, so that they can reach their own conclusions.

I hope that what the Leader of the House has said about enabling people to come forward with historic cases will satisfy the House. It is disappointing that that could not be included in the scheme, but there is a route for such cases to be addressed, and I hope that Members will find that sufficient. We are well aware of the Dame Laura Cox review, and hope that it will inform some of the views that we will be able to take in six months' time, when we presume that Dame Laura will be able to report to Parliament.

I think that the new direction offered to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards is equally important. We concluded that the PCS remained the only viable authority for the assessment and handling of sanctions. Being asked to consider issues relating to behaviour and bullying will present new and significant challenges. However, the commissioner is entirely independent, and it is almost impossible to ensure that the independence currently enjoyed by the PCS can be replicated elsewhere. Obviously, the report contains new guidance on the operation of the PCS.

The chairman of the Committee on Standards, the right hon. Member for Rother Valley (Sir Kevin Barron), has tabled an amendment to the motion, and several concerns have been raised about transparency. That is just one of the tensions that emerged throughout our deliberations. I think that every member of the steering group was profoundly disappointed by the prospect of the loss of a degree of transparency to address the issue of confidentiality for those who might be minded to come forward. I will listen carefully to what is said by the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas) before I finally decide on my position, but I am veering towards what was said by the Leader of the House, and

I hope to be able to accept her views on confidentiality. That has to be at the centre; everything has to start from that.

**Sir Kevin Barron** (Rother Valley) (Lab): Would the hon. Gentleman be happy as a Member of this House if somebody went to the local press and said that he had been accused of breaching the code of conduct—not the new code of conduct, but the current one—and there was nobody to deny that an investigation was taking place, so he just had to accept the accusation?

**Pete Wishart**: In all honesty and candour, I would not be happy with that, but we are trying to secure that the starting point is confidentiality for the people who come forward. There are compromises and things that are uncomfortable and unsatisfactory, and perhaps in the six-month review—this is a request to the Leader of the House—we can start to look at this again. I understand totally both sides of this: I hate the idea that we are losing transparency on issues to do with the normal work of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, and we must try to address this further.

**Kate Green**: I understand the concerns about people coming forward, but for non-ICGP complaints, we have had a system for several years whereby, as soon as an allegation is made and it is open to investigation, it becomes public, and there is no evidence that that deters people from making reports for investigation, so I urge the hon. Gentleman to consider the amendment sympathetically. It does not mean that those who report allegations of bullying and harassment will not have their confidentiality protected; it is simply in respect of complaints that we have already investigated, over many years, and the way in which the Committee wishes to continue to investigate.

**Pete Wishart**: Again, I do not disagree with anything the hon. Lady says. That is why I am torn between both positions. I accept the need for consistency to ensure that confidentiality is at the heart of what we do, and I also want to deal with the issues the hon. Lady raises.

**Andrea Leadsom**: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his considered words on this, and I want to assure all Members that this is not about rolling back transparency. I have asked whether the Standards Committee might consider a time-limited removal of that. I completely accept what the hon. Member for Stretford and Urmston (Kate Green) said—that since 2010, the PCS has been able to name an individual on whom she is opening an investigation—but her role has significantly changed, and to have one process for non-ICGP and a separate one for ICGP is confusing. I asked the Committee whether it would consider dropping it for the first six months while the new procedure gets up and running, and it refused, which I find slightly astonishing. This is a genuine attempt—I do not think anyone would accuse me of not making a genuine attempt—to put confidentiality at the heart of the process for the sake of the complainant.

**Pete Wishart**: I have no issue with the Leader of the House on that; I accept that she has tried to do that, and I think we have all been trying to do so, but unfortunately we are at a point where there are disagreements among those of us who have been involved in this report, and

we now see the amendment of the right hon. Member for Rother Valley and hear the concerns of the Standards Committee. I still want to hear from colleagues before I make a final decision, but I am veering towards the view of the Leader of the House on this. We must be consistent in how we deal with all these cases in this House.

**Rachael Maskell** (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): I have just checked Standing Order No. 150(12)(b) again, and its wording will not protect anonymity if there is no change. I am disappointed that the motion is not quite right and nor is the amendment. Therefore, because of the risk the amendment brings of breaching the confidentiality of a reporter in these cases, it cannot be supported, but we must address this issue in the six-month review and get it absolutely right.

**Pete Wishart**: That is a very helpful intervention, and perhaps the Leader of the House will confirm in summing up that this will be at the heart of the six-month review. Out of all the issues we have had to look at, this has been the most controversial and the most debated. If she can give an assurance to those of us in the group who are conflicted about this, that would go some way to assuaging my concerns, and perhaps those of Committee colleagues. I therefore ask for a solid commitment from the Leader of the House that this will be at the heart of the six-month review.

I want to address a couple of other important matters. The most important of them is training; this is a critical part of the report. The ideal situation is that the measures in this report are never deployed, and that means assisting Members and staff in how the code will apply. I am pleased that the features included in the training pack will be as follows: what constitutes bullying and harassment and sexual misconduct; the impact of inappropriate behaviours; the impact of power and unconscious bias on behaviours; ways to help prevent all forms of bullying and harassment at work; what to do if unacceptable behaviour happens; the role of the manager in preventing all forms of bullying and harassment at work; and informal and formal approaches to tackling unacceptable behaviours.

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to make the change needed to ensure that we all consider what we can all do to promote dignity and respect in our workplace. We encourage all members of the parliamentary community to support this scheme wholeheartedly and to uphold the important values it promotes. Some 15,000 people work in and around the parliamentary estate; I do not know how many visitors we get per year, but I suspect it is a greater number than that. We must make sure we serve them all and that anybody who has any contact with this House will be treated with the dignity and respect that underpin this report.

One thing that should unite everyone on the estate is the conviction that all who work here have a right to expect to work in an environment that is free from bullying and harassment, especially sexual harassment. There should be zero tolerance of any inappropriate behaviour. Parliament has to lead, because Parliament is the forum of our national debate and the centre of our democracy. We would shirk our responsibility if we did not tackle this issue and put out the strongest possible statement that such behaviour is unacceptable in this place. If we do not lead and establish solid

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procedures and processes to deal with our own issues, we will let down the people in every office block and every institution throughout the country, so it is our job to do this. We have to set the example, and I believe that this document does that. I hope the entire House wholeheartedly supports it.

1.36 pm

**Sir Kevin Barron** (Rother Valley) (Lab): I beg to move amendment (a), in paragraph (4), leave out from “Report;” to the end.

I wish to begin by paying tribute to the work of the Leader of the House and her colleagues on the steering group. The Select Committee on Standards has worked very closely with the steering group on the various work-streams over the past few months. There is one issue over which we disagree, and I have tabled an amendment to deal with it, which I will come to shortly. Because I and some of my Committee colleagues have tabled that amendment, under the rules of procedure we are not able to put our names to the main motion; otherwise, I personally would certainly have done so.

I want to emphasise that, this one area apart, the Standards Committee is completely in accord with the steering group and its delivery report. We strongly support the work that has been done to bring Parliament into the modern age in terms of personal conduct. This is not about complicated rules or codes or Standing Orders; it is about ordinary human decency.

People should not bully or harass other people. They should not sexually harass them or abuse their power. That is obvious, and yet not everyone in this institution has behaved in a morally decent way. Parliament should be giving a lead on this, but we have been lagging behind. The Standards Committee made a big effort some years ago to expand the code of conduct to include some aspects of personal behaviour, but this was undermined when it came to be decided in the House by what I may call today “the forces of reaction”. Now we have another chance, and we must take it.

The Committee set out its views in a report published last week. This focuses on matters which are the direct responsibility of the Committee—in particular, complaints against Members and the role of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards. We have worked with the steering group to develop proposals to ensure that Members are properly held to account while maintaining an independent, fair, trusted and effective process.

We support the new parliamentary behaviour code. We propose that it should be incorporated in the Members’ code of conduct, alongside an additional rule stating that:

“A Member shall treat his or her staff, and all those working for or with Parliament with dignity, courtesy and respect.”

This will ensure that Members can be held fully to account for any instances of bullying, harassment or sexual harassment. The motion before the House today will achieve that.

We have given a great deal of thought to how the complaints process will work under the new system. Clearly it has to be sensitive, and supportive of the people who wish to bring forward complaints, but at the same time it must follow the principles of natural justice and be fair to the people who are complained about. We believe that the new system should build on the strengths

of the existing system, in particular the role of the independent parliamentary commissioner, while tackling some of its weaknesses. We and the steering group propose that investigations relating to complaints against Members should be overseen by the independent commissioner.

In our report, we set out the background of the current commissioner, Kathryn Stone, who was recruited on merit through open and fair competition. She has a background in child protection and social care, and she has shown independent-mindedness in previous posts, including the particularly sensitive posts of commissioner of victims and survivors in Northern Ireland, commissioner of the Independent Police Complaints Commission and chief legal ombudsman for England and Wales. She also ran a charity for victims of crime, including sexual offences, for 11 years. I have had the privilege of seeing Kathryn in operation, and I have no doubt at all that she is a tough-minded person who will be fiercely independent in carrying out her new responsibilities.

The role of the Committee on Standards under the new system will be to carry out any appeal function that might be required. The ultimate decision on sanctions in serious cases will be taken by the House itself on the basis of a report on the case from the Committee, with the complainant anonymised and the report subjected to any redactions that the Committee considers necessary to protect the complainant. I know that some people are sceptical about involving the Committee because they think it will be a case of MPs marking their own homework. I have heard that view quite a few times in the media. I understand that point of view, but it does not reflect the reality of how the Committee operates. In particular, it does not take account of the crucial role of our independent lay members. There are now equal numbers of lay members and MPs on the Committee.

The lay members’ role is not widely understood. Our report gives more detail on this, and I urge Members to read it. In particular, they might like to look at the CVs of the lay members, which are set out in the appendix. They are members of the public, chosen on merit through open and fair competition, from diverse backgrounds and with a wide spread of experience and skills. None of them has been an MP, and nor are they in any way part of what people would call the parliamentary establishment. In general, the lay members work closely and harmoniously with the elected Members.

The Committee—like other Select Committees, and arguably more than most—proceeds by consensus. I have chaired other Select Committees in this House that have not had the type of consensus that the Committee on Standards works to. However, the lay members do not have voting rights—which we are aware of now—partly because of a concern that to confer such rights on them might open the work of the Committee to challenge in the courts. This concern is based on the ground that it is not a properly constituted Select Committee entitled to the protection of article 9 of the Bill of Rights 1689. Notwithstanding this, any lay member has the power to append an opinion to a report of the Committee. That power has never been exercised, but it has been seen as an essential safeguard for the lay members’ independence. Any one of them could at any time express an opinion on any of our reports dealing with Members’ conduct, but they have never done so because of the consensual way in which we operate and because of the fairness with which we adjudicate against Members of the House.

Indeed, there have been only two occasions on which formal votes have been held since lay members first joined the Standards Committee. The most recent was in May this year. That led us to review our procedures, because there was clearly a flaw in the arrangements. Lay members can append an opinion to a Committee report but they do not have such a right if the Committee divides on a motion not relating to a report. As a general rule, this does not matter because most Committee decisions relate to reports. Reports are how we announce our decisions on individual cases. However, at the meeting in May, two votes took place on motions relating to the commissioner's right to start an investigation. This drew attention to the fact that lay members had, in those unusual circumstances, no way of putting their views on record.

We have therefore introduced a new system of what we call indicative votes. This means that before the Committee has a formal vote involving only MPs, it should have a non-binding vote involving the whole Committee. We give more detail about this in our report. The motion before the House today will make this binding on the Committee, as we requested. In fact, the motion goes further than we requested, because it requires indicative votes to take place before all Divisions, including those on reports. We discussed this in the Committee last Tuesday and we are entirely happy with that. I should repeat that the vast majority of Committee decisions are taken by consensus. The point of the new procedure is to make it even less likely that things will be pushed to a formal vote. I certainly hope that that will be the case.

I should also mention that it would be wrong to think of the Committee as consisting of two opposing blocs: lay members and MPs. Except in relation to formal voting, both types of members are treated in exactly the same way and we work as a unified team. We are aware that indicative votes are an interim measure. Along with a majority of my colleagues on the Committee, I would like to see full voting rights given to lay members. We have called on the Government to bring forward primary legislation to guarantee that free speech in the Committee is protected by parliamentary privilege, as set down in the Bill of Rights 1689, in order to allow the extension of full voting rights to lay members. I hope that the Government will respond positively to this request.

Finally, I come to the one point of disagreement between the Committee and the steering group. This relates to the proposal in the motion to change the existing system under which the commissioner publishes details of ongoing investigations on her website. We entirely accept and support an extension of confidentiality in relation to complaints under the new system, particularly in relation to sexual harassment. There is a real need to ensure that victims of sexual harassment are given the confidence to use the new system, and confidentiality will play an important part in achieving that. We set out in detail in our report how this will operate, and we are in agreement with the steering group on that.

The difficulty for us arises from the proposal to extend confidentiality to complaints under the existing code that relate not to bullying and harassment but to financial misconduct or the abuse of House facilities. At the moment, the commissioner announces the names of Members when she launches an investigation, along with a brief statement as to the nature of the alleged offence. We can see from the commissioner's annual

report that the vast majority of complaints that go to her never get anywhere near to an investigation. They normally involved wild allegations that are made without substance or evidence, and they effectively go nowhere. Of those that are investigated, very few come to the Committee for adjudication. The commissioner rectifies people's misapplication of the rules on issues such as the misuse of parliamentary envelopes, for example, so we do not see that this is a major issue for the House.

The rules were agreed by the House some years ago in the wake of the expenses scandal, and were seen then as an important way of demonstrating transparency and openness. I was on the Standards Committee from 2005 to 2010, and I was a winger during the expenses scandal. I can tell the House that there was a real need for openness at that time, and a real need to let the people of this country know that we were being transparent and open in our dealings on their behalf. We believe that transparency and openness should continue to apply. There is no doubt that if the House votes for the Leader of the House's motion today without amendment, many people outside will criticise us for rolling back the openness that was agreed back in 2010 following the expenses scandal.

**Layla Moran** (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD): My question is simple. Under the plans proposed by the Leader of the House, is there any chance at all that an MP who is under investigation for sexual misconduct would be named?

**Sir Kevin Barron:** No, there is not, and I will go on to that. What the amendment does to paragraph 4 comes after the issue to which the hon. Lady just alluded. We are not going to stop anything. As I have said, confidentiality is crucial to the policy's success.

**Rachael Maskell:** The reality is that this is about amendment of the Standing Orders, which govern the procedures of the House, so while I accept that the motion is not necessarily in the right place, without the amendment it could lead to the identity of a reporter being exposed.

**Sir Kevin Barron:** I will say—this is an aside—that I have been in this House for 35 years, and I have seen many allegations made against Members of Parliament for all sorts of reasons. Quite a lot of them come from the press, the television or stings in the media, and the idea that we have anything to shy away from in these decisions is not true. We agree that sexual harassment and bullying cases require confidentiality to ensure that people will come forward and speak out so that action can be taken. The Committee carefully considered the Leader of the House's arguments for making the changes, and we understand why she has put them forward. However, we do not think that they outweigh the reputational damage that may arise if we go ahead with this proposal as drafted. It will be presented as MPs trying to cover up their misdoings.

The proposal is also good news for anyone who wants to smear an MP. They can simply tell the media that the Member has broken a rule and is under investigation, and, since the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards will effectively be gagged, she will not be able to confirm or deny it. The rumour will continue and no one will

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have the authority to put the record straight. Members ought to remember that that could happen. On most occasions, that is how things work for the Committee on Standards as it operates under the current code of conduct.

The proposal goes beyond the independent complaints and grievance policy and is not essential to it. We do not believe that the publication of whether a Member is under investigation will cause irreparable damage to that Member's reputation. I could cite the example of the right hon. Member for South West Surrey (Mr Hunt), who was recently under investigation by the commissioner following a complaint. It was in the national press and on national television, but it does not seem to have done his career any harm whatsoever because he was appointed Foreign Secretary last week.

The Committee was unanimous on the issue. All the lay members have written a joint letter to me, which has just been posted on our website, and I will read out the key paragraphs:

"Through our involvement in the work of the Committee we recognise the unusual, and sometimes precarious, nature of the role of MPs, the media interest they deal with on a daily basis and therefore, the importance MPs rightly place on their reputation. We also recognise the importance of the reputation of the House and the impact the actions and behaviours of MPs can have on how this is viewed.

Our experience to date suggests that publication of an announcement that an investigation is taking place does not cause significant damage to an MP's reputation and, on a number of occasions, the matter is already in the public domain through the media. Therefore, in our view, the announcement can provide assurance that concerns are being handled independently and in a fair and impartial manner.

Our view is that the current practice followed by the Parliamentary Commissioner on Standards, and explicitly agreed by the House in 2010, creates the right balance between the individual reputation of MPs and the collective reputation of the House. Any proposals to limit this approach would be a detrimental step in continuing to build the credibility of the reputation of the House."

I think those views make the case for the amendment very well.

The reason why the Committee on Standards has lay members is probably because, back in 1999, I was appointed as a lay member of the General Medical Council. Three Members of Parliament were appointed to it at that time, and I dealt with fitness-to-practice cases where doctors were in front of us, for example, and I thought that I played a constructive role. The first time that I said that the Committee on Standards ought to have lay members I remember a few sets of eyes widening, but the way that the lay members have operated for years now has been to the credit of this House. It certainly gives us a lot more credibility than if MPs were marking their own homework. When this motion is put to a vote, I hope that Members will recognise that lay members are helping us to change the culture in Parliament, just as the report does, which I do not take anything away from.

Obviously, the Committee on Standards will accept the decision of the House on this matter, and my colleagues on the Committee and I look forward to giving every assistance we can to the new complaints system as it is implemented. I repeat my congratulations to the steering group on its marvellous work. The acceptance of the report today marks significant progress

towards building further public confidence in the standards expected of all Members of the House and shows our determination to uphold the rules if they are not met.

1.57 pm

**Jess Phillips** (Birmingham, Yardley) (Lab): I want to add my voice to the many people who have spoken already and to the many voices who have called me since they met with the Leader of the House and saw the proposals—the voices of the many women and men involved who brought us to this point—in saying what a positive step forwards this is. As someone who has been a naysayer all the way through the process, I thought that it would never be good enough—there would have to be a million tick boxes to satisfy me—but what is outlined in this very detailed and quite long document is to be commended, and I feel confident that people will and should bring cases forward.

It will be a massive pleasure for me to no longer be the referral system for victims of violence in this building. I have been exhausted by the stories that I have heard since the situation started to break in October last year. I think that I am up to around 50 complaints about Members from a variety of people from different political parties and others who work in and around politics. It will be delightful to hand those cases over.

It would be wrong of me to say, as the right hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mrs Miller) has already outlined, that I do not have concerns about historical cases, not least because most of the cases that caused us to do anything will not necessarily be able to go through this system. I have deep trust in the Leader of the House and in her desire to make this right and to make sure that wherever possible, regardless of when a situation may have happened, there are still ways for this system to look after, care for and respond to victims and to give them independent advice on how to manoeuvre around the system.

It has always been a part of our code of conduct, whether in 1864 or today, that we must not bring this House into disrepute, which is an enormously broad term. I would argue, and I do not think it is up for debate, that sexually harassing our staff brings this House into disrepute. My right hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Sir Kevin Barron) rightly said that we should all have great faith in the credentials of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, as well as in her attitude and tone. The way she works with Members of Parliament should fill people with hope for the system, and she has plenty of scope to take complaints from people who may not fall within the 2017 issue raised by this specific report, but there are still things in the code of conduct that have definitely been broken in many of the cases I have heard, so I look forward to the review.

It is brilliant that we have a six-month review, and it is a new way of doing things around here that, after we sign a piece of paper on day one, we do not just believe that nothing has to change and that everything will be perfect. This system will absolutely be tested by the first person who goes through it.

**Mrs Miller:** Does the hon. Lady share my concern about how the amendment might incite idle speculation about the identity of victims, which we know could be devastating to those individuals?

**Jess Phillips:** I thank my friend, the right hon. Lady, for her intervention. I am not convinced by that argument. I worry about the identity of those who come forward being at risk in all such situations, and there are Members who have not behaved well in that regard and who have released things about people to try to shut things down. There are all sorts of reasons why we have to be very careful about how we handle this.

It is right that these cases should be anonymous, although I would never argue for the same in the criminal courts—I do not believe in anonymity for those accused in the criminal courts, which is a battle that many in this House seek to win. We manage in the criminal courts to maintain complete anonymity for victims and complete transparency for the accused. If that can be managed in a very open environment such as the courts, where the public can go in to sit and watch, I have faith that we can manage it here.

I have faith in the commissioner and in the Committee on Standards. However, I worry about how it looks that we are trying to pull back on transparency. To be completely honest, it seems to me like the deal had to be done to get this through. I put aside pretending that I think it is anything else.

The Leader of the House deserves complete and utter credit, because I am certain that she wanted exactly the system that I wanted. She has been vocal all the way through, and she realises how much this affects victims and how much it affects women as they go about their work. I have no doubt that, had it been entirely down to her sitting in a room, I would be having a ticker tape parade. To be honest, requiring anonymity was a deal done by somebody in a Whips Office or somebody on some committee that controls one of our political parties. I have no evidence to suggest that; I am enjoying my parliamentary privilege. Frankly, with the 50 cases I know of, there are a lot of people in this House who should be grateful that I do not enjoy my parliamentary privilege quite as much as I could—I leave it there.

It is important that the system has independent elements, including lay members, one of whom I know and trust incredibly well. She is a brilliant woman from Birmingham, and I feel safe in her hands. People could go through all sorts of different systems before they ever become a Member of Parliament, and one thing that needs to come from this is that the political parties really need to get their act together. The political parties are nowhere near as good as what is being presented to us today. Some parties have walked forward a little, and when I say walked, I mean dragged. I cannot comment on others, but I think that the Conservatives have been working on new systems.

I very much doubt that in any of the cases I have handled—they are numerous—people have been satisfied with the political parties and the processes they have gone through. Every day, I take complaints about the processes that people are put through by the political parties without an element of independence—by an element of independence, I mean the total foundation of independence. Neither the complainant nor the person who is complained against will ever feel protected by those systems, so I call on Government and Opposition Front Benchers to take back to their political parties what they have worked to achieve here in this place today.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Basingstoke that, perhaps at the six-month review, we need to consider a whistleblowing or bystander element, because we all see all sorts of things going on in here. We need to be confident, our staff need to be confident, the Doorkeepers need to be confident and the people in the Lobby need to be confident in knowing whether or not they should be reporting such things. I seek to have that in future.

Once again, I commend the Leader of the House, the working group and the brilliant people who advised them, some of whom I deeply trust. Finally, a massive thank you to the victims who stepped forward, because none of us would be standing here without their bravery. They are considerably braver than we are.

2.8 pm

**Layla Moran** (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD): I apologise for not rising to my feet quicker, but I was looking at Standing Order No. 150.

I should have started by saying what an honour and a privilege it has been to sit on the steering committee, albeit for an incredibly short amount of time, as I stood in for my hon. Friend the Member for East Dunbartonshire (Jo Swinson). I am sure many will agree that not just in this process, but in her former role as a Minister, she has been an inspiration on such matters.

I also pay tribute to the Leader of the House, to every other member of the committee and, of course, to all the staff. I have been a Member for just over a year, and the committee has been a remarkably collegiate cross-party effort. The process has been wonderfully thoughtful and absolutely driven by the evidence. Nothing has been left unquestioned, and the tone and nature of this debate, which has caused me to go on the internet to look up paragraph (12) of Standing Order No. 150, is a credit to the process. We need to get into that level of detail.

It is crucial in all these matters that six and 18-month reviews months are held at those times and there is no dithering, but it was also crucial that we got going. There were points at which we felt, “There’s so much to do. Are we going to get this done by recess?” It was crucial that we did, and it is good that we have moved forward. When thinking about whether or not we support amendments, we need to think of the perhaps dozens or more victims who will consider coming forward as soon as the procedure has been published. They want to tell their story and have probably been waiting for the past nine months to get going on that. Above all, we must put them first. I do not think the 18-month review needs to be the last review. I wish to put on record that as the 18-month review will come exactly a year after the six-month review, we will then need a yearly review of procedures, because these things always change over time. It is important that we are never again left in a position where this place is behind the rest of the country. I want to see the process for such reviews written down somewhere, because we have left it that the 18-month review could possibly be followed by further reviews, and I would like to see that formalised.

Let me deal with the issue of historical allegations. We now expect a large number of people to come forward. I hope that they do come forward, because that is what they need to achieve closure. Regrettably, it feels as though it was more wrong to engage in some of this behaviour before the start of the last Parliament and,

[Layla Moran]

of course, it was not—for the whole of my life it has never been right to bully anyone or to sexually harass anyone. Of course, I know that that is not the sentiment of what the steering group was trying to achieve, but one must always read these things from the point of view of someone who is looking at the procedures for the first time. I hope that the inquiry will have enough teeth to achieve not only some closure and signposting, but, when possible, redress for the victim and punishment for the perpetrator.

Let me deal with the point about transparency, which was why I was frantically looking at my iPad. I do not want any of those potentially dozens of people coming forward to the House to feel that there is any chance that they could be identified, so I have played around with a few scenarios of how this might work in my head. Currently, neither the amendment, the Standing Order nor the motion absolutely guarantees that an MP's name will not be published. We know how small our offices are, and this is one of the reasons why the optics are so bad. Most people out there do not appreciate that in my office I have just one parliamentary assistant. They think we have large teams behind us, but that is just not the case. In Portcullis House, these people's names are written on plaques by the names of the MP, so it is easy enough for a journalist or anyone else to wander around, see one of these names and then try to catch the person in a bar outside. My concern is that if ever there was a chance that that could happen, that would be front and centre in the mind of a complainant considering coming forward.

I will not say more than this, but there have been two occasions in my life as a candidate when I was a victim of some sexual harassment, albeit not terribly and not enough that I took it to anything formal. I know that many other Members have done that, as have many other staff members in this place, who are particularly but not exclusively female. The No. 1 thing in my mind was, "This is hard enough to say, and it is hard enough to even admit to." If there was any chance that I could have been identified, I certainly would not have then gone on to flag this through the right channels.

At the moment, there is that chance. I am not at all questioning the background of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards or asking whether we are not all in agreement on this point. However, given Standing Order No. 150 as it stands—and even without any of the amendments to it—I am not entirely convinced that we have gone far enough with this. To echo what other Members have said, I believe that this needs to be front and centre of what we look at in the six-month review, along with things such as mandatory reporting from third parties who see such behaviour, as part of the culture change.

Victims need to come before optics. I have not come to this place just to do what makes me look good; I have come to this place to do what is absolutely right. I am not saying that others have not done that, but at the moment I am not totally convinced that we have got this 100% right for victims.

I shall end by talking about culture change. I am told that I am the oldest type of millennial that one can be, and this is my third career. I have worked in countless places. On walking into this building on the Monday

after my declaration, which came on the Friday at 4 am, I found the induction and training for MPs and MPs' staff to be the worst of any employer I have ever been to. That is partly because we employ ourselves; in essence, we are entrepreneurs, with mini offices. That was not something that I understood even as a candidate, even though one would think that a candidate would look at what they were getting into—I should point out that it was a snap election. People out there perhaps do not realise that about this place, but we do and we have known it for a long time. I thought for a while that perhaps that was because I am a Member from a smaller party and that the bigger parties would have stronger processes for induction and so on, but that is not the case.

The point about putting culture change at the heart of what we are doing through this grievance procedure is key, because if something gets to the point of a complaint, we have already failed, as someone has already been hurt somewhere. Leaving aside malicious complaints, if a genuine complaint is made and upheld, something has gone wrong. This should be the best place to work for anybody in the entire country, but we have lagged behind for a very long time. Let us stop that now and pass this motion. We should be immensely proud of the proposal. All political parties need to catch up, but it is not just political parties that need to act, because we should be a beacon of good practice for the rest of the country. Let that start today. I was pleased to put my name to the motion and I am delighted to have been part of the process. Let us never fall behind again.

2.17 pm

**Caroline Lucas** (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): Westminster is the first Parliament anywhere in the world to have tackled bullying, harassment and sexual harassment so comprehensively, and huge progress has been made towards making this place a safer, more respectful and more equal environment. I join those who have thanked all members of the working group for their contributions. In particular, I pay tribute to its chair, the Leader of the House, for her commitment to change, her leadership and her seemingly unending patience. I also want to thank the secretariat, our special advisers, the staff representatives on the group, and those who came to speak to us on behalf of their trade unions to increase our understanding of the issues we were seeking to address. As others have said, more than anyone else we need to thank those who were brave enough to come forward and put in the public domain the kind of experiences they have had to go through, because that has been a driving force for all of us to work with the urgency and commitment that we have.

The report, and its policy and procedures, are really important steps, and it is welcome that we have built in from the outset mechanisms to ensure this is the start rather than the end of an ongoing process—others have referred to those. Although we are rightly celebrating what we have achieved, we must be mindful of what more there is still to do. I hope that the Leader of the House will forgive me if I concentrate on the areas where I think we have further to go, rather than simply celebrating what we have achieved. That is not because I do not think we have achieved a lot, but if we are to be the best we can be, we still have a bit of a way to go.

I wish to start by discussing making the final stages of the new system more independent—truly independent. I know that every effort has been made to guarantee independence at the point when reports are made and investigations are carried out. I hope that that will give everyone in Westminster renewed confidence in the system, and that all bullying, harassment and sexual harassment will be treated with the seriousness and objectivity to which all workplaces should aspire.

The principle of full independence is still somewhat undermined by allowing MPs to play a role in final decision making about serious complaints involving colleagues. The motion goes some way towards addressing that, for example by recommending that lay members of the Standards Committee are allowed an indicative vote, but the final decision to trigger the recall of an MP will still be subject to a vote of the House of Commons and, at least as it stands, lay members of the Committee still do not have full parity with MPs. I note with much approval that the Chair of the Standards Committee, the right hon. Member for Rother Valley (Sir Kevin Barron), is in favour of looking again at the role of lay members and has put on record that he is in favour of primary legislation to establish the absolutely equality of lay members in a Standards Committee vote.

Some aspects of the process are still left in the hands of MPs. One of the obstacles to further reform and making the system genuinely independent was concern that an MP might launch legal action if someone unelected had a say in a recall decision. I remain of the view that, with the right political will, that and other objections could be overcome. Recall rightly leaves the ultimate decision in the hands of the electorate, so a mechanism that, for example, gave the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards the power in some instances to trigger the recall process herself, could offer a way for MPs to be further removed from the process. I appreciate that that is a radical proposal and I do not expect it to find agreement in the House at the moment, but to my mind it is the logical consequence when we say, again and again, that MPs should not mark their own homework. Only such a radical proposal would ultimately ensure genuine independence from party political influence from start to finish.

I very much hope that the possibilities I have outlined, and others, to build on what has been achieved to date will be reviewed as a priority, because staff otherwise risk continuing to lose out through a system that still protects MPs just that little bit more. That risk is also there when it comes to the handling of historical complaints. It is important to be clear that the new independent inquiry will hear reports of historical complaints. The new system will allow those affected to access emotional support and signposting to next steps. That will mostly be either to party political grievance mechanisms, the police or, in the case of House staff, the previous Respect policy. It is widely agreed, however, that the Respect policy was not fit for purpose in respect of such issues. Historical complaints referred to the new process cannot result in outcomes or sanctions other than those that were permissible at the time of the incident. That is even more the case for behaviours that have clearly always been wrong, such as sexual harassment or bullying, but which Respect has been shown to be unable to deal with fairly.

Staff employed by MPs were never covered by Respect, and those not employed by their party have no prior system to have recourse to in the case of a historical complaint, if they seek more than the opportunity to be heard and to get emotional support. Those employed by political parties have that route but, as we know, there are signs that the promises made by every political party to get their own houses in order have not yet been properly fulfilled. In other words, the decision to impose an arbitrary 2017 cut-off point for historical complaints, alongside the independent inquiry, does not take us far enough. It leaves many people still unable fully to resolve their historical complaints.

There are some important and potentially game-changing provisions in the new policy and procedures, including those allowing multiple offenders to be identified and pre-2017 allegations to be referenced if a live case involves the same parties. But we should not let those real positives cloud the fact that some staff continue to be let down. The working group received legal advice noting the increasing difficulty of delivering fairness the further back in time one goes. That is true, but the advice also made it clear that, if there was enough political will, ways could be found to accommodate that. In some instances, for example, there may be written evidence that makes wrongdoing very clear. I hope that the six-month review will look again at the 2017 cut-off date and that historical allegations will come before whatever group is set up to look into allegations, because I do not think we have got it quite right yet.

Let me say a few words about promoting long-term cultural change. Although some voluntary measures have been put in place, reforms that will deliver real and meaningful culture change, such as compulsory consent training and meaningful good employer training for all MPs and peers, have been delayed until after the next election. Apparently, the justification is that nobody knew when they stood for election that they would have to undertake such training. To that I say that nobody knew that when they came to work in Parliament they might have to put up with furniture being thrown at them or being groped. Action after the next election—probably in 2022—is better than never, and Parliament's committing to taking action at all obviously sends a powerful and positive signal, but it is still hugely frustrating that there is not more understanding of how a culture of mutual respect and accountability benefits everyone. I hope that that time will come, because we urgently need a politics that is more equal, transparent and ethical—one that tackles all kinds of bullying and harassment, and which in particular moves us beyond #MeToo and #TimesUp by helping to dismantle privilege and what are all too often male-dominated hierarchies. That will be possible only if we keep up the pressure and continue to face up to ongoing obstacles to change, which are, in too many instances, vested interests and political self-interest.

If we want genuine confidence in the new system and the ongoing commitment to transforming the Westminster culture, we need to signal clearly that we want to continue to learn and improve, and we also need to be less risk averse. This is about leadership and setting an example. We need continued bold action, and if there are fears that that will upset some of our more regressive colleagues, so be it, frankly. The new behaviour code, by which all of Westminster will be expected to abide, asks that individuals recognise their power, influence and

[*Caroline Lucas*]

authority and do not abuse them. I would have liked that to be included in the motion, as it goes to the heart of what we need to see.

Finally, let me address the amendment with which we are all grappling as we try to work out the best way forward. Let me say loudly and clearly that if I thought for a moment that by deleting the part of paragraph (4) of the motion proposed in the amendment we would in any way put at risk the confidentiality of victims in ICGP cases, I would not support it, but I do not believe that that is the case. I agree with the hon. Member for Oxford West and Abingdon (Layla Moran) that, in a sense, we are in a position of trying to weigh up options when none of them are optimal. None of them absolutely gives us everything that we want regarding a firm guarantee of confidence and confidentiality for victims. Right from the start of my involvement in this process, I have been among the foremost of people saying that individuals should have their confidence respected. That has to be the bottom line. I do not believe that the amendment would undermine that.

What is at stake is the issue of whether consistency is more important than transparency. To my mind, transparency is more important in this instance. Consistency is nice to have, but I think we can explain why there is a difference between the way in which we treat someone who fiddles their expenses or who fiddles paperclips, and the way in which we treat people who have made allegations of sexual harassment and bullying, with follow-up investigations. We can explain that inconsistency an awful lot more easily than I would find explaining why we were rolling back on transparency. I do not think this is about optics versus the protection of victims—if I thought that, I hope everybody would know that I would of course have the protection of victims as the overall objective—but I do share the sneaking suspicion voiced by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips) that there are perhaps other forces at play that are leading us in this direction. I have no evidence of that either, but it feels like that is the more likely explanation for why we find ourselves in this difficult position.

I shall continue to listen to the debate, and particularly to the hon. Member for York Central (Rachael Maskell), because she seems to be on top of the Standing Orders, but from what I have heard so far, I do not believe that the Standards Committee's amendment would undermine victim confidentiality. If I did believe that for one moment, I would not support it.

2.28 pm

**Rachael Maskell** (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): We have had an excellent debate, conducted in very much the right tone. We exist in communities, not least this parliamentary community, so every decision that we make, action we take and word we speak has an impact. There are huge inequalities of power throughout society and, to date, that has also been true of this place. It is because of that inequality of power that we find ourselves where we are. It is absolutely right that we address how to put in place better systems to protect the most vulnerable in society and in our workplaces. We have all at least been caused to stop, pause, and reflect on our own behaviours, as well as those of people around us, and to ask serious questions about the leadership that this place provides.

Parliament holds the role of leadership across our nation and therefore it is incumbent on us to have the highest standards and to ensure that we reflect them in all that we do. The public watch us, which increases that responsibility. Perhaps we have witnessed or been recipients of inappropriate behaviour in private places. At the big display of Prime Minister's Question Time, people witness, on a weekly basis, mobbing, belittling, mocking, name-calling and worse.

Given all that, are we surprised that bullying and poor behaviour are endemic across our nation? Such behaviour is endemic in workplaces. It is the biggest issue at work. A third of people in work today have experienced bullying in their working lives—72% by managers—and, of course, it has caused so many people to leave their jobs. In fact, 36% of people who have been bullied leave their employment. Heartbreakingly, we see so much bullying taking place in our schools: 40% of young people today have experienced bullying, and that is just in the past year. We have such a responsibility to set the bar high, and this is, I trust, what we have been doing during this process.

We also need to think about the wider impact on the economy: £18 billion is lost to the economy each year just because of bullying. Therefore, we have a big responsibility ahead of us. I want to thank third-sector organisations and trade unions for the amazing work that they have done to advance this issue. Parliament has arrived at this point because people had the courage to stand up and speak of their experiences in this place, and, of course, we have all paid tribute to those individuals today. I particularly want to thank the Leader of the House for the way that she has conducted our discussions and for her sheer determination to ensure that Parliament changes, and changes its culture. I also thank all members of the steering Committee—whether they be peers, MPs, House staff, trade unions, MPs' staff and, of course, the officials, who I know have worked extraordinarily hard to reach this point.

We must see change. Today is all about how we can make that seismic change happen in this place. As we have heard, so many people are looking at us not just from the UK, but from around the world, as they reflect on their own Parliaments. Therefore, what we decide today will be of the utmost importance and culture change is at the very heart of that.

We must have permission to challenge and we must have confidence that, when we face challenge, the systems are there to protect us. That is why I very much welcome the behaviour code, which talks not only about looking at what is happening and how we behave, but about promoting our role. We have a responsibility not only to no longer be a bystander, but to speak up. We must not only ensure that our conduct does not include negative behaviours, but exhibit positive behaviours to one another. From your position, Madam Deputy Speaker, and from that of your colleagues in the Chair, I trust that you will remind us of that on a regular basis. We must ensure that we monitor the impact of this behaviour code on this place to ensure that it is doing the job that it is there to do.

We must recognise the power that we all have, how we use that power, and how misuse of power can cause such misery. I welcome the advances that have been made around sexual conduct and the fact that it has been put into the policy. Taking a zero-tolerance approach

is the only way forward. Putting real specialism and expertise into our processes enhances all aspects of this and gives confidence to those who have experienced misconduct in any form.

There will be personal support for all those who report incidents. I certainly will encourage people to raise issues early; when issues are raised early, a resolution is more likely, particularly as the policy focuses on informal approaches. Of course, when the approaches are informal, we need to be very realistic about their impact, because we are still talking about an inequality of power. When we talk about mediation processes, we need to ensure that there are pre-mediation processes so that these processes do not cause further harm if they are exercised. Therefore, wisdom is needed across these processes.

That takes us on to the role of the independent investigation process. For me, this is the most powerful part of the proceedings before us. I am talking about the fact that the investigator is not only an expert in their field, but has no interest in anything other than bringing resolution and justice to the person making the claim. However, I do question—and I have done so at the steering group—the idea of having a commissioner for standards and an independent investigator. Surely, we should trust a true professional who is an independent investigator in fulfilling their whole role. They do not need somebody looking over their shoulder. They should be trusted, through their professionalism and their expertise, to carry out the role that they are trained to do. I trust that we will look at that relationship as time goes by to ensure that they can get on with their job.

I also want to raise the issue of confidentiality, which goes to the heart of the debate today. We have all been studying the motion, the amendment and, what for me is essential, the rulebook—the book that covers the way that this place works. That is why it is so important that we understand Standing Order No. 150. We need to change the rulebook, because no matter how much aspiration there is in the world, it does not bring governance. That is why it is really important that we ensure that good governance is enshrined in the rulebook. The motion has failed to achieve what it set out to do, as it opens up—or closes down perhaps—some of those opportunities. It means that those who have been reported for other reasons will also come under this rule. We could have been more nuanced in the way that the motion was written to cover just those who come under this procedure. I also have to say that if we go back to the rulebook under the amendment, it means, unfortunately, that there is risk in the system. The name of a victim of abuse, whether that is bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct, could come to the fore. I do not cast aspersions on the commissioner or the Committee, but I go back to the rulebook as that is our governance.

I have one or two other issues to address before I close. First, I have raised in the steering group the way that sanctions are applied. It is really important that we see equality in applying sanctions and ensure that there is a framework in place for their application. Therefore, I really hope that, at the point of the six-month and 18-month reviews, there is moderation of the penalties to ensure that there is equality in applying sanctions. We will have different people applying those sanctions. It could be that, owing to unconscious bias, some people experience lighter sanctions than others. It is

really important that we review what the sanctions were. We also need to know whether they were adhered to and what their impact was. Then we must question what else should be done. I also want to raise the issue of ensuring that we have good data to support the process of review. By the time that we get to six months and 18 months, it is really important that we have a thorough understanding of the impact of the policies.

Another issue relates to non-disclosure agreements. It is important that we understand not only what their role can be in helping and supporting individuals, but how they can be misused. It will be incumbent on the six-month review to take up that issue to see how they have been applied in this House and across the parliamentary community. It may be that we need tighter governance around their use. Often, such agreements—compromise agreements—can be used to buy people off. That is often the failing, and we need to make sure that that does not occur and that people receive true justice.

On historical cases, which I believe all hon. Members raised on the steering group, we need to ensure that everyone has that sense of justice. Personal support will apply to everyone and all will have access to the informal resolution processes in cases that predate June 2017 and of course the legal channels and the ability to refer a case to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards will still exist. It is the formal process that people will not have access to, and therefore I welcome the additional independent inquiry for MPs, peers and House staff, but I ask whoever has that responsibility within the inquiry to look into such cases and determine that, if an independent investigation is needed, it is reviewed so that everyone can have the justice they deserve.

I believe that training should be mandatory, as hon. Members have said, and that waiting till the next Parliament will leave it far, far too late. We need to roll it out in this Parliament. It should commence this year. If it is not mandatory, of course, the very people who would perhaps most benefit from it may miss out. I trust that there will be tight scrutiny to ensure that all Member access it at the earliest opportunity and that a focus is given to adjusting the training as the learning continues. After all, this is not just about a process, but about a new culture that we must adopt, so it is important that everyone is engaged.

I welcome the move to a good employment standard, which, in itself, will bring much and long overdue change to how people are treated in this place. We need to take the best employment practices from across our nation to ensure that we do the right thing. We work in a highly pressurised and stressful environment, and it can be incredibly stressful at times for our staff, so it is only right that we do the best for them. Not only should the performance of our staff be monitored; there should be 360 degree feedback for us as employers to make sure that we also are doing the right thing and that staff feel empowered in that process and able to challenge.

In conclusion, these policies, the code and the training start here, should the motion be passed today. Our new journey together around a new culture begins in this place. We must not look back but press forward to create the right working environment for everyone. I particularly thank all the stakeholders involved in the process, but I ask the Leader of the House to seriously consider the role that trade unions can play in enhancing

[Rachael Maskell]

employment in this place. We have seen the valuable contribution they have made to systems to date. After all, it is they who represent people day and night—it is day and night—through supporting individuals with their bullying claims. When I was a trade union official, the biggest issue we dealt with was workplace bullying. It is vital, therefore, that we recognise the support trade unions provide—it is not just about the stereotypes and headlines.

Today, we mark a new beginning. I thank hon. Members for their contributions and trust we will move forward together.

**Andrea Leadsom:** With the leave of the House, I will make a couple of brief closing remarks. This has been an excellent debate and once again I pay tribute to colleagues from across the House for their efforts and contributions—it has been an extraordinary amount of work—and to the advisers, officials and the programme team who worked so hard. I also pay tribute once again to the victims who came forward with their testimonies and sparked this piece of work. On behalf of all the members of the steering group, I can say that we have been individually absolutely committed to achieving the change we are kicking off today. We can be incredibly proud of that.

We have, in particular, heard about the vital importance of the six-month review, and I draw all colleagues' attention to page 34 of the report, which sets out some of the jobs that six-month review will have to do in addition to taking into careful account the work of Dame Laura Cox QC and the further historical allegation review that we are launching today.

I thank the right hon. Member for Rother Valley (Sir Kevin Barron) and his Committee for their work. It took me considerable time and effort, however, to persuade the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards and the Standards Committee even of the need not to name people when opening investigations into all ICGP cases as well as non-ICGP cases. I have asked that we temporarily suspend naming people when opening investigations for the purpose of giving ourselves a clear run at this, even if we re-implement the PCS's ability to name non-IGCP candidates after six months. I really urge Members not to accept the amendment. We need a clear run at this, so we need confidentiality and consistency.

*Question put,* That the amendment be made.

*The House divided:* Ayes 22, Noes 79.

**Division No. 232]**

**[2.45 pm**

**AYES**

Barron, rh Sir Kevin  
Berger, Luciana  
Blackman-Woods, Dr Roberta  
Coyle, Neil  
Dakin, Nic  
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh  
Fitzpatrick, Jim  
Gapes, Mike  
Harman, rh Ms Harriet  
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon  
Huq, Dr Rupa  
Jones, Darren  
Lucas, Caroline

McCabe, Steve  
Morgan, Stephen  
Pennycook, Matthew  
Phillips, Jess  
Smyth, Karin  
Streeting, Wes  
Williams, Dr Paul  
Woodcock, John  
Zeichner, Daniel

**Tellers for the Ayes:**

**Lyn Brown and  
Kate Green**

**NOES**

Aldous, Peter  
Amess, Sir David  
Argar, Edward  
Atkins, Victoria  
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi  
Baker, Mr Steve  
Barclay, Stephen  
Blackman, Bob  
Bowie, Andrew  
Brine, Steve  
Butler, Dawn  
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair  
Cartledge, James  
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey  
Davies, Mims  
Davies, Philip  
De Cordova, Marsha  
Doyle-Price, Jackie  
Duddridge, James  
Duffield, Rosie  
Duguid, David  
Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain  
Eustice, George  
Evans, Mr Nigel  
Evennett, rh Sir David  
Ford, Vicky  
Frazer, Lucy  
Freer, Mike  
Garnier, Mark  
Goodwill, rh Mr Robert  
Gove, rh Michael  
Gyimah, Mr Sam  
Hammond, Stephen  
Harris, Rebecca  
Hayes, rh Mr John  
Heaton-Harris, Chris  
Hoare, Simon  
Hobhouse, Wera  
Huddleston, Nigel  
Jardine, Christine  
Johnson, Gareth  
Jones, Andrew

Kawczynski, Daniel  
Knight, Julian  
Leadsom, rh Andrea  
Lewis, rh Dr Julian  
Maclean, Rachel  
Maskell, Rachael  
Maynard, Paul  
Metcalf, Stephen  
Milling, Amanda  
Morris, James  
Morton, Wendy  
Newton, Sarah  
O'Brien, Neil  
Parish, Neil  
Pincher, Christopher  
Pound, Stephen  
Prentis, Victoria  
Pursglove, Tom  
Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob  
Robinson, Mary  
Rosindell, Andrew  
Rutley, David  
Scully, Paul  
Selous, Andrew  
Shannon, Jim  
Skidmore, Chris  
Spencer, Mark  
Stephenson, Andrew  
Thrup, Maggie  
Tolhurst, Kelly  
Tomlinson, Justin  
Vara, Mr Shailesh  
Vickers, Martin  
Villiers, rh Theresa  
Watling, Giles  
Whately, Helen  
Whittaker, Craig

**Tellers for the Noes:**

**Jo Churchill and  
Stuart Andrew**

*Question accordingly negatived.*

*Main Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House approves the Second Report from the Committee on Standards, Independent Complaints and Grievance Policy: Implementation, HC1396, and the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme Delivery Report and its proposals for ensuring clear standards for all who work in or visit Parliament, and, in particular:

(1) endorses the Behaviour Code and the policies and procedures relating to bullying and harassment and sexual harassment associated with the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme set out in the Delivery Report;

(2) agrees the following amendments to The Code of Conduct:

(i) in Section IV (General Principles of Conduct), after paragraph 8 insert the following new paragraph:

“Parliamentary Behaviour Code

Members are also expected to observe the principles set out in the Parliamentary Behaviour Code of respect, professionalism, understanding others' perspectives, courtesy, and acceptance of responsibility.”;

(ii) in Section V (Rules of Conduct), add the following new rule as Rule [17]:

“Respect

A Member must treat their staff and all those visiting or working for or with Parliament with dignity, courtesy and respect.”;

(3) agrees the following changes to Standing Orders:

A. Standing Order No. 149 (Committee on Standards)

(i) in paragraph (5), at end insert “save as specified in paragraph (5A) of this Order”;

(ii) after paragraph (5) insert new paragraph (5A) of this Order:

“(5A) It shall be an instruction to the Committee that before dividing on any motion, the Committee should hold an indicative vote of lay and elected members to ascertain the views on the motion of the Committee as a whole and of each member present; that such a vote should be conducted as if it were a formal division; that, as in a formal division, the Chair should not take part in the initial vote but should have a casting vote in the event of a tie; that after holding such a vote the results should be recorded in the Committee’s formal minutes, without question put; and that after holding such a vote the Committee may or may not proceed to a formal division of elected Members.”;

B. Standing Order No. 150 (Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards)

(i) in paragraph (2), at end add the following new sub-paragraph:

“(f) to consider cases arising from the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme”;

(ii) in paragraph (4), at end add the following new sub-paragraph:

“(c) in any case arising from the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme where the Commissioner has proposed remedial action within any procedure approved by the Committee with which the Member concerned has complied or, if the remedy is prospective, undertaken to comply”;

(4) recognises the role of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards to consider cases arising from the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme; notes the arrangements about publishing the details of investigations of such cases to ensure complaints are handled confidentially as set out in the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme Delivery Report; and accordingly agrees that, for consistency and fairness, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards should no longer routinely publish information about individual investigations before those investigations are concluded and accordingly agrees to amend sub-paragraph (b) of paragraph (12) of Standing Order No. 150 by inserting “statistical” before “information” and leaving out “and matters under investigation”;

(5) recognises that Dame Laura Cox QC is conducting an independent inquiry into the allegations of bullying and harassment of House of Commons staff, whose Terms of Reference were published on 23 April 2018; notes that the inquiry relies upon past and present staff members coming forward with information in person or in writing; notes further that the inquiry, while not investigating any individual complaints or reopening past cases, will consider what options are available for resolving current or historical allegations and providing support to those affected; accordingly agrees that a further independent inquiry in similar terms be established, by the Clerk of the House in consultation with the relevant authorities in the House of Lords as appropriate, to consider allegations of bullying and harassment in respect of those individuals including MPs and their staff, where those allegations are not in scope of the Dame Laura Cox QC inquiry; and directs that the inquiry should report directly to the House in time for its findings to be taken into account in the 6 month review of the scheme established under paragraph (6) of this motion;

(6) endorses the proposal in the report that there should be reviews of the new arrangements at 6 months and 18 months, and invites the Leader of the House to propose the establishment of a review body, including staff representation, to the House of Commons Commission for their consideration and agreement, in consultation with the relevant authorities in the House of Lords as appropriate; those reviews should incorporate

(a) the findings of the independent review set up under paragraph (5) of this motion and

(b) the findings of the Dame Laura Cox QC inquiry which deals with matters relating to staff of the House;

(7) directs the Accounting Officer to meet those costs of the inquiry under paragraph (5) and the reviews under paragraph (6) falling to the House of Commons from the House of Commons (Administration) Vote.

**Wes Streeting** (Ilford North) (Lab): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The ministerial code states:

“It is of paramount importance that Ministers should give accurate and truthful information to Parliament, correcting any inadvertent error at the earliest opportunity. Ministers who knowingly mislead Parliament will be expected to offer their resignation to the Prime Minister”.

This morning at business questions, the Leader of the House again attributed the controversy surrounding the pairing arrangements this week to administrative error. However, according to multiple news sources this afternoon, it appears that the Government Chief Whip did instruct Conservative MPs to break their pairs, with one hon. Member quoted as saying—[HON. MEMBERS: “Rubbish.”] Members of the Whips Office can shout “Rubbish” as much as they like, but they will hear what one of their own Members—[*Interruption.*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** Order. The point of order must be heard.

**Wes Streeting:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. They do not like to hear it, but here is what one Conservative Member is quoted as saying:

“Julian told me I was needed and told me to come in and vote. Of course he knew I was paired. I didn’t vote and honoured my pair, and he demanded to know why not afterwards. It then appears Julian told the prime minister it was all an innocent mistake”.

I have no reason not to believe that the Leader of the House is only relaying what she has been told to say. Given this, how can we compel the Chief Whip to come to the Dispatch Box to account for his actions, because if the trust of the pairing system has been abused in this way, he must surely now resign?

**Christine Jardine** (Edinburgh West) (LD): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Like the hon. Member for Ilford North (Wes Streeting), we would also like to inquire whether there are ways of addressing this issue. If an urgent question is submitted on the matter, then, with the Speaker’s permission, if the question is accepted, can the Chief Whip come to the Chamber to respond rather than hiding behind the Leader of the House?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Both hon. Members have made their views very clear, but neither of them made a point of order on which I can rule. I am sure that what the Leader of the House said at business questions was said in good faith and based on information that she had received. If she was intentionally inaccurate in anything she said, I am quite sure that she would take steps to correct the record. I do not think that we should rush to any conclusions based on what has been reported in social media.

With regard to the Chief Whip, it is certainly a convention that the Chief Whip does not speak in the House. However, first, it is a matter for the Speaker

[Madam Deputy Speaker]

whether to allow an urgent question, as hon. Members know. It is then for the Government to decide who should respond and in what way. I think we will leave it at that.

## Tobacco Control Plan

3 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Steve Brine):** I beg to move,

That this House considered the Tobacco Control Plan.

Last year—how time flies!—in response to a question from my shadow on the Opposition Front Bench, the hon. Member for Washington and Sunderland West (Mrs Hodgson), I confirmed my intention to publish a tobacco control plan for England. I published it and then we debated its lofty ambitions in this House. Today, on its first birthday, I hope that we can reaffirm the importance of the plan and welcome the progress that has been made, while recognising—as I always do at the Dispatch Box—there is much more to do.

Last year we announced an ambition to reduce the prevalence of adult smokers from 15.5% to 12%, of pregnant smokers from 10.7% to 6%, and of 15-year-old smokers from 8% to 3%. We also pledged to reduce the inequality gap in smoking prevalence between those in routine and manual occupations and the general population. Furthermore, we set out a long-term goal of a smoke-free generation, reducing adult prevalence to below 5%. We were very clear, however, that now—then or now—is not the time for more legislation. I am still of that view because there is quite enough for us to do in this House.

The UK has some of the toughest tobacco control laws in the world, and we are consistently considered by independent experts to have the best tobacco control measures in the whole of Europe. The plan recognised that smoking in certain groups is stubbornly high, although masked by the overall declines in prevalence. To achieve our ambitions, we need to recognise that smoking is increasingly focused on particular groups in society, and in particular areas. We need to shift the emphasis from action at the national level—hence no need for more legislation—to focused local action in support of smokers.

Pregnant smokers are one critical group. People with mental illness are also much more likely to smoke: a little more than 40% of people with serious mental health conditions smoke, which is more than twice the national average. I repeat: smoking among those with mental health conditions is more than twice the national average. We need to work across the system, as we are, to ensure that everyone is making their full contribution to deliver for those groups.

Earlier this year I was fortunate enough to visit the Maudsley Hospital, which has done an awful lot of very good and fruitful work in this area. I place on record my thanks to the team at the Maudsley for their dedication and hard work. It was good to meet them—staff and patients—and to thank them in person.

When I talk about working across the system to ensure that everyone is making their full contribution, that is what we are doing. Last month we published the tobacco control delivery plan, which sets out detailed commitments made by various organisations in central Government and the arm's length bodies to help deliver on our 66 recommendations. We will be tracking delivery of those commitments, and adding to them, as we move through the lifetime of the plan.

Let me touch on the work that is under way. The Prison Service is making the whole prison estate in England smoke free—no ifs, and definitely no butts. Do you see what I did there, Madam Deputy Speaker? This is a huge achievement, and I would like to pay tribute to the hard work that has made it possible. Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs has supported the UK Government's ratification of the protocol on illicit tobacco under the World Health Organisation's framework convention on tobacco control. This new treaty aims to eliminate all forms of illicit trade in tobacco products throughout the supply chain. The protocol has now been ratified by the necessary 40 countries and is in force.

**Sir Kevin Barron** (Rother Valley) (Lab): When the Health Committee looked at the issue of smoking in public places and took evidence from different institutions, the Prison Service felt at the time that it would be impossible for it ever to get to a situation in which it was smoke free. We should all look back and thank it for what it has done, which it told us years ago was impossible.

**Steve Brine:** I agree with the right hon. Gentleman. Those of us who have secure estates in our constituencies and go in and visit them regularly will be aware of just how much of a challenge this is, given how ingrained smoking is within the cohort. That relates to the point I made about specific groups. I think that the Prison Service deserves great credit. Suffice it to say that it has a lot of pressures on it, and in some ways it probably felt that this was the least of its worries and the last thing it could deal with, but it is actually very important. That is why I say we are working well across the Government, and the Prison Service is really pulling out the stops in its area. I thank him for that intervention.

To finish on the protocol, HMRC will continue to lead on it on behalf of the Government, working with my officials at the Department of Health and Social Care. Through the protocol, we are sharing our expertise as a leading tobacco control nation; this is not just about what we are doing domestically. We are funding the FCTC secretariat with £15 million over the spending review period to support tobacco control in 15 low and middle-income countries. I am very proud of that work, and I am pleased to say that we are already having an impact. Georgia introduced smoke-free legislation and a ban on advertising on 1 May. It seems strange to talk about banning advertising as a new measure, given how long a ban has been in place in our country, but it shows that other parts of the world have a long way to go to catch up. I am very proud that we are using our experience and our evidence-based experience to help countries such as Georgia to do so. I want to place on the record my congratulations to Georgia.

Domestically, Her Majesty's Treasury continues to maintain high duty rates for tobacco products to make tobacco less affordable, which is absolutely right. Public Health England, for which I am responsible, and NHS England are working on a joint action plan to reduce smoking in pregnancy. A key part of this is helping midwives to identify women who smoke and help them to quit and to support the implementation of National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidance on reducing smoking during pregnancy and immediately following childbirth.

PHE has been encouraging the use of e-cigarettes to help people quit. As part of this, the most recent Stoptober campaign for the first time highlighted the role of e-cigarettes in quitting. The best evidence suggests that e-cigarettes are helping thousands of people to quit and that they are particularly effective in the context of a smoking cessation clinic. PHE's data website, "Local tobacco control profiles for England"—another snappy title I dreamed up—is helping local commissioners and service planners to identify where they are succeeding, where they face the greatest challenges and how they compare with their neighbours and the rest of England.

**Alex Cunningham** (Stockton North) (Lab): I very much welcome the Minister's comments in *The Guardian* newspaper this morning about the activities of one tobacco manufacturer that has been contacting or at least trying to ingratiate itself with NHS staff by helping them to quit smoking. Will he write to all trusts and clinical commissioning groups telling them that they should have nothing at all to do with this initiative?

**Steve Brine:** I already have and NHS England already has: we have already done so. We think that Philip Morris International's move is totally inappropriate and totally contrary to the protocol. I do not think I could have been clearer either in the press or at the Dispatch Box today, and I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving me the chance to say so again.

All our local activity has the overall goal of helping people to quit smoking and stopping others starting in the first place, so how are we doing? Here is the score card. Publications by the Office for National Statistics and NHS Digital earlier this month show that we are making progress. Since 2011, the number of adult smokers has dropped by a fifth to the lowest level since records began, and we are fully on track to achieve our 2022 ambition for adults. Among 15-year-old smokers, there is good progress, and figures published last year showed that the prevalence of smoking has reduced by a further percentage point from 8% to 7% since the publication of the plan. The number of e-cigarette users in that group is also falling. Latest figures from the ONS annual population survey reveal that smoking rates among 18 to 25-year-olds are falling faster than in any other age group. Considering that that age is when most smokers start smoking, I am particularly pleased with that.

We are also making progress on inequality. Although routine and manual workers continue to have higher smoking rates compared with the rest of the population, the gap has narrowed slightly, from 26.5% at the publication of the plan to 25.7% as reported by the ONS earlier this month. Those are achievements to celebrate. Nevertheless, I must be honest with the House and say that progress on tackling smoking in pregnancy is disappointing, and in truth the figures have barely moved in the past year.

What shall we do in year 2 of the plan? First and foremost, I am determined to redouble our efforts to support pregnant smokers to quit. That will be best for them and for their babies, and we need people to understand that. Secondly, we will use the opportunity of the Government's investment in the NHS, which the Prime Minister announced last month, to embed prevention and cessation more firmly into the culture of the NHS. Last month, the Royal College of Physicians, which has

[*Steve Brine*]

a proud record of groundbreaking reports on tobacco, published “Hiding in Plain Sight: Treating tobacco dependence in the NHS”. That weighty report calculated that the cost of current smokers needing in-patient care is £890 million a year. It points out that smokers are 36% more likely to be admitted to hospital at some point than non-smokers, and it makes the powerful argument that smoking cessation repays the cost from year 1. I welcome that report, and I will be making that case loud and clear as we engage with NHS England on the content of the 10-year plan that the Prime Minister has asked it to produce.

Thirdly, we will continue to engage with local authorities—they are now top-tier public health authorities up and down the land in England—on promoting smoking cessation as the best evidence-based means of quitting smoking. Encouraging the NHS to do more on cessation is emphatically not about removing responsibilities from local authorities. This is about creating a whole-system approach in which addicted smokers can access the support they need to quit. Public Health England will continue to provide local councils up and down the land with facts and advice on tackling smoking—for example, it will work with sustainability and transformation partnerships, which should be leading that whole-system approach in the constituencies of all English Members.

Fourthly, as I have mentioned, we will continue to raise tobacco duty to make tobacco less affordable, while also taking action to tackle the illicit trade in tobacco. Fifthly, we will maintain a careful watch on so-called novel tobacco products. The Government are keen to use the opportunity of newer products, such as e-cigarettes, to help smokers to quit, without undermining the key message that the best thing someone can do for their health is quit completely. As I said in the Science and Technology Committee’s inquiry into this subject, we will continue to keep the harms of products such as heated tobacco products under review and continue to hold the industry to account. We have been explicit that the promotion of tobacco products is unlawful, as my recent letter to Philip Morris International makes abundantly clear—that letter was written before the one I mentioned in response to the hon. Member for Stockton North (Alex Cunningham).

Last but not least, we will continue to make the case for tobacco control internationally, building on our reputation as a leading tobacco control nation with credibility in that space. We have such credibility because our consistent work in this area goes back to the coalition Government, the previous Labour Government and the Conservative Government before them, and such consistency means that we are highly credible around the world. More than 7 million people a year across the globe die from smoking-related disease, and the UK Government can help make a dent in that toll by sharing knowledge and skills.

**Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): I pay tribute to the Minister’s brilliant work both since he became a Health Minister and before then. Will he comment on some of the scientific issues raised about addiction to nicotine, compared with the very harmful by-products that are a part of cigarettes, cigars and other tobacco

products? Will he comment on whether it is nicotine or the by-products that are harming people’s health and causing the most damage?

**Steve Brine:** I think cigarettes cause the most damage, because of the tobacco and the nicotine. The carcinogenic properties of the former are lethal. That link was proven with the lung cancer study that started the ball rolling. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend as the chair of the all-party group for the work he has done in this area. There are a lot of things that we know and there are a lot of things that we still do not know. Some people say that I do not go far enough to promote e-cigarettes and novel products, and some people say that maybe we go too far—I mentioned Stoptober. That generally suggests to me that we are in the right place. What I would say—I think that I said it earlier—is that an awful lot of research is still needed on e-cigarettes. One Member once told me that we should make e-cigarettes free on prescription to all pregnant women. The reason I did not say, “Yes, I think that’s a good idea” is that I still think there are risks to that product. I still think that the best thing people can do is to stop chuffing on anything, whether traditional cigarettes or so-called novel products. I thank him for his intervention, and I look forward to hearing what he has to say during the debate.

**Alex Cunningham:** I thank the Minister for giving way a second time. I join the tributes to both the Minister and the chair of the all-party group. There has been tremendous cross-party work on this issue—that has always been the case. The Minister mentions the role local authorities have to play. We all know the pressure they have been under in recent times. I wonder whether he could see a mechanism that would provide and ring-fence the funds to enable local authorities to fulfil their role. Currently, they are struggling to do so.

**Steve Brine:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for that intervention. On providing support to help smokers quit, as I said, we have moved from the national context of legislative work to local application. The challenge is that adult smoking rates vary considerably across the country—for example, they are 8% in Wokingham and 23% in Kingston upon Hull—so it is right that local councils have the flexibility to spend that money. There is some £16 billion in the ring-fenced public health grant during the spending review period, so there is a lot of money in the system. But am I happy with patchy services in areas where smoking rates are too high? No, I am not. That is why I have said that the Government have not made a decision on full business rate retention. I would be concerned about the impact that that might have. I would want all sorts of reassurances from local councils if I were to make that change. Do I think it right that local authorities can design services for their local area? Yes, I do.

The new Secretary of State and I have already discussed prevention, which is one of the three main pillars he wants to focus on. I have told him that the new investment of £20 billion that we are putting into the NHS is fantastic. Bluntly, we could have the money on the side of the bus three or four times over, but unless we get serious about prevention, in this space as much as any other, the NHS will continue to be under enormous pressure. Local authorities are a key partner for us.

I would also say, not least because the chair of the all-party group on community pharmacy is sitting behind the hon. Gentleman, that community pharmacists and pharmacies have a key role to play. They are an NHS centre on street corners up and down our land. Some of them provide really good work. The healthy living pharmacies I have seen help people to access the services they need. They provide a little bit of mentoring and support, using their experience to say, “Yes, you can beat this,” and signposting them to services, whether through the public sector or the third sector.

There is an awful lot that we can still do. That is why the 10-year plan will have prevention embedded at its heart, as the five year forward view said it would—and it did, but I do not think that it lived up enough to the ambition on that. Perhaps people would expect the Minister responsible for prevention to say that, but I am nothing if not consistent.

Tobacco remains the single biggest avoidable killer in our country today, causing a third of preventable cancers. It contributes to around half of health inequalities between rich and poor in our society and is a potent symbol of the burning injustices that the Prime Minister spoke about, which I think affect the life chances of poorer people up and down our land. The tobacco control plan represents the Government’s continuing commitment to tackling this epidemic. It was never presented as a panacea and it is still not a panacea, but it is a cracking good start.

Over the past year, we have seen some impressive progress, but I am absolutely not complacent. In World cup terms, I would suggest that we have made it through to the knockout stages, but nothing more. I hope to be able to demonstrate further progress in a year’s time, and no doubt we will discuss that again in the House. I look forward to hearing hon. Members’ contributions, and I am happy to introduce this important debate.

3.21 pm

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson** (Washington and Sunderland West) (Lab): It is a pleasure to be here to speak about the tobacco control plan, which celebrated its first anniversary only yesterday, as the Minister said. We are here to discuss the progress of the plan so far in reaching the Government’s goal of a smoke-free generation by 2022. I start by thanking the Government for allowing time for this debate to take place after all the drama and commotion of this week. As the Minister said, my first outing as shadow Minister for public health was in a debate on this issue, and thanks to him, we have the new, updated tobacco control plan that we are debating today. I know that it holds a very special place in both our hearts and, like him, I look forward to the debate.

The Opposition welcomed the plan and its ambitious goals, but we remain concerned about how they will be achieved by 2022. It is true that smoking is now thankfully at an all-time low, but the Government must not be complacent—I know that the Minister is not—and must not quit when it comes to measures that reduce smoking rates.

There are still 7.3 million adult smokers in the UK but, shockingly, smoking is an addiction of childhood, with the vast majority of smokers starting to smoke before the age of 18. Between 2014 and 2016, more than 127,000 children aged between just 11 and 15 started to smoke in the UK. According to a recent study by the

Society for Research on Nicotine & Tobacco, this amounts to 350 young people starting smoking each day. That is equivalent to 17 classrooms of secondary school children starting to smoke every day. The Government therefore have a huge challenge on their hands—as we all do in Parliament—to tackle smoking in childhood and to reduce the rate of children smoking to 3% or less.

Between 2013 and 2016, the rate of decline in smoking among young people slowed down and the proportion of 15-year-old regular smokers had fallen from 8% to 7% but, at this rate, we will fail to achieve the ambition for England of 3% by 2022. The Minister mentioned in his opening remarks that we really will need to accelerate our progress when it comes to the number of children taking up smoking. Tackling this issue will be the first step to achieving a generation that is not only smoke-free, but healthier.

Smoking remains the leading cause of preventable premature death, such as from cancer or lung disease, and accounts for around 100,000 deaths each year in the UK. Each of those deaths could have been prevented. In 2015-16, there were approximately 474,000 smoking-related hospital admissions, with smokers also seeing their GPs 35% more often than non-smokers. In 2017, 22% of hospital admissions for respiratory problems were directly attributed to smoking. In 2015-16, smoking-related respiratory diseases cost NHS England £167.4 million in adult secondary care costs. I am sure that the Minister agrees with me that an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence estimates that every £1 invested in smoking cessation generates £2.37 in benefits. However, according to the King’s Fund, spending on smoking cessation services in 2017-18 was reduced by almost £16 million compared with figures for 2013-14. Furthermore, the Health Foundation has found that next year just £95 million will be spent on smoking and tobacco control services, which is 45% less than in 2014-15. Has the Minister made any assessment of the impact that those cuts will have on local smoking cessation services?

A study conducted by Action on Smoking and Health—ASH—and Cancer Research UK found that in 2017 budgets for stop smoking services were reduced in half of the local authorities in England, following reductions in 59% of authorities in 2016 and 39% in 2015. It is a wonder that there are any smoking cessation services left at all. What that means on the ground is that smokers who want to quit do not have access to the services that they need, and smokers who may need an extra push to seek help to quit are not getting that push.

Given that local smoking cessation services are on their knees, how does the Minister’s Department expect to reach the goal of reducing smoking rates to 12% by 2022? The Government’s own plan acknowledges that “local stop smoking services continue to offer smokers the best chance of quitting”,

but cuts in local authorities’ funding have led to unacceptable variations in the quality and quantity of services available to the public. In my region of the north-east, the current smoking rate is 16.2%, which is down from 17.2% in 2016. That represents the biggest fall in smoking in England. It means that smoking rates in the north-east have fallen by more than 44% since 2005, when 29% of adults in the region smoked, and that there are about a quarter of a million fewer smokers.

[Mrs Sharon Hodgson]

It has to be said that that decline in smoking rates is due to the excellent programme Fresh north-east. I know that the Minister has commended the programme before, and no doubt he will take the opportunity to do so again. Its vision is to make smoking history and to reduce smoking prevalence in the north-east to 5% by 2025.

**Steve Brine:** I am happy to place on record my thanks for the work of Fresh north-east, whose representatives I have met. It is a good example of what I was talking about—local systems working together. It is not just about what local authorities commission and the state provides. Fresh north-east is a coalition consisting of the public sector and the third sector.

**Mrs Hodgson:** That is important, especially when, as the Minister has acknowledged, we are in such straitened times when it comes to local authority budgets. I am sure that Fresh north-east will be very grateful for what he has said.

Sadly, other areas are not as lucky. They do not have a Fresh north-east; if only they did. Stop smoking services are roughly 300% more effective than quitting by going cold turkey, but in some places the specialist services are being decommissioned altogether. For example, in Blackpool, smoking prevalence is 22.5%, while the average for England is 15.5%, yet Blackpool Council recently decommissioned its specialist smoking cessation service, citing a number of factors including public sector budget cuts.

That example leads me to my next point. Between 2012 and 2014, the healthy life expectancy for newborn baby boys in England was the lowest in Blackpool at 55 years. Again, the shortest life expectancy among men was in Blackpool too, at 74.7 years. Interestingly, in 2014, Blackpool had the highest smoking prevalence at 26.9%. Wokingham had the lowest smoking prevalence at 9.8%, but the highest healthy life expectancy of 70.5 years. That is a 15.5 year difference between healthy life expectancies, and while there will be several factors in play in these figures, it is clear that smoking is one of the largest causes of health inequalities in England.

Some 26% of routine and manual workers now smoke, compared with 10% of those in managerial and professional jobs. This has slightly increased rather than decreased the inequality from 2016. Some 28% of adults with no formal qualifications are current smokers compared with only 8% of those with a degree. It is these people—manual workers or those from low socioeconomic backgrounds—who suffer the most when the Government cut spending to public health services. I therefore ask the Minister what steps his Department is taking to ensure that these people are reached by local smoking cessation services. What assessment has the Minister made of the impact that smoking rates have on widening health inequalities, and how does he intend to address them?

Finally, I move on to smoking in pregnancy. The Government's ambition to reduce smoking in pregnancy to 6% or less by 2022 is laudable. In 2015-16 the rate was 10.6%. However, new data published recently showed that the rate of smoking during pregnancy in 2017-18 had increased slightly, to 10.8%. It is therefore deeply

concerning that the Smoking in Pregnancy Challenge Group, which I recently met, has warned that this ambition is unlikely to be met unless urgent action is taken.

In 2010, 19,000 babies were born with a low birth weight because their mothers had smoked during pregnancy. Up to 5,000 miscarriages, 300 perinatal deaths and around 2,200 premature births each year have been attributed to smoking during pregnancy. In addition, many other children will be three times more likely to take up smoking in later life because they live in smoking households. If we are going to have a smoke-free generation in the future, the Government must take urgent action to ensure that rates of smoking in pregnancy fall. We must not forget that it will be those very babies who will become the smoke-free generation that we all hope to see.

The current target is to reduce smoking in pregnancy to 6% or less by 2022. If that is achieved, it could mean around 30,000 fewer women smoking during pregnancy, leading to between 45 and 73 fewer stillborn babies, 11 to 25 fewer neonatal deaths, seven to 11 fewer sudden infant deaths, 482 to 796 fewer pre-term babies, and 1,455 to 2,407 fewer babies born at a low birth weight. That is something to aim for, but it will only happen if the Government take urgent steps to reduce the number of women smoking during pregnancy.

**Bob Blackman:** On behalf of the all-party group on smoking and health, I thank the hon. Lady for speaking at the launch of our recent report. Does she agree that we must encourage not only pregnant women to give up, but their partners, too, so that pregnant women no longer have to face the challenge of not only being deprived of smoking, but of seeing their partner smoke in front of them? This should be a partnership for both parties.

**Mrs Hodgson:** That is a very pertinent point. We all know the damage of passive smoking. It is all well and good if the mother gives up smoking—that will definitely help her and the baby during pregnancy—but if smoking is still going on in the household, the children will still be growing up in an environment of passive smoking. I thank the hon. Gentleman for making that important point and for his excellent work as chair of the all-party group.

I welcomed what the Minister said about tackling smoking in pregnancy, but will he also tell us how he will target work to encourage younger women and women from more disadvantaged backgrounds to give up smoking during pregnancy? Teenage mothers are nearly four times as likely to smoke before or during pregnancy than those aged 35 and over. Young mothers are less likely to quit before or during pregnancy, and only 38% of mothers under the age of 20 did so, compared with 58% of mothers aged 35 or above. It is clear that the Government need to tackle smoking in pregnancy, and smoking in childhood, as a matter of urgency to achieve their ambition of a smoke-free generation.

The Minister and his Department have a huge challenge on their hands if they are to meet the ambitious targets set out in the tobacco control plan. I still welcome the plan as the right thing to do, as I am sure the Minister does. Anything that is worth doing is going to be hard. We have four years to go before the target date, and the

Minister must now look at how the Government can properly fund smoking cessation services to drive down smoking rates and support those who need extra help to stop smoking. I look forward to the remainder of the debate and the Minister's closing remarks.

3.36 pm

**Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Washington and Sunderland West (Mrs Hodgson), who has done excellent work already in her shadowing role. I know that she was also at the forefront of this debate before shadowing these matters. Equally, I pay tribute once again to the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Steve Brine), who set a precedent for future public health Ministers when, at his first outing at the Dispatch Box, he agreed to publish the long-awaited tobacco control plan. We should remember that it had been delayed for a year before it was published last year at the behest of my hon. Friend, probably much to the consternation of his officials.

I also want to pay tribute to the Minister's predecessors, particularly the former Member for Battersea, Jane Ellison, who did a brilliant job of advancing many of the controls on tobacco that we now have in such a way as to ensure that they were delivered. I remember taking on the first debate on this subject in Westminster Hall, at which many of my colleagues were present. I think it was in September 2013, and it was the first debate after we came back from the summer recess. It took place at 9.30 in the morning, and I feared that I would have an hour and a half to fill by explaining why we should have standardised packaging for tobacco products. I have to say that both major parties were opposed to that idea at the time, but we were able to convince them otherwise and we changed the policy. That measure has now been enacted, which demonstrates the power that we on the Back Benches can have to change policy in a good way.

I must gently chide the Government, however, for taking over our Back-Bench debate. This means that we cannot pass the resolution that we wanted to pass today to encourage the Government not only to adopt smoking cessation policies but to resource them properly, to ensure that the plan is delivered. We understand that we are now having this general debate, however.

I declare my interest as chair of the all-party parliamentary group on smoking and health. We could go through the history of the progress that has been made, and the speeches from the Front Benches have shown us where we are today. I want to take us back to 1974, when I was sitting my A-levels. My late parents were both very heavy smokers. In those days, half the men in this country smoked, as did more than 40% of the women. It is hard to imagine, but in many ways it was considered healthy to smoke; it was somehow considered to be good for our lungs. Sadly, both my parents died five years later of cancer, so for me this is not only a health issue but a personal one. I do not want to see other people going through what my family had to go through as a result of using tobacco products in the way that they are intended to be used.

Smoking rates have dropped remarkably. As has been mentioned, the number of adult smokers has dropped from 7.7 million in 2011 to 6.1 million in 2017. The difficulty with figures, however, is that, as the population

increases, we have to go harder and further to reduce the number of people smoking. Smoking-related diseases are the leading cause of preventable death, with 80,000 people a year dying as a result of tobacco products. In Harrow, part of which I have the honour of representing, we still have 14,000 smokers, which is difficult to understand given the encouragement to quit and all the health issues, and the cost to public services is estimated to be £37.9 million a year in just one London borough, out of 32, that has about 250,000 adults. It is clear that we need further action.

The good news is that the UK is one of the leading countries in the implementation of tobacco control policies. We are recognised as a leader in the implementation of the World Health Organisation's framework convention on tobacco control, and I want to remind the House of article 5.3, which states:

"In setting and implementing their public health policies with respect to tobacco control, Parties shall act to protect these policies from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry in accordance with national law."

The guidelines on implementing article 5.3 have been agreed by the UK and advise Governments not to enter into any partnerships, whether they be non-binding or non-enforceable, or agreements with the tobacco industry, not to accept voluntary contributions from the tobacco industry, not to accept tobacco-industry-drafted legislation or policy or voluntary codes for legally enforceable measures, not to participate in corporate social responsibility or related schemes funded by the tobacco industry, and not to permit tobacco industry representation on Government tobacco control bodies.

Former MP Paul Burstow, my predecessor as chair of the all-party parliamentary group on smoking and health, is now the chair of the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust and co-chair of the Mental Health and Smoking Partnership. He wrote to the Minister about the letter sent by Philip Morris International, and I am pleased that the Minister has taken up the issue straight away. The company, which manufactures Marlboro cigarettes, wrote to say that it is

"keen to work with NHS Trusts and Foundations to see if we can support the NHS in helping its employees to stop smoking".

I do not usually promote this publication, but an article in *The Guardian* today quotes me, Paul Burstow and the Minister making it clear that we do not want any interference from Philip Morris and that that company should not avoid its responsibilities under the code. I am delighted that the Minister has completely rejected the position of Philip Morris, which also states that it has

"written to the heads of all the NHS Foundations and Trusts in England, all Clinical Commissioning Groups, Simon Stevens, and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care"

about the issue.

Most local authorities in England have signed up to the local government declaration on tobacco control, which is a public statement of the councils' commitment to reduce the harm caused by tobacco. The declaration commits signatories to

"protect our tobacco control work from the commercial and vested interests of the tobacco industry by not accepting any partnerships"

and so on. However, local government officers have reported continuing efforts by the tobacco industry to engage with local authorities over tobacco control issues

[*Bob Blackman*]

including, but not limited to, the illicit trade. We must be clear that the industry's involvement is not required and not welcome.

I am delighted that, on 1 November 2017, the Minister made a clear statement in this House on the Government's position, and I am delighted that will continue. I welcome his comments, both in his opening speech and in his letter. What else can he do to make sure that local authorities, the NHS and any other interested parties do not get sucked into this offer from Philip Morris?

On the risks we run, as the hon. Member for Washington and Sunderland West said, one of the problems is that the plan and the targets might not be met. We have to encourage everyone to get to that point. The reality is that smoking rates among young people have started to level out. There is a risk that we will not hit those targets. The target to get smoking rates down to 5% or less by 2022 is good, but I would like to see it at 0%—no one smoking. We could then say that we have achieved what we wished to achieve.

We clearly have to encourage young people not to start smoking. As has been said, more than 350 young people a day take up smoking, and 60% of them go on to smoke for the rest of their life. The huge risk is that those people will fuel the tobacco industry for the future.

There is therefore a case for further control measures, including increased funding for the initiatives, and new legislation. Although it is not appropriate to allow the tobacco manufacturers to make voluntary contributions, if they are offering to give money to the NHS and to local authorities as part of so-called corporate social responsibility, the industry clearly has money to pay for the measures we need to control tobacco and to mitigate the harm it causes, so let us make the tobacco manufacturers pay.

At a time when public sector budgets are under pressure both at national and local level, the tobacco manufacturers, if they have money, should pay an increasing share of the cost of control, as an application of the "polluter pays" principle. That is the clear recommendation of the all-party parliamentary group, and I trust my hon. Friend the Minister will therefore advance that recommendation to the Chancellor.

**Steve Brine:** Consider it advanced. Time will be limited for the wind-ups, so I will address the point about young people. Earlier this week, I held a roundtable in the Department of Health with a number of charities working on drug policy and with reformed drug takers. One gentleman said to me, "The trouble was that I really enjoyed taking drugs. What I didn't enjoy was the outcome of taking drugs."

I have heard young people say that they really enjoy smoking but that they do not enjoy the outcome. We should welcome today's statement by the Secretary of State for Education on the new work that will be done in schools on health and relationships education. Specifically, health education can help young people to understand the health consequences of smoking, even if they might enjoy the process of smoking.

**Bob Blackman:** I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention, and I completely agree that health education is an appropriate way to consider the issue.

There is a model in the United States that we could introduce. The Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act of 2009 gives the US Food and Drug Administration the power to regulate the tobacco industry, funded through what is called a user fee on manufacturers. The total amount to be raised is set out in legislation and apportioned to manufacturers on the basis of their share of the US tobacco product market. I ask the Minister to look at that US legislation as a way of introducing such a model.

The major recurring costs of tobacco control, and they are important, are mass media campaigns to discourage uptake and to encourage quitting. An approach such as the one in the US would: raise hundreds of millions of pounds a year from the tobacco industry; help to protect the business of legitimate retailers who obey the tobacco control legislation; help to protect Government tax revenues—at the moment, the excise tax raised £9.9 billion in 2016-17, but the loss on illicit tobacco was estimated to be £2.4 billion; pay for the mass media campaigns to discourage smoking, which we desperately need; and provide a source of revenue to local authorities, which could help to fund local tobacco control measures, including enforcement activity and the provision of support to smokers seeking to quit. Funding for trading standards has fallen substantially in recent years, from £213 million in 2010 to only £124 million in 2016, and the National Audit Office estimates that the number of full-time staff has reduced by 56% in seven years. So there are fewer people to enforce the rules that we want to see enforced. Such an approach could also support regional partnerships working to tackle illicit tobacco. The success of that has been shown in the north-east and north-west, which have concerted multi-agency enforcement activity and effective, evidence-based measures to reduce demand. So it is clear that we can deliver on this.

Polling conducted for ASH—Action on Smoking and Health—asked respondents how strongly they would support measures requiring tobacco manufacturers to pay a levy or licence fee to help encourage people to quit and prevent young people from starting to smoke. The net support for that was 71%, with only 9% opposing. So the Minister should impress on the Chancellor the need for this and the benefit of doing it.

One key issue that I wish to emphasise above all else is the need for mass media campaigns to shock people into realising how desperate smoking is and how damaging it is to health. There is nothing like seeing those sorts of mass campaigns for encouraging people to realise that they are responsible for their health. The analysis of these campaigns has shown that they are very effective but that they have declined in recent years. Public spending on such campaigns in the UK peaked in 2008-09 at £23.38 million, but now that has fallen dramatically, to only £1.5 million in 2016-17. Clearly, we need to encourage local authorities and the Department of Health and Social Care to use the opportunity to shock people so that they understand the damage they are doing. I therefore ask the Minister to look at mass media campaigns and ensure that they are used as part of the strategy.

Finally, let me say that my area now has a large number of people from the European Union who have chosen to come here to live in this country. If we go to many eastern European countries, we see people smoking

everywhere; these places do not have the tobacco control that we have in this country. Those people need to be reached to encourage them to give up smoking and ensure they look after their own health. It is those people we have to reach out to fully. I look forward to other contributions from right hon. and hon. Members, and I am sure that the Minister will reply in suitable fashion.

3.53 pm

**Martyn Day** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP): It is a pleasure to take part in today's debate, and I welcome the one-year anniversary of the tobacco control policy for England. A great deal of progress has been made in reducing smoking prevalence across the UK. As has been pointed out, whereas in 1974 more than half of adult males and more than two in five women smoked, the latest figures from NHS Digital suggest that smoking rates in the UK are now 15.1%. So I say congratulations on that achievement.

The figures on smoking prevalence in Scotland, where I come from, vary as between sources, but the Office for National Statistics has suggested a prevalence rate of 16.3% in 2017. Since 2010, Scotland has seen the largest decline in the proportion of smokers of the four UK jurisdictions, with a reduction of more than eight percentage points. That said, there are still about 10,000 smoking-related deaths per year and 128,000 smoking-related hospital admissions in Scotland.

The Scottish Government published their new five-year tobacco control plan in June. It goes a little further than the tobacco control plan for England, in that it not only puts forward a vision of a smoke-free generation but sets a date, 2034, by which we wish to achieve that vision. If Scotland is to achieve its vision, it requires action by the Westminster Government on issues that are not devolved, such as tax, illicit trade and smoking in the entertainment media. Page 14 of the tobacco control plan for Scotland commits the Scottish Government to

“continue to work with the UK Government to address the representation of tobacco use in the media.”

That is not something that the Scottish Government can do on their own.

A clear causal link has been established between exposure to smoking on screen in the entertainment media and smoking initiation in young people. The greater the exposure, the greater the risk of smoking uptake; yet smoking remains common in entertainment media viewed on screen by young people, including prime-time TV, videos, and films. A recent survey for ASH found that in all media for which questions were asked—TV, films, music videos, computer games and online—the 11 to 18-year-olds who had tried smoking were significantly more likely than those who had never smoked to report exposure to smoking imagery. The highest level of young people's exposure to smoking imagery was in films, with 81% of 11 to 15-year-olds and 88% of 16 to 18-year-olds reporting seeing smoking. An analysis of UK TV programmes broadcast between 6 and 10 pm in 2015 found that 12% of all programmes featured tobacco use, which was the same proportion as in 2010. In both 2010 and 2015 the frequency before and after the 9 o'clock watershed was roughly similar. Only a very small minority of the content could be justifiable on historical accuracy or other grounds.

The relevant regulators are Ofcom and the British Board of Film Classification. Ofcom, which has a statutory responsibility to protect the under-18s, has much more stringent rules than the BBFC. However, both regulators appear to be more concerned about how smoking is depicted than the overall amount of the exposure taking place. Will the Minister endorse the following recommendations and ask his colleagues in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to work with the Department of Health and Social Care to put them into effect through revised Ofcom and BBFC codes? First, Ofcom and the BBFC should monitor youth exposure to depictions of tobacco use on screen on the channels that they regulate and publish the data in their annual reviews; secondly, Ofcom and the BBFC should revise their guidelines with respect to smoking on screen in entertainment media viewed by under-18s, to discourage any depictions of tobacco use and require action to mitigate any remaining exposure; and thirdly, if smoking features in any programme or film likely to be widely seen, heard or accessed by under-18s, an anti-tobacco advertisement must be displayed at the beginning and in any advertising breaks.

When I spoke in the debate on the tobacco control plan in October last year, I focused heavily on the illicit trade, which the Minister will remember, and encouraged him to ensure that the UK ratified the illicit trade protocol in time for the meeting in October this year, so I am absolutely delighted that the UK did indeed ratify it. In fact, we were the 40th country to do so and thereby triggered the entering into force of the treaty. I congratulate the Government on that.

However, the UK Government still need to do more to tackle the illicit trade. In 2016-17, the size of the illicit market for cigarettes had remained roughly stable since around 2010, although as smoking prevalence has declined significantly, it has made up a higher proportion of the total market. Because taxes have increased over the years, the total tax revenue lost as a result of illicit trade has grown from £1.9 billion in 2010 to roughly £2.5 billion today.

Articles 15 and 16 of the tobacco products directive 2014/40/EU provide for EU-wide systems of traceability and security features for tobacco products, to address the issue of illicit trade. There are a lot of good suggestions and lots of good work in that directive. Under the traceability system, all unit packets of tobacco products are required to be marked with a unique identifier, and relevant economic operators involved in the tobacco trade are required to record the movements of tobacco products throughout the supply chain and transmit the related information to an independent provider, with data storage contracts to be approved by the Commission. The data will then be made accessible for enforcement purposes to the authorities of EU countries and to the Commission. Under the security features system, all unit packets of tobacco products placed on the EU market will be required to carry a tamper-proof security feature, composed of visible and invisible elements, enabling authorities and consumers to verify their authenticity. It is therefore, in my opinion, essential to the control of the illicit tobacco trade that the UK should continue to participate in the EU tracking and tracing system after Brexit and that any such system implemented in the UK is independent of tobacco manufacturers as required by the illicit trade protocol.

[*Martyn Day*]

A study for the tobacco control research group at the University of Bath, published just last month, exposes evidence that the big tobacco companies are still facilitating tobacco smuggling. The protocol explicitly requires Governments to take responsibility for control measures, rather than relying on industry self-regulation, which has failed so miserably to date. The industry must not be allowed to control the traceability system, either directly or indirectly through proxies.

In conclusion, will the Minister commit to the UK remaining in the EU tracking and traceability system for tobacco products after Brexit? Will he report on the UK's progress in implementing the requirements of the EU tracking and traceability system, and will he confirm that the system of tracking and tracing of tobacco products, which will be adopted by the UK, will comply with the independence requirements set out in the WHO illicit trade protocol?

4 pm

**Alex Cunningham** (Stockton North) (Lab): I appreciate being called at this stage of the debate. I declare my role as a vice-chair of the all-party group on smoking and health. This was going to be a Backbench Business debate on a motion that I put forward to consider further action necessary to deliver the vision set out in the tobacco control plan for England 2017 of a smoke-free generation by 2022.

I am grateful to colleagues across the party groups for working with me to secure the original debate. I am also grateful to ASH and other organisations for assisting with my preparation today. I will read the original Backbench Business motion into the record so that the Minister can take it on board. It reads:

“That this House welcomes the Government’s Tobacco Control Plan published in July 2017; notes its ambition to create a smokefree generation and to reduce the prevalence of 15 year olds who regularly smoke from 8% to 3% or less; notes the slowing rate of decline in youth smoking prevalence and risk to progress; and calls on the Government to develop new strategies to ensure that it allocates the resources and the funding necessary to deliver on that ambition.”

I very much welcome what the Minister had to say today and the 66 recommendations that are coming forward to move things along. I want to summarise the key points that I had originally hoped to make in much more detail.

This is an important issue for me in relation to my home area, the borough of Stockton-on-Tees. The smoking rate has come down considerably: 15% of the adult population in Stockton are currently smokers. Some 31% of the households that have a smoker are below the poverty line. If they quit, 1,991 households would be lifted out of poverty, and residents of those households include 1,342 dependent children. Smoking costs Stockton-on-Tees approximately £37.4 million, it costs the NHS £8.5 million, and £24.1 million in lost productivity. Some 15.3% of pregnant women in our area smoked at the time of their baby’s delivery.

Furthermore, the analysis of the most recent youth smoking data by Cancer Research UK finds that more than 350 young people started smoking every day. That is the equivalent of 17 secondary school classrooms. At the current rate of decline in smoking cessation, we will fail to achieve the ambition for England that, by 2022, 3% or less of 15 year olds are regular smokers.

Health inequalities are growing: one in four people in routine and manual occupation smokes compared with one in 10 in professional and managerial occupations, and that gap is widening. The key points of the Backbench Business proposal were the need to do more to reduce smoking initiation in young people and to encourage quitting among adults. We must reduce young people’s exposure to smoking in film, television and other media. That issue was raised by the hon. Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk (*Martyn Day*) a few minutes ago.

There is substantial peer-reviewed evidence that shows a causal link between exposure to smoking in the media and starting to smoke and that young people are being exposed to smoking on screen in the UK. Government have a role to play in encouraging media regulators to take smoking seriously and to act in this area. The Government need to urge Ofcom and the BBFC to revise their guidelines with respect to smoking on screen in entertainment media viewed by under-18s to discourage any depictions of tobacco use and to require action to mitigate any remaining exposure. We can make it more difficult for young people to obtain cigarettes by increasing the age of sale to 21, introducing retail licensing for the sale of tobacco and properly funding regional activity to support enforcement.

In the UK in 2014, 77% of smokers aged 16 to 24 began smoking before the age of 18. Evidence from the US shows that raising the legal purchase age to 21 reduces the number of young people who start smoking, reduces smoking-caused deaths and immediately improves the health of young people. More than one third of under-age smokers buy their cigarettes from shops without a licence, which can be revoked if they continue selling—so tobacco retailers can continue to sell tobacco to minors or to sell illicit tobacco. A retail licensing scheme covering all levels of the supply chain from manufacturer to retailer would also help to protect the business of legitimate retailers who obey tobacco control legislation.

As others have said, Government need to do much more to support and enhance enforcement where there is illegal activity, but funding cuts have led to significant reductions in the capacity of trading standards departments, which are responsible for seizures of illicit tobacco and prosecutions for tobacco fraud. From personal experience, I know that the capacity simply does not exist. Time and again, I have alerted Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs to tab houses selling tobacco illegally in Stockton, but those very same tab houses continue to sell. HMRC is the beneficiary of enforcement activity, as it protects tax revenues, so surely it should be required to fund the activity, which could be organised at the regional level, which is the most cost-effective way of doing it.

One of my principal concerns is the much higher incidence of smoking in disadvantaged communities and how we de-normalise it and tackle health inequalities by funding mass media campaigns, which the hon. Member for Harrow East (*Bob Blackman*) talked about in detail. Some 83% of children who smoke regularly have family members who smoke, and this is magnified in disadvantaged communities, such as the town centre ward in Stockton. Public spending on these campaigns, however, has fallen from a peak of £23.38 million in 2008-09 to only £2 million last year. We need to reverse those cuts, as such campaigns are highly effective and can be targeted at poorer and more disadvantaged groups, which have the highest rates of smoking.

The “polluter pays” levy on tobacco manufacturers, which the all-party group on smoking and health supports, could help to fund mass media campaigns as well as other important tobacco control measures. It is time to consider the greater role for social media to amplify the impact of mass media campaigns. There is now the capability to target individual postcode districts with specific messages using, among other things, the promote tool on Facebook. We could help the 60% of smokers who say they want to quit smoking by funding stop smoking treatment and including inserts in tobacco packets encouraging quit attempts.

In 2017, the budget for stop smoking services was cut in half by local authorities in England. The NHS and local authorities need to collaborate more effectively to ensure that smokers, particularly vulnerable groups who tend to be more addicted and have greater difficulty quitting, have access to the help they need. I think the Minister alluded to that in detail—if one can allude to anything in detail—in his speech. Simon Stevens told the Health Select Committee a couple of weeks ago that local authority stop smoking services were not sufficient and that NHS England needed to do more to treat vulnerable groups of smokers under its care. He said:

“It is pretty clear that we will have to keep pushing harder on smoking, and smoking cessation is part of that. That cannot all be done through local authority commissioned services; we are going to have to look at whether the NHS can embed smoking cessation in more of the routine contacts that we have with vulnerable groups who are still smoking. ASH and the Royal College of Physicians have put out an important set of proposals in the last 10 days, which we will take a very careful look at.”

I very much welcome that, and I hope the Minister does too.

On the subject of pack inserts, research from Stirling University has shown that smokers of a variety of ages, gender and social grade support their use as an aid to encourage them to quit. The Minister said earlier that we did not need more legislation. Well, perhaps we do. We need legislation mandating pack inserts, which would provide an inexpensive and highly targeted means of supplementing on-pack warnings.

People with mental health conditions are being left behind in all this. Approximately 40% of people with a mental health condition smoke. Smoking is the main reason that people with mental health conditions die 10 to 20 years earlier on average than the general population. They tend to smoke more heavily, be more heavily addicted and find it harder to quit. It is not that they do not want to quit, but that they need more help to succeed. The Minister mentioned this in his opening remarks, but I hope that he will say a little more when he winds up the debate. I can help a wee bit—at least the people who are briefing me can.

To reduce smoking among people with a mental health condition, we need to ensure that all mental health trusts treat tobacco dependency alongside implementing smoke-free grounds; to have improved data on smoking rates and service provision for people with a mental health condition who smoke; and to empower and inform people with a mental health condition to take control of their smoking and to include them in the development of services. We need specific national targets for reducing smoking rates in people with mental health conditions, and shared plans between local authorities and the NHS to ensure that smokers get support and

help in the community as well as when they are being treated as in-patients. We need to train all mental health staff in smoking cessation and to offer a range of alternative nicotine-containing products, including e-cigarettes, to those struggling to quit. Furthermore, as called for by the Royal College of Physicians and ASH, we need treatment for tobacco dependency to be embedded throughout the NHS, not just in NHS mental health trusts. This would improve treatment outcomes. The Minister knows all this.

Smoking exacerbates as well as causes disease, and helping smokers to quit can reduce NHS treatment costs and improve quality of life for patients. This includes pregnancy, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and other respiratory diseases, cardiovascular disease, mental health, surgery, diabetes and HIV/AIDS, not to mention 16 different types of cancer. Advice and treatment can increase patients’ chances of quitting up to fourfold. It is about the cheapest and most effective healthcare intervention around, costing hundreds of pounds per successful quitter. But despite these impressive results, only 24% of patients diagnosed with lung cancer are offered advice to quit by their GPs, and only 13% are prescribed stop smoking treatment. The RCP has calculated that if all smokers were provided with help to quit, the NHS could save £60 million annually in hospital readmission costs and A&E attendances alone from year one onwards, once the cost of the treatment is taken into account.

There are many other aspects to this issue. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow East—I call him my hon. Friend, despite the fact that he sits on the Government Benches—talked about other nationalities living in the UK. We could talk in great detail about people from eastern Europe and the extremely high levels of smoking in those communities, but I want to finish with just two simple questions for the Minister. Will the Government seriously consider all the recommendations that I have outlined in the debate today? Will he commit to asking Simon Stevens, as chief executive of the NHS, to confirm that tobacco dependency treatment for all smokers, as recommended by the RCP and ASH, will be included in the plan for the NHS to be published in November? He knows, as we all do, that lives depend on it.

4.13 pm

**Sir Kevin Barron** (Rother Valley) (Lab): I speak as an honorary fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and as a vice-chair of the all-party parliamentary group on smoking and health, to which, as everybody knows, the secretariat is Action on Smoking and Health, which I have been involved in for over two and a half decades now.

Smoking continues to be one of the most pressing health issues in my constituency, despite decades of progress in this country. Most importantly, it remains an enduring cause of unequal life expectancy for my constituents—something that it is extremely welcome to see the Government acknowledge in the tobacco control plan. Different Governments over the years have not always acknowledged these stark issues, which have been around for decades.

In Rotherham, which is partly in my constituency, 16.2% of the population smoke, which is above the English average of 14.9%. In 2016-17, 17.1% of women were smokers at the time of delivery, compared with the

[Sir Kevin Barron]

regional value of 14.4% and the national value of 10.7%, so we have higher rates of smoking in pregnancy than elsewhere. In 2014-16, of the estimated deaths attributed to smoking per 1,000 of the population aged 35-plus, 1,487 were in Rotherham. If anything else was killing that number of the population in our constituencies, we would rightly be taking action, and more action than we currently do.

In 2016, there were 3,620 smoking-attributable hospital admissions in Rotherham. In 2017, 22.8% of routine workers smoked compared with 13.1% of those in managerial professions. Among people who have never worked, the smoking rate rises further, up to 24.8%. Each year, smoking in Rotherham costs society approximately £64.2 million. This cost is accrued in a range of social domains, including healthcare, productivity, social care and house fires. It used to be chip pans that caused more house fires in constituencies such as mine, but cigarettes have now taken over.

The total annual cost of smoking to the NHS across Rotherham is estimated at about £12.7 million, with £3.7 million of this due to 3,244 hospital admissions for smoking-related conditions and £9 million due to treating smoking-related illness via primary and ambulatory care services. In 2015, there were 24,924 households in Rotherham with at least one smoker. When net income and smoking expenditure is taken into account, 34% of households with a smoker fell below the poverty line. If those smokers were to quit, 2,173 households in Rotherham would be elevated above the poverty line. These are the stakes for people with this addiction in constituencies such as mine.

I have long supported a strong approach to tobacco harm reduction as an important plank in the strategy to reduce health inequalities. Smokers who are disadvantaged face many more barriers to quitting, including high levels of addiction. A properly implemented tobacco harm reduction strategy can address this, and obviously has been doing so in the recent past. The commitment in the tobacco control plan to support innovation is welcome. Since the plan was published, Public Health England has published an updated evidence review of e-cigarettes showing the growing evidence that vaping is less harmful than smoking and has the potential to support thousands more people to become smoke free.

As I said in the debate on this subject in Westminster Hall, this is the first tobacco control plan that has ever mentioned e-cigarettes. The recent report by the Royal College of Physicians on smoking and the NHS reiterated the RCP's support for the use of e-cigarettes and encouraged wider use of these products within the NHS. However, smokers' appetite for trying e-cigarettes seems to have slowed somewhat. Since 2013, there has been a tailing off in the rapid growth in the market. This coincides with a deterioration of public understanding about the relative safety of e-cigarettes compared with smoking.

Action on Smoking and Health has recently provided evidence to the Science and Technology Committee inquiry on e-cigarettes. ASH reported a moderate improvement in accurate understanding of the harms from e-cigarettes between 2017 and 2018, but 22% of current smokers still think that e-cigarettes are as harmful or more harmful than smoking. Yet Public Health England has said that they are now at least 95% safer than cigarettes. Clearly, more

needs to be done to promote better health understanding of the relative safety of e-cigarettes. This should include addressing the lack of understanding also among health professionals, in addition to engaging smokers more in this.

I want to give a couple of brief examples of how e-cigarettes interact with smoking rates. The Minister has heard me say before that meeting the targets in the last plan and reducing adult smoking to its current levels was probably very much helped by smokers voluntarily taking up e-cigarettes. Some 2.9 million adults in the UK use e-cigarettes, more than half of whom have stopped smoking completely, so about 1.5 million people have stopped smoking because of e-cigarettes. ASH produced those figures for 2017. Likewise, 18% of smokers used e-cigarettes in 2017, and 23% of ex-smokers reported that they use or used to use an e-cigarette. One person in the UK switches to e-cigarettes every three minutes, allegedly.

I want to give a comparator and to refer back to my intervention on the Minister. I chaired the Health Committee in 2005, after we had fought an election on a manifesto commitment by the Labour party to introduce a ban on smoking in public places. I stood on that manifesto, but the ban proposed was not a comprehensive one. The Health Committee, of which I became the Chair, investigated smoking in public places. We went to Ireland to take evidence, because it had had such a ban for about two years.

I will now demonstrate the effectiveness of e-cigarettes by comparing smoking rates in the UK versus those in Ireland, where every other approach to tobacco control is identical to those in the UK, such as plain packaging, retail display bans and marketing promotions all stopped. In recent years in the UK, smoking rates have dropped by almost a quarter—according to the Office for National Statistics, 24.4% of UK adults smoked in 2012 and 15.8% in 2016—and the UK now has the second lowest smoking rate in Europe. In Ireland, which has exactly the same tobacco control as we put through this place over many years, smoking rates have stagnated: 23% of adults smoked in 2015 and 2016, dropping to 22% in 2017, according to Healthy Ireland stats. That shows how the use of e-cigarettes has been good in reducing smoking in this country.

According to Public Health England, e-cigarette use is associated with improved quitting success rates over the past year and an accelerated drop in smoking rates across the country. It said that e-cigarettes contribute to at least 20,000 successful new quits per year and possibly many more—we are not measuring them in those terms, although that is something that clearly needs to be done.

I will finish soon, but as much as I support the tobacco plan in all its targets and everything else, we still need to look at what is happening on the ground, as several other Members have said. I think that we would all accept that the availability of smoking cessation programmes is patchy to say the least.

ONS stats on smoking prevalence identify for us the five local authorities with the highest rates: Redditch, Thanet—so this is not necessarily a north-south thing as a result of deprivation, or there is clearly deprivation in Thanet as well, down on the south coast—the City of Kingston upon Hull, which I think was mentioned earlier in this debate, Glasgow City and Sunderland.

The five local authorities with the lowest smoking prevalence rates are Christchurch, West Devon, Maldon, North Warwickshire and the Orkney Islands. In my view, we need to recognise those differences to get to the meat of the targets. We need to look beyond saying that this is a matter for local authorities.

“Feeling the Heat: The Decline of Stop Smoking Services in England” was a Cancer Research UK survey and report done in 2017. Its conclusions were that budgets for local authority cessation services ranged from nil to £1.7 million, or an average of £436,000 per local authority, and that 61% of local authorities offered specialist cessation services, with advisers offering one-to-one or group support and access to medication. Some have been replaced with a more general lifestyle service. Tobacco control was said to be a high priority by 57% of the local authorities—they say that, but have they the ability to do anything?—while 75% of local authority cessation services supported use of e-cigarettes, but only 50% of primary care providers did so. We need a consistent approach in line with public health and NICE recommendations. The last figure I will give from the report was that a third of local authorities had no budget for wider tobacco control activity, dealing with issues such as illicit and under-age trade.

I will finish with this point for the Minister. Given that we know the areas where there is evidence of high levels of smoking and therefore a high number of premature deaths from smoking, we need something more—in the current situation of austerity and everything else—than just saying that we want local authorities to get on with this. Having identified where such needs have to be met—this should definitely be ring-fenced—perhaps the national Government, or the Department of Health and Social Care, will find a way to look at this and make sure that we get the services where the need is greatest. I will leave that with the Minister. I thank him again for all he has done since he has been in office, and I hope that the success we want from this tobacco plan will take place.

4.25 pm

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): First, I thank the Minister for bringing forward the plan. As always, he is very active in health matters, and he certainly has a passion for this. I also thank right hon. and hon. Members who have spoken. Their information and evidence-based contributions have added greatly to the debate. Their knowledge is certainly greater than mine, but I must say that the hon. Member for Stockton North (Alex Cunningham) and the right hon. Member for Rother Valley (Sir Kevin Barron) have made significant contributions.

I am my party’s health spokesperson in this House, and I want to provide a bit of background about Northern Ireland. The right hon. Gentleman referred to some of the facts from Ireland, and I will look at this from a Northern Ireland perspective. We in the Democratic Unionist party set out our health policies in “Our plan for a world class health service”. When we had a functioning Assembly, that was one of the things we were very proud of; I hope we will get back to those days very soon. One of the aims was to improve the health service, and one of the pillars and listed successful health outcomes over the past few years was a decrease in smoking.

We have clearly had a policy and a strategy to address this issue. In 2012, the Northern Ireland Public Health Agency published its public health strategy “Making Life Better” for 2012 to 2023. In 2015, it published “Tobacco Control Northern Ireland”, which stated:

“Smoking has been identified as the single greatest cause of preventable illness and premature death in Northern Ireland”.

The tobacco control paper noted that in 2014, about 16% or one in six of all deaths in Northern Ireland were attributable to smoking. Over the ten years to 2015, smoking caused between 2,300 and 2,400 premature deaths per year. That indicated how important it was to reduce tobacco smoking and its take-up.

Across Northern Ireland, the standardised death rate due to smoking-related causes in the most deprived areas was 54% higher than the overall regional rate and 129% higher than the standardised death rate in the least deprived areas, and relative health inequality was getting worse. A general theme coming through from all those who have made contributions is the take-up of smoking in areas of deprivation across the whole of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. There is also a related gender gap. The standardised death rate due to smoking-related causes was highest among males in the 20% most deprived areas, more than twice that of males in the 20% least deprived areas, and almost five times that of females in the 20% least deprived areas. According to the report, smoking cost Northern Ireland some £450 million a year.

We quite clearly had a big issue that we were trying to address, and I believe the strategy implemented through “Tobacco Control Northern Ireland” was a methodology to do just that. Reducing smoking prevalence remains central to Northern Ireland’s public health policy, and we clearly support what the Minister has said, and what other Members have said, because they also recognise that. Although health is a devolved responsibility, many other areas of public policy relevant to reducing smoking prevalence remain the responsibility of the Government in Westminster, and our contribution takes that into consideration.

If I may, I want to comment on e-cigarettes. The right hon. Member for Rother Valley very clearly outlined the advantages of e-cigarettes and vaping. Some of the figures are incredibly important. Vapour particles from e-cigarettes are 73% water, which means that they quickly evaporate into the atmosphere, and the evidence of experts shows that 99% of the nicotine is retained in the vapour. It is very important to appreciate the advantages of e-cigarettes.

According to the UK national health service, there is no evidence of direct harm from passive exposure to e-cigarette vapour, and if we look outside the United Kingdom, evidence from other countries—France is one example—suggests there is no harm from passive vaping, based on current scientific knowledge, facts and figures. In 2016, the UK Government issued advice to employers to encourage workplaces to adopt pro-vaping policies so that it would be as easy and convenient as possible for workers to switch. That was on the basis that international peer-reviewed evidence indicates that the risk to the health of bystanders from exposure to e-cigarette vapour is extremely low. Again, there is an evidential base. Not so long ago I asked the Department of Health and Social Care whether it would consider introducing vaping areas in hospitals. People who are

[*Jim Shannon*]

visiting hospitals go outside to smoke, and those who want to vape do not necessarily want to go to those smoking areas. I hope that the Minister will consider that idea.

In Newtownards, the major town of my Strangford constituency, a number of shops sell e-cigarettes. I suggest that those shops function because of the take-up of e-cigarettes—that is why they can pay their bills and why they exist. Very often, someone walking down the high street in Newtownards and elsewhere can see puffs of smoke. They are almost taken aback, and then they get the smell of strawberry, raspberry or cashew nuts, and realise that someone is vaping.

I want to comment on that point because it is important. The hon. Member for Harrow East (Bob Blackman) mentioned the US, and a survey carried out there suggested that vaping flavours may discourage smokers from returning to cigarettes. It stated:

“The results show that non-tobacco flavours, especially fruit based flavours, are being increasingly preferred to tobacco flavours by adult vapers who have completely switched from combustible cigarettes to vapour products.”

That was a survey of 20,000 adult frequent vapers in the United States, and of those 20,000, 16,000 had completely switched from smoking to vaping, and 5,000 were dual users who smoked and used vaping products—I want to add that point to the debate, because we must consider those results and look at the best ways to tackle this issue.

Hon. Members have asked how we can advance our strategy further. The Tobacco Control Northern Ireland report stated that exposure to smoking behaviour

“continues to occur in films deemed by the British Board of Film Classification as suitable for children and young people...this tobacco imagery extends beyond the film industry into mainstream television broadcasts”.

More than 60% of incidences of tobacco use occur before the 9 pm watershed, thereby providing a possible source of young people’s exposure to tobacco. A clear causal link has been established between smoking initiation among young people and smoking on screen in the entertainment media. The impact is down to the amount of smoking that young people see, not whether it is glamorised or not. The greater the exposure to smoking—however it is depicted—the greater the risk of smoking uptake, and I am sure that the Minister will come back with his thoughts about that.

Will the Minister ask his colleagues who are responsible for the regulation of film and TV in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to work with the Department of Health and Social Care, and press Ofcom and the British Board of Film Classification to ensure that their codes effectively tackle the portrayal of smoking in films and television programmes that are likely to be seen by children?

In Northern Ireland, since 6 April 2016, retailers have been obliged to register with the Tobacco Register of Northern Ireland, with a final deadline of 1 July 2016. That built on a similar scheme already in place in Scotland—the hon. Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk (Martyn Day) referred to that—and a scheme is due for implementation in Wales. Lessons can be learned from such schemes, and I believe that we can learn greatly from the other regions of the United Kingdom

of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and bring our thoughts together to do something collectively that will benefit us all. Although registration schemes have the benefit of enabling public health authorities to identify where tobacco is sold, as currently constructed they appear to have had limited impact in preventing the sale of tobacco to underage children, or the sale of illicit tobacco.

I know this point is not the Minister’s responsibility, but I would just like to put it on record. In Northern Ireland, paramilitaries are involved with illegal tobacco smuggling and cheap cigarettes flood the market. The Police Service of Northern Ireland and the customs authorities are involved in trying to address the issue, but if I may I would suggest that Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs could be more involved across the whole of the United Kingdom.

In conclusion, will the Minister ensure that his officials and their counterparts in HMRC talk to their opposite numbers in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales about their experience of the retail register scheme, and the lessons to be learned from the experience of the devolved Administrations? We can look at live these issues collectively, bringing our knowledge from the regions we represent. Hopefully, out of that we can construct a tobacco control policy that can help us all.

4.35 pm

**Mrs Hodgson:** With the leave of the House, I would like to start my closing remarks by thanking the hon. Member for Harrow East (Bob Blackman) and my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton North (Alex Cunningham), the chair and vice-chair of the very influential and active all-party parliamentary group on smoking and health, for their excellent speeches today and their leadership on this issue. I also thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Sir Kevin Barron). As we know, he has campaigned in this House for decades on this issue. I thank the hon. Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk (Martyn Day), who speaks for the Scottish National party, and, last but by no means least, the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon). It has been an excellent debate.

I will begin by touching on e-cigarettes, which I mentioned in my opening remarks and several hon. Members mentioned in the debate. For the first time, e-cigarettes were mentioned in the updated tobacco control plan, with the aim of maximising the availability of safer alternatives to smoking. There has been a significant increase in e-cigarette usage since the publication of the previous 2011 strategy. There were 700,000 e-cigarette users in 2012. That figure rose to 2.8 million by 2016. In 2016, Office for National Statistics data found that 470,000 people were using e-cigarettes as an aid to stop smoking, while an estimated 2 million had used the products and had stopped smoking completely. I am therefore pleased that Public Health England’s Stoptober campaign now includes e-cigarettes as a smoking cessation aid and that e-cigarettes have been found to be about 95% less harmful than smoking. We should encourage people to use smoking cessation aids, such as e-cigarettes, to help them to stop smoking, while keeping a watchful eye on any negative health outcomes, if there are any.

Earlier this year, I joined the Minister, Action on Smoking and Health, Fresh North East and a host of NHS professionals to launch the NHS Smokefree Pledge.

During my speech at the launch, I said that smoking cessation should become a central theme of healthcare staff's engagement with patients, making every contact count to help people to quit smoking. Has the Minister made any assessment of the success of this pledge so far and will the Government make any further assessment of how many people have quit smoking because of the NHS Smokefree Pledge?

While the proportion of adults who have never smoked cigarettes has increased over the past 30 years, from 25% of men and 49% of women in 1974 to 56% and 63% respectively in 2016, we must ensure that that steady increase continues. However, the deaths attributable to smoking continue. Of the 115,000 lung disease deaths each year, up to 58,500 are attributable to smoking. This includes 86% of all lung cancer deaths and 77% of all chronic obstructive pulmonary disease deaths. The UK currently has one of the highest premature mortality rates from lung diseases in Europe. Smokers are almost twice as likely to have a heart attack compared with people who have never smoked and about half of all regular smokers will eventually be killed by their habit. This is unacceptable.

The Government have a duty to ensure that their citizens are healthy, which means properly funded public health services and implementing policies that encourage healthier lifestyles. Will the Minister tell the House if further funding will be granted to local authorities to deliver public health services such as smoking cessation? I truly believe that the ambitions in the tobacco control plan cannot be achieved without adequate funding. I know that like me, he is truly passionate about reducing smoking rates and rightly passionate about achieving a smoke-free generation, so I look forward to his response.

4.40 pm

**Steve Brine:** With the leave of the House, I will also respond to the debate, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am aware that I am standing in the middle of the A14—almost literally—which is tonight's Adjournment debate, but I will respond to the points that have been raised in this short and small but perfectly formed debate.

The shadow Minister—my good friend, the hon. Member for Washington and Sunderland West (Mrs Hodgson)—rightly mentioned the issue of pregnant women and smoking, to which I referred in my opening remarks. Public Health England and NHS England are working on a joint strategy at the moment, setting out recommendations for how local areas can work together to achieve our ambition on smoking in pregnancy. In a way, I guess that is given a greater impetus in the light of the flatlining figures—I suppose that is the accurate way of putting it. This work is part of the maternity transformation programme, which started in 2016 and which I know she is aware of. Public Health England will look at how its mass media campaign can more effectively reach young people, especially working-class women of reproductive age and their families and friends. I wanted to put that on the record.

The hon. Lady returned to the subject of smoking services. I repeat what I said during the debate: there are varying rates across the country, so it is right that local councils have the flexibility to respond. I will touch on the point that the right hon. Member for Rother Valley (Sir Kevin Barron) mentioned about this being all the

responsibility of local authorities. There is a third way, he will be pleased to know, as a Blairite—that has finished his career, I apologise. I put on record again that councils will receive £16 billion of the public health funding until the next spending review, when the spending plans will be announced. We expect them to use it wisely.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow East (Bob Blackman) talked about the Back-Bench debate and the general debate. I will leave that matter for the usual channels, but the important thing is that we are having the debate, which is very welcome.

The shadow Minister spoke about smoking cessation training and those services. The success of our plan hinges on all manner of professionals offering help that works, which is why effective training on supporting smokers to quit is central to the tobacco control plan—from doctors and nurses in the NHS to physiotherapists in the community, to pharmacists, who I have mentioned, and to the health professionals who need to equip smokers with the capability, opportunity and motivation to quit for good. It often involves very brief advice and there is a lot of online training out there. Twenty minutes or so of online training can teach a professional how to have a short conversation with somebody with a smoking challenge, with proven results. I wanted to put that on record.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow East mentioned Philip Morris International and its kind proposal to help NHS trusts, which has been in the newspapers today. I thought I would place on record for the House that what it talked about in its offer to trusts was “operating a scheme that allows employees who do not quit to trial one of our range of smoke-free alternatives”. We have to give them 10 out of 10 for effort, but it is totally inappropriate and that is why we have written to all trusts to make it clear.

I understand my hon. Friend's Budget 2018 proposal for the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the need for the money in respect of the polluter pays principle. I know that the Chancellor will have heard that. My hon. Friend talked about the need for hard-hitting campaigns. We do have them, of course, and they are an essential part of tobacco control. In England for several years now, we have sought the balance between hope and harm. Every January, we have the Health Harms campaign and in the autumn, we have our more upbeat Stoptober campaign, and 2018 will be no exception.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk (Martyn Day), who spoke for the SNP, talked about the illicit tobacco trade protocol, and I thank him for putting on record that we indeed ratified the protocol on 27 June to eliminate the illicit trade in protocols. The first meeting of the members of the protocol will be in Geneva from 8 to 10 October.

The hon. Gentleman talked about track and trace. The tobacco products directive contains a commitment for member states to provide the track and trace system by May 2019 for cigarettes and roll-your-own tobacco. The European Union has published draft recommendations on the track and trace proposals, and we voted in favour of implementing the regulations. I would say that the EU measures go beyond the requirements of the framework convention on tobacco control, but many of its benefits arise from the exchange of information between nations, so it seemed sensible to us for the UK to align with the EU after exit in this respect.

[*Steve Brine*]

Both the hon. Member for Stockton North (Alex Cunningham) and the hon. Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk talked about smoking and the media. The Government do not interfere in editorial decisions. I think it right that content makers decide what to include in their programmes, provided that they comply with the broadcasting code, and I ask them to take their responsibility seriously. Obviously, as Members have said, they are regulated by Ofcom. Last month, it published a note to broadcasters reminding them of the rules in this area, and advising them on the depiction of branding and health warnings. The last time Ofcom found a breach of the broadcasting code related to smoking was in 2015, so I think that broadcasters take the code seriously.

Many Members mentioned the British Board of film Classification, which I know well and which is a well-managed organisation. Its guidelines were last updated four years ago, in 2014. Consultation on the new guidelines began late last year, and they are expected to be published early in 2019.

There was a lot of talk about e-cigarettes, which were partly dealt with at the beginning of the debate. Public Health England will update its evidence report on e-cigarettes and other novel nicotine delivery systems annually until the end of the current Parliament in 2022, and we will include that in our “quit smoking” campaign messages about the relative—I underline “relative”, if *Hansard* can underline—safety of e-cigarettes. I enjoyed the comparison that the right hon. Member for Rother Valley made with Ireland: I thank him for that.

The right hon. Gentleman also said that not everything could be done by local authorities. We have not said that it should. I have made it very clear to Public Health England that where we have more work to do is where they should target their help and support, but there is also a new grant to support the tobacco control plan. The Government have launched a competitive scheme whereby organisations can apply to undertake work to support the plan’s ambitions. The grant is £140,000 a year for three years, from 2018-19: a total of £420,000 is available. Applications are currently being assessed, and we will contact the successful applicants in the autumn. I will find out some more details and send them to the all-party group.

The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon)—as always!—asked whether we would introduce vaping areas in hospitals. Public Health England advises that the smoking of e-cigarettes should not be routinely treated in the same way as smoking tobacco, but it is true that it is for NHS trusts to make their own policies. Some, including the Maudsley, have designated areas both indoors and outdoors.

**Alex Cunningham:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle):** It is up to the Minister. He said that he wanted to speak for only one minute.

**Steve Brine:** I will give way.

**Alex Cunningham:** The Minister has 12 minutes left.

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** It was the Minister who suggested that he wanted only one minute in which to sum up. The fact that we are late does not matter to me.

**Alex Cunningham:** Let me tease the Minister on three matters. One, what are we going to do about the “tab houses”? Two, what is his position on cigarette pack inserts? Three, what is he doing to do about the fact that mass media campaign funding has been cut by 90% in the last 10 years? We need that funding in order to be effective.

**Steve Brine:** I will write to the hon. Gentleman about his first two points. As for the mass media point, the hard-hitting campaigns that we conduct through the mass media are incredibly powerful. Last year’s campaign showed a gentleman rolling a cigarette with roll-your-own tobacco made of blood and gore. That was very hard-hitting, and it had an incredibly good response mechanism when we tested it and when we rolled it out. In this year’s campaign, “between hope and harm”, I think the hon. Gentleman will see a good balance of that mass media campaign that he talked about.

I realise that that was more than a minute, Mr Deputy Speaker. There is so much to say about this subject! It is so exciting.

Let me end by reaffirming the Government’s commitment. What everyone has said today has been very kind. Yes, I am committed to this subject, but ultimately we will be judged on our record. We are committed to making further sharp reductions in smoking prevalence, not so that we can meet the ambitions of the plan, although that is all very nice, but so that we can make a difference to people’s lives, because as the right hon. Member for Rother Valley said, if our constituents were dying in these numbers in road accidents we would be calling for crossings.

We want to make the smoke-free generation a reality to help people’s lives and to make a difference. Tobacco control is a key priority for us, and it will be a key priority for the 10-year plan that the Secretary of State and I will be working on with NHS England. I was interested to hear the comments of Simon Stevens at the Select Committee, and I agree with Simon, not for the first time.

I thank all Members who have spoken for their contributions—and it is amazing how far a minute can go, Mr Deputy Speaker.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered the Tobacco Control Plan.

#### USE OF CHAMBER (WOMEN MPS OF THE WORLD CONFERENCE)

*Resolved,*

That this House welcomes the events organised to celebrate women’s suffrage and to mark the centenary of the Representation of the People Act 1918; recognises that the Women MPs of the World Conference provides a unique opportunity to gather parliamentarians from across the world to engage in discussions about equal representation and bring about social change; and accordingly resolves that parliamentarians who are delegates participating in the Women MPs of the World Conference should be allowed to hold a debate in the Chamber of this House on a day in November other than a day on which this House is sitting or a day on which the UK Youth Parliament is making use of the Chamber.—(*Mims Davies.*)

## A14 Cambridge-Huntingdon Upgrade

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

4.50 pm

**Daniel Zeichner** (Cambridge) (Lab): I am grateful for the opportunity to consider in the House the very important issue of the problems caused by the diversions implemented during the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon upgrade. This really matters to my constituents. One has contacted me today to say they have moved house because of the upset, and another emailed me this morning promising to tune in to this debate from where they are hiking in the Arctic circle; I hope it does not disappoint.

This road upgrade is important and long overdue. It is managed by Highways England, which I was pleased to meet some weeks ago when I went on site to discuss these issues. Anyone driving along the A14 at the moment, albeit often in a queue, cannot fail to be impressed by the scale of the works. Given that regular users have often been in queues over many years, and that there have been too many accidents and delays, most are agreed that the works are essential, and that, despite the current misery being caused, there will be substantial benefits. Let me also say at the outset that at my meeting with Highways England I was impressed by the knowledge and dedication of the many people involved; it is a huge and complicated operation, and everyone wants it to go well.

The purpose of this debate, however, is to highlight the unintended consequences for many who are affected during the construction, and to question whether enough is being done to mitigate those consequences. In my view, my constituents are paying a very heavy price in terms of their current quality of life to possibly improve the lives of others in the future. That is not fair, and I trust the Minister will hear that message loud and clear, and offer not just sympathy and kind words—which I am sure she will—but real action to stop the misery currently being endured.

The existing A14 trunk road between Cambridge and Huntingdon is well known for congestion and delays, and around 85,000 vehicles use this stretch of the A14 every day, many more than the road was originally designed to take. Around a quarter of this traffic comprises heavy goods vehicles, well above the national average for this type of road, and this adds to the need for an upgrade. It is a key east-west freight route—freight which many of us believe would be better off on the railways, but that is a debate for another day.

I will start by running through the history of this upgrade. The A14 has a chequered history over the Cambridge to Huntingdon section, with plans to upgrade going through various announcements, cancellations and re-announcements. I pay tribute to John Bridge of the Cambridgeshire chambers of commerce, who has devoted years of his life to campaigning for these improvements; indeed, there probably should be a bridge named after him. And I will now give an abridged account of what has happened.

Proposals were first made to widen the A14 between Bar Hill and Huntingdon in the late 1980s and were reviewed in 1998 as part of the Cambridge to Huntingdon multi-modal study, or CHUMMS. For many years,

CHUMMS became a part of many of our lives. In 2005, the Highways Agency, as it then was, unveiled plans for widening the road from Fen Drayton to Fen Ditton, with the route unveiled in March 2007. This was originally planned to be completed and in use by 2016—what a wonderful thought—and the cost at that time was between £690 million and £1.2 billion, a far cry from the £2 billion-plus that we are now having to pay. Around this time, the Labour Government of the day also approved the guided bus route, designed to relieve some of the pressure on the road. It was controversial, not least because it was only guided until it met city-centre congestion; it is the longest guided busway in the world but has cost much more than anticipated, although it has taken some of the strain and is now very heavily used.

When the coalition Government came to power in 2010, the scheme was duly cancelled by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Administration. After much lobbying, we then had an interesting diversion when local councils were urged to make contributions from their declining funds, which the ever-helpful Liberal Democrat administration in Cambridge declined to do. David Cameron then famously told BBC “Look East”—I think he was speaking to Andrew Sinclair at the time—that the scheme would not be built unless the A14 became a toll road, but, like a number of things David Cameron said, it did not turn out quite as planned, as his suggestion provoked a furious backlash across eastern England.

There was further prevarication, before the scheme was officially cancelled—until a new version was developed the following year. In November 2012, the scheme was reported to be back in action, and it was mentioned in the June 2013 spending review. In May 2016, the then Transport Secretary, the right hon. Member for Derbyshire Dales (Sir Patrick McLoughlin), approved it, and it is now due for completion in March 2021, by which time the country might well look rather different.

Those were the funding sagas that we dealt with. At the same time, various planning objections were lodged, which added further delays, but the scheme is clearly essential, and the Huntingdon flyover is now in a serious state of disrepair, so it was clear that something had to be done. However, this means that it is now much more expensive than it would have been in 2010, and many more years of misery have been endured since then. It is clearly a relief that the scheme is finally under way, but it is unacceptable that people in Cambridge are being made to suffer because of problems with the diversion, particularly through this long hot summer. Of course, many people outside the city are also suffering, particularly in the surrounding villages, but I will focus my remarks on my constituents who have made their experiences and feelings very clear.

This upgrade, although necessary, is unrelenting, with Highways England telling me that overnight road closures will continue five nights a week until September. Highways England’s official overnight diversion strategy adds 30 or more miles to the journeys of those driving lorries across the country, taking them along a strategic diversion route that includes the M11, the A505 and the A11 back to junction 36 on the A14, so it is unsurprising that some drivers choose to short-cut through Cambridge, along Kings Hedges Road, Milton Road, Victoria Road, Newmarket Road, Histon Road and Huntingdon Road.

[Daniel Zeichner]

However, this short-cut is unacceptable as it disrupts the lives of my constituents—to whom I am grateful for making me aware of the situation—particularly tireless local campaigners such as Doug Whyte and Elaine Gristwood, who recently presented me with a petition from local residents who are affected. This involves virtually every house along the route, and I in turn presented the petition to Highways England. They and residents on other routes have explained the effects of the diversions on our communities. Heavy goods vehicles are driving through small streets that are profoundly unsuited to heavy loads, such as Victoria Road, and it cannot be right that my constituents cannot sleep with their windows open owing to the noise, that children have had trouble sleeping through the racket on the nights before their exams, or that constituents have reported health problems, including one who got in touch to say that the increased fumes along Kings Hedges Road had had health implications for her husband, leading to asthma attacks. I also want to pay tribute to local Labour county councillors Jocelyne Scutt and Claire Richards, who have worked tirelessly with residents to try to find solutions to this problem.

I want to quote a few pieces of correspondence that I have received from constituents. One woman has told me:

“Adequate amounts of sleep are impossible with lorries thundering past every minute, and this is severely affecting my quality of life, mood, and effectiveness at work. My whole flat shakes every time an HGV goes past. It’s like a miniature earthquake, and I’m worried the building is not designed to deal with this kind of strain.”

Another has told me:

“Before the A14 closures I had laid down a brand new driveway for my property; this included laying down concrete for it. Due to the HGVs going down the road it has created cracks in my brand new driveway, and with the lorries going down the road frequently it will just get worse. So on top of not being able to have a peaceful night sleep, the house shaking causing things to break in the house, the outside of our house is also cracking.”

It is clear that the situation cannot go on. We need stronger disincentives for the HGVs that ignore the official diversion and hurtle through the city’s streets. Of course, I have considerable sympathy for the drivers who have a maximum number of hours that they can drive before legally needing breaks, and I understand the time pressures on them and their employers and the extra costs that long diversions bring, but the improvements in future journey times and fewer delays will help those hauliers. They will benefit in a way that my currently suffering constituents will not. Many of my constituents were initially forgiving of the disruption, accepting that it was part of the A14 upgrade, which they appreciate is vital.

5 pm

*Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 9(3)).*

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

**Daniel Zeichner:** A lack of information from Highways England about when and for how long the disruptions would last created a great sense of frustration for them. Information communication has improved a little throughout the process, but it could have been got right from the outset.

When the works began, the original problem was that the signage for the diversion was widely felt to be inadequate, and it was argued that drivers were failing to divert because they just did not understand the signs. The signage has been improved, but it should have been better from the beginning. Now that it has improved, it seems that too many drivers are just ignoring it, and those who choose to ignore these signs should face consequences.

I have so far not been particularly critical of those involved in the project, but I have to question why, months after it started, we have only now been promised data on how effective or not the diversions are. Anecdotally, I am told that residents are counting over 100 HGVs an hour in the middle of the night, and Doug Whyte contacted me this morning to say that he was being kept awake last night by heavy trucks passing every few minutes. Why should residents be doing the counting? On a £2 billion project, will the Minister tell me why Highways England is not collecting that data and making it available? I am told by the county council that an HGV counter has been installed on one road but not others, yet we still do not have that data—despite repeated requests. Only with that data can we tell whether improved signage has or has not had any impact.

Frankly, Highways England should have been able to predict the problems that we are seeing and should have established base data before it started and then monitored it, and I hope the Minister will explain why it did not do that. If she cannot, I will offer her a cynical view that I am hearing: no one cares unless local people kick up enough fuss to force others into action. Will the Minister please guarantee counters on all the affected roads, and will she promise to publish the data on a weekly basis? Does she have any of that data this afternoon? How many HGVs does she expect to be using Kings Hedges Road, Milton Road, Huntingdon Road, Victoria Road and other roads this evening? I hope she has an answer, because expecting Doug and Elaine to stay up all night counting trucks is really not good enough.

What else could be done? The county council has considered temporary traffic orders, but considering them is not enough. It needs to get on and do it to at least give some of these areas relief. What of enforcement and the role of the police? We know, sadly, that traffic policing has virtually disappeared under this Government, and that is backed up by the fact that Highways England offered to pay for more policing for the diversion. Even with that offer, however, it seems that there simply are not enough officers to make it a possibility. Even if we could get the enforcement in place, are the fines sufficient to act as a disincentive to those taking shortcuts? Perhaps we need to name and shame the hauliers who consistently break the rules. There is a whole range of things that could be done but, as it sometimes seems with this Government, there is so little action.

Beyond all that, there is the wider issue of the complexity of local governance and the mix of authorities with responsibility for the project. Highways England is responsible for national roads and motorways, the Conservative-run Cambridgeshire County Council is responsible for local roads, and the Conservative Mayor and combined authority have strategic transport powers. My sense is that those at the combined authority do not think it has anything to do with them, and the county council does not have the resources necessary to give the project the attention it deserves.

Even more dispiriting is Highways England's continuing failure to communicate properly. BBC Radio Cambridgeshire, in particular Dotty McLeod on the breakfast show, has kept residents informed and tried to explain what is happening, but Highways England consistently refuses to appear on the programme to respond. I pay tribute to journalists such as Jozef Hall and his colleagues for trying to pursue Highways England, but we have a problem when we have to resort to BBC journalists driving out in the middle of the night to find out what is going on because those responsible are refusing to answer questions.

The Minister will doubtless say that Highways England is an independent agency. Well, I say it was this Government who created that independence, and they did not absolve themselves of responsibility by so doing. It is public money, and there should be public accountability. I hope we can have an assurance from the Minister that, in future, Highways England will make itself available to answer questions on local media, just as local politicians have to.

My conclusion is that these problems could be resolved if there were the will and the resource to do it. I ask the Minister to intervene to end the misery. The suffering of the past few months cannot be undone, but it does not have to be extended. This project is in itself expensive, and, as I have said, it is more expensive now than it would have been if it had been completed years earlier, but for a fraction of the overall amount being spent the harm being done to my constituents could be mitigated. Signage, monitoring, TTOs, policing and proper governance are all key, and they should have been priorities from the start, but resourcing has made it all much more of a struggle.

I would like the Minister to commit now to properly resourcing a framework that means HGVs will follow the proper diversions. Drivers who do not, should be named, shamed and fined to protect the people of Cambridge who are currently left unprotected. I have been in conversation with Highways England for months, and it does not seem able to solve this problem. I have written to thousands of constituents to explain the situation and to ask for their views and experiences.

It is fundamentally unfair that our city's roads will suffer damage and, more importantly, that the physical and mental health of my constituents will be affected owing to the Government's neglecting to create the frameworks necessary to make sure that people follow the rules. I trust that the Minister will commit to sorting this out and that lessons will be learned from this sorry saga so that similar mistakes are not made on other schemes in the future.

5.6 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Ms Nusrat Ghani):** I congratulate the hon. Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner) on securing this debate on the A14 Cambridge-Huntingdon upgrade, and on taking us all the way to the Arctic circle. He must have noticed, as you will have, Mr Deputy Speaker, that I am not my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford and South Herefordshire (Jesse Norman), the Minister who has responsibility for roads, but I will do my best to respond to all the points that have been raised. Anything I am unable to cover will no doubt be addressed in writing.

The hon. Member for Cambridge diligently raised the concerns of his constituents about this subject and particularly the impact of road diversions through Cambridgeshire as a result of the scheme's construction. He has continued to lobby behind the scenes, too, and he has commented on his meetings with Highways England to resolve the A14 diversions.

I will use this opportunity to outline what Highways England is doing to reduce the impact of the scheme's road diversions on local residents. I will discuss those road diversions in some detail, but I begin by reminding hon. Members of the strategic reasons for the scheme and by providing an update on Highways England's good progress in delivering these much needed road improvements.

In 2013, the Government committed to improving a 21-mile stretch of the A14 between Cambridge and Huntingdon, which the hon. Gentleman no doubt supports. This section of road is one of the busiest parts of the strategic road network between the midlands, East Anglia and the port of Felixstowe. It is vital in connecting businesses, communities and families across Cambridgeshire and beyond, and it is a crucial corridor for international freight. However, it is a long-standing congestion hotspot and an area of concern for local communities.

In delivering upgrades to the A14, Highways England and the Department for Transport have acknowledged that demand on the A14 is taking an increasing toll on both drivers and local residents. Commutes between Huntingdon and Cambridge are severely congested. Small villages on either side of the road suffer from increased traffic due to drivers rat-running to avoid traffic delays on the A14.

The existing A14 is not fit for purpose. In recognition of the problems, the A14 improvement works were included as a major project in the five-year road investment strategy that the Department published in December 2014. Local authorities and local enterprise partnerships have together committed £100 million towards the £1.5 billion cost of the scheme. That contribution will help to deliver a scheme that meets the needs of the strategic road network and local people. The scheme will provide benefits to road users and local communities by making the following improvements: 21 miles of new three-lane dual carriageway road; a new 450 metre viaduct; the removal of the existing unsightly viaduct in Huntingdon town centre; two new footbridges at Swavesey junction and Bar Hill; and more than 18 miles of routes suitable for walking, cycling and horseback riding.

The Government and the Department firmly believe that the scheme will create a positive legacy by connecting communities and unlocking regional and local economic growth, while combatting congestion and improving road safety in the area. The A14 upgrade will reduce community severance and relieve congestion on a critical part of the network, making travel and commuting easier, safer and more reliable. Increased capacity will result in fewer accidents on this stretch of road, and the inclusion of better designed grade-separated junctions will further improve safety. The scheme will combat congestion by separating strategic and local traffic. That is vital, as a 26% increase in traffic growth is predicted for the region by 2026, with Cambridgeshire's employment forecast to grow by 16% between 2012 and 2031.

[Ms Nusrat Ghani]

Changes to the old road will improve air quality and reduce traffic noise. Highways England has been taking significant steps to ensure that the environment and wildlife of the local area are protected throughout construction and, where possible, will benefit from the scheme. As part of the scheme, Highways England will be delivering 2.7 sq kms of new habitat for wildlife and, you will be interested to know, Mr Deputy Speaker, installing 240 bat boxes and a variety of bird boxes—I am glad that you approve. The scheme also provides an opportunity to improve conditions for walkers, cyclists and equestrians through new crossings. This will restore and build new links and pathways, which will better connect communities.

The scheme will help to create a positive legacy in Cambridgeshire, enabling residential and business developments in the area. To date, the scheme has created jobs during construction, with the new highways college in West Anglia being opened to give up to 200 local people the skills needed to get the road built. After the road opens, it will help to connect residents to employment opportunities. Having outlined the key strategic reasons for the scheme, I am pleased to report that Highways England is making good progress—about 50% is complete—and is on target to meet an open-for-traffic date in 2020. That is with the investment of £1.5 billion.

Let me turn to the specific subject of this debate. The hon. Gentleman has concerns that traffic diversions during the construction of the road are increasing noise and pollution for residents on and off the official diversion routes. I assure him that the Government and Highways England are committed to ensuring that the delivery of the scheme causes the minimum inconvenience to local residents. I believe that from September there will be a step change in diversions, which will lead to improvements.

The issue of lorries and other vehicles not following the recommended road diversions was raised, and Highways England has been working hard to develop measures that will help to reduce these impacts and encourage more drivers to use the preferred diversion routes. Highways England is working closely with Cambridgeshire County Council and partner organisations to minimise the impacts as much as possible. When closures are in place on the A14 between junction 36 at Nine Mile Hill and junction 31 at Girton, the strategic diversion route directs traffic south of Cambridge to use the M11, A505 and A11—those are two sides of a triangle. However, alternative routes are required for non-motorway traffic and for traffic travelling to local destinations when the strategic diversion would not be considered acceptable. Those routes take traffic further into and around Cambridge city centre and include Kings Hedges Road, Newmarket Road and Milton Road.

Highways England has no powers to prevent road users, including those in HGVs, from taking other routes that they have a legal right to access as an alternative to the official strategic diversion route. Highways England is working proactively to encourage strategic traffic to follow the official diversion route, including by giving weekly briefings to regional media, parish councils and local organisations, as well as through posts on social media.

Highways England is working closely with all agencies. The dialogue commenced during the development consent order process, as part of which diversion routes were discussed and agreed. A project team meets the police and local authority at least once a month to discuss traffic management. There are more than 40 road signs, with some including instructions not to follow sat-nav systems, and up to 13 mobile variable-messaging signs. Overhead signs are in use further afield on the strategic road network.

The A14 project team is working with the Road Haulage Association and Freight Transport Association so that diversion information can be shared with their members. Highways England is working with Cambridgeshire County Council to implement speed signs and HGV counters to assess the additional numbers of HGVs that are using key routes when the A14 is closed. Cambridgeshire police is aware of the issues being raised and has agreed to check for non-compliance with speed or weight restrictions at key sensitive locations.

The hon. Gentleman asked about data. I assure him that the project team volunteered to introduce measures to tackle the magnitude of the problem. Between 20 June and 12 July, traffic counters recorded between four and 21 lorries per night above the normal levels experienced when road diversions are not in place. The data will be shared publicly on a weekly basis. The hon. Gentleman should have received an email update; if he did not, I will work with the Department to ensure that he receives weekly updates on the data, which he can share, should he wish.

In conclusion, I reaffirm the Government's commitment to delivering the A14 upgrade on time and within budget. We must ensure that the delivery of such major road schemes puts local stakeholders' concerns at the forefront of our work. I am confident that Highways England will deliver a scheme that meets the needs of strategic road network users and will minimise the disruption to local people.

*Question put and agreed to.*

5.16 pm

*House adjourned.*

# Westminster Hall

Thursday 19 July 2018

[PHILIP DAVIES *in the Chair*]

## BACKBENCH BUSINESS

### Perinatal Mental Illness

1.30 pm

**Dr Paul Williams** (Stockton South) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered perinatal mental illness.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Davies. I and my colleague on the Select Committee on Health and Social Care, the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous), are delighted to have secured this important debate, and I thank the Backbench Business Committee for granting it.

Nothing can prepare someone for the challenge of becoming a new parent—the sleepless nights, the new responsibility and the feeling that they suddenly have to put their old life on hold. As I have found since becoming a parent, a few months before my 40th birthday, raising a newborn child can be hugely rewarding. There is little that compares with the joy of seeing a child grow and develop. For most of us, it is a deeply fulfilling experience. Still, becoming a parent can have a dramatic impact on many people, in terms of both the stresses they experience and the impact it has on their relationships and their emotional wellbeing.

I will talk about how the Government can act to improve the lives of thousands of mothers in England who do not receive adequate support for perinatal mental health problems. The perinatal period is the time during pregnancy and the run-up to a birth, and the time immediately following the birth of a new baby. As a general practitioner as well as a parent, I have worked to provide mothers and newborn babies with the support and care they need in the perinatal period. It is a crucial time not only for the mother, but for the development of her child. It is also a time when great pressure is placed on mothers to care for their baby and simultaneously to be happy, excited and on top of life.

According to the mental health charity Mind, about one in five women experience mental health problems during pregnancy or in the year after they have given birth. Those mental health problems can come in many different forms—from eating disorders, to post-traumatic stress disorder, to anxiety and depression. If left untreated, the mental illnesses that these women experience can affect their whole lives, their ability to cope with being a parent and their relationships within and outside their families. The illnesses can affect attachment and bonding with the baby. At their extreme, perinatal mental health problems can lead to suicide and to long-term health problems for a child.

**Lyn Brown** (West Ham) (Lab): I understand that one fifth of parents stated that they were not asked about their mental or physical health during the six-week

post-natal check-up. Does my hon. Friend think that might be because GPs are massively overburdened and simply do not have the time to deal with this essential issue?

**Dr Williams:** I thank my hon. Friend for raising that point. I will refer to it later in my speech. I think the pressure on GP services that she has identified is one reason, but there are some other reasons to do with training and perhaps resources.

**Kevin Hollinrake** (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): I thank the hon. Gentleman for bringing forward this important debate. To support his case, I will describe the case of Libby Binks, a very brave constituent who came to my surgery. She described how she went through the six-week check without any consideration being given to her wellbeing, despite the fact that she was clearly in distress and had post-natal depression. A health visitor came in at a later stage and filled in a questionnaire with her, which clearly showed she had post-natal depression, but nothing whatever happened until her child's first birthday. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that we need to make more of that six-week check in particular, to ensure that the mother's wellbeing, as well as the child's, is taken into consideration?

**Dr Williams:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for relating the experience of his constituent, which is, sadly, shared by too many other women. Of course, there are many dedicated health professionals who do identify mental health problems, but too many women say that they slipped through the net.

I will talk about why perinatal mental health problems are so important for a child. The first 1,001 days of a child's life, from conception to the age of two, are absolutely crucial to their social, emotional and cognitive development. Put simply, those 1,001 days are when a brain is built and shaped. During that time, 1 million new neuronal connections are made every second in that child's brain. When the environment the child experiences, whether inside or outside the womb, is happy, relaxed and stimulating, he or she learns and develops those connections in the brain. The baby grows and adapts in a positive environment.

However, many of the symptoms of mental health problems do not provide that ideal environment. Stress raises the level of cortisol, which can cross the placenta and affect a foetus. When someone is severely depressed, perhaps they do not smile, so a baby does not see the warmth, the love and the reciprocation that they need from their mother. When someone is anxious or has an obsessive compulsive disorder, a baby sees, learns and repeats actions from the environment they are experiencing from birth. They learn to behave like their mother.

A mum's mental health problem can have such a significant effect on a baby that academics describe it as an adverse childhood experience. Adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, are stressful events that occur in childhood.

**Mohammad Yasin** (Bedford) (Lab): My hon. Friend is making a powerful speech. I was interested to hear the evidence put forward by the National Childbirth Trust to the all-party parliamentary group for the prevention of adverse childhood experiences that depression among

[*Mohammad Yasin*]

16-year-olds is usually linked to their mother's pregnancy. I realise that the research is more complex, but given the worrying rise in the number of children and young people with mental health problems, is he as concerned as I am that one quarter of women are unable to access specialist perinatal services in the UK?

**Dr Williams:** I thank my hon. Friend for making several points, including that a child whose mum experiences mental health problems is more likely to develop mental health problems themselves. Despite significant Government investment in specialist perinatal mental health services, significant inequalities remain throughout the country and there are still areas where, as he said, one quarter of women with significant mental health problems are not able to access specialist facilities. I hope we will get the chance to talk more later about access to specialist services.

Other adverse childhood experiences include domestic violence; parental separation or divorce; being a victim of physical, sexual or emotional abuse; physical or emotional neglect; or growing up in a household where there are adults experiencing alcohol and drug problems. Mental health problems in a mother can have as significant an impact on a child as some of those other problems. The term ACEs was originally developed in the US, but other studies have reported similar findings in England and Wales. Those ACEs have, as my hon. Friend has said, been found to have lifelong impacts on health and behaviour. They are relevant to all sectors and involve all of society.

An ACE survey of adults in Wales found that, compared with people who had experienced no ACEs, those with four or more were more likely to have been in prison; develop heart disease; frequently visit their GP; develop type 2 diabetes; have committed violence in the last 12 months; and have health-harming behaviours, such as high-risk drinking, smoking or drug use

Children's exposure to adverse and stressful experiences can have a long-lasting impact on their ability to think and to interact with others, and on their learning. Health and societal inequalities that develop during early years stick with children for life. That is why I chair the APPG for the prevention of adverse childhood experiences. It is also why the identification and treatment of maternal mental health problems is not only important for the individual mother but crucial for all of us in society.

National Childbirth Trust research shows that as many as half of new mothers' mental health problems are not picked up by a health professional. That is not to say that health professionals are not asking—they often are. There are many fantastic nurses, GPs, midwives, health visitors and others who provide care during pregnancy and during the post-natal period. However, those services, as my hon. Friend the Member for West Ham (Lyn Brown) has said, are overstretched. We all know how hard-pressed GP services are. The Government have acknowledged the problem and have promised to recruit an extra 5,000 GPs by 2020. However, they are failing miserably and are struggling to even maintain GP numbers. NHS Digital reports a decrease in full-time equivalent GPs from March 2017 to March 2018.

Perhaps a little less well known is the dramatic fall in the number of health visitors. Since 2015, there has been a loss of more than 2,000—almost a 20% drop—so each health visitor has to work harder. I commend health visitors for the work they do but, overall, women are experiencing a drop in services.

Staff numbers are part of the problem, but there are many other reasons why the problems of almost half of women with perinatal mental health problems are not identified. Stigma, and the societal pressure to be seen to be coping, makes it hard for some women to disclose that they have a mental health problem. Also, as the hon. Member for Thirsk and Malton (Kevin Hollinrake) has said, health services do not always ask women about their mental health in the most sensitive way. That is sometimes because they are pushed for time and sometimes because they have not been trained to sensitively and gently probe behind the "I'm okay" response that people are primed to give.

As a result, the hidden half of new mums with mental health problems struggle on alone, often afraid to reach out for help. The overwhelming majority of women who experienced a mental health problem said that it had an impact on their ability to cope or look after their children, and also on their family relationships. The mother of a woman suffering from post-natal depression told me:

"As a parent, watching a child go through that and feeling unable to make it better is a horrible experience. Health professionals need to make sure that husbands, partners and the family know about the likelihood of such depression...and know where to get support and help."

Perinatal mental illness has an immediate effect not only on mothers; it can have lasting consequences for relationships in the wider family. With the added pressure to be a perfect mother, and the expectations from many that come along with that, it is no wonder that so many women feel unable to cope. One constituent described this to me:

"I remember comparing myself to the younger mums who would turn up to the mother and baby groups looking fresh and without a care in the world, making motherhood look like a walk in the park. Although my son was thriving, I felt like I was failing, because I wasn't like the young mums or the ones in those perfect baby ads. I didn't want to share my feelings because I felt I'd been a failure in comparison to them. I believe the pressures of our professions and the guilt of parenthood traps us into a dark place."

It is often the most vulnerable who receive the least support, with evidence suggesting that those in areas of higher deprivation are less likely to be asked about their mental health. In dealing with this issue, the Minister has the chance to fulfil two parts of her ministerial brief, because investing in perinatal mental health will help to improve mental health and reduce health inequalities.

I have described the problem, but what are the solutions? Identification is key. Regardless of what services may or may not be out there—from specialist mother and baby units, to secondary care perinatal mental health teams, to cognitive behavioural therapy and the prescription of medication—half of women with the problem are not even identified. That is where I believe we need to start.

The disinvestment in health visiting is significant; there can be no solution to the problem while health visiting is not properly resourced. Will the Minister say what she intends to do within her Department to ensure that local authorities are adequately funded and supported

so that there is investment in crucial services for children aged 0 to 19, rather than the cuts that we have seen in the past three years?

However, there is another, relatively low-cost opportunity to identify the hidden half. About six weeks after giving birth, new mothers see their GP for a six-week baby check, with many practices also offering a maternal health check. Official National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidance encourages doctors to do that and inquire about a mother's emotional wellbeing, providing an opportunity for them to spot the development of any mental health problems. That check could be the last time a mother sees a health professional for a routine appointment in which there is the opportunity to focus on the mother, rather than her baby.

While some women get an excellent six-week check, showing its potential, other women miss out. A fifth of women questioned in a recent NCT survey said that they were not asked about their emotional or mental wellbeing at that appointment. Some women's checks are all about their baby. Why do all women not get the check that they need? Despite the six-week baby check being part of the GP contract, for which they receive funding, doctors do not receive any funding for the check on the mum. It is a credit to many practices that they offer the checks without funding, but making the time for a full appointment can be challenging, meaning that there is little opportunity to encourage a mother to talk about how she feels, which takes time. A rushed appointment can make many, like the constituent of the hon. Member for Thirsk and Malton, feeling dismissed, or like it was a tick-box exercise.

One woman I heard from recently said her appointment made her

"feel like she was a burden".

Another of my constituents spoke movingly of her experience:

"I knew there was something very wrong almost as soon as my son was born. Nothing I was 'supposed' to be feeling was happening. All I wanted to do was cry. I was feeding him and taking good care of him, but I felt empty inside, and so sad. I can't remember anyone asking me how I was. I only saw my health visitor once, and that wasn't in private so there was no opportunity to confide in her.

I told my GP I had postnatal depression and that I needed some help. He told me 'you have a good family, you should be grateful—you need to pull yourself together.' I don't think I have the words to explain how damaging that was. I felt too ashamed to see him again so I changed to another medical centre. My first appointment was with a GP who listened to me. I found the courage to confide in her and she offered me support straight away. I remember very little of my child's first year of life and I'm sure that is because of the trauma and deep depression I experienced."

That could have been prevented if my constituent had been seen early on in the post-natal period, and if that first GP had delivered open, supportive questioning that reassured her, rather than made her feel ashamed.

Another constituent told me:

"I sat down with my GP, who had a check-list printed out and placed on his desk. He ran through the questions at a rapid rate, didn't listen to my answers at all and placed ticks in the boxes after he asked the questions—not based on my reply. Hopefully a separate check for mothers can be achieved, as mothers just want someone to talk to who will not judge them for their feelings."

About 30% of women diagnosed with post-natal depression still have depression beyond the first year of childbirth. If problems are not identified and treated early,

they can worsen and develop into a much more severe mental illness. That underlines the need for an early check. If depression was recognised and treated appropriately within the perinatal period, it could prevent some effects that are much harder to treat in the long run.

**Lyn Brown:** I am sorry to intervene again. I intended to make a speech, but I am needed elsewhere, so I will ask a question. I have a lot of time for the Minister and I am wondering how we can help her to make the necessary case to the Treasury. Is it not true that if we look after the parent and the child as early and as well as possible, that will save massive amounts of money in the long term? This is an invest-to-save opportunity, and it would be welcome if the Government took it.

**Dr Williams:** I thank my hon. Friend for her intervention. I have avoided, as much as I can, talking about money in the debate—not all of this is about money, but there are many opportunities to make a massive difference. If we can draw a direct link between a mum's experiencing mental health problems and the damage that that may do to her child—it increases the child's chance of developing health problems and even of being involved in crime later in life—there are certainly opportunities to invest to save.

We must not forget, either, that perinatal mental illness has serious consequences for the mother. Suicide is the leading cause of direct maternal deaths occurring within a year after the end of pregnancy in the UK. It is at least possible that if an effective six-week check were in place, some of those deaths would be prevented. Of course, this is, as many hon. Members have said, a complex issue. Diagnosis and treatment are complex, but in addition some health services undoubtedly do not give women the care that they need. Women feel that they are still being dismissed, stigmatised and ignored. However, we should not blame the individual GPs and health professionals who carry out the checks; we should look to change the guidance, the system and the structure in place.

From its research, the NCT has made three recommendations. The first is to fund the six-week maternal post-natal check so that GP surgeries have the time and resources to give every new mother a full appointment for the maternal check. At the moment, although the check focusing on the baby is contracted for and there is funding available for it, there is no requirement for a six-week check on mothers. Checks on mothers, if they are done, are often compressed into the baby's check, so conversations about mental health may be rushed or sidelined completely.

A constituent got in touch after I said that I was going to speak in this debate. Her response was surprising. She said:

"After the birth of my first child, I suffered terribly with post-natal anxiety—something I didn't even know was a thing. I don't remember anyone ever picking up on how I was feeling and no one ever really asked.

Then after the birth of my second child I believe I was depressed. When he was born I didn't feel anything which then made me feel guilty"—

a common theme—

"and I struggled to bond with him over the first year."

She then said:

"I believe I met you"—

[Dr Paul Williams]

meaning me, because I was working as a GP in the constituency at the time—

“at my six-week check with him and I remember you asking how I was feeling. After telling you I think I may have needed to”

get some extra help

“for more therapy, you agreed it was a good idea and told me to come back”

for follow-up. She continued:

“I think women need to know where they can go for help and what signs to look out for. I was too scared to tell anyone that I didn't feel any bond with my son because I think there's still such a stigma around mental ill health.

I do think the idea of a separate appointment for the mother would be a good idea and more signposting to support groups, how to self-refer, confidential information and advice.”

That experience with my patient, who is now my constituent, demonstrates the value of making time to identify and explore perinatal mental health issues. It might be argued that GPs should be doing that anyway, even if it is not contracted for. I would respond by saying that some are and some are not. GPs do many things that are not in their contract. But the only way of getting true national coverage and the time needed to do a proper job is to resource it.

**Kevin Hollinrake:** The hon. Gentleman will be aware that £365 million has been set aside for perinatal mental health services. He is not too far away from North Yorkshire himself, and North Yorkshire has just secured £23 million of that to help with perinatal mental health services for new and expectant mothers.

**Dr Williams:** I do give credit to the Government for making investments in this area of provision. We started from quite a low baseline. There has been significant investment. Too many women are still missing out on these specialist services; the coverage throughout the country is patchy, but I acknowledge that things are improving. However, if we are not identifying half the women with perinatal mental health problems, that is a significant problem in itself.

The investment required to identify problems through the six-week check is estimated by the NCT to be about £20 million a year. That is a very small amount in the grand scheme of the NHS's budget, but it could make a huge difference to many new mothers. Secondly, in addition to the funding for the six-week check, the NCT recommends improved guidance for GPs on best practice on mental health, specifying a separate appointment for the maternal six-week check and the best methods of encouraging disclosure of maternal mental health problems.

A separate check involving supportive, open and encouraging questioning would provide an opportunity for women to come forward with any problem that they may be having. It might also help to eliminate some of the feelings of stigma or shame; 60% of women said that they felt embarrassed, ashamed or worried about being judged. Just because it is in a GP's contract does not mean that a doctor has to do the work; with the right training in place, it can just as effectively be undertaken by a practice nurse or other suitably qualified healthcare professional. What is important is that it forms part of the ongoing relationship that a new mother has with her GP practice.

The third NCT recommendation covers NHS investment in and facilitation of GP education. It is important that GPs are trained to recognise the symptoms of post-natal depression and differentiate them from “the baby blues”, which resolve on their own; and it is crucial that mothers are reassured and valued, not dismissed.

These three relatively straightforward measures—a contractual obligation, guidance, and training—could make a huge difference to many women's and children's lives. They could eliminate some of the preventable problems encountered by women suffering from perinatal mental illness. The average cost to society of one case of perinatal depression is estimated at £74,000. With an already overstretched NHS under immense pressure, these measures could alleviate some of the stresses placed, later, on mental health services; they will inevitably have to deal with the consequences of undiagnosed and untreated perinatal mental health problems.

With this debate, we are already raising awareness and challenging some of the stigma surrounding perinatal mental health, but we also have a unique opportunity to do something practical to address the problem. Negotiations for the new GP contract begin in September, and by holding this debate today, we want to gain wider support for these important recommendations to be included in the new contract.

There are many other areas of perinatal mental health that I hope we get the chance to explore in this debate. We have already discussed the availability of specialist perinatal mental health services. I hope that we also talk about the variable access to psychological therapies, which are excellent in some parts of the country; in other parts of the country, women struggle to access those services, too. I am very grateful to the other hon. Members who have come today to speak and contribute.

I consider myself to be a fortunate father, one whose experience of parenting has so far been very positive. Many parents are not so lucky. When I hear the heartbreaking stories of women whose post-natal depression has blighted their and their family's experience of parenthood, I am reminded of just how fortunate I have been. I am also acutely aware of how damaging it will be to wider society over the longer term if we do not improve the way in which we handle this issue. We need to bring the hidden half of these women out of hiding. Post-natal mental illness is not just a problem for new mums. If we fail to tackle it, we risk failing the next generation of children, too.

1.58 pm

**Andrew Selous** (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): It is an enormous pleasure to follow my colleague on the Health and Social Care Committee, the hon. Member for Stockton South (Dr Williams). I commend him for a tour de force of a speech, which was extremely comprehensive. I will not speak for as long as he did and I will try not to cover the points that he did, because this is a large area and there is a lot to say about it.

It might be a little surprising to some that two men are opening this debate on perinatal mental illness, but I strongly disagree with anyone who thinks that we should not be, because the strapline of the Maternal Mental Health Alliance is that this is “Everyone's Business”.

That is exactly what it is. We need men advocating and agitating, if this issue is to be taken seriously and dealt with properly.

The Health and Social Care Committee and the Education Committee, in a report earlier this year in response to the Government's Green Paper on transforming children and young people's mental health, included a contribution from our excellent Children's Commissioner for England, Anne Longfield. In evidence to both Select Committees, she said:

"I would like to see a comprehensive starting point that looks at children from birth and pre-birth onwards, and recognises that problems develop along the way; and the earlier and the nearer to home they can be treated, the better it is going to be for the child."

I think that is a really important point. While there is a lot to be commended in the Government's Green Paper, we know that in early intervention the earliest years are key.

The Prime Minister and the Chancellor have allocated an extra £20 billion to the Department of Health and Social Care. That gives us an enormous opportunity. Quite properly, the Government are not rushing decisions on how that money will be spent. We will be thoughtful and considered, to ensure that we make wise choices. For my money, prevention and early intervention would be a good use of that money. I am sure that the Minister will push hard in the Department, to ensure that this area is prioritised.

The hon. Member for Stockton South, who spoke so well, talked a lot about the GP checks. I want to press the Minister on how this is supposed to be working at the moment, so that we can learn from it and get it right when the GP contract is renewed in September. My understanding is that Ministers have made it clear that all GP surgeries must offer a six-week post-natal check, to assess how a woman has experienced her transition to motherhood, which includes a check on her mental health. Further, I understand that GPs who opt out from doing so receive a reduction in funding. Until fairly recently, Ministers had been informed that only four practices in England had opted out. Given that information from the Department of Health and Social Care, and given that we are paying for that service and it is supposed to be happening, how is it that 22% of the women in the National Childbirth Trust survey said that they were not asked about their emotional or mental wellbeing at their appointment? Are we, as taxpayers, paying for a service that many GP practices are not providing? I ask the Minister to address the oversight and accountability of GPs in this area.

I realise that we need more GPs. The good news is that 3,157 medical students qualified as doctors and went into general practice this year. That is the highest number ever. We are increasing by a quarter the number of medical students we are training in this country and not before time, because other countries have been training more than we do. Globally, we need 2 million more doctors. I want to see a lot more British doctors—bright British children able to come into this fantastic profession. Of course, we are grateful for the doctors we have from all over the world, but we need to train more of our own and that is exactly what we will do.

The reality, which I understand, is that a lot of GPs, because of the pressures of the job, are working part-time, not full-time. I learnt recently that the average GP works four days a week, rather than five. We also know

that a number of them are leaving general practice in their mid-50s, which is a crying shame. We cannot afford for them leave in their mid-50s. We cannot force people to work as GPs, but in their 50s they have so much experience and they are so needed. There is an issue of making the role of the GP less stressful and more enjoyable. In general, the Government need to think more about ensuring that public servants across the board have greater job satisfaction, so that they enjoy and look forward to going to work each day. If we have more GPs and they are less stressed, they should be able to do this work better.

I do not think I received a briefing from the Royal College of General Practitioners for this debate—perhaps I missed it. I am grateful for the briefings we had from a number of Royal Colleges and different organisations, all of which have been extremely helpful, but it would be good to have the full involvement of the Royal College of General Practitioners in addressing the incredibly important issue of perinatal mental health. Hon. Members are absolutely right to raise the training issue.

Earlier this week, I chaired the all-party parliamentary group for supporting couple relationships and reducing inter-parental conflict. We were looking at the issue of loneliness. New parents are one of the groups in society who often feel quite alone, if they do not have all the support networks that we would ideally like them to have. Someone at that meeting said that raising mental health touched on GPs' anxiety that they would open a Pandora's box of issues that would take them some time to deal with. GPs generally work to 10-minute appointments. We need to ensure that they have the time, in a relaxed environment, to go into these issues properly. It cannot be done in a rush or on a tick-box basis.

I want to pay attention to the important role that fathers and the partners of women with newborn children have in this area, because it needs to be properly recognised. Unsurprisingly, mothers report that fathers are their main source of emotional support. Yet fathers can sometimes feel left out and not as fully involved as they could and should be in dealing with perinatal mental illness, while the mother of the child wants the father to be involved. We have not always done as well in that area as we should.

I understand that there is evidence that a father's involvement in pregnancy increases the likelihood that a woman will receive pre-natal care in her first trimester by 40%. The Royal College of Midwives also reports evidence that teaching massage and relaxation techniques to fathers to assist during labour is an effective way of increasing couple satisfaction and decreasing post-natal depressive symptoms, as well as providing psycho-social support for women. We also know that the mother's relationship with her partner is a key determinant of antenatal maternal stress. This suggests the importance of assessing and addressing a range of attitudes and behaviours on the part of expectant fathers—not just domestic abuse but their own mental health, substance abuse, hostility, infidelity, rejection of the pregnancy and so on. Those issues must be dealt with, because they will have a huge impact on the wellbeing of the mother.

As I have said, poor paternal mental health has an impact on maternal mental health. Research suggests that a father's mood and anxiety disorder can exacerbate the effects of a mother's poor mental health and escalate the risk of a child developing emotional and behavioural

[Andrew Selous]

problems, while fathers with better mental health can provide a buffer against the negative impacts. Fathers and partners are very important, and I am grateful to the Centre for Social Justice for pulling together some of that research.

Again, I am grateful to the Centre for Social Justice for drawing my attention to Greenwich Mind, which is a practical example of a service that provides answers to some of the issues that I have described. It works in partnership with Tavistock Relationships and other local providers to run post-natal support groups and parenting workshops in local children's centres for parents with or at risk of depression. Those activities specifically focus on the co-parenting relationship, not least in terms of how it is affected by adjusting to parenthood. Evaluations show that relationship quality and mental health improved as a result. That is an example of a good service that we need to see more of.

We must remember the wise words of the hon. Member for Stockton South about the impact that maternal mental health has on children's development. The health and mental wellbeing of our children is key. I also serve as a vice chair of the all-party parliamentary group on adverse childhood experiences. We are a bit behind the curve in this area in England. The research in America is overwhelming. As an English Member of Parliament, it concerns me that the understanding of it is better in Scotland than in England; the same could be said for Wales and Northern Ireland. I look forward to the time when England is at the same level of understanding.

I will not repeat what the hon. Gentleman said about the earliest years of a child's development, but those issues really matter. The wellbeing of the mother—indeed, of both parents—in those early months is critical for how our children develop and for giving them the best chance to flourish.

2.12 pm

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous), and I thank the hon. Member for Stockton South (Dr Williams) for setting the scene so well. He obviously has a passion and a knowledge of the subject—not just as a father, but from his previous job. I have a knowledge of it through people who work for me and who I have social involvement with, including the lady who writes all my speeches—she is a very busy girl—who always wanted to be a mother and had two miscarriages. I am very conscious of her story, and I will tell that today.

The wife of my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson), Lindsay Robinson, who set up a charitable group in Northern Ireland, has also given me permission to tell her story, which I will do in the way she told it to me. It is important to record those stories. We have come together on a Thursday afternoon to tell the story of why perinatal illness is very real, and to think about how we can help, which is the real reason for being here. I always say that we try to provide solutions so we can do things better. For the record, I should say that I have already apologised to the Minister and the shadow Minister, and to you, Mr Davies, for having to leave early, because I am committed to a later debate.

The work of the NCT is vital and a great support to parents all over the world. In Northern Ireland, we have three active branches that offer local mums, dads and families vital information, resources, connection points, community and friendship when they need it most. I thank the charity for the time and energy it has put into the research for the #HiddenHalf campaign, which has focused our attention on the issue of maternal mental health. It is clear from its work, and that of all those in the maternal mental health arena, that too many women go undiagnosed and unsupported. This debate must be a way to address those issues verbally, and we look forward to the Minister's response about how she will help us.

NCT's #HiddenHalf statistic that the problems of almost 50% of women who were surveyed, and who struggled, were not identified by a healthcare professional and that they did not receive any help or treatment is shocking. We must work together to change that. All the hon. Members who have spoken so far have reiterated that point.

My parliamentary aide, Naomi Armstrong-Cotter, who is also a local councillor, has spoken out in a personal way about her experience of miscarriage, of successful pregnancies afterwards, and of the fact that a leaflet handed to someone is not enough to give them the tools to deal with the emptiness of that loss. Our local paper, the *Newtownards Chronicle*, gave her an opportunity to tell that story; coincidentally, that appeared last week. Her plea was for greater support during and after pregnancy; for a network whereby someone did not have to search for help, but it was ready and waiting; and for follow-ups to be given more effectively. She is now blessed by God with two children, and I have no doubt that her family's support kept her life together when she was having great difficulty trying to adjust to what was happening to her.

My party fully supports the #HiddenHalf campaign and I attended an excellent event in Parliament two weeks ago to raise awareness of its work on the issue, where I heard stories from mums whose lives have been marked by the illness and by not receiving the timely help that was necessary to make a difference. The event was hosted by my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast East, who understands only too well the devastating impact that maternal mental illness can have on women and the wider family unit. He was the other half who lived with the difficulties that his wife Lindsay was having. She struggled and suffered for two years before getting help. She has given me express permission to use her experience in this place to highlight the failings and the need for a brighter future.

From her experience, Lindsay spearheads the campaign in Northern Ireland for mums, dads and their families to get the support they need and deserve via her movement, "Have you seen that girl?" At the event that I and others attended, the impact of the NCT NI volunteers was clear. She also plays a role in the Maternal Mental Health Alliance's Everyone's Business campaign, of which NCT is also a part. Many charities and bodies have come together to offer support.

From the point of view of the two ladies whom I have referred to—my permanent parliamentary assistant and speechwriter and the wife of my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast East—the Church has also helped. It is important to have a faith and to have access to that at an important time.

Having met Lindsay—I spoke to her this morning, just before she left here—I understand that 80% of Northern Ireland still does not have access to specialist perinatal mental health services and that funded community-based peer support is limited. I understand that the Minister is not responsible for Northern Ireland, but from a Northern Ireland perspective, unfortunately, I would be surprised if we were not behind the rest of the UK, which is not good. We need to be up alongside and equal to other countries across the United Kingdom, as the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire said, but treatment and support is a postcode lottery with too many mums and families being let down when they are at their most vulnerable.

The campaign for change is based on three areas. There should be provision of a mother and baby unit. Unlike in England, Scotland and Wales, a mother and baby unit is not available in Northern Ireland, which is disappointing—nor is it on the whole island of Ireland. The Minister is not responsible for that either, but it shows hon. Members that across north and south Ireland, we have not moved to make that happen. That means that mum and baby have to be separated should in-patient treatment be required. That is a very negative thing. I want to give a perspective on where we are in Northern Ireland and also say what has happened there recently. Some headway has been made—not enough, I have to say, but some at least.

The situation is simply not good enough and can have further negative effects on the mum and the family. There are five health trusts in Northern Ireland, but such specialist services for mothers are currently only available in one: the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. Although that trust's services are fantastic, they cannot meet the needs of the whole population of Northern Ireland; that would be impossible for one trust. Mums and families outside the Belfast trust's area also deserve access to specially designed care and support.

Community-based peer support is also important. I am informed that currently great support is provided in the community and in the voluntary sector, often by mums themselves. How often do mums all come together to support each other? My wife had great support when we had our children; that was not only family support but support from other mothers who had had children at the same time. Again, however, in Northern Ireland we are without proper funding to successfully grow that kind of work.

I make a plea. I am aware of the NCT's Parents in Mind programme, which is running very successfully here in England—on the mainland—and doing tremendous work. MPs from the mainland will know that and welcome it. NCT Northern Ireland volunteers are keen to source funding to bring that programme, or a similar one, to parents in Northern Ireland. We look forward to the day when that happens. For many parents, peer support is a lifeline, offered by those mothers who have faced a similar battle and who are keen to receive training so that they can provide help to others.

I am also aware from my party colleagues in Northern Ireland that Lindsay Robinson and Tom McEaney, working with the Maternal Mental Health Alliance, led a team of campaigners to meet the all-party working group on mental health at Stormont; although Stormont and the Northern Ireland Assembly are still not functioning

as they should, meetings still take place. The campaigners presented the information and asked all the Northern Ireland parties to sign a consensus statement, pledging their commitment to action all of the issues that I have mentioned as soon as possible. I am delighted that my party—the Democratic Unionist party, for which I am the health spokesman—has signed up to that, and I am assured that other parties have also signed up to it. We are keen to meet further with the team and give them our support. I hope that we are considering a strategy that will take us right through the next period, hopefully with a functioning Assembly. However, the strategy will certainly work, whether or not the Assembly is up and running.

I will close now, Mr Davies; I am always very conscious that there are other speakers to come. In closing, I again offer my full support to the NCT's #HiddenHalf campaign and its goals here in England—on the mainland—and I thank the NCT for its continued support for the campaign in Northern Ireland. The NCT is supporting our campaign in Northern Ireland and we thank it for that, because it is very important that we have that support. As I have said often, we are better together—the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland—with all regions working on things that are of mutual interest to us all. I understand that the NCT is fully behind all that is happening and will become further involved in the coming months, and I look forward to that.

Also, I commend Lindsay Robinson and all those who have been campaigning in Northern Ireland for improvements to maternal mental health. We know that they are making a difference, both to the parents in their communities and also with decision makers. However, we must also take action in this House. We must do what we can to honour the bravery of those who lay their experience on the line for people to see and bring about changes that support mothers and families across the UK.

Again, I congratulate the hon. Member for Stockton South on securing this debate and other Members who have spoken or who will speak; I look forward to hearing all the contributions to the debate.

2.23 pm

**Rosie Duffield** (Canterbury) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Mr Davies, and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton South (Dr Williams) and the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous) on securing this debate.

We should judge the success of our society by how we treat our new mothers—it really is that simple. I am here today to speak up for better-quality, more consistent and well-funded services for perinatal women.

I am not a new mother. In fact, my youngest teenage son is sitting just over there in the Public Gallery and Members may be able to tell from his towering 6-foot frame just how long it has been since I was recovering from giving birth to him, the second of my two gigantic children. Even so, I remember those special early days for all the many wonderful, and some horrible, reasons that all mothers will know.

We do not discuss post-natal truths enough in the UK. Women will sometimes share with their friends the gory details of their experience of giving birth, but we rarely ever see in the print media, on TV, or in films what happens after a baby is born. If the fairy tale does

[Rosie Duffield]

not end when Cinderella weds her prince, as most fairy tales do, it most certainly has ended by the time Cinderella has entered her third trimester and is waddling around the palace. Nobody wants to hear about Cinderella's third-degree tear, the fact that her boobs leak, the possibility that she may experience incontinence, or the fact that, even though she has a wonderful, healthy baby in her arms, she just cannot stop crying. But fairy tales are out of date and so is the fact that we do not talk about perinatal experiences—both external and internal experiences—with the honesty we need.

Things are changing, however. After all, we are here today saying that what is on offer to post-partum women in the UK just is not good enough. It is outrageous that women in one quarter of the UK are still without access to specialist perinatal mental health services. How can the mental healthcare of new mothers still be a postcode lottery? It is not as if mental health changes are uncommon after a woman has given birth. In fact, 81% of women say they have experienced at least one perinatal mental health condition either during or after their pregnancy.

I know from talking to friends, family and, indeed, constituents how imperative perinatal mental health support is. We must remember that three quarters of women who say they have experienced a perinatal mental health condition had no previous history of mental health problems. For those who have experienced mental health problems before giving birth, changes to the brain's chemistry post-birth, combined with post-partum isolation, can trigger the return of symptoms that they had previously experienced, often in their teenage years.

Speedy referrals and access to early treatment is vital for those who experience mental health issues during or after pregnancy. What is so worrying is that it takes more than four weeks for 38% of women in the UK who are referred to be seen. In fact, there are cases of women suffering post-partum who have the courage to seek help from their doctors and health visiting teams but who still have to wait beyond a year for help after referral. That is a whole year that these women are waiting for help in what is often one of the most turbulent, joyous, change-filled and complicated times in any mother's life. Any service that keeps people waiting for more weeks that I can count on the fingers of one hand is completely unfit for purpose.

We must close the funding gaps that cause huge waits—it is reassuring to hear that the Government intend to do that—and end omissions in service provision. We must also ensure that maternity services do not remain overstretched and understaffed. We must bring back full bursaries for midwives and related healthcare qualifications, which will allow staffing gaps to be filled with the much-needed new caring talent that will have the capacity to offer continuity of care to high-risk women in pre and post-natal moments of vulnerability. The erosion of higher education bursaries, especially for nurses, midwives and other healthcare students, was yet another example of this Government knowing the cost of everything but the value of nothing.

There is another reason why we must act and act soon. A study by the department of anthropology at the University of Kent, which is in my constituency, shows that post-partum depression discourages mothers from

having more than two children. The decision to have children, or the decision to have more children, is a woman's choice alone. However, that choice must be made without the pressures and limitations that come with poor funding of post-natal care. A choice made through fear is no free choice at all.

I completely echo colleagues' calls for there to be much greater depth in the maternal six-week check. The baby's check by the doctor and the mother's check by her doctor must be separate. A woman's six-week check cannot be limited, as I so often hear it is, to a few rushed questions. I have been told of women being asked only about the contraception they plan to use, with no questions at all about their physical or mental wellbeing. I have heard from friends that their doctors simply asked them, "Are you feeling okay?" That is not a proper question. As any mother will say, the moment their new new-born is in their arms, the definition of what was previously considered "okay" is thrown out of the window. Time must be put aside for proper, in-depth questions and for real insight.

After all, as we have already heard, according to the Royal College of Midwives 42% of women with post-natal depression never even mention it to a healthcare professional, and three quarters of those women stay quiet because they feel guilty about having such thoughts. Moreover, many women are led to believe that serious mental health issues are merely a bout of the baby blues. We urgently need proper training and proper conversations to create an environment where mothers feel safe, well-informed and able to talk about any difficult experiences.

I acknowledge that even the most thorough six-week check for women would not always pick up on everything. Post-natal depression can sometimes manifest slowly. One study suggested that the majority of women experiencing symptoms did not report them until six months post-partum or later. To tackle that, I urge that the maternal mental health check by health visitors at three to four months is reinstated. Even taking more time at that early point when a woman is sat with her GP at the six-week check will save lives. A couple of weeks ago, I attended the NCT's #HiddenHalf event, where several brave women attested to just that.

**Andrew Selous:** Has the hon. Lady had a chance to look at the clinical evidence base for the effectiveness of the three to four-month check? Is she aware of a good base of evidence from clinicians that it is a sensible use of money at that point?

**Rosie Duffield:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for that intervention. I have not looked at the issue in that kind of depth. I have been working on it with local women and local groups who suggest that it would be good to reinstate it. I will look into it further.

The women at the #HiddenHalf campaign event said that their lives had been saved by a fortuitous visit to the right GP at the right time, but they know they were the lucky ones. The mother's six-week check must also allow time for a full physical health check to prevent long-term and often totally avoidable health complications resulting from difficult deliveries. Furthermore, it is my belief that a course of pelvic floor physio should be provided for every single woman who has experienced a vaginal birth, as happens in France. I am working with

a group of women on health policy for post-partum women. This debate focuses on the perinatal health symptoms of the hidden half, but many of the mental health conditions that health visitors report are triggered by the physical trauma of a difficult birth and women having to reconcile themselves to a completely new sort of body.

Those of us here today will not stop campaigning and raising the issue until the situation changes for new mothers and new families who need our help. We should get the full truth of post-natal motherhood out there and become a country that can rightly say, “There’s lots of help here for you. We will assist you and your families for as long as it takes. We are here to champion and celebrate you in being the happy, healthy, supported mother that you ought to be able to be.”

2.32 pm

**Wera Hobhouse** (Bath) (LD): It is a real pleasure to serve under your chairship, Mr Davies. I congratulate the hon. Member for Stockton South (Dr Williams) on securing this excellent debate, which perfectly brings together my personal and political lives. I am a mother of four and, like the hon. Member for Canterbury (Rosie Duffield), I had them 20 years ago so I know what it feels like to have children completely outgrow me.

This issue does not go away. When I speak to mothers in my constituency, I know that the issue of perinatal health is as alive as when I was a young mum. Some things are getting better, but others are getting worse, particularly because of the time that health professionals can give to people who come to a surgery or the time that a health visitor can give to someone in their home.

I am here because I serve on the all-party group for the prevention of adverse childhood experiences. ACEs are well known in the United States, and the APPG is doing excellent work with the WAVE—Worldwide Alternatives to Violence—Trust. I also pay tribute to the #HiddenHalf campaign group, which came to the APPG the other day and specifically campaigned on the additional six-week check-up for mothers after childbirth.

Pregnancy, childbirth and the first year of a baby’s life is one of the most life-changing experiences in a woman’s life and her partner’s life. It is meant to be amazing, exciting and wonderful. All the folklore and our societal expectations are around how wonderful all that is. Actually, it is a time of profound change. In my experience, it is not only physical change, but mental change. Most women who have experienced pregnancy and childbirth will testify that a big mental change happens, too. All women are at a vulnerable point at that time in their lives. Apart from the physical exhaustion, there is the pressure to prepare and provide for another person’s life. All parents ask themselves how they will cope, how it will all work out, and whether they will love this new being.

While medical attention is focused on the physical health of the mother, the unborn child and, later, the born child, little medical attention is given to mental health during pregnancy and after birth. We are missing out on a vital aspect of health, with enormous consequences for the mother and the child. The APPG is concentrating on this particular issue: adverse childhood experiences and what affects a child’s health from the start.

We know how vital the first 12 months are for a new baby. An enormous amount of development is happening not only physically, but mentally and emotionally. If a mother is mentally unwell—for example, if she is depressed or suffering from anxiety—she will not bond properly with her newborn baby. She cannot give the baby the attention it needs, and the child will suffer. We know that a lack of attention during the first 12 months puts a child at a severe disadvantage for the rest of their life. To address that, they will require a lot more intervention later on, with a lot of extra resources. It therefore makes utter sense to focus our attention on a mother’s mental health before, during and after pregnancy. No woman can be expected to be in perfect mental health during those profound changes in her life. Even mild mental health problems can lead to much bigger problems, with severe consequences for mother and child.

I fully support the call for a six-week check-up in addition to that which already exists and which focuses mainly on the baby. The additional check-up should focus on the mother and her mental health. In my experience, I was never asked how I felt; I was expected to get on. If anybody had asked me, I would probably have cracked up and cried—and why not? It would have brought out that I felt utterly exhausted, inadequate and isolated. I felt that I was letting people around me down. I would probably have been reassured that that was normal, and people would have kept an eye on me.

We still do not know enough about mental health, but as with physical health, early detection and intervention are key. Sometimes symptoms go away on their own, but unlike with physical health, many people will not go back to their doctors if mental health problems do not go away. Those problems can fester and grow bigger. With a six-week check-up, we have a chance of early detection and early intervention. To conclude, let us ensure that all new parents receive the full support they need and deserve. It will be of great advantage to us all.

2.38 pm

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Davies. First, I thank the National Childbirth Trust for its work and campaigning on this issue and the hon. Members for Stockton South (Dr Williams) and for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous) for bringing this issue to the House. I thank all the Members who have spoken so passionately. There were common themes on access to support, expectations on mothers and being able to talk about post-natal depression.

Perinatal mental illness is crucial for families, and I welcome the calls for a more comprehensive six-week check and the implementation of the other recommendations made by the NCT. Other Members have talked about their experience, so I will mention my own, which was largely fine, other than the stress of being a new parent and being responsible for a new baby. Those things are overwhelming. New parents are given a tiny baby and they leave the hospital with it, and then they have to look after it for the rest of their life. That is quite a big deal, and we downplay it a little bit in society.

My pregnancies were trouble-free and my babies were both well, but in reflecting on this issue, I remembered vividly having panic dreams in which the baby had gone

[Alison Thewliss]

out of the cot. I would wake up in a huge panic, and everything was fine, but it reminded me that we are surrounded by all these hormones and feelings, and it is difficult and stressful, and we do not support mothers enough through that.

I was very glad of the support from the team at Bridgeton Health Centre and Townhead Medical Practice—I want to put it on the record that they were absolutely fantastic. However, when it came to the six-week check, I questioned the efficacy of getting people to fill out a tick-box form about their mental health. It seems to me pretty obvious that if someone did not want to disclose a mental health issue, they could easily fill in that form so that it passed, and nobody would ask any further questions. People have to actively seek help, at a time in their life when they do not know what is normal and hormones are flying all over the place. I hope that that can be improved, and that the check can be more detailed. At the moment, it is too easy to miss the key signs, as hon. Members have mentioned. It was good to hear the hon. Member for Stockton South talking about the feedback that he had from a patient. I hope that more doctors are like him, asking those questions in a way that will draw proper answers, and that time can be given to such things.

Conversations about mental health in society have changed a lot. However, as the hon. Member for Canterbury (Rosie Duffield) mentioned, how we talk about these things has not changed quite enough. I was struck by Serena Williams' comments about her experience of post-natal depression. This is a woman who is known for her strength and resilience, and for being an athlete, champion and star. She struggled just like anybody else would, and found it incredibly difficult, but has been able to work through it. As we saw with her recent performances, she has come back very strongly, but we are all very vulnerable in those circumstances, and we cannot be complacent about how difficult it can be.

Research from the National Childbirth Trust found that only 50% of women get the help that they need at that key intervention point, and that stigma and embarrassment continue to be rife. The NCT report also highlights the genuine fear that women have—46% in the survey—of the consequences of a healthcare professional thinking that they are incapable of looking after their baby. Certainly in Glasgow, where there are many cases of social work intervention in families, women are scared that if they confess to any weaknesses, they will lose the care of their child. That might not be the case, but the fear is enough to stop women coming forward.

Socioeconomic factors are in play, and perinatal mental health problems are a major risk factor in poor outcomes for children and mothers. Mothers in areas of higher deprivation are far more likely to experience repeated mental health problems and predicted future problems. There is thought to be a direct causality between poor mental health and children's development. A longitudinal survey in Scotland showed that children whose mothers were emotionally well had better social, behavioural and emotional development than those whose mothers had brief mental health problems. Those children had better development than those whose mothers had repeated mental health problems. That can affect children's transition to school and their subsequent development and attainment.

I recommend looking at the work of Scotland's former chief medical officer, Sir Harry Burns, who has spoken passionately about the impact of children's mental health and of parental mental health, and the consequences that it can have.

In Scotland, we have moved towards a nationally co-ordinated systemic approach. The Scottish Government's new mental health strategy for 2017 to 2027 focuses specifically on allowing children to start their lives with good mental health. The Scottish Government have funded a national managed clinical network on perinatal mental health to the tune of £173,000 per year. It is the first MCN covering mental health in Scotland. The network will provide a focus, enabling us to improve standards for all children and new mothers across Scotland. The MCN is multidisciplinary, involving specialists in perinatal mental health, nursing, maternity and infant mental health. The establishment of the first network for mental health is part of the Scottish National party Government's determination to give mental health parity with physical health. I understand that such clinical networks work in other parts of the health service and have a proven track record of driving up standards of care across the board.

I have seen figures that suggest that one in eight babies in Scotland are born to a parent who has experienced mental health issues, so it is significant and widespread. We know that perinatal mental health problems do not only affect mothers; they have a wider impact on the family. The MCN is taking forward a work plan addressing that, which includes assessing current provision across all levels of service delivery in Scotland. In the longer term, that will ensure that all women, and their infants and families, have equity of access to the perinatal mental health services that they need right across Scotland, where we have huge rural areas, many islands and various geographical challenges to overcome.

In its review of the current provision, the network will pay particular attention to the pathways into care for women who may live some distance from an existing mother and baby unit, and will make recommendations on improving access where difficulties emerge. The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) spoke passionately about the issues that that causes in Northern Ireland and in Ireland more widely, where women cannot access mother and baby units and the support that they need. It must be even more stressful if a woman has to travel over the sea to get to a unit that provides the support they dearly need. In doing so, they will lose contact with family networks that could also support them.

Another core remit of the MCN is to determine what training midwives, health visitors, primary care and mental health professionals—

2.45 pm

*Sitting suspended for a Division in the House.*

[ANDREW ROSINDELL *in the Chair*]

2.57 pm

*On resuming—*

**Alison Thewliss:** I see we have had a change of Chair, Mr Rosindell. It is good to see you.

As I was saying before we were interrupted by the vote, the managed clinical network aims to ensure equitable co-ordinated access to mental health provision for pregnant

and post-natal women. It seeks to understand current provision and promote improvements in local services, including access and options for families, professional expertise and effective service delivery. Beyond that, it will seek to contribute to improved early years health and development for infants, as part of a broader Scottish Government intention for improved early intervention. The MCN will make fuller recommendations before the end of this year on what services should be available in all board areas to meet the needs of women and their families.

The most exciting part about that for me was the women and families maternal mental health charter, “My Right to Good Care from NHS Scotland for my Baby, my Family and Me”, which was launched on 4 June. The charter has nine points, which I want to put on the record. They are, first, the right to be at the centre of my care, so that I have the information I need to make the best decisions for me, my pregnancy and my infant’s future health; secondly, the right to be seen by staff who have the appropriate level of knowledge and skills to assess and care for me; thirdly, the right to preconception and pregnancy advice and care if I have a pre-existing mental health condition; fourthly, the right to access expert advice and care about my maternal mental health when I require it, wherever I live in Scotland; fifthly, the right to have priority access to talking therapies during my pregnancy and post-natal period; sixthly, the right to be admitted jointly with my infant if I need in-patient mental health care; seventhly, the right to discuss my maternal mental health without fear of stigma or being judged; eighthly, the right for my family to have the information they need to help me and to get help for themselves; and ninthly, the right for my baby to have parents who are supported with their mental health. All these are very good points, which are the bedrock of what we should see in a mental health service for women and infants.

I cannot end my speech without mentioning my role as chair of the all-party parliamentary group on infant feeding and inequalities. The discussion in this country about breast feeding versus bottle feeding has become increasingly divisive. I do not want to venture into it, but a cause of many issues is the pressure on women to have the perfect, glowing, spotless, white-bloused-in-a-perfect-home version of breastfeeding, but that is unrealistic. It is more like chaos surrounding a knackered mother with all the surfaces covered in vomit and soggy muslin cloth—or maybe that was just me.

The hon. Member for Stockton South mentioned the perfect baby ads that we see and the idealised images of motherhood. We put pressure on mothers all the time without necessarily supporting them with being a mother and with the learned skill of breastfeeding. By not providing that support, we set women up to fail. Many carry that very personal pain around for a long time. It should not be that way.

**Luciana Berger** (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab/Co-op): The hon. Lady is making a very compelling case. I am sorry that I was unable to attend the start of this debate, but I commend Members on both sides of the House for bringing us together to discuss these very important matters. Does she, like me, worry that the reduction in antenatal services and services for new mums and dads, particularly in our children’s centres, increases the challenges that new parents and expectant parents face?

**Alison Thewliss:** Absolutely. I visited a children’s centre in Blackpool and spoke to people involved with the Breastfeeding Network, and they said they had seen the peer support service cut suddenly. That service was crucial, because it was doing the job that the community services and health visitors did not have time to do. It was providing early intervention and support with mental health issues and all the other things that mothers need. I understand that the hon. Lady is very committed to this issue. Early intervention services are absolutely crucial. Children’s centres—somewhere that women can go—are so important, because going to them is an easy first step for women to take. They are not scary; they are accessible and are right on the doorstep—or they certainly should be.

The Breastfeeding Network cites evidence that breastfeeding can have a preventive effect when it comes to mental illness. It said:

“A large scale research study published in 2014 showed that mothers who planned to breastfeed and who actually went on to breastfeed were around 50% less likely to become depressed than mothers who had not planned to, and who did not, breastfeed. Mothers who planned to breastfeed but who did not go on to breastfeed were over twice as likely to become depressed as mothers who had not planned, and who did not breastfeed.”

Providing support for women’s breastfeeding goals is absolutely crucial. If women want to do it but are set up to fail, that can have a serious negative impact. The positive impact of the oxytocin, the bonding and the skin-to-skin contact can be crucial in helping women and children through what can be a very difficult period.

Women on antidepressants are given the often erroneous advice that they should stop breastfeeding. Some 15% of enquiries to the Breastfeeding Network drugs in breastmilk helpline, run by the amazing Wendy Jones, are about that very issue. Evidence demonstrates that giving up breastfeeding is not necessary in many cases, and that if a mum stops breastfeeding before she is ready, that can have a further negative effect on her mental health. I encourage the Minister to look at the drugs in breastmilk helpline and perhaps find some funding for that voluntary service, because GPs and pharmacists often rely on it to give advice to women.

The key to all of this is support for women in how they decide to feed their baby and in the choices they make in life. There is a real postcode lottery. I encourage the Minister to examine this further and to speak to the UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative, which has been cataloguing some of the cuts.

In Glasgow, support also comes from the community, in the shape of groups such as Glasgow South PANDAS, run by Lauren Tonner. The group meets regularly and allows parents to talk about their concerns. As we have heard, it can be difficult to open up, but NCT research shows that opening up and seeking help generally leads to much better outcomes. I encourage those experiencing challenges to find a way to take the first step towards accessing support. It is important to state and restate that women in that situation are not alone. There is always support there for them, and there must be ways of ensuring that women understand that. Handing them a leaflet is not good enough; there must be support and talking therapy.

My wider concern is that we are not supporting women enough anymore. When they go into hospital to give birth, they have to leave very quickly. Community services are often not there, and families are more

[Alison Thewliss]

fragmented and further apart nowadays. That is an issue particularly for women with insecure immigration status, those who have not been in the UK very long, and those who are living in communities where community resilience has broken down and people do not know their neighbours well enough to ask for support. A friend of mine told me recently that she had wonderful neighbours who were there for her when she had her baby, which made a big difference to her when she was struggling. We need to do all we can to help women who are struggling to put food on the table, or are struggling with other aspects of life, such as maternity discrimination and all the other societal pressures on them. All those things contribute to post-natal depression and women's poor mental health.

I hope UK Ministers and my colleagues in Edinburgh can share best practice and seek to remove barriers to support for women experiencing perinatal mental health issues. We owe it to every family to ensure that having a baby is a time when women can feel safe, supported and cared for.

5.5 pm

**Barbara Keeley** (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Rosindell. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton South (Dr Williams) and the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous) on securing this important debate and on how they opened it. We have heard contributions from the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon), my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Rosie Duffield), the hon. Member for Bath (Wera Hobhouse) and the Scottish National party spokesperson, the hon. Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss). We also heard interventions from the hon. Member for Thirsk and Malton (Kevin Hollinrake), my hon. Friend the Member for West Ham (Lyn Brown) and, just a moment ago, my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Wavertree (Luciana Berger).

Pregnancy, birth and becoming a parent can be a special and rewarding time for many people. As we have heard, it is a time to celebrate new life and the start of the exciting journey into parenthood. However, for others, the stress and upheaval of pregnancy and becoming a parent can trigger existing mental health problems or spark new ones. Perinatal mental health issues can include severe mental health disorders that require severe immediate hospital treatment, such as postpartum psychosis. It may affect only two cases in 1,000, but it is a very serious condition and can put new mothers at risk of harming themselves and their baby. The issues can also include most common mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder and panic attacks. My hon. Friend the Member for Stockton South spoke very well about the impact of those mental health conditions on the child's development.

Given the expectation that pregnancy and becoming a parent should be a joyful time, women who experience those conditions can feel even more stressed and unhappy, and often that they are somehow to blame for their condition. A study by the Boots Family Trust in 2013 described some of those experiences. One mother said:

"I avoided friends at all costs as I lost the ability to communicate and became very isolated".

Another said:

"I'm currently into my second pregnancy and think I am suffering from depression...I feel scared and feel like I have trouble bonding with this pregnancy...I don't know what is wrong with me."

We know that one in five women will experience mental health problems during pregnancy. Given the high prevalence of mental health issues in new and expectant mothers, the woman I just quoted should not have had to feel like something was wrong with her. We have heard many excellent examples in the same vein in this debate. One way to prevent women from feeling isolated or somehow to blame is by identifying those mental health issues and ensuring the proper support is put in place. Unfortunately, as hon. Members said, too often that does not happen.

Hon. Members rightly highlighted that identification is a major barrier to accessing support for mental health issues. I join them in congratulating the National Childbirth Trust on its #HiddenHalf campaign. The research underpinning that campaign shows that nearly half of all the mental health problems that new mothers experience are not picked up by health professionals.

As we have heard, early intervention is key. The sooner issues are identified, the quicker people can access appropriate support, and that surely drives better outcomes. It is simply not good enough that only half of perinatal mental health issues are picked up. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton South detailed, GPs should offer a post-natal check about six weeks after the baby's birth. We have heard that a properly delivered check-up can have a transformative effect on new mothers who are experiencing mental health problems. Research by the National Childbirth Trust found that women directly questioned by a GP about their mental health were almost seven times more likely to disclose a mental health problem. If mental health problems are left untreated, they can escalate into much more severe mental illness.

The National Childbirth Trust also found that 95% of women who had experienced a mental health problem felt it affected their ability to cope or look after their children or family relationships. As we have heard, the six-week post-natal baby check is mandatory, but the maternal check was left out of the GP contract. As a result, the maternal check is often not done at all or becomes a rushed conversation at the end of the baby check. In one third of cases, the maternal check was estimated to last three minutes or less.

The National Childbirth Trust recommends that the Government fund the six-week maternal post-natal check so that GPs have the time to give every new mother a full appointment for the maternal check. As we have heard, the National Childbirth Trust also recommends an improvement in the guidelines for best practice around maternal mental health, including a separate appointment for that maternal six-week check, and they recommend better methods of encouraging disclosure of maternal mental health problems.

I have looked at the NHS England guidance, which states:

"There are no set guidelines for what a postnatal check for mothers should involve."

It also states:

"The following is usually offered, though this may vary according to where you live...You will be asked how you are feeling as part of a general discussion about your mental health and wellbeing." We can and must do better than that.

I have already mentioned the pressure on women to feel happy after the birth of a child and how mental health issues can lead to their feeling that there is something wrong with them. It can often lead to women putting on a brave face. One woman, responding to the Boots Family Trust survey, said:

“I was terrified to admit to any health professional as I was scared they would take my son away.”

That is exactly the point made by the hon. Member for Glasgow Central and it demonstrates the challenges that GPs face in identifying mental health issues. Merely asking how a new mother is feeling is no substitute for a properly trained staff member identifying mental health issues and knowing how to encourage disclosure.

The National Childbirth Trust recommends that NHS bodies should support and invest in initiatives to facilitate and further develop GP education on maternal mental health. Earlier, my hon. Friend the Member for West Ham touched on the fact that investment in perinatal mental health would result in savings. It is worth thinking about how much that might be.

The statement from the Royal College of General Practitioners about perinatal mental health said that post-natal depression, anxiety and psychosis carry an estimated total long-term cost to society of about £8.1 billion for each one-year cohort of births in the UK, and 72% of the cost relates to adverse impacts on the child. That reinforces the very important points that my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton South made earlier. More than a fifth of those total costs—£1.7 billion—are borne by the public sector: mainly NHS and social care. I hope that that all helps to give the Minister ammunition. Sadly, the average cost to society of one case of perinatal depression is estimated to be £74,000: £23,000 relates to the mother and £51,000 to the impact on the child. There is every reason to try to make the case being made in the debate today.

We must make sure that, where a diagnosis has been made, appropriate treatment and support is made available. According to the Maternal Mental Health Alliance, a quarter of pregnant women and new mothers cannot access specialist perinatal mental health services that meet the full National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines. Only 7% of the women who reported experiencing a maternal mental health condition were referred to specialist care. It took more than four weeks for the 38% of the women who were referred to be seen. Shockingly—we have heard several examples—some women waited up to a year for treatment. My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury talked about such an example. In fact, it was recently revealed that there were only 131 specialist perinatal beds in the whole of the UK, with none in Northern Ireland or Wales.

We know that pressure on mental health trusts comes from money earmarked for mental health services being used to pay for other areas of the NHS. The Labour party would ring-fence mental health spending so that funding for mental health services is not siphoned off to pay for other priorities. In this debate we have heard much detail of the #HiddenHalf campaign. The Opposition support that important campaign and we would look at implementing it in government. We call on the Government now to make resources available so that every mother is given the perinatal support that she deserves. It is important that we also include that commitment to

ring-fence mental health spending so that the funding that is meant to be for mental health services does not go to other priorities in the NHS.

The Government have made some commitments on perinatal mental health, and I am keen to hear from the Minister, if we have time, what progress has been made. The five-year forward view for mental health set a target to ensure that by 2021 at least 30,000 more women each year would be able to access specialist mental health care during the perinatal period. Given that we are now halfway through that phase of the five-year forward view for mental health, can the Minister tell the House what progress has been made towards that target and whether NHS England is on track to meet it?

In autumn 2017, at the maternal mental health ministerial roundtable, a number of commitments were made to improve perinatal mental health services. They included a commitment that the Department of Health would work with health system partners and other Government Departments to deliver improvements in perinatal mental health services, and a commitment that NHS England would expand specialist mental health services by 2021 to meet the needs of women in all areas. We have heard, as we hear in so many debates on health and social care, about very unfortunate postcode lotteries, so how is NHS England doing in expanding those specialist services to meet the needs of all women?

**Luciana Berger:** My hon. Friend is making a strong case, as have other colleagues, about the inconsistency of the availability of perinatal mental health services. Although there has been some investment, there are still many areas where there is no sufficient, adequate or indeed any immediate access, and mothers still have to travel too far across the country to access a bed if they need one in a mother and baby unit. Does she share the concern expressed by the British Medical Association that there is a 20% difference in referral rates in some areas, which illustrates the inconsistency of care? When the issue is so critical not only for the mother but for the child in its lifetime, that is something that the Government should urgently address.

**Barbara Keeley:** I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend. It is very important that the Minister tells us now or after the debate what is happening to expand the services so that we do not have what are almost deserts, where women have to travel either to get a bed or to get the service that they need.

Finally, there was a commitment in autumn 2017 that NHS Health Education England would support the roll-out of GP perinatal mental health champions across England. I am sure it would help if there was in every area a perinatal mental health champion speaking up for their own area. Will the Minister tell the House what progress has been made on these important commitments?

I want to conclude on a wider point about women's mental health. Women are more likely to suffer from mental ill health than men, and yet too often women's specific mental health needs remain a blind spot. Research by Agenda, the women's mental health charity, has shown that mental health trusts are too often failing to consider women's specific needs. Only one of the 35 trusts that responded to a freedom of information request by Agenda had a strategy on gender-specific mental health services.

[Barbara Keeley]

Fourteen years ago, the Labour Government launched a comprehensive women's mental health strategy to address the specific mental health needs of women. Sadly, that strategy was ditched by the coalition Government, and women's mental health has since slipped down the policy agenda. The Mental Health Foundation has described it as being "almost invisible" in Government policy.

We have had an excellent debate today in which many useful examples have been given and many good points made. There is a strong feeling that we want to help the Minister do something about this issue. Will she in future match Labour's commitment to have a national women's health strategy that would work to deliver the targeted support that women and girls need?

3.18 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Jackie Doyle-Price):** It is good to see you in the Chair, Mr Rosindell. The debate has been excellent. I have enjoyed listening to all the speeches, which, without exception, have been thoughtful, constructive, and, in the case of people who have been through motherhood, very honest and gritty about the reality of the situation that we face. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Stockton South (Dr Williams) for making as articulate a speech as possible on the issue. It covered the whole breadth of subjects that we need to consider. It was a real pleasure to listen to him. I will say the same about my hon. Friend the Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous). I am pleased to see two men leading the charge on this subject. It is an important message that this is not a woman's problem; it is a problem for society and for families. Ultimately, if we do not tackle it, society picks up the tab. It is great that two male Members of the House are leading the charge.

Many themes have come up in the debate, and I will try to address them all. I will begin by tackling the issue of the first 1,001 days. A number of hon. Members present are members of the all-party parliamentary group for the prevention of adverse childhood experiences. We recognise that the period from conception to age two is vital for every child's development, and that is why we are prioritising and focusing on ensuring that there is sufficient perinatal mental health support at that stage. On the wider issue of adverse childhood experiences, the hon. Member for Stockton South mentioned that having four of them makes someone more likely to end up in prison. This is about the best kind of early intervention—for me, that is a no-brainer. We can identify those young people or children who are most at risk of falling out of society. Therefore, we should look at how best we can intervene early to support them.

**Luciana Berger:** I am delighted to hear the points the Minister has made about the importance of the first 1,001 days and the nought-to-two agenda. On that basis, might we expect the Government to respond to their Green Paper consultation on young people's mental health by putting in place measures to support and help under-fives?

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** As I have often said, the real focus of the Green Paper is on schools and measures that we are taking with the Department for Education. However, the hon. Lady and others will be aware that we have committed to extra funding for the NHS and we are working with NHS England on what we can all expect with that extra funding. I am open to representations as we develop that 10-year plan as to what else we can do in this space. As we are in discussions with NHS England, I cannot make any commitments but this is exactly the time when we should rigorously be testing policy suggestions and interventions that we might be able to deliver.

**Dr Paul Williams:** It was reported in the *Health Service Journal* two days ago that the chief executive of the NHS, Simon Stevens, has outlined five priorities for the 10-year plan and that one is reducing health inequalities. Does the Minister think that a serious focus on reducing health inequalities—particularly those that are embedded from the beginning of life—should be a focus for the 10-year plan?

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** The hon. Gentleman earlier used the phrase "spend to save", so the answer is yes, because obviously if we make interventions earlier and they help people to help themselves, there is a long-term saving to the NHS. That is the exact spirit in which we are entering the 10-year plan for the NHS. I look forward to hearing suggestions from the APPG—get in touch with us soon.

I thank everyone who has contributed to the debate and hope that we can go forward with the shared objective of doing the best we can for new mothers. By that I mean not only improving services, but giving support in general to women who are going through the experience of motherhood. As many Members have said, we are offered a fairy tale fantasy about how everything is perfect and wonderful, when actually there is a lot of associated vomit, pain and misery—joyful as the experience is overall. We need to tackle the taboo, because the fact that we think that everything is a perfect fairy tale means that the pressure on those women who are struggling makes them feel like failures. They are not: it is all entirely normal.

I am always struck by the fact that one in three women suffers from incontinence. People do not know about it, because everyone suffers in silence and just gets on with it. I often ask, "How would it be if one in three men suffered from incontinence?" We would hear about that a lot more. We need to be generally more open and give women the message: "Do you know what? It is normal to feel you are struggling, and feel miserable, because you have gone through a life-changing experience and a physical trauma. It is inevitable that it will affect your mental health." Giving them the message that it is normal is half the battle, because they will realise that they are not a failure but just need to manage and work through the situation. We need the right services in place to help them.

**Andrew Selous:** Is the Minister aware of the Best Beginnings "Baby Buddy" app, which has videos of parents sharing their experiences to help reduce the isolation some parents feel? It encourages women to take the time to look after themselves and their relationships,

if they are with a partner. Does she agree that that is practical? It is free and lottery funded. It is not making a profit, as far as I am aware. I think it is run by a charity. Things like that can be helpful to mothers who might otherwise be quite isolated.

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** That sounds like a good resource, not least because it means women can get access to help in a more anonymous, less threatening way. We need sufficient tools to be available for women—and families, for that matter.

We have heard constantly throughout the debate that women are not always asked about their mental health in GP health checks. For that matter, they are not always asked about their physical health either; it is all about the baby. One of the challenges we have in improving the way in which we deliver health comes from the fact that an NHS practitioner faced with a patient will focus on the immediate problem and not the patient's holistic needs. There is a need to consider mother and baby together. A baby cannot be looked at in isolation. The role of the mother, and the relationship with the mother, is part of the child's welfare. We need to spread better practice in that regard.

**Andrew Selous:** I agree very much about looking at the mother as well as the baby, but does the Minister agree that, where there is a relationship with a partner, dad must not be left out, and that working on the couple's relationship is a key matter, given that mums probably look to their children's parent more than anyone else for emotional and practical support?

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** I thank my hon. Friend for being my conscience—we absolutely must not forget dad or partner, or for that matter the wider family. Members have expressed concern about the declining number of health visitors, and the beauty of having a health visitor is exactly the fact that they develop a relationship with the family and can talk to dad as well. Quite often, dad feels excluded from the process.

**Wera Hobhouse:** Valuable and important as that exchange is, the point about the #HiddenHalf campaign is that often attention is diverted away, because the baby and the dad are there. #HiddenHalf is looking for quality time for the mother in particular. I want that space to be preserved, however much is done by the GP. It is important that a woman who has gone through the trauma that the Minister described is able to feel, "Someone is just looking after me." It is important to recognise that.

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** I agree and do not think the two points are in conflict. We need both—we need the wider package of support.

The theme we have been considering—of women not always being asked about themselves, and its being all about the baby—is not confined to the issue of perinatal mental health. Women face that across the board with respect to their health. The hon. Member for Worsley and Eccles South (Barbara Keeley) spoke about a women's health strategy and women's mental health. I co-chair a women's mental health taskforce with the chair of Agenda, and in the coming weeks we will present our report on a year-long piece of work. It will have information about tools to enable the health service in general better to

support women's mental health. I am also doing more to raise the whole issue of women's mental health, because I feel strongly that women are often disempowered in health settings. We need to give them the tools to take control of their own care and to feel empowered to engage in good conversations with medical professionals, to benefit their health.

We have heard anecdotal accounts of women's experiences, and what has come across is the arrogant behaviour of some medical professionals. They see a large number of patients and they are not always sensitive to how best to communicate with certain individuals. We need that practitioner-patient relationship to work a lot better, particularly in the case of women. I am open to representations from everybody about what tool we can use.

The hon. Member for West Ham (Lyn Brown) is no longer in her place, but I have been impressed by her work on hysteroscopies with women. We are developing tools on that. I reassure all Members that women's health and the way in which the national health service can better serve women are high on my agenda. I am not going to stand here and say that the world is perfect, but we have made perinatal mental health a priority in the five year forward view. We are midway through that review, so I should give Members an account of how far we have got and what more needs to be done.

To go back to 2010, the situation was really quite poor. Only 15% of localities had fully fledged specialist services in the community, and 40% of communities provided absolutely no service at all. People talked about a postcode lottery; clearly, we could not allow that to continue. We need to work towards universal provision. We are implementing the recommendations of the five year forward view for mental health taskforce, which reported in 2016. From 2015 to 2021, we are investing £365 million into perinatal mental health services. NHS England is leading a transformation programme to ensure that, by 2021, at least 30,000 more women each year are able to access specialist mental healthcare during the perinatal period. In May, NHS England confirmed that, by April next year, new and expectant mums will be able to access specialist perinatal mental health community services in every part of the country. We are making progress. The key to that is community provision.

**Barbara Keeley:** I asked the Minister a specific question: we are halfway towards the deadline for the 30,000 target—does she know how that target is going? Has there been an improvement of 15,000?

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** I will write to the hon. Lady with some detail on the figures, but the point is that the access is there. Obviously, it will take time to become embedded. We have a good direction of travel to deliver against that commitment and we will continue with that. Community-based provision is key, but we also need to ensure that there are sufficient specialist perinatal mental health beds in mother and baby units for particularly severe cases. NHS England has taken a more strategic approach to commissioning, so that there is a level of access that does not involve wide-scale moving out of area.

As ever with transformation programmes, change takes time, but we are on track to meet our commitments. We are investing £63.5 million this financial year to

[Jackie Doyle-Price]

support the development of those specialist perinatal mental health community services across England. Our pace of change is to enable 2,000 more women to access specialist care. Last year that was exceeded, so we should maintain the pace that we planned in the five-year forward view.

I have visited one of the new in-patient mother and baby units in Chelmsford, where there are four new beds. That centre is expanding its capacity. As well as opening new centres, we are expanding the capacity of existing ones to give more support. In Devon, the trust opened a four-bed mother and baby unit in a reused space in April this year while the new unit is being built, so we still have that provision even though there is not the physical space. By the end of this financial year, we will have expanded the capacity of those beds by 49% since 2015 and there should be more than 150 beds available for mothers and babies in those units.

We are also expanding psychological therapy services, which successfully treat many women who experience common mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety disorders during the perinatal period. We have set an ambition for at least 25% of people with common mental health conditions to access services each year by 2020-21, including extending provision to ensure swifter access for new and expectant mothers. However, as we have heard today, getting perinatal mental healthcare right is not just about expanding specialist services in isolation. Many professionals in different parts of the health and care system are well placed to support women in the perinatal period. NHS England is working with partners to ensure that care for women is integrated and joined up effectively. More than £1 million was provided in 2017 to enable the training of primary care, maternity and mental health staff, to increase perinatal mental health awareness and skills.

NHS England has also invested in multidisciplinary perinatal mental health clinical networks, which will include GPs across the country to support that strategic planning, working across services to ensure that those wider services are in place. The role of GPs is central in identifying when someone is suffering from perinatal mental illness, and to ensure that those women are directed towards treatment. The role includes monitoring early-onset conditions, including pre-conception counselling, referring women to specialist mental health services, including access to psychological therapies, and specialist perinatal community teams where necessary.

I am aware of the NCT's #HiddenHalf campaign; I am grateful for its campaigning on this important issue. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence recommends post-natal checks for mothers and new-born babies. NHS England expects commissioners and providers of maternity care to pay due regard to the NICE guidelines. My hon. Friend the Member for South West Bedfordshire raised this issue and said that, since this was part of what we should expect from GPs, it seemed anomalous that so many mothers and babies were not getting such checks. We make clear to GPs what we expect of them, as part of their contract, but ultimately we rely on clinical commissioning groups to ensure that GPs deliver against the obligations that we expect of them. This is not the only case where this happens—many

GPs are not delivering learning disability health checks either. We need to be clear with NHS England that we expect that obligation to be delivered.

**Dr Paul Williams:** The hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire referred to a maternity additional service that only four general practices have opted out of. Is the Minister aware of what period of time that additional service covers?

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** I will come back to the hon. Gentleman, but this area requires further exploration because we need to be clear about how we deliver on those things.

**Dr Williams:** I will gladly tell the Minister: the period of time covers pregnancy but ends 14 days after birth. Whereas it may be very appropriate for a GP to provide care during that time, the additional service that the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire referred to ends 14 days after birth. We are talking about a different issue: the opportunity to do a check six weeks after birth. There is no commissioning of that check at the moment. It is helpful that the Minister says that she expects commissioners to commission that check, but is that a commitment from the Government to ensure that commissioners are funded to be able to commission that six-week check?

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** I was coming to that—I was just dealing with the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for South West Bedfordshire.

Moving on from the NICE guidelines, we clearly expect GPs to do their part in identifying and supporting women. We are aware of the campaign, but any changes to GP contracting arrangements to specifically include the six-week check-up would need to be negotiated with the GP committee of the British Medical Association. Those negotiations are taking place and will be completed by September. I cannot give any firmer commitment than that, other than to say that we obviously want to see GPs make their contribution.

**Barbara Keeley:** I just want to reiterate what I said earlier: the Opposition support that campaign and would look at implementing it in government. I outlined that the NCT put a cost of £20 million on it. Clearly, the Minister could have that figure checked out, but it is balanced against the £1.2 billion extra cost to the NHS and social care of perinatal mental health problems in every one-year birth cohort. There really is a point here about investing to save further down the road.

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** I thank the hon. Lady for that. As she says, if we are talking about £20 million in a broader settlement, that clearly should be under consideration given the outcomes that could be achieved on the basis of the evidence we have seen. I am not negotiating the contract, but we will have the outcome of those negotiations in the not-too-distant future. Members on both sides of the Chamber expressed very clearly the view that they want GPs to be able to do more to support new mothers. That message has been well noted, and I thank Members for making it. They said they wished to give me as much as assistance as they could in my battles on these things, and they certainly made a very strong case.

I want to come back to health visitors. I am a firm believer that health visitors are uniquely placed to identify mothers who are at risk of suffering, or are suffering, perinatal mental health problems and to ensure they get the early support they need. In fact, I visited the Institute of Health Visiting only a couple of weeks ago and heard a moving story from a new mum who had gone through a mental health crisis. It is striking that she had experienced all the feelings we have talked about—she felt there was something wrong with her, she could not bond with her baby, and she got more and more depressed and withdrawn about it. The other interesting thing about that case was that it was dad who felt utterly powerless to do anything. Only their relationship with their health visitor enabled them both to reach out for help.

I am under no illusions about the importance of health visitors. I was privileged to meet so many fantastic advocates for them as part of the NHS's 70th birthday. They are our eyes and ears in so many ways, and they are our intelligence network in tackling adverse childhood events. I am full of praise for the important job they do in supporting new parents and families through a child's early years. I am really pleased about the success of the Institute of Health Visiting perinatal and infant mental health champions training programme. Those 570 champions play a crucial role in spreading good practice and early identification of mental health problems.

Some hon. Members raised concerns about the decline in the number of health visitors. There was a substantial increase in the run-up to 2015, and there has been a fall since. I am bothered about that, so I will look at how we can encourage local authorities to alter that situation, recognising that in some areas local leaders have realised that health visitors can do so much more to deliver better outcomes for their communities. Blackpool, for example, has substantially increased the number of visits. I am really looking forward to seeing the outcome of that work, so that we can encourage that good practice in other local authorities.

I reiterate my thanks to all Members for their thoughtful comments and questions, but I especially thank the hon. Member for Stockton South and my hon. Friend the Member for South West Bedfordshire for securing the debate. I am very proud of our direction of travel in delivering and transforming perinatal mental health services so that we ensure that more expectant and new mothers are able to access high-quality mental health support, but we should never be complacent about that. I look forward to continuing the transformation programme.

3.45 pm

**Dr Paul Williams:** I thank all the Members who stayed here to contribute to the debate. I also thank the organisations—particularly the National Childbirth Trust—that contributed to filling our minds with useful information. I am proud to have brought this issue to Parliament as a man. As many Members said, this is not a women's issue—it affects us all, and it needs to be taken really seriously. As the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous) said, it is everyone's business.

We have discussed a very vulnerable time in a woman's life—the time when she is most likely to develop a mental health problem. We heard about the impact of such problems on a woman, her family and particularly her child. It is heartening to hear that the Government are listening, and I hope that that continues to manifest itself in action—particularly on the GP contract negotiations, but also on the many other things that could be done to improve the lives of these women, their families and their children.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered perinatal mental illness.

3.46 pm

*Sitting adjourned.*



# Written Statements

Thursday 19 July 2018

## CABINET OFFICE

### Electoral Integrity

**The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Chloe Smith):** Today, the Cabinet Office published its evaluation and it shows that Bromley, Gosport, Swindon, Watford and Woking delivered successful voter ID pilots. We know that because the evidence shows that the majority of voters who turned up to vote without ID returned later with ID without problem. When surveyed, polling station staff overwhelmingly judged that they had been able to successfully deliver the ID requirements in their polling stations, with 99% satisfaction rates among administrators in four of the five local authorities—Bromley, Swindon, Woking and Gosport—and 97% in the fifth, Watford.

Locally issued ID was made available free of charge whenever an elector was unsure they were able to produce the required ID. In one local authority, this was issued to 10 people who were homeless. They were also able to use the ID to register at the local jobcentre. The amount of voters who felt the security of elections improved increased consistently in the areas where electors had to show photographic ID. Confidence and satisfaction in the process of voting itself significantly increased post-election day where voters had to show photographic ID.

Overall, voters' views of election day were largely positive across all of the pilots and the main reason for not voting was that people were too busy or had other commitments.

Alongside the Government's evaluation, the Electoral Commission will publish their evaluation on the voter ID pilots today.

Peterborough, Slough and Tower Hamlets tested additional measures to improve the security and integrity of the postal vote process and ensured that additional guidance on preventing electoral fraud was given to every postal vote applicant. The local authorities found value in the pilot as an elector engagement exercise, given the positive feedback they received from electors in reaction to being contacted.

Electoral fraud is not a victimless crime. We owe it to voters to ensure they know their voices are being heard and their right to vote is being protected. We have worked with the Electoral Commission and Crimestoppers to support the "Your vote is yours alone" campaign that ran alongside the local elections to encourage the reporting of suspected electoral crime.

The improvement we will make to the security and integrity of our voting process in Great Britain will bring us in line with many other countries where voters provide confirmation of their identity and where there is a reasonable expectation that someone's vote should be properly protected and that doing so guards democracy and confidence for everyone.

Indeed, within the United Kingdom, the experience of Northern Ireland, where paper ID has been required since 1985 and photo ID since 2003, illustrates that there should be no issue for voters—once the requirement has become established.

I am absolutely clear that requiring voter ID in polling stations is a timely and reasonable measure that will sustain confidence in our voting process and we are inviting expressions of interest from local authorities to run further pilots at the local government elections in May 2019.

We are committed to improving the security of everyone's votes, strengthening our elections and ensuring that people have confidence in our democracy, while putting equality and inclusivity at the centre of our electoral system.

[HCWS888]

## TREASURY

### Infrastructure (Financial Assistance) Act 2012: Annual Report

**The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Robert Jenrick):** The annual report to Parliament under the Infrastructure (Financial Assistance) Act 2012 for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 has today been laid before Parliament.

The report is prepared in line with the requirements set out in the Infrastructure (Financial Assistance) Act 2012 that the Government report annually to Parliament on the financial assistance given under the Act.

Copies are available in the Vote Office and the Printed Paper Office.

[HCWS895]

### Securing the Tax Base

**The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mel Stride):** The Government are fully committed to doing what is necessary to protect the Exchequer and maintain fairness in the tax system. Therefore, the Government are announcing today that legislation will be brought forward later in the year which corrects a number of loopholes and omissions.

#### *VAT offshore looping arrangement*

The Government are announcing today that secondary legislation will be introduced later in the year to tackle VAT avoidance which takes advantage of a particular type of offshore looping arrangement, as well as examining further measures to tackle variations of this type of avoidance. By taking this action, the Government will maintain fairness in the tax system and will protect up to £100 million of future annual tax revenues. The Government are also considering additional measures to protect further tax from being lost on variations of these schemes, which could be adopted extensively across the VAT exempt sectors.

#### *Offshore looping avoidance*

Providers of financial services generally cannot reclaim the VAT they incur on their costs because their services are VAT exempt. An offshore loop is a cross-border structure that enables these VAT costs to be recovered by routing services primarily carried out in the UK via a body located in a non-VAT territory. Those services are

then used to provide insurance and other financial services back into the UK market. This is contrary to the intention of the VAT system and distorts competition to the disadvantage of domestic UK suppliers.

#### *Targeted action*

This measure addresses a particular version of offshore looping which is currently found almost exclusively in the insurance sector and involves looping supplies via non-VAT territories. While this scheme is currently the subject of litigation, the Government have decided to legislate to put the issue beyond doubt and prevent any ongoing distortion of competition through use of this scheme.

The Government will amend UK law using secondary legislation later in the year. This will reduce the scope of the current VAT relief for exporters of financial services by excluding financial intermediation in supplies made ultimately to UK customers. This will mean that the UK providers of these financial services will no longer be able to gain a VAT advantage by acting as an agent for an overseas associate when the services are in fact being provided to their UK customers. The draft legislation and explanatory note will be published today and will be available on the gov.uk website.

#### *Further action*

The Government are also examining further legislative options for closing other versions of avoidance schemes involving such arrangements. This would ensure that revenue is protected in the future and that the system is fair for all and that those that seek to benefit from this type of arrangement do not get an unfair advantage.

Another variant of offshore looping, involving the provision of repair services to insurers, was addressed in 2016. Alongside that, the Government also considered further action, particularly in respect of the application of the VAT use and enjoyment provisions, but concluded that further change was not merited at that time. However, given the additional risks since identified, the scope of the options now under consideration will be much broader, including the use of measures outside of the UK VAT system altogether. Further details will be set out as part of the normal tax-making process.

#### *Interest for late payment and repayment of taxes*

Additionally, the Government are announcing today that they will introduce retrospective legislation in the Finance Bill 2018-19 to correct omissions from enactments that enable HMRC to charge interest for late payment of taxes and to pay interest on repayments to taxpayers. This legislation will also include interest charged as part of the diverted profits tax regime. By taking this action, the Government will guarantee the integrity of the tax base.

The legislation will apply retrospectively to cover all relevant interest charged or applied and will not change either the interest rate or amounts charged or repaid by HMRC to date. The legislation will apply to all taxpayers and any existing or future claim or appeal where these omissions have been identified.

The main taxes affected are corporation tax, stamp duty and stamp duty land tax. Further detail can be found in the accompanying draft clause and explanatory note.

## DEFENCE

### Modernising Defence Programme

**The Secretary of State for Defence (Gavin Williamson):** In January, together with the Prime Minister and Chancellor, I launched the Government's modernising defence programme (MDP). The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is now able to share our headline conclusions. Throughout the MDP, the Department has worked with colleagues across Whitehall, with academics, subject matter experts, allies and partners and ran a public consultation exercise.

The MDP was launched after the national security capability review acknowledged the increasing security challenges we are facing. Its purpose was to deliver better military capability to meet the increasing threat environment and value for money in a sustainable and affordable way. Defence protects our people, projects our global influence, and promotes our prosperity. And, at this key moment as the UK leaves the European Union, defence and the armed forces will continue to deliver security in Europe and further afield, helping to make global Britain a reality.

Threats and risks to national security have diversified and become more complex since 2015. Although we anticipated many of the threats and risks we now face, we underestimated the pace at which they would intensify and combine to challenge UK national security at home and threaten the rules-based international order that has delivered peace, security and prosperity over many decades. And, we did not fully understand the ways in which they would interact with each other.

Alongside this, the character of warfare has changed since 2015. We are in a period of constant aggressive competition between states, often developing into undeclared confrontation and, in some cases, proxy conflicts. Technology, especially digital technology, is developing at a breath-taking pace, making pervasive many capabilities once only imagined in science fiction.

Our adversaries are working to take advantage of this contested environment by systematically identifying and exploiting our vulnerabilities and those of our allies and partners. Peer and near-peer states are investing heavily in both conventional and emerging technologies, and are increasingly adopting hybrid or asymmetric approaches to gain advantage. This has included attacking our digital networks and those of our allies, and operating in unconventional and legally questionable ways. Broader developments in the world including demographic change, increasing urbanisation, the risk of pandemics, resource and environmental pressures will all contribute to a global strategic context which will become more complex.

All this means that the challenges to our national security and prosperity—and to our allies' and partners' security and prosperity—are increasingly complex, ambiguous, destabilising and potentially catastrophic.

Work in the first phase of the MDP has reviewed this changing strategic context and how our armed forces need to be able to respond. We have reviewed our existing capability plans, and begun to shape new policy approaches and identify investment priorities, and through workstreams, we have developed a blueprint for a major programme of top-down transformative reform to defence.

In all of this, we have been guided by the three key roles that our armed forces should be able to fulfil in the 21st century:

Contribute to strengthening global security through our leading role in NATO, and provide the structures and capabilities to defend the UK;

Meet the challenges of the wider threats to international security and stability, including through operations and activities alongside our global allies and partners. Defence must be engaged and outward looking, meeting the challenges of our age, from state-based competition and confrontation, violent extremism and terrorism, instability and crises in Africa and Asia, illegal and irregular migration, serious and organised crime, to climate change and environmental disasters.

Act independently, when appropriate, to protect UK interests and citizens overseas, leading multi-national operations and developing strong defence relationships with partners around the world.

### *Headline conclusions*

#### *1. Our armed forces need to be ready and able to match the pace at which our adversaries now move.*

The pace at which our adversaries can act against us has grown quickly since SDSR 2015. Today, our adversaries disguise their actions by launching attacks that are hard to attribute, or by operating below the conventional threshold for a decisive, collective response. Whilst our armed forces already protect us against these challenges every hour of every day, we need to be able to respond to this new character of warfare, both in the traditional land, sea and air domains, as well as in the new domains of space and cyber. The MDP will make sure that the armed forces can continue to protect our prosperity and security, while reinforcing Britain's place in the world.

To defend our national security, we should make the best possible use of the unique mix of hard and soft power that makes the UK a major global actor: from our economic levers to our wider diplomatic and cultural influence on the world's stage. This integrated, collective approach to national security is captured in the Government's fusion doctrine. Defence has a vital and increasing role in underwriting it, including through contributing to deterring and disrupting hostile state activity, delivering the CONTEST counter-terrorism strategy in the UK and overseas, or supporting wider security and prosperity objectives.

The armed forces have a unique network of alliances and friendships spanning every corner of every continent. We have made significant progress in making defence more "international by design", and we will look at how we could do more. We have already strengthened relationships with key allies and partners, including through ambitious capability collaborations, and we will seek to go further still. We will consider our global defence network, to make sure we have the right military and civilian staff deployed around the world. We will seek to optimise our programme of world-class international education and training, which is so highly valued by our allies and partners, and gives the UK competitive advantage and strategic influence across the globe. And we will continue to lead multinational forces and deepen our relationships across the globe.

Most importantly, we need to make sure we can respond rapidly to future crises on our terms. Our elite and high-readiness forces are critical in this regard, enabled by collective training and our high-end exercise programme. We will consider how we can rebalance our

training and equipment to mainland Europe, the far east and the middle east and review our overseas basing to improve our interoperability with allies and partners. NATO's readiness initiative will also play an important role in this endeavour. Equally, our ability to respond rapidly will depend on an improved understanding and anticipation of the strategic confrontations that define this era: we will therefore build a strategic net assessment capability in the MOD. Strategic net assessment looks across all dimensions of competition—political, economic, military, resources—to assess how the choices of both friends and foes may play out over the short, medium and long term. Its conclusions can be used to develop more nuanced and better-informed strategy, so we can better anticipate our adversaries' actions and counter them more effectively.

As outlined in SDSR 2015, protecting our security safeguards our prosperity, so our armed forces will continue to provide the assurance and reassurance for our global trade and development commitments, and support our ambitions for global Britain. As we continue our commitment to defence investment we will consider a much more agile approach to the development of future equipment, with a clear focus on the increasing flexibility required to maintain strategic advantage over our adversaries.

#### *2. A fighting force fit for the challenges of the 21st century*

We intend to modernise our force structure so that it is better able to meet the increasing threats we face. The key design principles of Joint Force 2025 are right: we want armed forces able to operate with agility and pace in the information age. Our armed forces need to be able to meet a full range of missions now and into the future. This includes, if necessary, warfighting operations under NATO article 5 and further afield.

We need to be able to meet future threats and face down our adversaries to continue to protect our prosperity and security. We may need to accelerate elements of the programme to meet the most acute threats sooner. Equally, we might want to introduce new capabilities or equipment that provide significant advantage in the immediate term. We intend, in each case, to look to the right balance of conventional and novel capabilities to meet the threats we face.

Alongside this, we will consider how to improve our resilience, so that our networks and systems across defence are protected against cyber-attack and infiltration, and our submarines can continue to avoid detection. We will also strengthen our equipment, training and facilities, like the investment we are making in a chemical weapons defence centre to counter chemical biological radiological and nuclear threats like we saw in Salisbury and Amesbury. Through advancing our resilience we will make sure our forces and bases are better protected.

A fighting force fit for the challenges of the 21st century also means our armed forces need to be able to operate in the space domain. So, to guide future investment in our satellites and wider space capabilities we will publish a space strategy.

To operate effectively in the information age, we need "information advantage". Conflicts of the future will increasingly be won and lost based on who uses information technology most effectively: sensors, computing, communication, cyber and machine learning, artificial intelligence and autonomy. We will consider how to

enhance our ability to collect, analyse, disseminate and act very rapidly on the vast quantities of data that characterise the contemporary operating environment. That will allow us to understand how our adversaries are thinking, how they may choose to act against us, and how we can deter or defeat them.

We are also looking at how to update the way we fight. For much of the last two decades, the UK has been conducting or contributing to significant overseas operations, in Afghanistan, Iraq and the wider middle east. Our adversaries have learned a lot about how we operate, and how they can disrupt our preferred methods. So, we are considering what a more active and dynamic approach to operations in all five domains—land, sea, air, space and cyberspace—should look like.

At the same time, we will consider how to modernise our approach to technology and innovation. By taking a more co-ordinated approach to technology and experimentation, with better central oversight, we may be able to pursue opportunities for modernisation more aggressively and accept higher levels of risk pursuing novel ideas. We intend to invest in a series of “Spearhead” initiatives on key new technologies and increase our spending on innovation, science and technology. Pursuing this approach will allow us to become quicker at turning advances in research and development into strategic advantage. In support of this, we will publish a “Defence Technology Framework”, setting out the Department’s technology priorities so that we can focus efforts and guide strategy, investment and plans across defence as a whole.

And we should also ensure that we use the combined talents of our whole force of regulars, reserves, civil servants and industry partners more effectively. The character of conflict and the world of work more generally are changing, so defence will need to up-skill our people, harness the advantages offered by reserves, and reflect the expectations of the modern workforce.

### *3. Transforming the business of defence to deliver a robust, credible, modern and affordable force*

We are re-setting and re-energising the way MOD is led, organised and managed, with clearer responsibilities and accountabilities to deliver better value for money. We will embrace approaches, processes, technologies and best practice with a proven track record of success elsewhere. We will encourage a culture of experimentation, and change our acquisition and commercial processes to better support the rapid and incremental adoption of new and emerging technologies.

To help create financial headroom for the additional modernisation, we will consider how to deliver greater efficiency by adopting ambitious, digitally-enabled business modernisation. In parallel, we will consider removing existing areas of overlap and duplication within our force structure and burden-sharing more effectively with allies and partners.

We intend to adopt a more collaborative and demanding approach to our relationship with industry, centred around an agreed set of productivity, efficiency, skills and innovation challenges that we need to meet together. At the same time, in the next stages of our work we will consider what we might do to grow even further the already considerable contribution that Defence makes to UK prosperity. The important work conducted by my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr Dunne) in his independent report can inform these considerations.

### *Conclusions*

The first phase of the MDP has looked to set the direction we intend to take. It has clarified three key themes we should consider in the next phase: first, our armed forces need to be ready and able to match the pace at which our adversaries now move. Secondly, our armed forces need to be a fighting force fit for the challenges of the 21st century. And, finally, we need to transform the business of defence to deliver a robust, credible, modern and affordable force.

The Prime Minister, Chancellor and I will continue to work closely throughout the next phase of the MDP, and I will keep the House updated as decisions are made.

We will continue to meet our commitment to our partners and maintain a full spectrum of nuclear, conventional and cyber capabilities to match our global ambition. With one of the largest defence budgets in the world, and the highest in Europe, our defence budget is increasing in real terms by £1 billion a year during this Parliament. The stage is now set for the next phase of this programme of work to ensure UK defence and our armed forces can continue to keep our country safe, our people and interests around the world secure, and help ensure that the UK can continue to play a major role on the world stage.

[HCWS883]

### **Service Personnel**

**The Secretary of State for Defence (Gavin Williamson):** On 12 March 2018, I announced that the Ministry of Defence (MOD) would be looking to mitigate the impact of income tax rises in Scotland affecting thousands of armed forces personnel in Scotland. New income tax bands and increased tax levels for tax year 2018-19, as compared to the rest of the UK, will result in the majority of military personnel living in Scotland, those earning more than £26,000 per annum, paying more tax this year by comparison to their counterparts living in the rest of the UK.

It has been decided that for this tax year the MOD will make a financial mitigation payment to all those regular service personnel negatively impacted by Scottish tax by £12 a year (or £1 a month) or higher. However, it has also been decided the amount of mitigation provided will be capped at £1,500. The financial mitigation payment will be paid retrospectively after the end of the tax year. It will be grossed up to ensure that when income tax and national insurance deductions are made the value of the payment closely matches the difference in tax experienced up to the £1,500 cap.

The MOD will continue to review the situation and decide each tax year whether the impact on UK armed forces warrants an offer of financial mitigation to support service personnel in Scotland.

It is estimated that these payments will be made to up to 8,000 regular service personnel and will cost the MOD in the region of £4 million in financial year 2019-20.

[HCWS885]

## DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### Contingent Liability

**The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Jeremy Wright):** A minute has been laid before Parliament regarding the live broadcast of the England men's team semi-final match at the 2018 football World cup in Hyde Park on 11 July, and specifically in relation to incurring a contingent liability.

The Department for Digital, Media, Culture and Sport (DCMS) directed the Royal Parks (TRP) to host an event which showed the live broadcast of the England men's team semi-final match at the 2018 football World cup on large television screens in Hyde Park on 11 July. The Department provided an indemnity agreement to the TRP; in order to meet the short timescale to organise this event, it was necessary to give commitments in relation to such liabilities urgently.

DCMS agreed to indemnify TRP for net costs and there is an agreement regarding any such indemnity costs between DCMS and the Greater London Authority and the Football Association.

The Treasury approved the proposal in principle. Authority for any expenditure required under the liability will be sought through the normal Supply procedure. A full departmental minute has been laid providing more detail on this contingent liability as provided to TRP on 8 July.

[HCWS891]

## EDUCATION

### Relationships and Sex Education

**The Secretary of State for Education (Damian Hinds):** Children and young people today are growing up in an increasingly complex world and living their lives seamlessly on and offline. This presents many positive and exciting opportunities, but also challenges and risks. In this environment, children and young people need to know how to be safe and healthy, and how to manage their lives in a positive way. Ensuring children and young people have this knowledge contributes to Government's effort to eradicate problems like sexual harassment and violence.

We have engaged thoroughly with a wide range of organisations, supported by experienced headteacher Ian Bauckham CBE. Between November 2017 and March 2018, Ian led a wide-ranging stakeholder engagement process with many experts. In addition, the Department launched a call for evidence to seek public views from adults and young people—over 23,000 people responded and the level of consensus has been encouraging. We are pleased today to be able to announce the key decisions and launch a consultation on the detail of the regulations and guidance.

For relationships education and RSE, the aim is to put in place the building blocks needed for positive and safe relationships of all kinds, starting with the family and friends, and moving out to other kinds of relationships, including online. It is essential that we ensure young people can keep themselves safe online, from the basics

of who and what to trust and how personal information is used, through to how to ensure online relationships are healthy and safe.

A guiding principle is that teaching will start from the basis that children and young people, at age appropriate points, need to know the laws relating to relationships and sex that govern society to ensure they act appropriately and can be safe. This includes LGBT, which is a strong feature of the new subjects at age appropriate points. The draft guidance sets out core required content, but leaves flexibility for schools to design a curriculum that builds on this and is right for their pupils, bearing in mind their age and religious backgrounds. It enables schools with a religious character to deliver and expand on the core content by reflecting the teachings of their faith.

We are also proposing to introduce compulsory content on health education. This supports the findings from the call for evidence and engagement process, where giving children and young people the information they need to make good decisions about their own health and wellbeing—particularly their mental wellbeing—was a priority. This directly supports the Green Paper published jointly by the Department for Education and the Department of Health and Social Care on children and young people's mental health, as well as our manifesto commitment to ensure all young people are taught about mental wellbeing. The focus on physical health also supports the Government's activity to tackle childhood obesity.

Financial education is already in the curriculum, in maths and citizenship, and careers education is an important part of our careers strategy. For these reasons, we do not consider that economic education should be made compulsory. We are committed, however, to improving provision of financial and careers education and will work with stakeholders to do so.

We know that many schools successfully cover this content in a broader PSHE programme. They should continue to do so, adapting their programme to the new requirements rather than starting from scratch. Schools are also free to develop alternative, innovative ways to ensure that pupils receive this education and we want good practice to be shared so that all schools can benefit.

We have previously committed to parents having a right to withdraw their children from sex education in RSE, but not relationships education in primary or secondary. A right for parents to withdraw their child up to 18 years of age is no longer compatible with English case law or the European convention on human rights. It is also clear that allowing parents to withdraw their child up to age 16 would not allow the child to opt in to sex education before the legal age of consent.

We therefore propose to give parents the right to request their child be withdrawn from sex education delivered as part of RSE. The draft guidance sets out that unless there are exceptional circumstances, the parents' request should be granted until three terms before the pupil turns 16. At that point, if the child wishes to have sex education, the headteacher should ensure they receive it in one of those terms. This preserves the parental right in most cases, but also balances it with the child's right to opt in to sex education when they are competent to do so.

This is a very important change to the curriculum that has to be delivered well, and while many schools will be able to quickly adapt their existing teaching it is essential that those schools that need more time to plan and prepare their staff get that time. It is our intention that as many schools as possible will start teaching the subjects from September 2019. We will be working with those schools, as well as with MATs, dioceses and education unions, to help them to do so. All schools will be required to teach the new subjects from September 2020. This is in line with the Department's approach to any significant changes to the curriculum and will enable us to learn lessons from the early adopter schools and share good practice across the sector. We will be seeking views through the consultation to test the right focus for a school support package as we know that it is crucial for schools and teachers to be confident and well prepared.

We are keen to hear as many views as possible through the consultation, which will be open until early November, and the final regulations will be laid in both Houses, allowing for a full and considered debate. There was strong cross-party support for the introduction of these subjects we are confident that we can continue to work together on this important reform. We believe that our proposals are an historic step in education that will equip children and young people with the knowledge and support they need to form healthy relationships, lead healthy lives and be safe and happy in modern Britain.

[HCWS892]

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

### OSCE

**The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Sir Alan Duncan):** I represented the United Kingdom at the 24th Ministerial Council meeting of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) held in Vienna on 7 and 8 December 2017, hosted by Austrian chair-in-office, Sebastian Kurz. The Council is the top decision making body of the OSCE and was attended by Ministers from across its 57 participating states. A number of new commitments were agreed, including on combating trafficking in human beings, on small arms and light weapons, and on reducing the risk of conflict stemming from the use of information and communication technologies.

In my intervention at the Ministerial Council, I reaffirmed the United Kingdom's support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. I condemned Russia's destabilising actions in eastern Ukraine and illegal annexation of Crimea, and we co-sponsored an event in the margins of the Ministerial Council for Crimean Tatar leaders. The United Kingdom is the second largest contributor of secondees to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM), which plays a crucial role in monitoring the ceasefire and events on the ground. I paid tribute during my intervention to SMM paramedic Joseph Stone, who tragically lost his life on patrol in April 2017. The United Kingdom continues to call on all parties to ensure the safety both of our monitors and of civilians in Eastern Ukraine.

The 2017 Ministerial Council discussed the continuation of the structured dialogue launched in 2016, aimed at reducing risk of military conflict. We welcome the

dialogue as an opportunity to rebuild trust among all stakeholders of European security in the OSCE area. The process will take time, but we value the work done so far, including discussions on threat perceptions, challenges to the rules-based order, military-to-military contact, and trends in military force postures and exercises. At the Ministerial Council, the United Kingdom delivered a statement on behalf of 29 allies restating the importance of enhancing military transparency, and of full implementation and updating of relevant commitments.

The OSCE is a vital forum for addressing the "protracted conflicts" which remain a threat to European security, and during the Ministerial Council I reiterated our firm support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Government welcome progress on confidence-building measures relating to the conflict in Moldova agreed in the 5+2 format meetings in Vienna in 2017 and in Rome in 2018. We also continue to support the Minsk co-chairs in their efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The Government remain committed to the security and stability of the Western Balkans. We provide over 5 million euros per annum to OSCE's extensive field presence in the Western Balkans through assessed contributions and also give extra budgetary funding to support work on media freedom, electoral reform, safe storage of small arms and light weapons, strengthening the rule of law, and processing of war crimes cases. The office of the OSCE's representative on freedom of the media chaired a discussion on media freedom at the Western Balkans summit in London on 9 and 10 July. The Government also support security and stability in Central Asia through our assessed contributions and through extra-budgetary funding to OSCE field missions, supporting work in areas such as judicial independence, rule of law, border controls, counter-terrorism, cyber-security, and freedom of religion or belief.

The United Kingdom is using its second year chairing the OSCE human dimension committee to support the 2017 Italian chairmanship and promote discussion of issues relevant to everyday lives across the OSCE area in the field of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy. 2018 meetings have covered issues such as human rights defenders, freedom of religion or belief, and Roma and Sinti girls' education. The committee has also addressed cross-dimensional issues such as human trafficking and violence against women. The Prime Minister's special envoy on post-holocaust issues, Lord Pickles, spoke at an OSCE chairmanship conference on anti-Semitism in Rome in January and a UK-led event on racism in Vienna in May. Throughout this period, the United Kingdom, with EU partners, has continued to raise human rights concerns at the OSCE. At the Ministerial Council, the UK joined a declaration by 44 states expressing concern at deteriorating respect for human rights and space for civil society in parts of the OSCE region.

OSCE work on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, along with counter-terrorism and cyber-security, plays an important role in pursuit of our security objectives. We continue to promote efforts in the OSCE to strengthen and modernise conventional arms control in Europe, based on principles such as respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, reciprocity, transparency, and host nation consent. We welcome the OSCE Ministerial Council decision to reinforce and

expand efforts to reduce the threat posed by small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition.

I was able to underline the UK's commitment to European security, the OSCE and to multilateral co-operation when I met the new OSCE secretary-general, Thomas Greminger, during his visit to London in May.

Slovakia has begun preparations for its OSCE chairmanship, which starts in January 2019. We look forward to working with them to promote shared priorities, uphold shared principles and commitments and to increase security and co-operation in Europe.

[HCWS879]

### **Jordan: Policing Support**

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr Jeremy Hunt):** The United Kingdom is strongly committed to supporting Jordan's security and stability. Through a Conflict Stability and Security Fund project worth £9 million over two years, the UK is helping the Jordanian Public Security Directorate (PSD) and gendarmerie to develop its community policing, critical incident response and investigative counter-terrorist policing capabilities. The support delivers against the objectives of Her Majesty's Government, in particular our security objective, on building Jordanian capability to enhance both its own security and its ability to tackle internal and regional threats in a manner compliant with human rights.

In order to reach this objective, the British embassy in Amman is granting equipment totalling £742,853.24 for support to the PSD and gendarmerie. This includes infrastructure, vehicles, and IT equipment (hardware and software).

The provision of this assistance is fully in line with this Government's security and stability objectives in the middle east. Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials carry out regular reviews of our programmes in Jordan to ensure that objectives are being met, and that value for money is being achieved.

[HCWS880]

### **British Council: Tailored Review**

**The Minister for Asia and the Pacific (Mark Field):** I am announcing today the start of a tailored review of the British Council, the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. Established by Royal Charter in 1940, the British Council builds relationships and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries.

As a non-department public body (NDPB) sponsored by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the British Council is required to undergo a tailored review at least once in every Parliament. The principal aims of tailored reviews are to ensure public bodies remain fit for purpose, are well governed and properly accountable for what they do.

The review will provide a robust scrutiny of, and assurance on, the continuing need for the British Council—both its function and its form. It will then assess the

governance and control arrangements in place to ensure they are compliant with the recognised principles of good corporate governance and delivering good value for money. The structure, efficiency and effectiveness of the British Council will be considered throughout the review.

A challenge panel, chaired by a FCO non-executive director, will examine the findings of both stages of the review.

The review will follow guidance published in 2016 by the Cabinet Office: "Tailored Reviews: Guidance on Reviews of Public Bodies" <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tailored-reviews-of-public-bodies-guidance>. The terms of reference for the review can be found on gov.uk.

In conducting this tailored review, officials will engage with a broad range of stakeholders across the UK and overseas, including across UK Government, devolved Administrations, foreign Governments, business and civil society, as well as with the British Council's own staff and management.

I shall inform the House of the outcome of the review when it is completed and copies of the report of the review will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

[HCWS881]

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

### **Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008: Remedial Order**

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Jackie Doyle-Price):** We are today laying a revised non-urgent remedial order, which will enable a sole applicant to apply for a parental order, which transfers legal parenthood after a surrogacy arrangement.

The Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR) published its report about the initial draft remedial order on 2 March 2018. The Government have carefully considered the issues raised in the report and have accepted the recommendations made by JCHR. We have taken additional action so that the revised order ensures that a biological parent in a surrogacy arrangement is not blocked by their relationship status from obtaining legal parenthood.

Surrogacy has an increasingly important role to play in our society, helping to create much-wanted new families for a range of people. The UK Government recognise the value of this in the 21st century where family structures, attitudes and lifestyles are much more diverse.

The revised remedial order reflects an equal approach for a sole applicant or a couple in obtaining legal parenthood after a surrogacy arrangement. The order will allow a six-month period where an existing sole applicant can retrospectively apply for a parental order for a child born through surrogacy.

It will be for the Joint Committee on Human Rights to further scrutinise the revised order, take views from parliamentarians and stakeholders and advise the

Government and Parliament on the appropriateness of the order. The Committee will have 60 days to undertake these considerations and then make recommendations to Parliament, before debates in both Houses.

[HCWS893]

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Gangmasters Licensing Authority & Disclosure and Barring Service: Annual Reports

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Victoria Atkins):** Today the annual reports and accounts for the Gangmasters Licensing Authority 2016-17 [HC 1402] and the Disclosure and Barring Service 2017-18 [HC 1367] are being laid before the House and will be published on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk). Copies of both reports will also be available in the Vote Office.

The 2018-19 business plan for the disclosure and barring service is also being published today and a copy will be placed in the Library of the House and will be made available on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

[HCWS884]

### Immigration

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sajid Javid):** I am today publishing a consultation paper on the design of a compensation scheme that will help to right the wrongs suffered by those of the Windrush generation who have faced difficulties and suffered losses as a result of measures that are in place to tackle illegal immigration [Cm 9654].

I have been very clear both that the Government deeply regret what has happened to some of the Windrush generation and that we are determined to put it right. A series of measures are in place to help achieve this. We are supporting those affected directly to gain confirmation of their immigration status. The Windrush taskforce, established in April, has provided documentation to over 2,000 people to demonstrate their right to live in the UK. We are conducting a lessons learned review, with independent oversight and challenge, to look at what happened and what the Home Office can do to ensure that it acts differently in future. Today I am also fulfilling the commitment to publish the terms of reference and methodology for that review by the summer recess and a copy of each will be placed in the Library of the House. The review aims to complete its findings by the end of March 2019 and I can confirm that the findings from the review will be published.

We also committed to establish a compensation scheme for those who have suffered loss as a result of these difficulties. On 10 May I launched a call for evidence, to help us understand what went wrong, when and the effects it has had on people's lives. That closed on 8 June and we received over 650 responses. I have been moved by the stories people have told. There has been genuine suffering, which should never have happened. I am also inspired by the way many of the respondents moved halfway round the world to help rebuild the UK, and established their homes and lives here. It is also clear from these stories that these are strong communities which support each other and contribute significantly to the life and prosperity of the UK.

I want to move quickly, but carefully, from this initial call for evidence to the next stage. Based on the call for evidence and the independent advice we are receiving from Martin Forde QC, we have designed a consultation exercise to help us build and set up a compensation scheme. We are suggesting the scheme should be open to anyone who would be eligible for assistance of any type under the existing Windrush scheme being operated by the taskforce, and we are consulting on the types of losses and impacts that we should compensate for.

We received representations to extend the initial call for evidence and therefore I am keen to ensure that the consultation exercise is thorough and allows sufficient opportunity for everyone who wants to respond to do so. The consultation will last 12 weeks, closing on 11 October 2018. We are encouraging responses from a wide range of people, but particularly the communities affected. I am working with the Caribbean high commissioners to ensure the consultation reaches the right people abroad. The consultation document will be accessible online and offline. My officials will promote the consultation using appropriate media channels including social media. Throughout the consultation period we will engage with key stakeholders and community organisations to encourage responses, providing copies of the document and guidance for it to be completed, along with the offer of dedicated events with Home Office staff within community groups to facilitate responses. The independent adviser to the scheme, Martin Forde QC, will be talking directly to individuals affected and their representatives, as well as community leaders.

Following the consultation my priority will be to establish a scheme which will pay appropriate compensation as soon as possible. In the meantime, we will continue to offer people direct support to establish their immigration status.

[HCWS887]

### Independent Office for Police Conduct: Annual Report

**The Minister for Policing and the Fire Service (Mr Nick Hurd):** I am today, along with the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, my right hon. Friend the Member for Central Devon (Mel Stride), publishing the 2017-18 annual report and accounts for the Independent Office for Police Conduct [HC 1331]. This will be laid before the House and published on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk). The report will also be available in the Vote Office.

[HCWS886]

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### Grenfell

**The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (James Brokenshire):** Hon. Members will have been moved by the strength, courage and dignity demonstrated by those affected by the Grenfell Tower fire during the commemoration that took place last month marking one year on. I wanted to update the House before the summer recess on the critical work the Government are undertaking in response to the tragedy and broader building safety work.

First, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government continues to work closely with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea to ensure the bereaved and survivors are given the support they need. This includes practical, long-term emotional, and, in some cases, mental health support to ensure all the bereaved and survivors are settled and comfortable in new permanent accommodation.

The latest position is that of 204 households from Grenfell Tower and Walk who need rehousing, 200 households (over 98%) have accepted an offer of either permanent or temporary accommodation, and 142 households have now moved in, of which 96 have moved into their permanent homes and 46 households are currently living in good-quality interim accommodation. The number of households in hotels has reduced to 40, with 19 in serviced apartments and three living with friends and family. My Department is working closely with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea to ensure that the properties acquired for the survivors are safe and ready to move into and I have been assured by the council that the majority of that work is now complete. Twenty Four properties that have been accepted by residents are still being finalised and the vast majority of these are expected to be completed over the summer. I am also continuing to focus on the support that is available to those moving into their new homes through working with the Council to provide a strong package of resettlement support. This includes a range of elements, from helping to provide furniture, packing and removals, support to join community groups in a new local area, and drop-in counselling sessions.

Our support and commitment to the bereaved, victims and wider community remains steadfast.

Secondly, I wanted to update the House on the work we are doing to ensure residents of high-rise buildings are safe and feel safe, now and in the future. The Government are committed to learning lessons from the Grenfell fire and delivering far-reaching change to ensure similar devastation cannot happen again.

In the days following the tragedy, we set up a building safety programme as part of our response. Key initial actions to guide and support this work included:

- establishing an expert panel, chaired by Sir Ken Knight, and an industry response group to advise on and support urgent safety and remediation work; and
- commissioning an independent, forward-looking review of the building regulations and fire safety system, led by Dame Judith Hackitt.

The report by Dame Judith, “Building a Safer Future”, was published on 17 May. As I said in my statement to the House that day, its publication was a watershed moment for everyone who has a stake in ensuring the people living in buildings like Grenfell Tower are safe, and feel safe. Dame Judith called for major reform and a change of culture. The onus should clearly be on everyone involved to manage risk at every stage, and the Government should do more to set and enforce high standards. The Government agree with that assessment and support the principles behind the report’s recommendations for a more effective system.

As Dame Judith acknowledged, delivering fundamental system reform—including changes to the law—will take time and, as I said in May, I will set out our detailed implementation plan in the autumn. But we can, and must, start changing the culture and practice right now. We are therefore delivering key elements of the report.

First, I am pleased to announce that my Department is today publishing the clarified building regulations fire safety guidance (“Approved Document B”) for consultation. The revised guidance will be easier to use and reduce the risk of misinterpretation by those carrying out and inspecting building work. It is a vital first step on the road to reform. A link to the consultation is here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/fire-safety-clarification-of-statutory-guidance-approved-document-b>.

I am also placing the documents in the Library of the House.

I am clear we will not hesitate to go further than the Hackitt recommendations where we deem it necessary. Not only have we launched a consultation on proposals to restrict or ban the use of so-called desktop studies (assessments in lieu of tests) for cladding materials, as recommended by Hackitt, but we have also launched a consultation on proposals to ban the use of combustible materials in the exterior wall construction of high-rise buildings. I have also listened to calls from a number of colleagues, experts and organisations that a wider review of “Approved Document B” is necessary to ensure the guidance reflects innovations in the construction sector and the latest understanding of fire behaviour and protection. With this in mind, I am today announcing the Government will carry out a wider technical review of the guidance on fire safety. We will publish a call for evidence in the autumn inviting views on the technical issues and further improvements that could be made in the approved document.

Reforming the regulatory system requires change across all its aspects. In relation to building safety, I can announce we will introduce a mandatory requirement on landlords in the private rented sector to ensure electrical installations in their property are inspected every five years. This will help drive up standards across the private rented sector and reduce deaths and injuries due to electric shocks and fires caused by electric faults.

We are committed to establishing a more effective regulatory regime for fire and building safety. We have started work with building control bodies, National Fire Chiefs Council, the Health and Safety Executive and others to consider options for a joint competent authority and stronger regime as per the recommendations in the report, and we will set out our implementation plan in the autumn.

The Hackitt review identified a lack of leadership within the construction and fire safety industries as a contributory failure on building safety. I want the construction industry to drive action on building safety now, leading from the front and changing practice and behaviour. We know there are many who are already doing the right thing, and I want to encourage more in the industry to do the same.

I am pleased we have already had support on this and today I can announce that Willmot Dixon, Kier, L&Q and Salix Homes have agreed to be the first of the early adopters on building safety. This is a commitment to prioritising building safety. These organisations will work with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to trial ways of working in line with the Hackitt recommendations and assess benefits in the buildings they are constructing or managing. We would welcome others in industry coming forward to join them.

We also need to ensure residents are given a voice in the system. This is necessary to provide reassurance and recourse across all tenures by providing greater transparency of information on building safety; better involvement in decision-making through the support of resident associations and tenant panels; and a no-risk route of escalation and redress. This was echoed in feedback from tenant events held to inform the social housing Green Paper. We are considering options for addressing these concerns, including through the forthcoming Green Paper.

I can also announce today I intend to set up a residents' reference panel for the life of the building safety programme. This indicates our commitment to residents, and ensures policy is grounded in the experiences of those who live in high-rise buildings.

The Hackitt review also called for the construction and fire safety industries to show more effective leadership in raising the competence of those working on high-rise buildings. I have been pleased to see both the construction and fire sectors come together quickly in the response to this challenge set by Dame Judith, under the stewardship of the Construction Industry Council. We remain in close contact with the industry to see the progress of their proposals on competence, and will stand ready to provide support as required.

I also welcome the work of the Home Office and National Fire Chiefs Council on setting up a new independent fire standards board to produce and own professional standards for fire and rescue services in England. This forms part of the Government's fire reform programme which will make services more accountable, effective and professional. Work is under way to form the board by late summer, with work on the first standards beginning shortly thereafter.

To provide additional oversight of the industry's work, I intend to set up an industry safety steering group. This group will hold industry to account for making cultural change happen, and I can announce today that this will be chaired by Dame Judith Hackitt.

Our focus on delivering the systemic reforms envisaged by the Hackitt review will not distract from the critical work of ensuring people are safe in their homes. Guided by advice from our expert panel, we continue to work closely with fire and rescue services, local authorities and landlords to identify high-rise buildings with unsafe cladding, ensure interim measures are in place to reduce risks, and give building owners clear advice about what they need to do to make buildings safe.

My written statement of 28 June provided an update on our work to identify, test and remediate unsafe cladding systems on high-rise buildings. I announced in that statement the further steps I would be taking to promote swifter action by building owners to remove potentially unsafe cladding on private sector high-rise residential buildings. I expect to chair the first meeting of the new private sector remediation taskforce which will oversee this activity before summer recess. Since 28 June two additional roundtables have been held with industry to work on solutions for individual building owners who cannot resolve building remediation themselves. This work with industry will continue over the summer.

We will also take further steps to ensure there is clarity for building owners about the circumstances in which buildings should be remediated. These steps will

include the production of clear guidance about the circumstances in which decorative or small amounts of aluminium composite material cladding should be remediated. My Department has also written to all relevant building owners to remind them of their responsibilities and I am pleased to be able to report that the National House Building Council has accepted a warranty claim for the New Capital Quay development. I call on others to follow their lead.

Further to my update on building safety on 16 May, my Department is continuing to monitor and facilitate action taken by those who purchased Manse Masterdor fire doors. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is working with the Local Government Association and National Housing Federation to provide advice and support to building owners with these doors.

In my update of 16 May, I also reported that Synseal, the company that took over the Manse Masterdor business, was working with trading standards to ensure its products met relevant standards and had withdrawn its composite 30-minute fire door range. Following further testing of their fire doors, Synseal has informed my Department it has withdrawn its composite and timber fire door range from the market as it does not consistently meet the minimum standard. Based on advice sought from the expert panel, Synseal has written to all customers of Masterdor Ltd (a subsidiary of Synseal) asking building owners to review the fire risk assessment of their buildings to determine how quickly these doors should be replaced. The expert panel has advised me there is no change to the risk to public safety and the failure of Masterdor Ltd fire doors remains a product standards issue which is being overseen by trading standards. My Department is working closely with trading standards on this issue.

Local fire and rescue services continue to provide advice locally and the National Fire Chiefs Council, with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, are monitoring assessments and the action being taken by customers of Manse Masterdor and Masterdor Ltd.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will continue its investigation into the wider fire door market, where we are testing doors from at least 20 suppliers over the next six months.

Nothing is more important than ensuring that people are safe and feel safe in their homes. We have made progress but there is much left to do. I shall provide a further update to the House on this work in the autumn.

[HCWS890]

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

### EU Trade Agreement Impact Analysis and Process

**The Minister for Trade Policy (George Hollingbery):** I am pleased to announce that my Department will today publish an impact assessment for the EU-Singapore free trade agreement (FTA). I have separately written to the scrutiny Committees in both Houses of Parliament such that they can consider this evidence as part of their

important review of this agreement. A copy of this impact assessment will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Negotiations with Singapore concluded in October 2014. The European Commission has now presented the final negotiated texts to the Council of the European Union (Council). The Council will now decide whether to adopt the necessary Council decision authorising signature and conclusion, with a vote in October 2018.

The agreement is expected to promote bilateral trade and economic growth between the EU and Singapore by eliminating most tariffs and reducing non-tariff measures that businesses face when trading goods and services and when investing.

I will also today lay the European Union (Definition of Treaties) (Economic Partnership Agreements and Trade Agreement) (Eastern and Southern Africa States, Southern African Development Community States, Ghana and Ecuador) Order 2018 to designate the Ecuador-EU Andean accession and these economic partnership agreements as treaties in accordance with the European Communities Act 1972.

The EU, Ecuador, Colombia and Peru signed the protocol of accession of Ecuador to the EU-Andean free trade agreement (known as the EU-Andean FTA) on 11 November 2016. The protocol has been provisionally applied since 1 January 2017.

On 28 July 2016, the EU signed an economic partnership agreement (EPA) with Ghana. The EPA has been provisionally applied since 15 December 2016.

On 10 June 2016, the EU signed an economic partnership agreement (EPA) with six countries from the Southern African Development Community (SADC): Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland (now known as Eswatini) (the “SADC EPA states”). The EPA has been provisionally applied since 10 October 2016, except in the case of Mozambique, where it has been provisionally applied since 4 February 2018.

On 24 August 2009, the EU signed an economic partnership agreement (EPA) with the eastern and southern Africa countries: Madagascar, Mauritius, the Seychelles and Zimbabwe (the “ESA countries”). In July 2017, the Comoros signed the agreement, and they are currently in the process of ratification. The EPA has been provisionally applied since 14 May 2012, except in the case of the Comoros, where it will be applied pending ratification by the government of the Comoros. These agreements require ratification by the EU member states to come fully into effect.

I will lay this order concurrently with the laying of the text of the agreements as Command Papers under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act for scrutiny. This is in effect the start of the formal process of ratification of the agreements in the UK.

These agreements will boost the economies of the UK, the EU, and partner countries by promoting trade and economic growth. The European Union’s economic partnership agreements (EPAs) have a development focus that goes beyond trade, by including co-operation and assistance for partner countries. They aim to promote trade—and ultimately contribute, through increased trade and investment, to sustainable development and poverty reduction.

I will also lay before the House an explanatory memorandum to this order. This explains the background and rationale of the agreements and ratification. At the same time, we are publishing our economic impact assessments of these agreements. Copies of these documents are being placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

The Government remain committed to supporting the EU’s ambitious trade and development agendas including the EU free trade agreements they are putting in place. The UK ratification of these agreements while the UK is still an EU member state is a sound demonstration of this commitment.

The Government have been clear they will seek a seamless transition to replicate the effects of the agreements when we leave the EU in line with our policy.

[HCWS882]

## WTO: UK Goods Schedule

**The Secretary of State for International Trade and President of the Board of Trade (Dr Liam Fox):** I have previously informed the House that in order to fulfil our obligations at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) as we leave the European Union we will prepare UK-specific schedules of concessions and commitments. I have today sent to the secretariat of the WTO the UK schedule for goods and I will place a copy in the Library.

This schedule replicates, as far as possible, our current obligations. We see this as a technical exercise for which the WTO’s 1980 procedures provide the appropriate legal mechanism. That will be our first step.

Presenting our own UK schedules at the WTO is a necessary part of our leaving the EU. It does not in any way prejudge the outcome of the eventual UK-EU trading arrangements.

[HCWS878]

## JUSTICE

### Legal Aid (Inquests)

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Lucy Frazer):** The Secretary of State for Justice and I are today launching a call for evidence which seeks information on the experience of bereaved families at inquests.

An inquest is a distinct judicial process. It can be a traumatic ordeal for the bereaved, both in hearing how their loved ones died and through the frustration in the search for answers. That search for the truth, the answers to the unknown questions, is important in helping the bereaved to understand and make sense of tragedies such as this.

The inquest itself is meant to be an inquisitorial process, and as such most inquest hearings are conducted without the need for publicly funded representation. That must be right to ensure they are as accessible as possible to both the bereaved and the wider public. Of course, early legal advice may sometimes be needed and helpful. That is why we have protected early legal advice to support the bereaved in preparing inquests, ensuring

that it remains within the scope of legal aid. It may also be that publicly funded representation at the inquest hearing itself is necessary in certain exceptional circumstances, and if that is the case it should be provided.

Recently, concerns have been levelled against this existing availability of legal aid for inquests. In the light of this, the Ministry of Justice is conducting a review of the current system. This call for evidence forms a key part of this work.

The central aim of this paper is to consider what is needed to ensure that bereaved people have access to the necessary levels of support they need to understand and properly participate at every stage of the proceedings.

The paper seeks to widen our existing evidence base. In particular, we are interested in finding out more about death in custody cases, and cases where there is state involvement in the process. It also seeks to better understand the circumstances in which families may require legal representation to allow for a fair inquest process, and whether changes need to be made to current eligibility criteria.

The paper also includes questions on what can be done beyond the provision of legal aid, to make inquests less adversarial and more sensitive to the needs of bereaved families. This includes looking at the number and actions of lawyers and the style of questioning adopted.

Responses will be used to help us consider whether changes need to be made to existing policies. Any prospective policy options will be presented in a public consultation.

The Government welcome responses from bereaved people, charities, arms-length bodies, the legal profession, experts, and professionals across the system who have experience or involvement in the inquest process.

The call for evidence exercise will run for eight weeks to 31 August 2018.

A copy of the consultation paper will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and will be available online at: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

[HCWS894]

# Petitions

*Thursday 19 July 2018*

## PRESENTED PETITIONS

*Petition presented to the House but not read on the Floor*

### **Home Education: draft guidance and the consultation**

*The petition of residents of South West Wiltshire,*

Declare that the “Home Education—Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Dr Andrew Murrison .]

[P002228]

*The petition of residents of Charnwood constituency,*

Declare that the “Home Education—Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

And the petitioners remain, etc. .]

[P002243]

*The petition of residents of East Lindsey (Boston and Skegness) constituency,*

Declare that the “Home Education—Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks

to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Matt Warman.]

[P002244]

*The petition of residents of Tiverton and Honiton constituency,*

Declare that the “Home Education—Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Neil Parish.]

[P002245]

*The petition of residents of South West Norfolk constituency,*

Declare that the “Home Education—Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

And the petitioners remain, etc. .]

[P002246]

*The petition of residents of Morecambe and Lunesdale,*

Declare that the “Home Education—Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and

further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

And the petitioners remain, etc. .]

[P002247]

#### **School funding in Tiverton and Honiton**

*The petition of residents of Tiverton and Honiton,*

Declares that parents have concerns about funding for schools in the constituency of Tiverton and Honiton; further that Tiverton High School is facing pressure on staff numbers and further that parents and teachers in Tiverton and Honiton are concerned about ability to maintain high school standards.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons does not let those cuts take place.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Neil Parish.]

[P002242]



# ORAL ANSWERS

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**not later than  
Thursday 26 July 2018**

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