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**HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY  
DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**Thursday 6 September 2018**

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## House of Commons

*Thursday 6 September 2018*

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

### PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## Oral Answers to Questions

### DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

*The Secretary of State was asked—*

#### Public Broadcasters

1. **Julian Knight** (Solihull) (Con): What steps he is taking to ensure that public broadcasters reflect and provide for the whole of the UK. [906655]

12. **Mike Wood** (Dudley South) (Con): What steps he is taking to ensure that public broadcasters reflect and provide for the whole of the UK. [906666]

**The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Jeremy Wright):** Public service broadcasters should do what they can to spread prosperity and opportunity across the whole country. For example, my Department has supported Channel 4 in moving 300 and more of its staff outside London and increasing its out-of-London commissioning spend. I look forward to other broadcasters following its example.

**Julian Knight:** First, may I warmly welcome my right hon. and learned Friend and near neighbour to his post? I am sure he will do a superb job.

Does my right hon. and learned Friend think that the decision to run the Government's 5G pilot in the west midlands makes the case for Channel 4's HQ relocation to Birmingham almost unarguable and that that would go some way to closing the regional public broadcast gap?

**Jeremy Wright:** I thank my hon. Friend for his generous welcome. He is right that the 5G testbed announcement is good news for the west midlands. In the longer term, it is good news for the whole country, because it will give us the opportunity to test what 5G can do across a range of different communities.

As far as Channel 4 is concerned, my hon. Friend will understand that I need to be a little careful. As things stand, the Secretary of State, the Minister of State, the shadow Secretary of State and, indeed, our Parliamentary Private Secretaries all come from the west midlands. None of us, of course, would be disappointed if Channel 4 came to the west midlands, but we would all agree that the strongest bid should win and it is up to Channel 4 to decide which that should be.

**Mike Wood:** As well as the 5G pilot, the west midlands has a young and diverse population that reflects the country as a whole. May I tempt my right hon. and learned Friend a little further? Does he agree that those are among the many reasons that Channel 4 coming to Birmingham would not only be good for the west midlands, but would offer some excellent opportunities for Channel 4?

**Jeremy Wright:** It is also worth noting that the west midlands has a young and diverse range of Members of Parliament too, but my hon. Friend is right: it is important for Channel 4 that it has the benefit of the talent that the many regions of the UK can bring to it. I hope that it will pursue that objective, whether it locates itself in Birmingham or in any of the other candidate cities.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): I know that the Secretary of State has to be careful in this matter, but will he carefully consider the bid from West Yorkshire, and Leeds in particular? It is a centre of creativity and of innovation, and is much neglected. Will he bear it in mind that many of these towns and cities with elected mayors with vast resources are spending tens of thousands of pounds on their presentations? We in Leeds and West Yorkshire cannot afford that sort of money.

**Jeremy Wright:** I understand the point that the hon. Gentleman makes. Channel 4 is fortunate in that it has to choose from a number of strong bids from a number of excellent places, but, as I said, this is a decision that Channel 4 must make, and it must do so on the basis of its own requirements, as well as what I hope will be its motivation to spread opportunity across the United Kingdom.

**Ian C. Lucas** (Wrexham) (Lab): Most of the population of the United Kingdom do not live in cities. A superb bid was made by Chester and Wrexham, a smaller city and a town, to Channel 4, but they were not even given a hearing. Does the Secretary of State agree that that was a failure of creative imagination by Channel 4? There is a lot of talent in our towns and in our countryside particularly engaged in this process. Is it not a shame that we have ended up with a list of the usual suspects from which the choice will be made?

**Jeremy Wright:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman to this extent: talent is absolutely located in large and small communities around the country. One of the challenges for broadcasting is to be able to draw on all that talent. The decision that Channel 4 has to make—again, I stress that it is a decision for Channel 4 and not for me—is where to locate its national headquarters. I hope it will do that in an open way. I am sorry to hear about the bid from Wrexham and the surrounding area, but I do think there is an opportunity for Channel 4 and other public service broadcasters to draw on the whole country's talent and what it has to offer.

**Hannah Bardell** (Livingston) (SNP): I welcome the right hon. and learned Gentleman to his place; I look forward to shadowing him. May I put on the record my congratulations to England's and Scotland's women's teams? Shelley Kerr, the manager of Scotland, is also a Livingston lass.

This summer's debacle over the discriminatory censorship of Scottish bloggers using BBC footage by BBC bosses in London shows how out of touch London is with Scotland. By bringing greater commissioning power to Scotland, the BBC would not only better serve Scottish audiences, but benefit viewers throughout the UK, so when will this Government support the SNP in ensuring more autonomy at Pacific Quay?

**Jeremy Wright:** I thank the hon. Lady for her welcome; I look forward to working with her, and I had a very productive meeting with Michael Matheson and Fiona Hyslop while I was in Edinburgh last month. In terms of what the BBC can and should be doing in Scotland, the hon. Lady will know that it takes very seriously its responsibility to reach beyond London and England and into the regions and nations of the United Kingdom. I am sure she will look forward, as I will, to the launch of BBC Scotland early next year. That is one way in which I hope we can demonstrate that the BBC can reach all of us.

### UK Tourism

2. **Craig Tracey** (North Warwickshire) (Con): What steps he is taking to support tourism throughout the UK. [906656]

**The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Jeremy Wright):** Tourism is hugely important for the United Kingdom, and it will be one of my priorities in this Department. We provide financial support through VisitBritain and VisitEngland, which are responsible for promoting the UK through a range of initiatives and campaigns, including the £40 million Discover England fund, which is aimed at encouraging visitors to explore the regions of England beyond London, including, of course, Warwickshire.

**Craig Tracey:** May I also welcome my right hon. and learned Friend to his place? As a fellow Warwickshire MP, he is obviously very aware of the draw that our local area brings. Unfortunately, many miss the opportunity to see the north of the county and the hidden gems up there, such as Middleton hall, our historic towns and the beautiful rural countryside, instead concentrating more on the south of the county. What role can Government initiatives such as the cultural development fund play in helping these lesser known tourist attractions in the north to fully realise their potential?

**Jeremy Wright:** I thank my hon. Friend for his kind words. As he says, I am familiar with the challenge he sets out, and he is right to focus on the cultural development fund, which is £20 million that can be used to open up the potential of various parts of this country. He will know that we are moving in the new year towards an announcement as to who has been successful in their bids under that fund. He is right that it is important that, even in counties such as Warwickshire, we are able to make sure that those visitors who come to the major honeypot attractions such as Warwick castle and Stratford can see what the rest of the county and beyond have to offer, whether that is Middleton hall, Kenilworth castle or other opportunities—there are many of them. Time spent in Warwickshire is time very well spent.

**Mr Gregory Campbell** (East Londonderry) (DUP): The Minister will be aware, I hope, that the R&A will come back to Royal Portrush next year for the first time in 70 years for the Open golf tournament. Would he join me in ensuring that his colleagues in the Cabinet take the decision on VAT on hospitality and air passenger duty to try to ensure that tourism in Northern Ireland receives a much-needed boost in advance of that tremendous tournament?

**Jeremy Wright:** We certainly want to see that be a successful Open championship, and we will look at any way we can to assist. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that there are difficulties at the moment in the absence of an Administration in Belfast, but we will do all we can to help, and I look forward to speaking with him and others about how we might do that.

**Michael Fabricant** (Lichfield) (Con): My right hon. and learned Friend will know the importance of tourism—3 million people are employed in the industry, and it is our fourth largest export—but, for the improved viability of the industry, we need to get a sector deal. It has been submitted to the Department. When are we likely to see the sector deal come through?

**Jeremy Wright:** I understand my hon. Friend's enthusiasm, and as he has heard me say, I entirely share it—I think tourism is something we should focus on in the Department, and we will. In relation to the sector deal, there has been a small further delay, caused, I am afraid, by me, because I wanted to look at that deal to make sure it is as robust and powerful as it possibly can be. However, my hon. Friend should take reassurance, as should the industry, that the reason for that delay is not that I am not enthusiastic about tourism but, quite the reverse, that I am extremely enthusiastic and I want to make this bid as persuasive as it can be.

**Helen Goodman** (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): One key attraction for tourists is the arts, so will the Secretary of State ask the Arts Council to support the very excellent Witham arts centre in Barnard Castle?

**Jeremy Wright:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady. I am not familiar with it yet, but I am sure I soon will be. I will certainly be speaking to the Arts Council about the work it can do across the country, including in her part of the world, to provide support.

### Grassroots Sport Funding

3. **Clive Efford** (Eltham) (Lab): What recent discussions he has had with the (a) Premier League, (b) Football League and (c) Football Association on funding for grassroots sport. [906657]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Tracey Crouch):** I meet the football authorities on a regular basis to discuss a variety of matters, including to ensure that grassroots sport and community projects are better supported than ever before.

**Clive Efford:** It is only four years ago that the then chair of the Football Association, Greg Dyke, announced that there would be a massive investment in expanding

the number of all-weather pitches in our major cities. Just four years on, we are told that we will have to sell Wembley stadium to finance investment in grassroots sport. Is the Minister confident that the FA will use that money for that intention, given the lack of progress it made on the previous plan, which it set out in 2014?

**Tracey Crouch:** The FA has been putting a significant amount of money into grassroots sport over a number of years, and the hon. Gentleman will be well aware that I have negotiated more than £100 million a year of investment into grassroots sport from the premier league, which is double the previous amount, and I am confident that the FA, regardless of whether the sale of Wembley goes through, will continue to invest in all-weather pitches.

**Andrew Bridgen** (North West Leicestershire) (Con): Coalville Town football club is an excellent non-league team offering opportunities to participate for men, women and a plethora of youth teams. What funding is available for Coalville Town and other non-league football teams in my constituency to continue to improve their facilities and their offering of sports participation to my communities?

**Tracey Crouch:** Non-league football is incredibly important in the pyramid of football and many colleagues support their own constituency football clubs, and rightly so because often more vibrant football is played at community level. I would encourage my hon. Friend's football club to look at Football Foundation funding and talk to Sport England about further investment in its facilities.

**Justin Madders** (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): I do not know whether the Minister saw Gary Neville's evidence to the Select Committee, but I thought he made a compelling case about why there is no need to sell Wembley stadium. Why can we not take up his suggestion and use a levy from agents' fees, from which millions of pounds are going out of the game, to fund the grassroots, instead of selling Wembley?

**Tracey Crouch:** Not only did I see Gary's evidence, but I was sat behind him throughout it and gave evidence subsequently to the Committee. I look forward to reading the report when it comes out.

The FA has made it very clear publicly and to the Committee that it does not need to sell Wembley stadium for financial reasons. It thinks this is a good opportunity to invest in the long term for grassroots football. This is a deal for the FA to negotiate, and we are working, as public sector funders in the stadium, to make sure that if we are to consent to a deal, we do so under the right circumstances.

### Personal Data Online

4. **Chris Stephens** (Glasgow South West) (SNP): What plans he has to regulate the processing of personal data by online technology companies. [906658]

**The Minister for Digital and the Creative Industries** (**Margot James**): The Government take the protection of individuals' data very seriously, which is why we introduced the new legislation, the Data Protection

Act 2018 incorporating GDPR—the general data protection regulation—which updates our data protection framework, placing obligations on organisations, including online technology companies, to process people's data lawfully, fairly and transparently.

**Chris Stephens:** A Select Committee report recently gave a withering account of the use of data and ads in our elections, with specific concerns about Facebook being unwilling to investigate claims that its platform was abused by the Russian Government. So can the Minister confirm that the Select Committee recommendations will be implemented in full in order to protect our democratic process?

**Margot James:** The hon. Gentleman raises serious issues of which I am aware. The Government will respond to the Select Committee report very shortly, and I can assure him that the Electoral Commission, the Information Commissioner's Office and the Government will be looking very robustly at the evidence the Select Committee has provided.

**Damian Collins** (Folkestone and Hythe) (Con): Following the Cambridge Analytica data scandal, the Minister will be aware that there are concerns that there may have been other data breaches affecting Facebook user data. These are currently being investigated by the company, but the company alone, and it is under no obligation at all to share the findings of those results. Does the Minister believe that it should be a matter for the regulators and the ICO to check that Facebook is doing its work properly?

**Margot James:** This is a live and ongoing independent investigation by the commissioner and a number of legal proceedings are under way. We continue to expect that all organisations, including Facebook, fully co-operate with the ICO.

**Chi Onwurah** (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): The Government know that data is the driving technology behind so much of our new economy and social change, yet they have done absolutely nothing to put out a coherent data regulation framework. Will the Minister commit to undertaking a data review so that we can identify who owns data and how it should be processed?

**Margot James:** To some degree the hon. Lady's concerns have been addressed by the new provisions in the Data Protection Act and the incorporation of GDPR, but she does make the good point that data extends beyond what has already been covered by that Act, and the Government are in the process of reviewing the whole issue of data with the idea of publishing a national data strategy in due course.

**Scott Mann** (North Cornwall) (Con): There are big opportunities for using big data for good, and I would urge the Minister not to use a sledgehammer to crack a nut. We have many small tech firms starting up in North Cornwall. Can we utilise some of the small and medium-sized companies to pitch for local and national Government contracts? It seems that the big boys can play; I would like some of the small firms to be able to, too.

**Margot James:** I very much agree with my hon. Friend that SMEs have an important role to play in the great opportunities supplied by big data and AI, just as large companies do.

**Tom Watson** (West Bromwich East) (Lab): Welcome back, Mr Speaker, and congratulations to the Secretary of State on his new position. As the Chair of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee has said, Facebook broke the law and allowed illegal data breaches during the EU referendum. The Minister has alluded to the numerous investigations by multiple regulators and police authorities, so is it not now the time, in the public and national interest, to have a Mueller-style inquiry into the conduct of the EU referendum that also examines the role played by the Russian state?

**Margot James:** The hon. Gentleman raises very serious issues. There is no doubt that the law as it stands has been updated, and the ICO has much-increased powers and will be encouraged to use them. There is no doubt that these serious matters concerning the European referendum will be investigated, but it is really not a matter for my Department.

**Tom Watson:** I am afraid that it is partly a matter for the Minister's Department, and we will continue to press her and her colleagues on this.

Google's YouTube is now the No. 1 source of consumption of free music and video. It is estimated to have made £160 billion off the back of content and data created by others. Nearly every sector of our creative industries believes that it abuses its market power through the take-it-or-leave-it rip-off deals that it offers to creators. Is the Minister concerned about this, and if so, what is she going to do about it?

**Margot James:** I am indeed concerned about the rights of independent creative artists, and about their power vis-à-vis the huge power of Google and YouTube. I was disappointed that the recent European vote on the matter was so swayed by Google that it went, in my view, against the interests of artists, and I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we will be looking carefully at what more we can do to protect artists and their rights over their own output.

### Public Libraries: Funding

5. **Gill Furniss** (Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough) (Lab): Whether he has made an assessment of the effect on the viability of public libraries of changes in the level of Government funding for local authorities; and if he will make a statement. [906659]

16. **Bambos Charalambous** (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab): Whether he has made an assessment of the effect on the viability of public libraries of changes in the level of Government funding for local authorities; and if he will make a statement. [906670]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Michael Ellis):** It is of course for each local authority to decide how to use the funding it receives to deliver its local services, including a public library service that meets local needs. We work across

central and local government to encourage investment in sustainable library services so that they can continue to support local and national priorities and needs.

**Gill Furniss:** As the chair of the all-party parliamentary group on libraries, I have spoken to many stakeholders who are concerned by the lack of statistical clarity on libraries. Does the Minister agree with the research analysis published by his own Department that the most complete data on the state of the nation's libraries—the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy statistics—is flawed, and if so, what does he intend to do about this?

**Michael Ellis:** The issue of data as regards libraries is affected by the fact that libraries are the responsibility of local authorities—[*Interruption.*] Of course we still have a lot of data available, because local authorities continue to invest in their library services and their net expenditure has been more than £640 million. We continue to look at the data and at how we compile it with the assistance of local authorities.

**Bambos Charalambous:** Public libraries are community hubs and engines of social mobility, but book stocks in libraries in England have fallen by 15.1 million since 2010. What recent assessment has the Minister made of the effects of the Government's cuts to local authority budgets on public libraries?

**Michael Ellis:** In fact, hundreds of millions of pounds are spent on libraries every year by local authorities. I have seen examples of this, including at the Halifax central library, the Storyhouse in Chester and the Oxfordshire county library. I have been travelling the country visiting libraries, and local authorities in many areas are investing large sums in their libraries because, as the hon. Gentleman says, they are centres of social activity. We do look at the quantum of books, but it is for the local authorities to ensure that their libraries are providing a comprehensive and efficient library service.

**Stephen Crabb** (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con): Will my hon. Friend join me in congratulating libraries across the country which, with the support of the Reading Agency and other partners, delivered another successful summer reading challenge? Does he agree that that initiative is a great way of encouraging young people to build their reading skills and to become regular users of their local libraries?

**Michael Ellis:** I join my right hon. Friend in support of that initiative. In fact, I went to the offices of *The Beano*, and I was given a few free copies that I am putting in the Library for colleagues. I helped to launch the annual summer reading challenge in July, and library services have encouraged children aged between four and 11 to develop their reading skills and their confidence, which is really important.

**Huw Merriman** (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): Due to the high costs of social care in East Sussex, we lost many of our libraries but, rather than having no plan B, a community group took over the running of the library in Pevensey Bay. Will the Minister do more to support community groups across the country, such as the one in Pevensey Bay, and would he like to bring his library card down to Pevensey Bay to check us out?

**Michael Ellis:** I congratulate my hon. Friend and the volunteers in his area on the work that they have done. The reality is that that is exactly what our civil society strategy is all about, and there are areas around the country that are doing just that.

**Mr Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) (Lab):** The Minister has apparently been doing a tour of various areas, but has he been to Derbyshire? Has he had words with the Tory-controlled county council? Almost its first decision was to close 20 libraries in the county—a Tory-controlled council. Get something done about it.

**Michael Ellis:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his question. The fact is irrefutable that Government support for libraries includes funding for the libraries taskforce and Arts Council England, and the Arts Council has made seven library bodies national portfolio organisations. The fact is that they receive—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman is asking me for dancing lessons, but that I cannot offer. However, that raises the point that libraries across the country offer a wide variety of activities. It is not just about loaning books; many social activities are taking place. We support libraries, and each local authority has the responsibility to maintain a comprehensive and efficient library service.

**Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con):** Northamptonshire faces the closure of 21 libraries, including well-supported libraries in Desborough and Rothwell. Will the Minister send in the Department's libraries taskforce to give the county council the best advice on how those libraries might be saved, perhaps through the creation of a libraries trust?

**Michael Ellis:** As my hon. Friend knows, the matter is currently subject to judicial review. In respect of Northamptonshire, it would potentially be a conflict of interest for me to have responsibility for that situation, so the matter has been passed to the Secretary of State. However, I note, as my hon. Friend will know, that the council recently decided to pause its proposed library changes to give further consideration to its proposals for the service, and I am glad about that.

### Broadband and Mobile Phone Coverage

6. **Luke Hall (Thornbury and Yate) (Con):** What steps he is taking to improve broadband and mobile phone coverage in rural areas. [906660]

8. **Peter Heaton-Jones (North Devon) (Con):** What steps he is taking to improve broadband and mobile phone coverage in rural areas. [906662]

17. **Daniel Kawczynski (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con):** What steps he is taking to improve broadband and mobile phone coverage in rural areas. [906671]

**The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Jeremy Wright):** As my hon. Friend the Member for Thornbury and Yate (Luke Hall) knows, our superfast broadband programme has achieved 95% national coverage, but I appreciate that that is of little comfort for people in the remaining 5%. For that reason, the programme is continuing to roll out to further rural areas. We are also

clearing the 700 MHz spectrum to improve mobile coverage, and our full fibre roll-out plans include a strategy to ensure that rural areas are not left behind.

**Luke Hall:** I thank the Secretary of State for that answer and welcome him to his place. South Gloucestershire Council is close to achieving 96.5% coverage of superfast broadband, which is remarkable considering how rural some of the district is. However, some rural communities, such as Bibstone, are being left behind. What assurances can my right hon. and learned Friend provide that South Gloucestershire Council's bid through the Rural Development Programme will be considered and, hopefully, supported to ensure that such communities are not left behind?

**Jeremy Wright:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Although I am sure that the bid to which he refers will be considered, I cannot tell him whether it will be approved. However, I can tell him that there will be support from my Department to get as much of the rural parts of our country as possible covered under the existing superfast broadband programmes and adjuncts to it, of which there are several. Then, we must of course look at full fibre roll-out and ensure that that process gets to as many places as possible. If possible, we will do so in an even more efficient way.

**Peter Heaton-Jones:** I welcome the progress we are making, but will my right hon. and learned Friend work with me, with Connecting Devon and Somerset and with the contract holder, Airband, to ensure that North Devon does not have to wait unduly for a fast, reliable and affordable broadband service?

**Jeremy Wright:** Yes is the short answer but, as you would expect, Mr Speaker, I will not leave it as a short answer. All I will say in addition is that there are a number of ways in which we can help. We want to work with local areas, and there may well be very specific local solutions in areas such as North Devon so that we can expand coverage more successfully.

**Daniel Kawczynski:** The Government's aspiration of full fibre by 2033 is laudable. However, this goal raises concerns about existing public intervention. Some contracts for copper and wireless broadband will subsequently need to be over-built. How will the Government ensure that rural areas like mine in Shropshire are treated equitably for full fibre deployment?

**Jeremy Wright:** I offer my hon. Friend the reassurance that, in relation to the process that is under way, I expect that a considerable amount of the infrastructure will be reused in the full fibre roll-out process, so there will not be as much over-building as he fears. On the full fibre roll-out, he may have noted that at the end of July we set out plans for what we describe as an outside-in strategy—in other words, making sure that rural areas such as the one he represents in Shropshire will be covered alongside the market roll-out in those areas that the market will cover.

**Caroline Flint (Don Valley) (Lab):** Many of my constituents would not recognise the coverage figures that the Secretary of State put out today. Nearly a third of my constituency—more than 30 towns and villages—has very slow access or no access at all. Teachers call me

because they cannot mark homework at night, and young people who have bought housing on a new housing development find that they are not connected to fibre broadband. That is not acceptable, and I hope the Secretary of State, in his new position, will take the time to speak to me and other MPs on both sides of the House who feel that our communities are being let down.

**Jeremy Wright:** I am grateful to the right hon. Lady, and the two points she makes are entirely right. First, people are coming to expect good-quality broadband connections, and they have a right to expect them, because many areas of activity now need to be carried out online.

Secondly, it is important that we do not build new houses without decent-quality broadband connections, or the capacity to make those connections. The right hon. Lady will understand that I want to look carefully at what measures the Government might be able to take, up to and including legislative measures if necessary.

**Nic Dakin** (Scunthorpe) (Lab): The people of Cleatham, Manton and Greetwell keep being promised superfast broadband by North Lincolnshire Council and BT Openreach, and the date keeps moving away. What can be done to make sure these things are delivered, rather than continuing to go further and further away?

**Jeremy Wright:** It seems there are a number of different ways of approaching the broadband challenge. The Government support a number of different programmes, perhaps not all of which are known about in every corner of the country. I am happy to write to the hon. Gentleman with further details of those programmes to make sure they are all canvassed in his area.

**Ben Lake** (Ceredigion) (PC): What consideration has the Secretary of State given to the merit of changing the way in which spectrum is awarded so as to facilitate spectrum sharing and better rural mobile connectivity?

**Jeremy Wright:** The hon. Gentleman is right that we must look carefully at the way in which spectrum auctions are conducted. He will know that Ofcom is now considering the best way to auction the next section of the spectrum. We will continue to urge Ofcom to do that in a way that maximises the ability of most parts of this country to benefit.

### Leaving the EU: Creative Industries

7. **Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the effect on the viability of UK creative industries of the UK leaving the EU without a deal.

[906661]

**The Minister for Digital and the Creative Industries (Margot James):** The creative industries are a major economic and cultural success story for the UK, contributing £91.8 billion to the economy in 2016. The Government firmly believe that a deal with the EU is in the best interests of both the UK and the EU, and we are working to ensure that the creative industries' success continues after exit, whether or not a deal can be reached.

**Kerry McCarthy:** The Creative Industries Federation is advising its members to prepare for what it describes as the "catastrophic" consequences of no deal, which will mean higher costs, delays, barriers to trading in Europe and, potentially, the loss of employees and access to funding, too. The Prime Minister might think that no deal is not the end of the world, but for many creative industries it could mean the end of their businesses. What will the Minister do to help them?

**Margot James:** I assure the hon. Lady that I am in touch with the Creative Industries Federation and very much understand its concerns. My Department is working with the Home Office to ensure that, post Brexit, the industry will continue to have access to the best skills and talent from wherever in the world it comes.

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): Does the excellent Minister agree that coming out of the EU will be of great benefit to the creative industries? If there was a no deal, could a little bit of the £40 billion we would not give to the EU be spent on the creative industries?

**Margot James:** As I said earlier, the Government are working hard to get a deal, because, no, we do not think that exiting from the EU without a deal would be to the benefit of the creative sector or, indeed, any other sector.

### Topical Questions

T1. [906673] **Chris Stephens** (Glasgow South West) (SNP): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

**The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Jeremy Wright):** It is a privilege to have been appointed Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport at the start of a very busy summer for the Department and its sectors, not least with England reaching the semi-finals of the World cup. That was the point at which I took over, and England made no further progress. However, Gareth Southgate and his team deserve congratulations, not just on their performance, but on the way they showed the power that sport has to bring us together. We have also welcomed millions of tourists to the United Kingdom this summer, including to the Edinburgh festivals and fringe, which I had the pleasure of attending last month, and where I was able to welcome colleagues from across the world to the international culture summit.

Finally, if you will allow me, Mr Speaker, may I offer my congratulations to the new Attorney General, who I am pleased to see in his place? I wish him well in that hugely rewarding role and thank the Solicitor General for the tremendous support he gave me and which I know he will offer to my right hon. and learned Friend.

**Chris Stephens:** I welcome the Secretary of State to his place. He omitted to mention that Glasgow recently co-hosted the European athletics championships, which provided a great economic boost to the city. Earlier in the year, however, the EU Home Affairs Sub-Committee was advised that major sporting events may shun Britain after Brexit, so will he tell us what engagement he has



had with sporting bodies and the devolved nations on the potential impact of that, and will he report on his findings?

**Jeremy Wright:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind welcome and apologise to him for the omission; he will understand that it has been a remarkable summer of sport and listing all of it would, I am sure, have antagonised Mr Speaker. The hon. Gentleman is right to point out Glasgow's success in that regard. There has been a great deal of engagement, not least that involving the Sport Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch). We shall continue to engage as much as we can.

**Maggie Throup** (Erewash) (Con): Shockingly, only 17% of the tech workforce are women. I therefore welcome the recent announcement of a digital skills innovation fund of £1 million, which is there to help under-represented groups. Will the Minister outline what further measures are being taken to ensure that our digital economy is accessible and diverse?

**The Minister for Digital and the Creative Industries (Margot James):** Diversity in the tech sector is vital. In addition to the digital skills partnership, which is bringing government and industry together to solve these problems, we are also backing the tech talent charter, which is driving diversity, especially regarding gender, across the sector.

**Tom Watson** (West Bromwich East) (Lab): As the Secretary of State will know, 300 newspapers have closed in the past decade and there are 6,000 fewer local journalists than there were in 2007. That is hardly surprising, given that two companies, Facebook and Google, control nearly 60% of global online advertising revenues, using content created by local journalists, playing their role in our democratic system. Does he think that that duopoly is healthy for journalism and local democracy in the UK?

**Jeremy Wright:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that. The position he sets out and the problem he raises is one of the most serious we face, certainly within my Department and, arguably, beyond. He will appreciate that I want to understand this issue properly before I start to set out any decisions. This is an issue where cross-party discussions are useful and I hope we will be able to have those discussions together—perhaps even live, rather than on Twitter. It would also be helpful to have the conclusions of the Cairncross review, of which he will be aware. I met Frances Cairncross yesterday to talk through some of her preliminary thoughts on the way in which her investigations are proceeding, and I look forward very much to what she has to say on the issues he has raised.

**Tom Watson:** I thank the Secretary of State for that answer. I know he is new to his brief, but I was hoping that his Front-Bench team could provide more reassurance on the protection of voters and consumers, and show more interest in protecting the music industry and local newspapers. The problem seems to be that the Government as a whole are either unwilling or unable to deal with the market dominance of the big tech giants. The Opposition believe that these companies are running

rings around Governments, legislators and regulators. There is no better example of that than Mark Zuckerberg's cowardly refusal to appear before the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee. Even Rupert Murdoch did that. Does the Secretary of State agree that the time is now right for a new single, powerful regulator to take on the big tech giants and redress this huge imbalance of market power?

**Jeremy Wright:** Well, the other aspect that the hon. Gentleman has not mentioned but about which I know he shares my concern is the range of online harms, on which we can realistically expect more assistance from the tech companies than we currently get. We need to think about a whole range of areas. The truth is that the tech economy has changed dramatically, as has the online companies' power. The hon. Gentleman will understand that I want to make sure that whatever the actions this Government and this country take, they are properly thought through. That is for two reasons: first, they will be substantially attacked, and the hon. Gentleman knows that; and secondly, I very much hope that they will be an example to the world, and that will be so only if we have thought them through properly and designed them carefully, so that they are robust under scrutiny. He has my reassurance that that is exactly the process with which I intend to engage.

**Mr Speaker:** I gently remind the House that topical questions and answers are supposed to be substantially shorter than those for substantive questions. We are behind time. I seek to help colleagues, but colleagues must help each other. Single-sentence questions are in order; a great exemplar of that, I am sure, will be Mr Stephen Kerr.

**Stephen Kerr** (Stirling) (Con): Given the announcement last week that RootsTech will hold a global event next October at the ExCeL in London—the first time the event has been held outside North America; it will be attended by 10,000 enthusiastic family-history professionals and so forth—what is the Minister's estimation of the value of family history to the UK and to Scotland's cultural economy?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Michael Ellis):** As heritage Minister, I think family heritage is extremely important.

T2. [906674] **Stephen Kinnock** (Aberavon) (Lab): Thanks to the Welsh Government in Cardiff, the infrastructure is in place for the majority of my constituents to have superfast broadband, but for many the cost is prohibitive. Will the Secretary of State commit to taking on the broadband providers, to make superfast broadband more affordable for my constituents?

**Jeremy Wright:** We are all interested in the provision of superfast broadband at reasonable rates for those in Wales and elsewhere. The hon. Gentleman will understand that there is an overlap—particularly when it comes to the delivery of such services to very rural areas—between what can be done in fixed broadband and what can be done in mobile telephony. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman also speaks to his colleagues in the Welsh Government about the planning changes that are necessary to enable

more mobile infrastructure to be rolled out more quickly. Those changes have been made in England and Scotland, but not yet in Wales.

**Vicky Ford** (Chelmsford) (Con): Given the Home Secretary's comments this week about internet safety, will the Secretary of State confirm that the Government's internet safety strategy will ensure that tech companies have to manage their content more responsibly?

**Jeremy Wright:** Yes. I hope that was quick enough, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** Excellent.

T3. [906676] **Mary Creagh** (Wakefield) (Lab): Arts Council England has awarded £750,000 to the Hepworth Gallery and Yorkshire Sculpture Park—both in Wakefield—and the Henry Moore Institute and Leeds Art Gallery, to stage the first ever Yorkshire Sculpture International, which will put Yorkshire firmly on the international art map. Will the Minister make sure that he puts the opening in his diary?

**Michael Ellis:** I thank the hon. Lady for her question. Wakefield has a thriving cultural and museums sector. I am looking forward to visiting the Hepworth, Yorkshire Sculpture Park and the National Coal Mining Museum. I am looking forward to a visit to Wakefield soon.

**David Duguid** (Banff and Buchan) (Con): When it comes to superfast broadband, Scotland still lags behind the rest of the UK. Will my hon. Friend update the House on plans to allow Scottish local authorities to bid directly for UK Government funding?

**Margot James:** My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State made it clear earlier that full fibre roll-out plans will ensure that rural parts of my hon. Friend's constituency are not left behind, whether that investment is made commercially or via the public purse.

T4. [906677] **Neil Coyle** (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (Lab): The UN concluded that false reports on Facebook contributed to Myanmar genocide and that its algorithms contributed towards violence against refugees in Germany. The Secretary of State says that he needs to think about these issues, but will he back the deputy leader of the Labour party, my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich East (Tom Watson), with his "nospaceforhate" campaign and support proposals for a new regulator with the power to fine social media companies that fail to act against false reports and hate speech on their platforms?

**Jeremy Wright:** What the hon. Gentleman raises is hugely important and we will certainly consider ideas from wherever they come. As Secretary of State, I do not take the view that just because an idea comes from a Labour Front Bencher it is automatically bad—the odds are good that that will be the case, but the idea will not be automatically bad—so I will, of course, consider these ideas from wherever they come.

**Rachel Maclean** (Redditch) (Con): Will the Secretary of State congratulate Andy Street and his team on successfully securing £50 million of Government investment for 5G technology in the midlands? How might my constituents in Redditch benefit from this?

**Margot James:** I am delighted that my hon. Friend is so pleased with the good news. The 5G pilot will benefit constituents across the west midlands in many different ways, such as regarding health, but it would probably take me too long to actually go into detail.

**Mr Speaker:** Well done.

T5. [906678] **Meg Hillier** (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op): I am proud to represent the beating heart of emerging tech and digital businesses in Hackney South and Shoreditch, but dismayed that still, according to the Centre for Towns and the House of Commons Library, my constituency is ranked 384th out of 650 for broadband speed. I welcome the Secretary of State's tone on broadband, but will he make sure that areas such as mine also get the benefit?

**Margot James:** We will work very hard to bring the benefit of superfast broadband to all residents. I am aware that there are pockets of London where speeds are inadequate and unsatisfactory, as the hon. Lady has just described. Where an area is commercially viable, it is difficult for the Government to intervene, but we are in close contact—

**Mr Speaker:** I call Robert Courts.

**Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): Will Ministers commit to working with providers so that when much-needed broadband and mobile upgrades are rolled out to rural areas, roads are properly repaired? Ideally, infrastructure should be put in verges.

**Margot James:** My Department is working with local government to ensure that all local authorities step up to the plate with regard to their streets. Planning obstacles should be much reduced so that my hon. Friend's constituents can benefit from superfast broadband.

T6. [906679] **Seema Malhotra** (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): Earlier this year, BT announced that it was set to hire 3,000 engineers to fill broadband notspots in cities and suburban areas. What assessment has the Minister made of progress in areas such as the Meadows estate in my constituency, which has been blighted for far too long by BT inaction? Will she meet me to understand the specific issues that those residents are facing?

**Margot James:** I am very aware of the difficulties that the hon. Lady quite rightly complains about. I am willing to meet her to discuss the needs of her constituents.

**Tom Pursglove** (Corby) (Con): For three days every two years, I put everything else to one side and consider myself to be a European. Will my hon. Friend join me in wishing Team Europe all the very best for wresting back the Ryder cup in Paris later this month?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport** (Tracey Crouch): I will certainly do that. I thought that yesterday's wildcard picks were very sensible, bringing in a level of experience to the rookie team that had automatically qualified. As part of my ministerial duties, I look forward to supporting the team in Paris.

T7. [906680] **Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): Scotland's land mass is two thirds the size of England's, and we have more challenging geography and islands to cover, yet when it comes to broadband funding, Scotland gets only a fifth of what England gets. Why is that?

**Margot James:** Broadband coverage is improving in Scotland. Continuing the improvements is a matter for not only my Department, but the companies, the sector and the Scottish Government.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I am sorry to disappoint colleagues, but we really must move on.

## ATTORNEY GENERAL

*The Attorney General was asked—*

### Knife Crime: Prosecution Rates

1. **Sarah Jones** (Croydon Central) (Lab): What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on improving prosecution rates for knife crime. [906696]

**The Solicitor General (Robert Buckland):** We are working closely with other Departments to urgently tackle this issue, which we recognise as a national priority. As a member of the inter-ministerial group on serious violence, we are playing a central role in the delivery of the serious violence strategy, which looks to address violent offending to improve knife crime prosecution rates.

**Sarah Jones:** The proportion of people receiving a custodial sentence for knife possession has risen from 40% in 2010 to almost 70% today, yet in the past five years there has been a sustained and shocking increase in knife crime, suggesting that harsher sentences simply are not the answer. Will the Attorney General look at two things: first, some creative alternatives to prison, such as electronic tagging or banning young people from social media if they use it to incite violence; and, secondly, more ways to reduce reoffending through education and rehabilitation to keep young people out of the prison system?

**The Solicitor General:** I know that the hon. Lady has a keen local interest in the issue, which affects Croydon as much as other parts of our country. I do not think that there is a direct correlation. We have seen a rise in knife crime since early 2016, and it is right that we have approached the issue of possession in a more serious way. However, I take her points about causation on board. I recently visited the Ben Kinsella Trust in north London, with which I know she is familiar. I am deeply impressed by the trust's work with young people, and it is that sort of interventionist approach at an early stage that can help to deal with this problem.

**Bim Afolami** (Hitchin and Harpenden) (Con): What conversations have the Solicitor General or the Attorney General had across Government and with retailers about cutting down on the online sale of knives?

**The Solicitor General:** My hon. Friend may be aware that we are working on the new Offensive Weapons Bill, which is going through the House. That Bill includes a measure to make it an offence to deal with knives bought online being sent to residential addresses without appropriate safeguards.

**Mr Speaker:** I call Mr Barry Sheerman.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): Question 2, Mr Speaker.

**The Attorney General (Mr Geoffrey Cox)** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** I do apologise to the right hon. and learned Gentleman, but I think that the hon. Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire North (Gavin Newlands) wishes to come in on Question 1 from the Front Bench.

**Gavin Newlands** (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): Thank you very much Mr Speaker; you are forgiven. I welcome the Attorney General to his post, and it is good to see the indefatigable Solicitor General still in his place.

Given the current knife crime epidemic in England and Wales, with rates up by 54% in three years, I know that the Government and the Met have been looking to Scotland, and particularly Glasgow, where hospital admissions for slashes and stab wounds have fallen by 65% in 12 years. Will the Solicitor General update the House regarding what policies and practices enacted in Glasgow will be replicated in London, or in England and Wales more widely, following a delegation visiting Glasgow?

**The Solicitor General:** Yes, the hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to raise the excellent Glasgow example. I am making plans to visit Glasgow as soon as possible. Only last month I spoke to the Scottish Law Officers about their experience. I am deeply interested and want to learn more as quickly as possible.

### Serious Fraud Office

2. **Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): What recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the performance of the Serious Fraud Office. [906697]

**The Attorney General (Mr Geoffrey Cox):** Serious fraud losses are estimated at over £190 billion a year. The SFO is an essential component of our national effort against financial crime. It is responsible for some of the largest and most complex cases. In the past five financial years, 25 out of 30 of its prosecutions resulted in convictions, which is a rate of 83%. I thank Sir David Green for his leadership and guidance in the last six years of momentous legislative change. The SFO is an important and central player, and it will remain so with the Government's commitment. It is a vital part of our national effort against fraud.

**Mr Sheerman:** The Attorney General knows that I have a keen interest in this area and that I, like many Members on both sides of the House, want to see an effective and efficient Serious Fraud Office. We are still seriously concerned that if the SFO is not resourced well enough, and does not have enough staff and sufficient

budget to do the job, it will increasingly become reliant on the big accountancy and legal firms. He knows the problem, so will he meet a few Members from across the parties to talk about this?

**The Attorney General:** I am always willing to have a constructive dialogue with the hon. Gentleman and any Opposition Member, but I must say that I do not recognise the problem. I have inquired into this issue with the SFO and there is no significant commissioning of the big four. We have increased the SFO's core budget and we are still making available blockbuster funding for large cases. With the new director giving fresh energy and a fresh perspective to the leadership of the SFO, I hope that we shall see an already good performance much improved.

**Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con):** How much of that £190 billion of financial fraud has been successfully prosecuted?

**The Attorney General:** In the past four financial years, £650 million of financial penalties has been recovered by deferred prosecution agreements. Millions of pounds have been recovered. The total cost of the total amounts of fraud that have been prosecuted amounts to hundreds of millions.

### Criminal Legal Aid

3. **Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP):** What discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Justice on recent changes to criminal legal aid. [906698]

**The Attorney General (Mr Geoffrey Cox):** As the hon. Gentleman will know, legal aid policy does not lie within the ministerial responsibilities of the Attorney General, but I have met the Secretary of State already and will do so regularly to discuss matters of common interest in respect of our departmental responsibilities. As Attorney General, I have a particular interest in the legal professions, and I am concerned to ensure that the professions' standards remain high and that they are able to attract entrants of the highest calibre. To that end, I am pleased that the Ministry of Justice continues to make provision of £1.6 billion a year in legal aid. It has recently allocated an additional £15 million to the advocates' graduated fee scheme for Crown court representation. It has published its proposals, and I hope that they will be welcomed by the criminal Bar.

**Alan Brown:** Anyone who cares about the legal aid system will be aware that there are challenges. The Scottish Government have undertaken a review of legal aid to make the system simpler, more flexible and more cost-effective. Will the Attorney General discuss with the Justice Secretary undertaking a similar review and following the recommendations of the Justice Committee report on that?

**The Attorney General:** I am aware of the Scottish Government's review and will be interested to see the Scottish Government's response, which I understand is still awaited. We are carrying out our own review of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012. It is a careful review of the policies and

choices made in that legislation. Evidence is currently being gathered. A second round of meetings took place in July, and over 80 organisations have already engaged with this. The evidence is due to be submitted by the end of this month, and we will publish the review later this year.

**Mrs Kemi Badenoch (Saffron Walden) (Con):** Can my right hon. and learned Friend assure the House that a sufficient number of criminal legal aid lawyers can provide suitable coverage across the country?

**The Attorney General:** The Legal Aid Agency maintains a watch on this. The number of offices and solicitors' firms to which franchises have been granted has increased. However, we clearly need to maintain a close watch on this. In my capacity as being interested in the prosperity, welfare and health of the legal professions, I shall certainly keep a close eye on it.

### Economic Crime

4. **Sir Henry Bellingham (North West Norfolk) (Con):** What support he is providing to the CPS to tackle economic crime. [906699]

6. **Nigel Mills (Amber Valley) (Con):** What support he is providing to the CPS to tackle economic crime. [906701]

**The Attorney General (Mr Geoffrey Cox):** Tackling economic crime requires a sophisticated multi-agency and cross-Government response. The Crown Prosecution Service is a vital part of that response. It prosecutes some of the more serious and complex cases, recovering a huge amount of ill-gotten gains. The Government are committed to tackling economic crime. We are introducing a programme of reforms to bring forward shortly, in particular, as my hon. Friend the Member for North West Norfolk (Sir Henry Bellingham) will know, the National Economic Crime Centre.

**Sir Henry Bellingham:** I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his well-deserved appointment. How effective does he believe that the new unexplained wealth orders will be in obtaining funds from criminals and their associates? How will this be applied to foreign criminals? Has he made any assessment of how much money will be raised in the next financial year, and how will that money be spent?

**The Attorney General:** Unexplained wealth orders are a particularly valuable part of the armoury of the law enforcement agencies against corruption and bribery. They are a novel tool. The Government and the law enforcement agencies are looking at the correct and appropriate cases in which to use them. I am not aware of whether there has yet been any estimate of what might be realised by their use, but I expect that considerable numbers of them will be used over the coming months. An exercise is being undertaken to scope the first few to be started.

**Nigel Mills:** Will my right hon. and learned Friend update the House on the impact of the introduction of deferred prosecution agreements in tackling cases of economic crime, and particularly corruption and bribery?

**The Attorney General:** This has been a particular success story. The current numbers, as I said earlier, show that these agreements have realised £650 million in penalties. They have been applied to some of the biggest multinational corporations in the country, ranging from banks to major supermarkets. They are a valuable tool, and I hope to see an increased use of them, but they have to be used carefully, because plainly they are not a substitute for prosecution; they can only be used in the right circumstances where, according to the code, they are the appropriate action.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab):** I welcome the Attorney General to his role and wish him well.

An essential part of our action against economic crime is tough action internationally, including a public register of beneficial ownership of companies based in the overseas territories, yet in a debate on 1 May, the Attorney General spoke out about that, saying about publicity:

“All it will mean is that the money goes to where it is darkest”.—  
[*Official Report*, 1 May 2018; Vol. 640, c. 203.]

Has the Attorney General now changed his mind?

**The Attorney General:** I am disappointed with the hon. Gentleman. As we get to know each other, he will realise that that is not the sort of approach I would take. Let me explain to him what I said, and if he reads *Hansard*, he will be able to check it. I said that the means being proposed in the House at that time—namely the imposition of legislation from the centre—offended the devolved settlement that had been given to the Cayman Islands. I fully support the substantive policy of the Government, which is the increase of the use of public registers. I raised the subject at the “Five Eyes” conference last week and urged other countries to follow our example.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:** I am always sorry to disappoint, but I have to say to the Attorney General that I have read *Hansard* very thoroughly and the numerous interventions he made about that. I was disappointed with the main thrust of his answer. If the Government are serious about transparency of our overseas territories, surely the Attorney General must be enthusiastic about it. Can he completely recant what he previously said?

**The Attorney General:** I repeat: the fact of the matter is that I did not say what the hon. Gentleman says I said. I objected on a constitutional ground that a devolved settlement was being overridden. I fully support the transparency policy of the Government, and if he looks more closely at *Hansard*—I can take him through it—he will see that I am right.

**Mr Speaker:** I call Will Quince—[*Interruption.*] I do beg the hon. Lady’s pardon; it is not personally directed at the hon. Member for Newport East (Jessica Morden).

#### Victims and Witnesses: Support

5. **Jessica Morden (Newport East) (Lab):** What steps the CPS is taking to support victims and witnesses giving evidence in court. [906700]

**The Solicitor General (Robert Buckland):** The CPS continues to work with criminal justice partners to ensure that the support offered to victims and witnesses

is tailored to meet their needs. Prosecutors will meet victims and witnesses before they give evidence to explain what is likely to happen in court and consider whether special measures such as screens or TV links can be used to help them to give their evidence.

**Jessica Morden:** Registered intermediaries support children and vulnerable witnesses in court, but as BBC Wales reported last week, there is only one for the whole of Wales, including Gwent. In view of that, is the Solicitor General confident that equal access to justice is being delivered?

**Mr Speaker:** I am very glad that we have heard from the hon. Lady. It was worth waiting for.

**The Solicitor General:** I was concerned to hear that report, because I myself have used registered intermediaries as a prosecutor, and I know that they have been readily used in courts across the length and breadth of Gwent and south Wales. I note that there has been an increase in recruitment in the south-east of England. I will take on board the hon. Lady’s point and make further inquiries so that we can ensure that there is equal access to intermediaries throughout the length and breadth of the jurisdiction.

**Rachel Maclean (Redditch) (Con):** Given the pressures of giving evidence in court, including for victims of rape, does my hon. and learned Friend agree that it is right that the Government have allocated £96 million of Government investment to support mental health services and vulnerable witnesses?

**The Solicitor General:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her question. She is absolutely right to identify the important funding that will support witnesses giving evidence. Without witnesses giving evidence, prosecutions will not succeed.

**Nick Smith (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab):** By when will the Government introduce the measures necessary to prevent victims of domestic violence from being questioned by perpetrators in family courts?

**The Solicitor General:** The hon. Gentleman knows that that is and remains a key manifesto commitment for our Government. We want to introduce it via new domestic violence legislation. My colleagues in the Home Office are working on a draft Bill, and I very much hope that it will be introduced for parliamentary consideration as soon as possible this year.

**Thangam Debbonaire (Bristol West) (Lab):** Will the Solicitor General provide further clarification about the additional protections needed in the prosecutions of victims of child sexual exploitation, particularly when there sometimes appears to be a blurring of the line between victim and perpetrator?

**The Solicitor General:** It is right to identify the sometimes difficult and delicate choices that have to be made by the police and prosecutors when it comes to dealing properly with the victims of this appalling crime, who have often had no voice at all. A range of available measures need to be used, and they are now becoming the norm in our courts. I think we can go even further,

such as by looking at a presumption that special measures will apply in such cases without the need for an application. I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her question.

### Unduly Lenient Sentence Scheme

**7. Will Quince** (Colchester) (Con): What recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the unduly lenient sentence scheme. [906703]

**The Solicitor General (Robert Buckland):** Last year, the unduly lenient sentence scheme involved the referral by the Attorney General and me of 173 cases to the Court of Appeal. Of those 173 cases, the Court of Appeal agreed that 144 were unduly lenient. The scheme remains an important avenue for victims, family members and the public to ensure that justice is delivered.

**Will Quince:** I thank the Solicitor General for that response. Does he agree that urgent attention should be given to extending the unduly lenient sentence scheme to cover the production and/or distribution of indecent images of children?

**The Solicitor General:** We are giving urgent consideration to extending the scope of the scheme, and I have said on record that I strongly advocate the scheme's extension to that type of offence. Online abuse of children is as insidious as abuse offline, and it can be achieved in a much quicker timeframe than has been the case. I want to make sure that the public have full confidence in the system, and that is why I strongly support the extension of the scheme in that respect.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Solicitor General for his response. Will he carry out a review of sentencing on the basis of the successful applications to the unduly lenient sentence scheme? I think that it is important to have a review.

**The Solicitor General:** I reassure the hon. Gentleman that, happily, we are dealing with a small number of the about 80,000 cases prosecuted in the Crown court in England and Wales. Day in and day out, our judges are complying with the guidelines, where appropriate, and getting it right. This scheme is an important safety valve to ensure that we get maximum consistency and confidence, as well as guidance from the Court of Appeal on sentences for new offences.

**Neil O'Brien** (Harborough) (Con): What action is my hon. and learned Friend taking to increase public awareness of this important scheme?

**The Solicitor General:** We can see an increase in public interest—we have reached a figure of nearly 1,000 inquiries from members of the public and agencies this year. We are using social media and the mainstream media to publicise the scheme, talking about individual cases of note and making sure that as many people as possible, including victims and their families, know about their rights.

**Melanie Onn** (Great Grimsby) (Lab): In July, a 13-year-old took to the rooftops in Grimsby and caused over £2,000 of damage—tearing down tiles, throwing them

at police cars and hitting a police officer. Frankly, he has been causing misery for his neighbours and the whole town for months. He has just been given a year's supervision, a curfew and a fine of just £20. What confidence can the Solicitor General give to people in Grimsby that this sentence will be effective in deterring other young people from behaving in such a lawless fashion?

**The Solicitor General:** The hon. Lady rightly raises a case of great concern to her constituents, and we as constituency MPs will have similar experiences. I cannot comment on the individual case, but it sounds to me as though it probably would not be within the scheme.

**Melanie Onn:** What confidence?

**The Solicitor General:** Indeed, the question the hon. Lady asks is about confidence, and we are playing our part as Law Officers to ensure that it increases. The fact that she has raised the case today will again help those responsible to understand the need for consistency when it comes to dealing with serious offences.

### Modern Slavery: Prosecutions

**8. Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): What steps the CPS is taking (a) domestically and (b) internationally to increase the effectiveness of prosecutions for modern slavery. [906704]

**9. John Lamont** (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) (Con): What recent discussions he has had with the CPS on the effectiveness of prosecutions in cases involving modern slavery. [906707]

**The Solicitor General (Robert Buckland):** The Director of Public Prosecutions and I are members of the Prime Minister's taskforce on modern slavery, which aims to do more to bring perpetrators to justice and support victims both here and overseas. The Crown Prosecution Service has recently announced an increase in prosecutions for modern slavery, and I will meet the DPP further to discuss how that good work can continue.

**Kerry McCarthy:** I welcome the fact that the number of prosecutions has gone up, I think by 27%. Is the Solicitor General having discussions about how we treat young people who are involved in county lines? Will they be treated as criminals, or as the victims of, in many cases, modern slavery?

**The Solicitor General:** I know the hon. Lady takes a keen interest in this issue through her all-party group and in other work, and she hits the nail on the head when it comes to the difficult decisions that are sometimes made. I assure her that the typology on county lines that the CPS published only a few months ago has a particular focus on such issues. There will be times when a decision to prosecute must be made, but many of the people involved—particularly young people—are victims who need support.

**John Lamont:** In Scotland the police are alarmed by the rise in reports of potential human trafficking offences, and those individuals and gangs do not stop at the border. What discussions is the Solicitor

General having with his counterparts north of the border to ensure that there is a UK-wide approach to this issue?

**The Solicitor General:** As a border MP, my hon. Friend knows the issue acutely. In February 2016 the Directors of Public Prosecutions for England and Wales and for Northern Ireland, and indeed the Lord Advocate for Scotland, met and pledged their commitment to providing a whole-of-UK approach to human trafficking and slavery. As a result, quarterly meetings are held at official level between the jurisdictions, and there is a regular exchange of information and best practice to make sure we get it right.

**Paul Masterton (East Renfrewshire) (Con):** The chain of trafficking offences is often complex and runs across several jurisdictions. How are we working with other countries to increase the number of prosecutions?

**The Solicitor General:** We place a heavy emphasis on international work, and we are currently working with 25 Europe-based inquiries. We have 30 prosecutors in other countries who focus on this type of work, as well as on other types of crime. Our commitment is clear.

**Mr Speaker:** It has been pointed out to me that the Attorney General and the Solicitor General would make a very good singing duo, although any performance would have to take place outside the Chamber. I hope the Attorney General enjoyed his debut at the Dispatch Box as much as I did.

## Business of the House

10.42 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 10 SEPTEMBER**—General debate on legislating for the withdrawal agreement.

**TUESDAY 11 SEPTEMBER**—Remaining stages of the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Bill, followed by motion to approve a money resolution relating to the Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill.

**WEDNESDAY 12 SEPTEMBER**—General debate on the Salisbury incident.

**THURSDAY 13 SEPTEMBER**—General debate on proxy voting, followed by business to be nominated by the Backbench Business Committee.

**FRIDAY 14 SEPTEMBER**—The House will not be sitting.

The provisional business for the week commencing 8 October will include:

**MONDAY 8 OCTOBER**—The House will not be sitting.

**TUESDAY 9 OCTOBER**—Business to be nominated by the Backbench Business Committee.

I am delighted that we are bringing forward a debate on proxy voting next week because I know how important that issue is to many Members across the House. It will be an opportunity for all views to be heard. I confirm that the Government will then bring forward a substantive motion, and it is my intention to do so as soon as practically possible. I am fully committed to making progress on this issue, to ensure that life as both an MP and a new parent is more compatible. May I take this opportunity to welcome everyone back to Westminster? In addition to the important constituency work that goes on over the summer, I hope that all colleagues got the chance for some relaxation.

**Valerie Vaz:** I thank the Leader of the House for outlining the business for next week, but it is somewhat surprising that it is so light. In the week commencing 8 October we have business only for Monday and Tuesday, so will the Leader of the House confirm whether Wednesday and Thursday have been cancelled? I do not know whether she heard the Solicitor General on “Westminster Hour” on 5 August, when he said that there was a fair amount of information to get through and that we would have to look at recesses. Now, the hon. and learned Gentleman is a very capable, able and assiduous Minister. Will the Leader of the House indicate whether the Government are considering cancelling recesses and, if so, which ones, because we do need to plan? As one newspaper put it, in a pithy headline, “Christmas is cancelled”.

I agree with the Leader of the House about the debate on proxy voting, which has been scheduled for next Thursday, but does she know about new research, published by the shadow Secretary of State for Health, revealing that nearly half of England’s maternity units were closed to new mothers at some point in 2017, up on previous years? The most commonly reported reasons for closures were capacity and staffing issues. The latest

estimate from the Royal College of Midwives is that NHS England has a shortage of 3,500 midwives. May we have a debate on that?

The Leader of the House has said several times that she will be able to provide extra sitting days for private Members’ Bills. Will she announce the next sitting days?

The Boundary Commission has sent its report to the Minister for the Cabinet Office. The Government should have laid it immediately—we all got the email yesterday. In the interests of transparency, will the Leader of the House say when it will be published and when we can have a debate on it?

The Leader of the House has been admonishing lots of people, among them Michel Barnier, warning that “the European Commission needs to take it very...seriously. They need to stop all of this rhetoric around ‘we don’t like it, we don’t approve it’”,

but that is what some Conservative Members have been saying. They all turned up to the Prime Minister’s house party, but little does the poor beleaguered Prime Minister know they are now playing a different game, and it is called Chuck Chequers. Or are they playing Chaos? The Secretary of State for International Trade said last Sunday that he did not believe the Chancellor’s prediction of the effect on the economy of no deal. There is no solution to the Irish border, but an hon. Member weighs in and says his solution is that people should be inspected just as they were in the troubles. That is deeply disturbing. The people of Ireland chose peace, not to be divided. Or what about the former Minister advising people to invest in gold to shield them from a no deal Brexit at the same time as advocating one? Some people cannot even buy school uniforms, let alone invest in gold.

I do not know whether the Leader of the House has seen the poll of 44 Tory marginals, according to which three quarters of people are dissatisfied with Ministers’ handling of Brexit. It is not just Tory marginals that are dissatisfied; it is the whole country. It is chaos. We are now told that the Budget might be at a different time. Will she confirm whether the Budget will be in October or whether, as some Treasury sources have indicated, it will be in December? Have there been discussions about a change in date? Will it in fact be an autumn/winter Budget?

There is more chaos with the roll-out of universal credit. I do not know whether the Leader of the House has seen the Resolution Foundation report published this week, but low-paid working families will be affected. Can she say whether the Department for Work and Pensions is in a state of preparedness for roll-out so that people do not suffer?

No sooner were our backs turned than the Members’ Centre was renamed the “Customer Services Hub”. Members are not customers. We are trying to do our work. We are sometimes chucked out of Committee Rooms because there are not enough rooms for Select Committees. The centre offered privacy, but now we cannot have it. Will the Leader of the House please look into that?

Will the Leader of the House and other hon. Members join me and my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral South (Alison McGovern), who chairs the Speaker’s Advisory Committee on Works of Art, in opposing the relocation of the Emmeline Pankhurst memorial from Victoria Tower gardens to Regent’s park? The planning



application has been made to Westminster Council, and all Members should object. It is right that the memorial overlooks Parliament. This in the week when Professor Jocelyn Bell Burnell, who was overlooked in the Nobel citation despite also being part of the discovery of pulsars, is donating money to encourage women in physics to overcome unconscious bias. We may have come a long way, but, to paraphrase Robert Frost, there are many miles to go before we sleep.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I thank the hon. Lady for that tour de force across all areas of government. I shall try to do justice to it.

First, on the proposal to move the Emmeline Pankhurst statue, the idea is to move it in order to have a much bigger one in Parliament Square. That is the ambition of the advocates of that proposal. I know there are quite strongly held views, but I just want to clarify that point for the record.

The hon. Lady asks about the cancellation of recesses. There is no plan to cancel recesses. The business managers are looking carefully at recesses. Obviously, we are very much on the front foot in organising, for example, secondary legislation, as well as the passage of primary legislation, to make sure we enable all Members to have the right amount of scrutiny time in this place, while ensuring they have the opportunity to carry out their constituency work and have a bit of a break from time to time.

The hon. Lady mentions maternity unit closures. I share her very grave concern about that. The same thing happened at Horton Hospital in my constituency—the maternity unit was closed for a few hours. This is definitely something the NHS needs to focus on to ensure that those services are available at all times—no doubt about that.

The hon. Lady asks about my own comments. I hold to my own comments that the European Commission needs to take very seriously the Prime Minister's offer on the table of the future trading arrangement. The hon. Lady will know that the Government's position is to ensure that we meet the democratic decision of the people of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union, which means taking back control of our money, our borders and our laws. It means leaving the customs union and the single market, and leaving the common agricultural policy and the common fisheries policy. What the Chequers proposal also does is meet the red lines of the European Commission. That is why I argue that it needs to take it very seriously. What the Government are seeking is a good deal for the United Kingdom and the European Union that will enable us, our citizens, European citizens and businesses to continue to work together closely, as we have done in the past.

The hon. Lady asks about the business of the House. We have had some very important business this week. We have made important progress in reforming civil liability law and in dealing with the horrendous issue of upskirting. We have completed the Commons stages of the Tenant Fees Bill, which will make renting easier, ban tenant fees and cap security deposits, all of which are incredibly important. I am sure that she will agree that it is important the House has the opportunity next week to discuss the withdrawal agreement White Paper in advance of the time pressures that are likely on this House when we actually come to consider the withdrawal

agreement Bill. It is also vital that the House has the chance to consider the appalling revelations yesterday about the facts behind what happened during the Amesbury and Salisbury incidents. Those are very important debates, so I do not agree with her that the Government are not timetabling important business. She will, of course, be aware that Standing Orders provide for 20 Opposition days in each Session. The Government will, of course, abide by that and bring forward extra days in due course.

The hon. Lady asks about the Budget date. I can tell her that the date will be announced by the Treasury in the usual manner, as it always is.

The hon. Lady asks about Members' space in Portcullis House and objects to the term "customer services". Personally, I rather like it, because I think it is important that Members have a place where they can go to ask questions and get problems solved. I will take away her specific point about a quiet space for Members to be able to work in. I think that that is extremely important.

I welcome the hon. Lady back to this House and I look forward to plenty of Thursdays of robust debate.

**Andrew Bridgen** (North West Leicestershire) (Con): A country that does not control its own armed forces cannot be sovereign. Before the EU referendum, we were assured that plans for an EU army were fantasy and scaremongering, so Members can only imagine my dismay this week when I saw photographs of British troops disembarking for an exercise in Bosnia-Herzegovina wearing EU insignia on their uniforms. May we have an urgent statement on UK participation in the EU army that does not exist?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend raises a matter that is clearly of grave concern to him. What I can say is that the UK's armed forces are playing a very active role right around the world and will continue to do so. The Government's position is to continue to work and liaise closely with the European Union once we have left the European Union in March 2019.

**Pete Wishart** (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): It is good to be back for the annual *Daily Mail* fortnight. I hope that everybody has had a good break. Unfortunately, I do not think that we can all sport as impressive a suntan as yours, Mr Speaker.

I thank the Leader of the House for announcing the business for next week. We did learn a few things during the recess. One is that it does look like we are possibly heading for this no deal Brexit, with all the attendant food shortages and medicine stockpiling. We have learned that this Government are increasingly relaxed about that prospect.

We have also learned that the Prime Minister definitely cannot dance, although we know nothing about twinkle toes Leadsom. What we have found is that the EU negotiators are waltzing right round the UK as the hon. Member for North East Somerset (Mr Rees-Mogg) does a quickstep while the Government can barely muster a cha-cha-cha.

The issue of private Members' Bills is not going to go away for the Leader of the House. There are only two sitting Fridays left in this Session of Parliament, and there is a list of private Members' Bills still awaiting

[Pete Wishart]

money resolutions, prime among them the critical Bill on reuniting refugee families tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Angus Brendan MacNeil). Will we see some extra sitting Fridays, and will there be progress on those money resolutions?

May we have a debate about meetings with Ministers? I spent a bit of my recess looking at all the many photographs of Scottish Conservative Members of Parliament with Ministers and Secretaries of State. They are an impressive bunch of photographs—I will concede that—but I have now written to all those Ministers and Secretaries of State, insisting on meetings to discuss critical issues in my constituency, although I have not yet had the courtesy of one such meeting. Are we beginning to see the politicisation of meetings with Ministers to give party political advantage? If that is the case, what are the issues for the ministerial code?

Lastly, may we have a debate on Brexit and Scotland? Another prime thing we learned this summer is that, if Brexit goes ahead, the majority of people in Scotland now want independence for our nation as we refuse to go down with the stricken UK Brexit liner. I bet the Leader of the House wishes she had listened to the Scottish Government when it comes to Brexit now.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I have to take issue with the hon. Gentleman: I think the Prime Minister can dance. I draw his attention to the all-party parliamentary group on Scottish country dancing. He might like to write to the Prime Minister to invite her along, with him, to that group. He claims to be able to sing. I can see some new bonding going on there; it would be fantastic.

The hon. Gentleman talks about UK Ministers not being available to him. I am very happy to meet him any time he likes. I will definitely have my photograph taken with him; I would be delighted, any time. In particular, if we were dancing together—Scottish country dancing or whatever—that would work for me.

Anyway, I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is right that UK Ministers refuse to meet him. If he has evidence of that, I will certainly look into it, but my absolute clear understanding is that Ministers will meet colleagues right across the House, and do so frequently. It may simply be that my hon. Friends here are more photogenic; he needs to consider that in his thinking.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman raises the issue of additional days for private Members' Bills. The House approved, early in this Session, 13 sitting Fridays for the Session. As I said during the debate on 17 July 2017, given that we have announced that this will be an extended Session, we will be bringing forward additional sitting Fridays in due course. However, we have seen some excellent progress right across the House. I am pleased that we will be discussing a money resolution for the Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill, tabled by the hon. Member for Coventry North West (Mr Robinson). That is a very important private Member's Bill, so I do think we are making progress. There is always more to do, but I hope that the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) will continue to be resolute in his determination to see his hon. Friends' Bills taken forward also.

**Sir Peter Bottomley** (Worthing West) (Con): I will be briefer than the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) in quickly raising two issues.

The first is the proposal—inappropriate in many people's eyes—to collocate a learning centre with the holocaust memorial proposed for Victoria Tower gardens.

Can the Government publish a paper showing their comparison of the merits there with those of the Imperial War Museum and how the present proposal matches the specification in the national Holocaust Memorial Foundation specification of September 2015?

I shall speak briefly to a separate issue, but one that matters to one person and many watching. Kweku Adoboli is 38. He was last in Ghana aged 4, when his father, as a senior United Nations official, was expelled from some other place. Kweku, until he came here aged 11—he has been here continuously since then—lived in Israel, Syria and Iraq.

How is it public purpose that someone that age when he was last in Ghana should be expelled there as a consequence of the offence for which he was convicted?

**Andrea Leadsom:** On my hon. Friend's last point, if he would like to write to me with the details, I could take it up with the Home Office or the Foreign Office, as appropriate. With regards to his first point, I think we are all very excited about the holocaust memorial. I understand that a consultation is going on at the moment in Church House, and he should make his views known there. Again, if he would like to write to me on that point, I can take it up.

**Ian Mearns** (Gateshead) (Lab): I thank the Leader of the House for advance notice that the Backbench Business Committee will be allocating debate time on 9 October—that is very welcome.

I know that the Leader of the House likes advance notice of time-sensitive debate applications, and we have two applications for 18 October. As that is Anti-Slavery Day, one application is on ending exploitation, including modern slavery, in supermarket supply chains. It is also World Menopause Day, which is a matter I am sure many Members would want to discuss.

Next Thursday, there is a Westminster Hall debate on services for deaf children, under the auspices of the Backbench Business Committee. The debate, which is to be signed in British Sign Language, is sponsored by my hon. Friend the Member for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick). It is interesting that children and adults who use British Sign Language do not yet have the facility of having a GCSE examination in their own main form of communication. The whole House should take that on board and try to get the Department for Education to introduce a GCSE in BSL for deaf people.

Lastly, Mr Speaker, you will be delighted to know that the Great Exhibition of the North is coming to an end this Thursday. I thank the Leader of the House for visiting my constituency during the exhibition, along with her Cabinet colleagues. It was a pleasure to meet her and to welcome her to the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art in the Gateshead constituency.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I thoroughly enjoyed my trip to the hon. Gentleman's constituency, and I thank him very much for hosting me there.

The examples the hon. Gentleman has just given of some of the work of the Backbench Business Committee highlight how valuable and varied the debates are that come from it. It is an absolutely vital and top priority for all Members across the House to stamp slavery out. I think that a debate on World Menopause Day would also be of great interest to a lot of Members.

On the debate the hon. Gentleman has scheduled for deaf children, I am sure many Members will have examples in their own constituencies and will want to speak more about what we can do to facilitate ease of communication for deaf children.

**Sir David Amess** (Southend West) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on the future funding of football in the United Kingdom? While the premier league generates vast sums—some might say to an obscene level—precious little of that money finds its way to the lower leagues and to non-league clubs. If we are serious about winning the World cup in Qatar, we need to change that situation.

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend always raises an important point, and winning the World cup in Qatar is definitely a priority for the United Kingdom. He raises an important point about funding for grassroots sport, and the Premier League outlined in 2016 that it would invest at least £1 billion of its domestic TV revenues in grassroots facilities, including youth coaching and improving disabled access and so on. It is important that we do all we can to promote football, so that we get that pipeline of talented young footballers and do even better in the next World cup.

**Kate Hoey** (Vauxhall) (Lab): Will the Leader of the House look at early-day motion 1036?

*[That this House notes that Remembrance Sunday 2018 falls on 11 November (Armistice Day), exactly 100 years since the guns fell silent; recognises that there is a prima facie case for a one-off retail closure across the UK on that day to enhance the peace and decorum inherent in Remembrance Sunday and to enable more working people and their families to partake in the events of Remembrance Sunday 2018; expects that retail would also benefit as more goods would be bought before the one day closure and on reopening; believes that legislation to enact such a one-off retail closure would provide a chance for all hon. Members and those of the other place to rise above their daily political divides and come together in genuine unity; and requests that the Government brings forward a simple piece of legislation to provide for a one-off retail closure across the UK for Remembrance Sunday 2018.]*

This year, 11 November is a very important date—it will be 100 years since the ending of the first world war. The Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers would like to see that day—Sunday 11 November—treated this year the way we treat Christmas day. Will the Leader of the House look at bringing forward some very urgent legislation to put that through for this very special day this year?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I certainly agree with the hon. Lady that it will be a very special day to commemorate the enormous sacrifice of so many, and I would be pleased to take the issue away and look into what can be done.

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): The Boundary Commission has reported to the Government on parliamentary constituencies, but that has not been reported to this House. Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement to be made next week about the publication of the proposed new parliamentary boundaries and when we will vote on them? Is the delay because the Government think they will not have a majority for the new proposal? I for one will not be voting for it.

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend is right; the boundary commissions submitted their final reports to Ministers on 5 September. We are required to lay the reports before Parliament once received, and we will do so promptly. As each report will be an Act paper, they can be laid before Parliament only when both Houses are sitting. Once the reports have been laid before Parliament we will make them publicly available, which we expect will be on Monday 10 September.

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): I am sure, Mr Speaker, that you will have seen the 2010 film “The King’s Speech”, portraying George VI. It contained 11 uses of the F-word and was granted a classification of 12A. I recently saw the highly rated documentary “A Northern Soul” by Hull film-maker Sean McAllister. Its main character uses the F-word 14 times and it is heard 19 times in total in the film. None of it was aggressive or gratuitous, and the film simply portrays the life of a working-class Hull man and his work helping local children, but it has been given a 15 certificate nationally. May we therefore have a debate about whether there is a class bias in the way censors seek to protect younger teenagers from the reality and language that many experience in their lives every day?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Lady raises a genuinely interesting point, and I urge her to seek an Adjournment debate so she can discuss it with Ministers and then take it forward.

**Jeremy Lefroy** (Stafford) (Con): Staffordshire County Council has generally done an excellent job over the last few years both in meeting budgetary requirements and in protecting services, but, like many such authorities, it is facing severe challenges for 2019-20. May we have a debate on the importance both of increasing local revenue through not requiring referendums on increases in council tax above 2% or 3%, and of providing extra money from the better care fund for the provision of better care services for adults and children? There is also, of course, our ongoing request to have the business rate pilot scheme for Staffordshire.

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend is a strong voice for his area. He will be aware that we have backed councils in England with £200 billion to deliver local services between 2015 and 2020. That is an increase, and there has also been a significant increase in the money available for adult social care this year. Nevertheless, my hon. Friend raises an important point, and I know that many colleagues are concerned about local government funding. I encourage him to seek a Back-Bench business debate so that he and other colleagues can raise this issue.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): I stand in front of Jo Cox's memorial. Is the Leader of the House picking up a growing concern among some Members about their personal security? We do not speak much about that in the House, but it would be valuable if she would meet a group of us to talk about it.

May I also get in a second quick question? May we have an early debate on the impact of the private finance initiative on health provision up and down the country? My town and others are likely to lose accident and emergency departments because of the PFI burden we still have to carry.

**Andrea Leadsom:** On the hon. Gentleman's first point, of course I would be delighted to meet with colleagues who are concerned. The House authorities have put in place very good measures, and the Chairman of Ways and Means is keen to speak to any Member who is concerned for their own safety. I encourage all colleagues to take up the offer of personal security and also additional security measures for their staff both in the constituency and here in Parliament. It is a very serious issue.

On the second point, we have had a number of debates over the years on PFI and the impact on public services, and a further debate would be valuable, so I will take that suggestion away and look at it.

**John Howell** (Henley) (Con): May we have a debate on the new data showing that service sector activity reached a three-month high in May?

**Andrea Leadsom:** We should all celebrate the excellent economic news that we have had recently, in particular the rise in employment and reduction in unemployment, and the growth in our economy and certainly in our services sector. My hon. Friend will be aware that there will be many opportunities to discuss our economy during the Budget debate later this year, but he might like to seek an Adjournment or Westminster Hall debate to discuss service sector productivity.

**Seema Malhotra** (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): On Tuesday, in evidence to our Exiting the European Union Committee, the deputy permanent secretary confirmed that there were still 800-plus pieces of legislation to come through Parliament by February. That equates to a ballpark figure of about 50 a week, and more statutory instruments in four months than in each of the past two years. Will the Leader of the House make a statement on how the Government plan to schedule those statutory instruments, which we are told will be necessary prior to our leaving the European Union regardless of the outcome of the negotiations, and whether that will require any extended hours of the House or the cancellation of other business, if there are no plans to change the recesses?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Lady raises a really important point, and I would like to spend a moment explaining exactly where we are on this. We expect there to be between 800 and 1,000 Brexit statutory instruments, but the figure will probably be at the lower end of that estimate—somewhere in the region of just over 800. About half of those will be required either for no deal or for all eventualities. The other half are subject to negotiation. That number is perfectly manageable and

in line with other parliamentary Sessions. It is not an extraordinary number of SIs at all, and we are confident that it can be managed within the normal parliamentary timings and the normal management of the business of the House, so I do not think that hon. Members should be concerned that the amount of secondary legislation will require any changes to recesses or to the normal sitting hours. The hon. Lady will also be aware that the business managers will make every effort to manage the business such that the flow is perfectly regular and normal, so that we do not end up with big peaks.

**Antoinette Sandbach** (Eddisbury) (Con): I am grateful to the Leader of the House for indicating that 9 October will be a Back-Bench business day, and I am delighted that the Chair of the Backbench Business Committee is here, because that will be Baby Loss Awareness Week, and I know that an application will be made to the Committee immediately to try to ensure that we can debate that important matter at that time.

Secondly, on High Speed 2, it is regrettable that only 31% of need to sell applicants in Eddisbury are successful. When people are facing their homes and livelihoods being blighted as a result of HS2, it is important that this matter should be debated in the Chamber. I ask the Leader of the House for time for a debate on the need to sell scheme and its application to those affected by HS2.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am delighted that my hon. Friend has taken this opportunity to lobby the Chairman of the Backbench Business Committee. I am sure you would agree that that is entirely appropriate, Mr Speaker. She has also raised a really important point about HS2. She will be aware that there have also been concerns in my constituency about how compensation has been assessed for people under the need to sell scheme. I encourage her to make contact with my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Dame Cheryl Gillan), who is involved in the compensation and mitigation forum, which meets regularly to look at issues relating to compensation. Equally, she might wish to seek an Adjournment debate in order to raise her particular issues.

**Norman Lamb** (North Norfolk) (LD): On 20 June, Bishop James Jones published his report on Gosport hospital, which revealed the really shocking fact that more than 450 people had lost their lives through inappropriate prescribing of opioids and highlighted profound concerns about how public bodies had closed ranks to prevent people from getting to the truth about what had happened to their loved ones. We owe it to the relatives, who are now going through real trauma as a result of the findings of that report, to have a debate in Government time on the implications of the report and on what needs to change if we are to learn the lessons from it. Will the Leader of the House look into that, please?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The right hon. Gentleman raises a worrying issue. We were all shocked by the level of unexplained deaths and the overuse of opiates, and it would certainly be right to seek a further debate to discuss the report directly with Ministers. He will recall that there was a statement at the time, but I encourage him to seek a further a debate for the sake of those who are still suffering the consequences of what has happened.

**Dr Matthew Offord** (Hendon) (Con): Many reports suggest that residential leaseholders face bills of thousands of pounds to replace the Grenfell-style cladding on their properties because the property owners will not pay for it. That is causing much concern for my local residents, particular those in Premier House in Edgware. May we have a statement from the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the progress he has made with building owners and developers to find a solution that will protect leaseholders from such additional costs? If no solution has been found, I would like to know what other routes are being explored to protect leaseholders from incurring costs associated with what is a purely a safety measure.

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend is right that buildings with unsafe cladding systems must be made safe without delay. The Government are encouraged that the Peabody Trust, Mace Group and Taylor Wimpey have joined Barratt Homes and Legal & General in doing the right thing by covering the cost of removing and replacing unsafe cladding. We expect all building owners and developers to follow their lead and to protect leaseholders from the costs. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is working with the relevant local authorities to ensure that our expectations are clear to all the building owners and developers concerned.

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): As chair of the all-party parliamentary group on Russia, I have talked for a long time about the problems facing this country in relation to the Russian Federation, but I urge the Leader of the House to think again about the debate next Wednesday. One of the things that makes this country different from Russia is that we do not put people on trial in Parliament. We have a sub judice rule. It would be wholly inappropriate if prosecuting authorities were to conclude at the end of next week that this House had decided that certain individuals were guilty. I strongly urge her to withdraw that debate next Wednesday. Let us have an Opposition day debate or a debate on anything else—acquired brain injury or my private Member's Bill spring to mind. We could debate anything, but we should not break that fundamental rule that we do not put people on trial in this Chamber.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I can only reassure the hon. Gentleman that there will be no risk of that happening during a general debate next week about the Salisbury incident.

**Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): The level of gun and knife crime, particularly in London, dramatically increased before and during the summer recess. At the same time, a former adviser to the Mayor of London has admitted that the Mayor does not have a clue what to do about it. May we have a debate in Government time on how to combat this terrible menace to society, particularly when most of it is gang or drug related?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend is right to raise this worrying issue. In London, crime has risen 4%, with violent crime up 5% and robberies up 22%, and knife crime has surged by 48% to the highest level in seven years. The Mayor of London has a budget of £16.5 billion and has the power to move it around. The Government's serious violence strategy is focused on tackling this

scourge, and the Mayor should be taking part in, feeding into and learning from the response to the increase in serious violence.

**Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): May we have a debate on mental health services in our universities? There were recent reports of a series of suicides at the University of Bristol, and I am also dealing with a family in my constituency whose son killed himself while a student at Leeds Beckett University. It seems difficult for the family to get the right of access to a body to which they can complain about the lack of support that they believe that their son received. Will the Leader of the House arrange time for a debate on that important matter?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I share the hon. Lady's grave concern about this issue. The prevalence of suicides and self-harming in our schools and universities is truly worrying. She may be aware that the Government set a new aim to address self-harm as an issue in its own right in the national suicide prevention strategy last year, and that we have invested almost £250 million to implement liaison mental health teams in every A&E by 2020, which will be well placed to deal with people who attend hospital with mental health issues, particularly self-harming. However, I encourage the hon. Lady to seek a debate to raise her specific constituency issue.

**Huw Merriman** (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): The need to protect freedom of speech and expression is hugely important, as is the need to protect legitimate businesspeople going about their business. May we have a debate on whether we have the balance right, with protest groups being able to overstep the mark without having to pay towards the cost of any policing, and therefore a lack of policing? There is an impact on businesses when the police do not step in.

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend raises a valid point about who pays for the right of individuals and groups to exercise their free speech. There is a valid discussion to be had, and I encourage him to seek a debate so that all hon. Members can contribute.

**Kirsty Blackman** (Aberdeen North) (SNP): A couple of weeks ago I had the huge honour of going along to the "I Am What I Am" show at the Aberdeen performing arts centre in my constituency. The show is run by Music 4 U, a completely inclusive group. Many of the performers on stage are disabled young people, and the performance was unbelievable—the Leader of the House would have loved it. I congratulate the people who work so hard to pull off that stage show on all they do, and I highlight the fact that such organisations across the country are a place where inclusion really happens, and they are a real picture of what society should look like.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I congratulate the hon. Lady on raising that wonderful-sounding organisation. "I Am What I Am" sounds fantastic, and I am glad she enjoyed the performance. I encourage that organisation and others to do more to demonstrate that we have an inclusive society in which everybody's voice is heard and everybody's particular talents are enjoyed and appreciated.

**Stephen Kerr** (Stirling) (Con): Last Friday I was honoured to attend an event in Dunblane to commemorate the heroism of Lieutenant James Huffam, who was

[Stephen Kerr]

awarded the Victoria Cross for gallantry in the first world war. The pride of James Huffam's son and family was very moving. What special debates are planned in the House over the next few weeks, leading up to the 100th anniversary of the armistice of 1918, to allow us to reflect on the sacrifice and valour of those who served our country in the first world war?

**Andrea Leadsom:** We will never forget the service and sacrifice of those who served during the first world war. I encourage everyone, whatever their connection to it, to apply to participate in the people's procession along Whitehall and to join in with the bell-ringing programme to help us mark this historic occasion. That will be a fitting conclusion to the four-year commemorations of the centenary of the first world war and will ensure that such stories are not lost.

On my hon. Friend's question about what we will be doing in this House, I will take that away and give it further thought.

**Dr Paul Williams** (Stockton South) (Lab): Bobi Wine is a charismatic, brave and popular Ugandan musician, and he is an MP under his real name of Robert Kyagulanyi. On 13 April, along with other Ugandan MPs, he was arrested, detained in military custody, beaten and tortured. That was not the first time in President Museveni's Uganda—MP Betty Namboozie was beaten by security forces in the Ugandan Parliament last year. Will the Leader of the House express solidarity with fellow MPs in Commonwealth countries who are trying to protect democracy? How can the House ask the Government to stand up to President Museveni's behaviour through action at the United Nations and the Commonwealth, and by using Magnitsky legislation if necessary?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman raises an important point. Last year I took part in a group of female Commonwealth MPs who shared their experience of violence and threats, particularly against female MPs. He is right to raise the importance of freedom and free speech, and of being able to go about our work free from the threat of torture and punishment. I am not aware of his specific examples, but if he wants to write to me I can take them up with the Foreign Office on his behalf.

**Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): Will the Government make a statement on what can be done to strengthen planning law to allow local authorities more redress when conditions or legal agreements entered into by contractors, such as routing agreements, are routinely breached?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend will be aware that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is doing everything it can to ensure that developers abide by planning laws and, in particular, that we speed up the planning system so that we can get more homes built for those who desperately need them. He raises an important specific point and I encourage him to raise it directly with Ministers at the next MCHLG questions.

**Chris Elmore** (Ogmore) (Lab): The Leader of the House may be aware that before the summer recess *The Telegraph* exposed Government data breaches after

the use of an online system called Trello, about which concerns had already been raised by its own security. The leak meant that members of the public could access details of how to gain passes to Government buildings. Will she therefore arrange for a Cabinet Office Minister to make a statement on the Floor of the House in order to give the public reassurance that the Government do take cyber-security seriously and will stop using online portals for sharing work that can lead to these data breaches?

**Andrea Leadsom:** We all need to be extremely careful about the use of data, and there is no doubt that those breaches are completely unacceptable. The hon. Gentleman might be aware that we have Cabinet Office questions next week, and I encourage him to raise this issue directly then.

**Neil O'Brien** (Harborough) (Con): It is very welcome that the Government are investing £1 billion in the midland main line, including an extra track on the most congested part of the line, so that we can have more services, and a huge new car park at Market Harborough. Along with other Members who represent constituencies along the line, I am campaigning for further improvements, such as the electrification of the line between Kettering and Market Harborough, and the provision of shelters at Market Harborough. Would it be possible for us to have a debate in Government time on the future of the midland main line?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend is highlighting some of the improvements the Government are determined to make to the railways. We are investing more than has been put in at any time since Victorian times in maintenance, modernisation and renewal to try to deliver more journeys and fewer disruptions, with modern ticketing and so on. He is raising a specific point about the midland main line, and I encourage him to seek an Adjournment debate, so that he can raise it directly with Ministers.

**Carolyn Harris** (Swansea East) (Lab): It would appear that suicides as a result of gambling addiction are not recorded as such by coroners' officers. Will the Leader of the House consult ministerial colleagues and ask them to work with the Office for National Statistics to establish an inquiry as to how we can best gather this data so that we can measure the true impact of gambling addiction?

**Andrea Leadsom:** As so often, the hon. Lady raises a serious and important point. It is not a matter for me, but if she would like to write to me, I will be able to take it up with the relevant Ministers on her behalf.

**John Lamont** (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) (Con): Despite savage budget cuts by the Scottish Government, Scottish Borders Council is prioritising mental health services by appointing counsellors in all the high schools in its area. Will the Government therefore find time to have a debate on mental health and whether they can adopt the strategy used by that council to ensure that all high schools across all the UK can benefit from such a service?

**Andrea Leadsom:** My hon. Friend is a strong voice for his constituency and I join him in praising Scottish Borders Council. I hope the Scottish Government will

follow its initiative. He will be aware that the Prime Minister has made tackling the appalling injustice of mental illness a priority for the UK Government. Health is a matter for the Scottish Government, but the £2 billion in extra funding they received from the UK Government this year could be used to help roll out this policy right across Scotland.

**Thangam Debonnaire** (Bristol West) (Lab): Another business questions and another week in which we have had no sight of and heard no mention of the immigration Bill, and been given no possible clue, hint or even a raised eyebrow about its location. This House has to debate and pass that Bill before next March. When is it going to come to the House?

**Andrea Leadsom:** We have already introduced and passed some of the Brexit legislation: 23 Government Bills have received Royal Assent and we are bringing forward legislation as we need to do so. The hon. Lady may be aware that there will be a Migration Advisory Committee report during the fourth quarter. The immigration Bill will come forward after that and in good time.

**Chris Stephens** (Glasgow South West) (SNP): Three days after the summer recess, the Home Office's asylum accommodation provider, Serco, announced plans to evict 330 asylum seekers in Glasgow from its property as they were deemed to be "failed". The facts are that they are not "failed"; the majority either have made a fresh claim or have an appeal pending. Will the Home Office make a statement, or may we have a debate, so that we can hold the Home Office to account for passing wrong information to Serco and ensure that asylum seekers are treated with respect across the United Kingdom?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am sorry to hear about the particular case the hon. Gentleman raises. He will be aware that asylum seekers in the United Kingdom are cared for; they are housed and protected by the United Kingdom Government. If the hon. Gentleman would like to write to me about his specific case, I can take it up with Ministers on his behalf.

**Tonia Antoniazzi** (Gower) (Lab): Recent research from Swansea University shows that more and more students are paying other people to do their assignments. The Governments of Ireland and Australia have committed to following the lead of New Zealand and the USA by banning the advertising and provision of so-called essay mills. May we have a debate in the House on banning this practice in the UK in order to safeguard the integrity of our outstanding higher education sector?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Lady raises a really important point. We have Education questions next week, when she may well wish to raise the issue directly. I absolutely agree with her that we have to ensure that it is only those who have done the work who then take the exam and get the qualification at the end of it.

**Vernon Coaker** (Gedling) (Lab): Yesterday, we had an amazing debate in Westminster Hall about serious organised crime and the exploitation of children. Will the Leader of the House bring the Home Secretary to the House regularly to discuss what we are going to do about the

fact that thousands upon thousands of children in the United Kingdom are exploited by criminal gangs through county lines? It is a national disgrace and a scandal of huge proportions, and we must speak up much more loudly about it in the House and get the Home Secretary to come here to discuss what he is going to do about it.

**Andrea Leadsom:** All Members would agree with the hon. Gentleman that this is a really concerning matter. He will be aware that the Government launched our serious violence strategy in April this year, part of which is addressing the really worrying issue of county lines and the misuse of drugs. We have key commitments under that strategy to provide a new national county lines co-ordination centre, and we are continuing to work with the Crown Prosecution Service and the National Police Chiefs Council lead on the prosecution of county lines offences, encouraging the use of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 wherever possible. A lot of work is being done and a lot of cash—Government money—is going into community work to get young people off that conveyor belt, which leads in effect to such appalling abuse of them, and which is also a road to crime, because it leads to awful problems for young people during their lives. I am extremely sympathetic to the hon. Gentleman.

**Darren Jones** (Bristol North West) (Lab): In July 2017, the Government announced that they were going to lift tolls on the Severn bridge this Christmas, which caused me concern about traffic gridlock in north Bristol. On 12 March this year, I tabled a written question, only to be told that no new modelling had been done on the additional number of cars. In July, I found that the modelling was being done, and a freedom of information request over the summer showed that we can expect 6 million extra vehicle journeys every year. Will the Leader of the House tell me whether it is Government policy to take decisions before the evidence is available? If so, may we have a debate about evidence-based policy?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree that the purpose of abolishing the tolls is to boost the south Wales economy by more than £100 million a year. He might find that some of his hon. Friends would not agree that it was done deliberately to try to cause traffic jams in his constituency. The idea is to save the average motorist more than £1,400 per year, which is good news for the motoring public. Some 25 million vehicles cross the bridges every year. The scrapping of the tolls is going to be good news in south Wales and for motorists.

**Melanie Onn** (Great Grimsby) (Lab): It has been revealed that a third of children in Grimsby did not reach the expected levels in their SATs. May we please have a debate in Government time on the impact and effectiveness of the new SATs on teaching and learning in primary schools?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I am very sorry to hear the statistics in the hon. Lady's constituency. However, I am sure she will recognise that since 2010 we have almost 2 million more pupils in good or outstanding schools, and 86% of schools in England are now rated good or outstanding—up from 68% in 2010. The hon. Lady expresses particular concerns about the new SATs; I encourage her to raise that matter directly with Ministers at oral questions next week.

**Jonathan Edwards** (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): During exchanges on the statement on public sector pay on 24 July, I was given assurances by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury that the pay increase for Welsh teachers will be fully funded as it is a reserved function until next year. To date, that promise has not been fulfilled, but it has been for English teachers, so can we have an oral statement from the Treasury on why the British Government are seemingly short-changing Welsh teachers?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman might wish to raise that matter at Treasury questions next week, but what I can say to him is that this pay rise for teachers is much needed, will be welcomed and will do more to improve education right across England and Wales.

**Jessica Morden** (Newport East) (Lab): Many packaged bank accounts now come with travel insurance, but many people only discover what they are not covered for when they need to claim. This has caused huge distress and expense for a family from my constituency this summer. Can we have a debate about what more banks should do to be upfront with people and clear from the outset about what they are covered for?

**Andrea Leadsom:** That is a really good point. We all have experiences of being sold extras that then somehow do not happen when we try to claim on them, so the hon. Lady raises a very important point. Again, I encourage her to raise that with Treasury Ministers next week.

**Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): My constituent Andy Woodburn's mother-in-law Nadia is Ukrainian, and her last visit to the UK coincided with Russian disruption in Ukraine. As Home Office advice was not to travel at that time, Nadia stayed longer than her visa and applied for leave to remain, but she returned home as soon as she possibly could. She then applied for a family visa but was turned down because she did not properly highlight the withdrawn application. I have asked for a review of the decision, but immigration officials are sticking to their guns. Will the Leader of the House make a statement, outlining what options are available to me as a parliamentarian to help Nadia get a visa to visit her young grandchildren?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on raising this constituency case—it is something that he often does in this place. If he wants me to take up the matter with Ministers on his behalf, perhaps he can write to me with the details.

**Ged Killen** (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Lab/Co-op): I note how many Members across the House are currently face down with their smartphone or tablet. I realise that they are all working very hard and multi-tasking, but there is now growing evidence about the link between overuse of technology such as smartphones and poor mental health, particularly among young people. Can we have a debate in Government time about what more can be done to get the big tech companies to take this issue seriously?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I certainly agree with the hon. Gentleman that we all spend far too much time on technology, and that is particularly true of young people. It is interesting that a number of schools are now saying

to their students that they cannot have their devices during the course of the day. That is a contentious subject, but I certainly support such a move. He is right that it is a really key issue. In a sense, we are undertaking a massive experiment, because there is no regulation around this matter. I encourage him to seek a Backbench Business debate so that all hon. Members can share their views and perhaps we can then debate them with Ministers.

**Debbie Abrahams** (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab): Today's Resolution Foundation report calling for universal credit roll-out to be stopped is the seventh such call in the past six months. I have heard from constituents about applications that have never been received and documents that have been lost, which is delaying by several weeks—on top of the designated five weeks—when they receive their first payment. Clearly, the system is not fit for purpose, so can we have a debate in Government time on a new social security policy and the need for a new social contract with the British people?

**Andrea Leadsom:** Universal credit is designed to help. It is a better, simpler and more flexible system that helps more people into work. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Lady might not like it, but that is the truth of it. Under the old system, if a person worked a minute over 16 hours, they lost their whole jobseekers' allowance. Universal credit requires a person to make only one application, and it makes sure that work always pays.

Research published this month shows that universal credit means £8 billion a year extra for the economy, an extra 200,000 people in work and 130 million more working hours every year for those already in a job. She raises an important point, which is about the roll-out of universal credit. She will be aware that the Government have listened very carefully to the evidence in this place and from users. We have raised advances to 100% of the first month's payment so she is not right to say that people are having to wait five weeks; that is simply not the case. We have made it quicker and easier for people to get their first payments so that everyone who needs it can get their money on the very same day. We have introduced an overlap for those already receiving housing benefit, to ensure that they have a smooth transition on to the new system. We continue to look very carefully at the roll-out to improve it, but to simply say that we should halt it is to deny many people this opportunity. Mr Speaker would not allow me the time, but I could give the hon. Lady countless examples of people who have really benefited from universal credit, getting into work for the first time.

**Bambos Charalambous** (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab): My private Member's Bill, the Terminal Illness (Provision of Palliative Care and Support for Carers) Bill, is due to have its Second Reading on Friday 23 November. There are 34 Bills listed for debate that Friday; my Bill is No. 23. That date is the last Friday that has been allocated as a sitting Friday. As such, my Bill is unlikely to get any time for its Second Reading. Will the Leader of the House tell me when the Government will announce more sitting Fridays for the remainder of this parliamentary Session?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I wish the hon. Gentleman great success with his PMB. The House approved 13 sitting Fridays for this Session at the beginning of the Session.



I made it clear during the debate on 17 July 2017 that, given that we had announced this would be an extended Session, we would expect to provide additional sitting Fridays in due course, taking into account the passage of business, so I do expect to make that announcement soon.

**Patricia Gibson** (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP): On whole swathes of the Isle of Arran in my constituency, there is no mobile phone coverage at all. As well as being inconvenient, this could—and has almost in the past—cost lives. Given that the UK Government promised to roll out full mobile phone coverage for Arran by 2015, will the Leader of the House make a statement to the House on when this coverage will finally be completed for the island of Arran?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Lady raises a very important point. In the 21st century, it is key that we get proper coverage rolled out right across the United Kingdom. We are doing very well against our own targets, and there is more to do. The Government have announced a significant investment in digital infrastructure. The Scottish Government also have a role to play. I encourage the hon. Lady to seek an Adjournment debate to raise her question directly with Ministers.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds** (Torfaen) (Lab): Many constituents have contacted me, worried that the Government are going to drop their proposal for a pensions dashboard to access all information about pensions in one place. The Government now say that it is going ahead, but they are handing it over to the private sector with no guarantee of how the scheme is going to be complied with. Can we have a debate about the whole issue of how people can access information about their pensions?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I think that we have all received quite a number of requests for information about the pensions dashboard, and the hon. Gentleman is quite right to raise the issue. The Government remain committed to doing everything we can to improve transparency and financial advice to those seeking advice on their pension. I encourage the hon. Gentleman either to raise this matter at an Adjournment debate or to write to me so that I can take it up directly with Ministers on his behalf.

**Neil Coyle** (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (Lab): Nationally, nine in 10 crimes are sadly going unpunished, including murders in Southwark, where our police are really struggling, having lost 400 officers and police community support officers since 2010. Will the Government provide time to debate why the Home Office is ignoring the recommendation of its own advisers to provide an extra £100 million to the Metropolitan Police Service, which is equivalent to more than 4,000 additional officers desperately needed by communities across our capital?

**Andrea Leadsom:** As I said earlier, the Mayor of London is responsible for policing and priorities, and he has a £16.5 billion budget. I absolutely agree with the hon. Gentleman that the Mayor should be looking very seriously at his budget allocation to policing. The Government have enabled a further £460 million of

funding for local policing through the council tax precept. That is how the Government are ensuring that police and crime commissioners can meet local needs.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): Today Leah Sharibu, the only girl out of the 119 kidnapped by Boko Haram in February this year who is still being held by the terrorist group, reached 200 days in captivity—a punishment for refusing to give up her Christian faith. This week, at least 23 people were killed or injured in a drive-by shooting by Fulani militia in Plateau State. Violence against religion or belief groups is escalating in Nigeria, with over 1,000 casualties since the beginning of this year, so will the Leader of the House agree to a statement or contact a Foreign Office Minister on this most important issue?

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman raises a very serious issue about the appalling abuses of religious freedom. The Government believe that all should be allowed to practise their religious faith free from threat of harm or imprisonment. He has raised some very important points. I encourage him to seek an Adjournment debate so that he can raise this directly with Ministers.

**Nick Smith** (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): May we have a statement on the introduction of mandatory calorie counting on menus? Health professionals say that this measure will help to address childhood obesity across the UK.

**Andrea Leadsom:** The hon. Gentleman raises an incredibly important point. There is obviously a discussion to be had about the burden that that might place on smaller businesses, but, at the same time, we have to do everything possible to tackle the problem of obesity in this country. I am personally very sympathetic to him. I encourage him to seek a Back-Bench debate on the subject so that all hon. Members can share their views.

**Mr Speaker:** I call Paula Sherriff.

**Paula Sherriff** (Dewsbury) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Speaker—you are very kind. I hope that everybody has taken the opportunity to visit the “Voice & Vote” exhibition in Westminster Hall. Have the Leader of the House, and perhaps you, Mr Speaker, considered whether there is any possibility that this exhibition could be moved around the country? I appreciate that it is quite large, but it would be a shame if people in, say, Dewsbury who would be unable to visit London for financial reasons could not see it. It would be great if it could be taken around our great country.

**Mr Speaker:** It is a splendid exhibition—absolutely first-class. I am sure that the Leader of the House would concur with that.

**Andrea Leadsom:** I think, Mr Speaker, that you were trying to earn the hon. Lady’s suggestion that you are extremely kind. I absolutely agree with her that that exhibition is excellent. I encourage all Members to have a look if they have not already done so, and of course to encourage their constituents who can come here to come and see it for themselves. Her suggestion of moving it around the country is a good one. She is absolutely right; it is extremely large, and definitely not for most village halls. However, I can certainly take this away and look at it.

**Kate Hoey (Vauxhall) (Lab):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I know that we are about to hear a statement from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, but is it right that half an hour ago the BBC Northern Ireland website more or less gave us the whole statement? We might as well not be hearing it from the Secretary of State. The detail of everything that she is going to say has been on the BBC Northern Ireland website; we have all read it in the past half hour.

**Mr Speaker:** Well, if that is so—the hon. Lady will appreciate that I was not in a position to know about it as I have been in the Chair since 9.30 this morning—it is extremely unsatisfactory. I must say that I have always regarded the Secretary of State as a person of unimpeachable integrity, and of real courtesy and commitment to the House. This is therefore very, very disappointing. Sometimes—we will hear from the Secretary of State in a moment as she is signalling that she wishes to contribute—Ministers themselves do not make material available but other people, supposedly acting on their behalf, do so. However, Ministers are responsible for everything that happens in, or relating to, their Departments, so I am very perturbed to hear what the hon. Lady has said. Let us hear what the Secretary of State has to say.

**The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Karen Bradley):** Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I was going to refer to the matter, which has just been brought to my attention, too. It is an honest mistake—it was human error—but I do apologise to the House for this. It was not intended that anything would be made public until I had made my statement to the House, and I do apologise to all Members.

**Mr Speaker:** I thank the Secretary of State for that. Needless to say, it must not happen again, but I thank her for her good grace.

**Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker. This is on a completely different matter, and it goes to the point that I raised with the Leader of the House earlier.

As you know, the sub judice rule means that, in particular when charges have been presented, as they have been in this case, we do not discuss those matters in this House because we believe in the separation of powers. We are not Russia. We have an independent judiciary. Anything said in a debate in this House that could suggest that the people of Britain have made up their mind as to the guilt of an individual person would be wholly detrimental. It would probably mean that other authorities in other countries would say that there is no chance of a fair trial in this country and therefore would refuse to extradite. I am sure, Sir, that you would use your best endeavours to ensure that any discussion in the debate strays nowhere near that, but I still urge the Leader of the House, through you, preferably to withdraw that debate, and if not, to ensure that we do not engage in any shape or form in a trial by party political Parliament.

**Mr Speaker:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his point of order. Obviously I heard both his business question to the Leader of the House and her reply. The scheduled business has been announced, and it is not for me to seek to change that business. That said, the hon. Gentleman has raised an extremely serious and pertinent point.

The hon. Gentleman will know that it is open to the occupant of the Chair, whether I as Speaker or a Deputy Speaker acting on my behalf, to waive the sub judice rule. The Chair has some discretion in the way in which it is implemented. I certainly anticipate that if the debate goes ahead, it will be necessary to repeat what I am about to say: Members should not refer to their belief, one way or the other, as to the guilt or innocence of particular individuals. That simply must not happen. I also anticipate that between now and the debate taking place, there will be discussions between parliamentary officials and representatives of the Ministry of Justice.

I hope colleagues will understand if I leave it there and do not think it wise or necessary to say anything more, but the hon. Gentleman has raised a matter of the utmost importance, and I think we all take it, and will take it in the coming days, as seriously as it must be taken. I thank the Leader of the House and colleagues for the exchanges that we have just had.

## Northern Ireland Government

11.52 am

**The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Karen Bradley):** With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to update the House on the restoration of government in Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland needs devolved government. It needs all the functioning political institutions of the Belfast agreement and its successors. As significant decisions are taken at this critical time, Northern Ireland's voice must be heard. With new powers coming back from Brussels and flowing to Stormont, Northern Ireland needs an Executive in place to use those powers to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead. As relationships evolve, a functioning North South Ministerial Council is vital to ensure that Northern Ireland makes the most of its unique position within the UK and in relation to Ireland.

Other critical strategic decisions need to be taken for Northern Ireland—on, for example, investment, reform of public services and future budgets. Critical cross-cutting programmes addressing social deprivation and tackling paramilitarism are stalling following 19 months without devolved government. As this impasse continues, public services are suffering. Businesses are suffering. The people of Northern Ireland are suffering. Local decision making is urgently needed to address this. The only sustainable way forward lies in stable, fully functioning and inclusive devolved government. With determination and realism, we must set a clear goal of restoring the devolved power-sharing Executive and Assembly.

In the absence of an Executive, I have kept my duty to set a date for a fresh election under review. I have not believed, and do not now believe, that holding an election during this time of significant change and political uncertainty would be helpful or would increase the prospects of restoring the Executive, but I am aware of the current legislative position. In order to ensure certainty and clarity on this issue, I intend to introduce primary legislation in October to provide for a limited and prescribed period during which there will be no legal requirement to set a date for a further election and, importantly, during which an Executive may be formed at any point without the requirement for further legislation. That will provide a further opportunity to re-establish political dialogue, with the aim of restoring the Executive as soon as possible.

While Assembly Members continue to perform valuable constituency functions, it is clear that during any such interim period they will not be performing the full range of their legislative functions. Therefore, in parallel, I will take the steps necessary to reduce Assembly Members' salaries in line with the recommendations made by Trevor Reaney. The reduction will take effect in two stages, commencing in November. I confirm that this will not reduce the allowance for staff, as I do not think that MLAs' staff should suffer because of the politicians' failure to form an Executive.

I wish to commend the key role that the Northern Ireland civil service has played during the period in which there has been no Executive in ensuring the continuity of public services in Northern Ireland. Following the recent decision of the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal in the Buick case, I recognise that there is a need

to provide reassurance and clarity to both the NICS and the people of Northern Ireland on the mechanisms for the continued delivery of public services. The legislation I intend to introduce after the conference recess will therefore include provisions to give greater clarity and certainty to enable Northern Ireland Departments to continue to take decisions in Northern Ireland in the public interest and to ensure the continued delivery of public services. I intend to consult the parties in Northern Ireland about how this might best be done. I will also bring forward legislation that will enable key public appointments to be made in Northern Ireland, as I set out in my written statement on 18 July.

At the same time, I am conscious that this is no substitute for the return of elected Ministers taking decisions in the Executive and being accountable to the Assembly. I intend, therefore, to use the next few weeks to engage in further discussions with the parties and the Irish Government, in accordance with the three-stranded approach, with the intention of establishing a basis for moving into a more formal political dialogue that leads to a restoration of the institutions. These discussions will also seek views from the parties on when and how external facilitation could play a constructive role in the next round of talks.

Be in no doubt that no agreement can ever be imposed from outside Northern Ireland. It must be reached by those closest to these issues—those who have been elected to represent the people of Northern Ireland. I believe that the people of Northern Ireland want a restoration of their political institutions, and that is what this Government are committed to achieving. This statement represents a clear way forward and a plan for Northern Ireland, and I commend it to the House.

11.57 am

**Tony Lloyd (Rochdale) (Lab):** I thank the Secretary of State for advance sight of the statement, although the fact that it was shared with the rest of the world might make that slightly irrelevant. Let me say at the outset that I give a cautious welcome to the proposals she has set out. However, let us be very clear that the demand of the people of Northern Ireland is quite rightly to see the restoration of democratic government, and that demand must be echoed in this Chamber.

I welcome the reference in the statement to external facilitation for future talks, but will the Secretary of State clarify whether we are talking about an independent chair, which we have urged on her in the past, or is this simply a mechanism to move the agenda on? It is important to say that the capacity to have an independent chair is something that could break the logjam. I also welcome the decision—it is overdue—on MLAs' pay. Members on both sides of the House have been urging this on the Secretary of State and it is well beyond time, so that is a step in the right direction.

We are clear that many decisions on critical issues are now held in the logjam caused by the democratic crisis in Northern Ireland. For example, there is the issue of the existence of the Northern Ireland Policing Board. In the light of the arrest of two journalists over the weekend, that kind of oversight is fundamental to accountable policing in Northern Ireland and elsewhere. There is the issue of nurses' pay in relation to making sure that a nurse in Newcastle in County Down is paid the same as one in Newcastle upon Tyne. There are also

[Tony Lloyd]

issues with a legislative flavour, such as equal marriage. That has already been sanctioned by the Assembly, but it needs a change to be made here.

It is not acceptable to have a process of governance by judicial review, or a situation in which people cannot go to an elected Assembly Member or Member of this House, but have to go through the courts to seek justice. Part of the test of what the Secretary of State has set out must be whether the kinds of issues that have been mentioned will be resolved. Will it mean that the ordinary folk of Northern Ireland do not have to resort to the courts to seek the kind of justice that my constituents, and those of the Secretary of State, do not have to seek there? Will the arrangements mean that nurses pay will be brought into line and ensure that we have a policing board? The answer to the second point is almost certainly yes, but the answer to the first is less certain.

The answer on the point of equal marriage is within the gift of the Secretary of State. She must recognise that moving away from Good Friday agreement legislation is a significant change, and it is not unreasonable for her to consider when she could use her capacity for legislation in this Chamber to move on those things that Northern Ireland needs.

There is a serious democratic issue at the heart of this. Of course, after the Buick judgment, we must give clarity to civil servants, but at the moment civil servants in Northern Ireland have no one to account to—not the Secretary of State, and not Members of the Northern Ireland Executive. The Secretary of State must look at the democratic deficit over this period—it could run for another 600 days. I do not wish for that, but it brings us back to the central point that we now need to proceed with real urgency. We must have capacity for early decision making, and some of that must be reflected through the only democratic institution available, which is this House. Therefore, some of that oversight must be considered here. That is not direct rule; it is the way in which democracies shine a light on decisions that are being made. Otherwise, we risk civil servants being dragged back into the courts to be judicially reviewed over incinerators or any other decision they want to make.

This is a small step, not the giant leap we need. The Secretary of State is right that we need urgency in the British-Irish intergovernmental conference, and we need five-party talks to be delivered with a degree of urgency that has simply not existed to date. Democratic accountability must be put back. The decisions that are frustrating and blighting the lives of people in Northern Ireland must be brought to a conclusion. This is a small step, and in general terms, guardedly, we will look to support the Secretary of State where appropriate. However, she must do more to break the logjam.

**Karen Bradley:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his support. The decisions that are being taken today are not easy, and I appreciate his guarded support for what we are doing. I will continue to work with him to ensure that the House is comfortable and happy with the decisions that we are taking. Unfortunately, there is no easy answer. In an ideal situation, we would not have had 19 months without devolved government, but we have had that. We must act within the parameters of the situation in which we find ourselves, rather than where we would like to be.

The hon. Gentleman will know that I have worked throughout with four key principles in mind. First is our commitment to the Belfast agreement, and second is our obligations as the UK Government under that agreement. Thirdly, I have always acted to ensure that we remove any barriers to devolution and the restoration of power sharing. Fourthly, as the representative of the UK Government, I must bear in mind that the 1.8 million United Kingdom citizens who live in Northern Ireland are entitled to good governance, and decisions needed to ensure that good governance have been taken in this House. We will continue to take such decisions as appropriate and with the support of communities within Northern Ireland.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned my reference to external facilitation, and I have made no decisions about the right way to get talks restarted. He is right that those talks need to restart, but I need to work with the parties. Over the next few weeks, I intend to spend an intensive period, working with the parties and with the Irish Government as appropriate, and obviously with Her Majesty's loyal Opposition—again, as appropriate—to ensure that we have the right framework to get what we all want, which is government restored in Northern Ireland.

The hon. Gentleman refers to MLA pay. I should pay tribute to the hon. Member for North Down (Lady Hermon), who makes this point any time I do anything either in the House or at the Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee and has been a campaigner on this matter like few others. I did not want simply to beat MLAs by cutting pay; I needed to make sure there was an incentive for them to come back into devolved government. We want to use it to ensure that MLAs and politicians do the right thing and form a devolved Government. As soon as one is formed, the legislation we passed to cut MLA pay will fall away under the sunset clause passed in this House.

On the Policing Board, I have already said I will legislate to make sure that public appointments can be on a statutory footing. The hon. Gentleman is right: the Policing Board is probably the key example that everyone refers to. That is because policing in Northern Ireland has to be done with the consent of the public and all communities there, and having a properly constituted Policing Board is incredibly important to that.

The hon. Gentleman referred to equal marriage. It is probably worth clarifying the situation. While the majority of MLAs voted for equal marriage, it was stopped by the use of the petition of concern, not a failure to act. The Assembly did not give permission for equal marriage legislation to be taken forward. That seems a technicality, but it is the reality of the situation. There is no legal basis on which Northern Ireland can have equal marriage at this stage. I voted for equal marriage in this House, and I am proud to have done so, for my constituents and his—I refer here to Newcastle-under-Lyme, as well as Newcastle in County Down and Newcastle upon Tyne. Equal marriage, as with many other matters, is rightly devolved, and it is right that those decisions be taken by politicians elected by the people of Northern Ireland, not politicians in this Chamber, where appropriate. I respect the principle of devolution. Even if there are things we disagree with, we still have to respect that principle of devolution.

I will look carefully at the hon. Gentleman's point about oversight and the democratic deficit. In my conversations and discussions with all parties about

how decision making can take place, there will be a range of options available to make sure that when we bring legislation forward we do so with the broad support of the people of Northern Ireland and those who represent them. To do otherwise would not help the work we want to do and the clear objective we all have of seeing government restored to Stormont and locally elected politicians being appointed as Ministers and making decisions on behalf of the people who elected them.

**Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con): The Secretary of State mentioned that she is taking these steps in the national interest. Does she feel that it is in the national interest that old soldiers who participated in securing the successful outcome after the years of the troubles and the creation of civil government in Northern Ireland should be dragged through the courts, as is happening at the moment, decades after the events in which they were involved?

**Karen Bradley:** My right hon. Friend has campaigned on the treatment of veterans for many years. I have spent considerable time listening and talking to him about it, and he is right: the current situation is not tolerable. It is not acceptable that veterans are being subjected to a disproportionate focus by the authorities in Northern Ireland. We want to change that, and are consulting on how to do so, to stop veterans being dragged through the courts in the way he has described.

**Kirsty Blackman** (Aberdeen North) (SNP): I thank the Secretary of State for advance sight of the statement. I also pass on the apologies of our Front-Bench spokesperson, my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire North (Gavin Newlands), who has had to go up the road on urgent constituency business. He apologises for the fact that I am here in his place.

The Scottish National party stands by the principle that policy decisions in devolved institutions should be taken by devolved Administrations, rather than by Whitehall. We agree with the Secretary of State on that. On the Brexit negotiations, which are approaching their final stages—apparently—the Irish border is a really significant issue in those negotiations, and it is important that the voice of the people of Northern Ireland be heard in them. Can the Secretary of State give us assurances that that voice will be heard, despite the current absence of a functioning Executive?

The impasse has gone on for a very long time and the Scottish National party agrees that it needs to end. However, I have slight concerns about what the Secretary of State says with regard to talking to all the parties. I appreciate that, but my concern is that it is difficult for the UK Government to be seen to be an honest and unbiased broker given their reliance on the DUP, which is one of the parties involved in this negotiation. Will she try to give us some reassurance on this point, particularly to help the people of Northern Ireland understand her position?

**Karen Bradley:** I thank the hon. Lady for her points. I received a note from the hon. Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire North (Gavin Newlands). I understand that he has constituency business. We are all constituency MPs first and foremost and our constituents come first in all matters, so we all sympathise.

I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her comments and for her support for the proposals. She is right when she says that the voice of the people of Northern Ireland is not being heard through the proper channels in the Brexit discussions. She will know there are representatives of the Scottish Government and the Welsh Assembly in the various Joint Ministerial Committee meetings and so on. They enable the voice of the people of Scotland and Wales to be put through those forums. That is simply not possible without a devolved Government in Northern Ireland. We have ensured that all the main parties in Northern Ireland receive thorough briefings on Brexit. I endeavour, as a member of pretty much every committee on Brexit in the Government, to ensure that the voice of Northern Ireland is heard.

The hon. Lady asks about a framework by which talks could happen. As I said in the statement, I am making no decisions about how talks might best happen. I am very pragmatic about that. I want the talks to succeed, so I will consider and discuss all options with the parties to make sure we get the restoration of devolved government, which is what we all want to see.

**Nigel Mills** (Amber Valley) (Con): I welcome the statement, but the Secretary of State will know that there are important and sensitive political judgments to make in areas such as health and education reforms which were planned before the Executive fell apart. She envisages giving the power to civil servants to make those really quite difficult political judgments. Does she have another plan for how we can see some progress for those key public services?

**Karen Bradley:** I thank my hon. Friend, who is a very assiduous member of the Select Committee. As I said in my statement, I want to talk to the parties in Northern Ireland to ensure that decision making can be made in a way that has broad support across Northern Ireland. There are a variety of ways that that can be done and a variety of lengths to which we can go in terms of decision-making powers. I want to talk to the parties in Northern Ireland before making any final decisions.

**Mr Gregory Campbell** (East Londonderry) (DUP): My party welcomes the Secretary of State's announcement, particularly on reducing MLAs' pay. The DUP is the party of no preconditions: we want to get into government tomorrow. Unfortunately, others who walked out of the Executive have set preconditions. Hopefully, she will get on with that job. May I draw her attention to the part of her statement where she said that MLAs

“will not be performing the full range of their legislative functions”, thereby justifying the reduction in pay? Does she not apply the same logic to abstentionist Members of Parliament? Yesterday, we had a very important business reception at which the Secretary of State spoke. A Sinn Féin MP actually boasted that they did not have to leave the reception to come up here to vote and go through the Division Lobby. They claim hundreds of thousands of pounds of taxpayers' money for not performing their full legislative function.

**Karen Bradley:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his cautious welcome for the announcements I have made today. Pay and allowances for Members of this House are a matter for this House. It is therefore not appropriate

[Karen Bradley]

for me to comment on them. The decision I have taken today with regard to MLA pay is in relation to the recommendations put to me by Trevor Reaney, which were commissioned by my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (James Brokenshire). It is right, given that a decision has been taken to deal with the election duty, that we recognise that MLAs are not performing their full range of functions at this stage and that their pay should reflect that.

**Vicky Ford** (Chelmsford) (Con): I thank the Secretary of State for her comments. It is absolutely unacceptable for politicians to walk away from their decision-making responsibilities but still continue to pocket their pay. I am very pleased to see the Secretary of State for International Development, who holds responsibility for women and equalities, in her place and listening very intently. Does the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland agree that crucial decisions on women's rights should be taken locally in Northern Ireland, but that if they are not taken they cannot be delayed in perpetuity?

**Karen Bradley:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right to say that these are matters for the devolved Government. That is why we need to see a devolved Government: so that such decisions can be taken by those whom the people of Northern Ireland elected to do so for them. The sooner we have those people in Stormont, taking those decisions and dealing with those important matters, the better for everyone.

**Kate Hoey** (Vauxhall) (Lab): I thank the Secretary of State for apologising for something that clearly should not have happened. Even now, looking at the BBC report, there is a lot more detail about the salary structure. Will she tell the House exactly what she is going to do on Assembly pay? It is on the BBC website. There is only one party—we all know that—that has refused to go back in without any preconditions. If we get the Assembly back again, what is to stop one party deciding that it is going to walk out again? Are we not coming to the crucial point where, ultimately, we are going to have to look at the arrangements for how the Belfast agreement, in this particular instance, actually works—or does not?

**Karen Bradley:** I apologise again for the error that led to the BBC report. That should never have happened and I apologise again to the House. The hon. Lady asks a question about the mechanics in relation to MLA pay. I will now write to all MLAs to inform them that I intend to reduce their pay in two stages, as set out by Trevor Reaney, with the first reduction in November and the following reduction three months later. I hope that that will incentivise MLAs to come back around the table and to re-form the Government and appoint Ministers, which we all want to see them do. That is the priority for all of us. We want to make sure we deliver that as soon as possible.

**Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): It appears that one party, namely Sinn Féin, are frustrating the whole talks process, and that they are doing so for party political advantage in the general election in southern Ireland. May I urge my right hon. Friend to lay out a timetable not only for legislation in this House, but for

the talks process that should take place and lead to a natural conclusion? If the talks fail, the conclusion must be what action we have to take in this place.

**Karen Bradley:** I apologise to the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey). My hon. Friend raises the point that she raised. I will address both their points now. We are all concerned about the sustainability of the Executive. This issue needs to be resolved. Clearly, the changes made to the Belfast agreement in the 2007 St Andrews agreement have made the situation we have found ourselves in for the past 19 months more likely. We therefore need to look at the sustainability of the Executive. On a plan or framework for talks, I want to meet all the main parties in Northern Ireland over the next few weeks and make a decision at that stage. As I said earlier, it is important to be pragmatic. We cannot impose this decision; it has to be taken by the politicians in Northern Ireland, on behalf of the people of Northern Ireland.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael** (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): May I invite the Secretary of State to join me in commending Naomi Long on the initiative she took earlier this week in relation to getting the parties together at Stormont and talking? It is surely apparent now that the exercise in collective hand-wringing that we are all engaged in here today is not going to bring about the change that we need. In the past, when we reached an impasse of this sort, we looked outside—I am thinking of the likes of Senator George Mitchell and others who played an important role in moving on the process when that was necessary. Will the Secretary of State give that sort of initiative the bulk of her attention, because, frankly, as somebody who has been engaged in this issue for years now, I do not see any other means of achieving the progress that we need?

**Karen Bradley:** The right hon. Gentleman is right to refer to the initiative of the Alliance party and Naomi Long, who I spoke to earlier today. I commend her for taking that initiative, which demonstrates that there is some low-level engagement between the parties. That is something I want to explore. As I said in my statement, I rule nothing out. I will look at all options, but I need to do the right thing by the parties in Northern Ireland. As I have said previously, I cannot impose this; it has to be something that the parties in Northern Ireland are willing to choose and comply with.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Secretary of State for coming to the House today and for the statement that she made. She has rightly related and referred to the strategic decisions on investment in agri-food sectors, which I have discussed with the Minister of State, and on issues of health and education, roads, fishing and so on—things that are critically important. There is a need to address the issue of social deprivation, as well as tackling paramilitarism, which is rampant in my constituency, as the Secretary of State knows.

The announcement on MLA pay is the right decision—I put that on record—although most MLAs, including my own colleagues, want to get the Assembly working fully and immediately. However, everyone is being punished due to the refusal of one party, namely Sinn Féin. If we are going to hit the pockets of Northern Ireland Assembly Members, which is right, does the Secretary of State

agree that the same principles being applied to Northern Ireland Assembly Members should now apply to those who refuse to do their work in this House?

**Karen Bradley:** The hon. Gentleman refers to many, many of the decisions that need to be taken. We need ministerial decisions to be taken so that those many urgent matters around public services and their delivery, the reform of health and education, and matters regarding paramilitarism can be dealt with. We need Ministers to do that, and the right Ministers to do it are those whom the people of Northern Ireland elected to represent them. That is what we all want to see.

The hon. Gentleman made the same point as his colleague, the hon. Member for East Londonderry (Mr Campbell), regarding the situation in the House. That is a matter for the House, and I am sure the hon. Gentleman will take it up with the House authorities, which no doubt he does on a regular basis.

**Alex Sobel (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op):** In response to the hon. Member for Aberdeen North (Kirsty Blackman), the Secretary of State outlined the approach with the Northern Ireland parties on Brexit in general. In the absence of a functioning Assembly, will she outline how she is working with the Northern Ireland parties, in particular on the movement of goods and of people across the Irish border after Brexit?

**Karen Bradley:** The hon. Gentleman will have seen the Government's White Paper, which sets out our proposals on the movement of goods and people following the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union. He will have seen that the White Paper sets out pragmatic and sensible suggestions as to how those movements could continue in the way that they have done historically and in a way that works for the whole United Kingdom. Clearly, the Northern Ireland parties have been briefed on the White Paper, which is a public document.

## Points of Order

12.24 am

**Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab):** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Mohamed Bangoura is a six-year-old boy who lives in my constituency. This summer, he went to Belgium to stay with family friends, as he had on many previous occasions, but he was prevented from travelling home on Sunday, when I understand that the Belgian authorities were told that the Home Office had revoked his passport. The Home Office has apparently said that it is looking at all possible options to enable Mohamed to come home and be reunited with his mother, but, four days on, he remains trapped in Belgium. Could you advise me how I can ensure that the Home Office deals with this case with the urgency it deserves, and at the very least that he is issued with emergency travel documents today, so that he can come home and be again with his mother?

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his point of order and for giving me prior notice of it. I am sure he understands that this is not a matter on which the Chair can rule, but I do understand his concern. I would advise that he perhaps make direct contact with the Minister's office, but I would also say that I am sure that those on the Treasury Bench will have heard his concern and will perhaps feed it back to Ministers.

**Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab):** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work has laid a written ministerial statement in the Library this morning in response to the UN committee's report from last October, which investigated breaches by this Government of the UN convention on the rights of disabled people. Given the importance and seriousness of the UN's findings and recommendations, have you received any indication of when there might be an oral ministerial statement giving the House the opportunity to question and scrutinise the Government's response to this important report?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I thank the hon. Lady for her point of order. At the moment, I have not received any notification that there is going to be an oral statement. I am sure she knows that there are ways in which she can pursue this matter, perhaps through an urgent question or oral questions, or perhaps at business questions next week to ask the Leader of the House whether there might be a debate. In the meantime, I am again sure that those on the Treasury Bench will have heard her concerns and will report them back.

## e-Cigarettes

### SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

#### Select Committee statement

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** We now come to the first Select Committee statement. The right hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb), the Chair of the Select Committee on Science and Technology, will speak on his subject for up to 10 minutes, during which no interventions may be taken. At the conclusion of his statement, I will call Members to put questions on the subject of the statement and call the right hon. Gentleman to respond to those in turn.

12.26 pm

**Norman Lamb** (North Norfolk) (LD): I want to make a statement following the publication over the summer of our report on e-cigarettes. May I start by thanking the more than 90 organisations and individuals who provided us with written evidence, and the 25 individuals who gave oral evidence? I also thank my fellow Committee members, several of whom are present in the Chamber, for their work on this inquiry. This is strictly an evidence-based report, and it would not have been possible without the input of so many organisations and individuals who submitted evidence.

The bottom line is that we conducted this inquiry because smoking kills. Despite the great strides that we have made in recent years, smoking remains the primary cause of preventable illness and premature death, accounting for approximately 79,000 deaths a year in England. That is a dreadful death toll that causes untold misery for families and communities up and down the country, but we know that nearly 3 million people in the UK are using e-cigarettes as a tool to help them to stop smoking.

The Government's tobacco control plan points out:

"In 2016 it was estimated that 2 million consumers in England had used these products and completely stopped smoking and a further 470,000 were using them as an aid to stop smoking."

E-cigarettes have been in the UK market since 2007, and we wanted to examine the evidence.

It is important to be really clear here: our report is aimed at those who are already smoking cigarettes and at the horror of lives being lost through smoking-related diseases. To focus on the evidence, there is growing consensus that e-cigarettes are significantly less harmful for a smoker's health. This is not just our Committee's view of the evidence that we have analysed; it is the view of Public Health England, which estimates that they are 95% less harmful than smoking. It is also the view of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, the British Medical Association, Cancer Research UK, the British Heart Foundation, the Cochrane Tobacco Addiction Group, the Royal Society for Public Health, the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh and many, many more.

The Government themselves have acknowledged that the

"evidence is increasingly clear that e-cigarettes are significantly less harmful to health than smoking tobacco".

I want to quote the evidence from Public Health England and the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency, the regulator. They said:

"Levels of carcinogenic chemicals...are substantially lower in e-cigarettes' aerosol compared with tobacco smoke. Biomarkers of carcinogen exposures (chemicals detected in the blood or urine of users) are also substantially decreased in current e-cigarette-only users compared with cigarette smokers and decrease when smokers switch to e-cigarettes."

Clarity of the message on this is really important. Some people urge a more cautious approach because we do not know everything about long-term risk, but we conclude:

"any judgement of risks has to take account of the risk of not adopting e-cigarettes—that is, continuing to smoke conventional cigarettes, which are substantially more harmful".

We know they kill, so there is a price to be paid in human lives through adopting a more cautious approach.

Our report made a number of recommendations, and today I am going to focus on three particular areas: the need for ongoing research into e-cigarettes, the use of e-cigarettes in mental health facilities and their use in public spaces. I hope today that I will be able to correct some of the inaccuracies in some of the media coverage of the Committee's report.

Our report is not the end point—more evidence is needed. That is why we concluded that the Government should maintain their planned annual evidence review on e-cigarettes. We also say that they should support a long-term research programme, to be overseen by Public Health England and the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment, to ensure that health-related evidence is not dependent solely on the tobacco industry or the manufacturers of e-cigarettes.

Hon. Members might not know that 40% of adults with mental ill health smoke, compared with just 16% of the general population. Smoking is also the single largest cause of premature mortality for those with mental ill health. We know that people with severe and enduring mental ill health die 15 to 20 years earlier than other people. Therefore, as the Government warn, if we do not reduce smoking among this group, which, as I say, remains stubbornly high,

"we will have failed to reduce health inequalities".

We surveyed mental health trusts to inform our work in this area. What we found was rather shocking. A third of mental health trusts still ban e-cigarettes within their facilities. We also found that three quarters of NHS trusts—these are health trusts, which ought to be on top of the evidence—are mistakenly concerned about second-hand e-cigarette vapour, despite evidence that it presents a negligible health risk. However, progressive trusts such as Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust use e-cigarettes to help patients give up smoking, while encouraging them to engage with treatments.

We conclude that all patients in mental health units should have the benefit of this more enlightened thinking. NHS England must set a clear central NHS policy on e-cigarettes in mental health units that establishes allowing e-cigarette use by patients as a default unless an NHS trust can show reasons for not doing so that are demonstrably evidence-based.

Let me now turn to the area of our report that created the biggest debate: the treatment of e-cigarettes in public spaces. Despite some suggestions to the contrary, we did not recommend that e-cigarettes should be allowed in closed public spaces or on public transport. We called for a public debate on how these products are dealt with



in our public spaces. The coverage of our report has certainly kick-started a public discussion, and I really welcome that. We need such a debate because the evidence suggests no public health rationale for treating e-cigarettes and conventional cigarettes as one and the same.

There are, however, nuisance justifications for restricting e-cigarettes' use in public, such as in enclosed spaces and on public transport. I personally would not support any proposal that permitted the use of e-cigarettes on public transport, specifically because many people find the smell of many vapours unpleasant and intrusive. However, that is quite different from restricting usage in all public spaces based on misplaced health concerns and treating this issue in exactly the same way as we treat smoking.

It is surely the duty of policy makers to understand what the evidence says about the relative harms of e-cigarettes and conventional cigarettes and to make policy based on that evidence, in consultation with experts. We call for a shift to a more risk-proportionate regulatory environment, where regulations, advertising rules and tax duties reflect that evidence on the relative harms of the various e-cigarettes and tobacco products that are available. We need to take action so that we can encourage current smokers—given the death toll of 79,000 in England alone every year—to make the switch to e-cigarettes and to improve their health. The potential to save lives is clear.

**Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): I thank the Chair of the Committee for his report and for his clarification of what the Committee's recommendations actually were.

I declare an interest as the chairman of the all-party parliamentary group on smoking and health. The clear message to smokers is that the safest way to restore their health is to give up smoking completely. However, as an alternative route towards that, taking up e-cigarettes is clearly a better health outcome than smoking.

I urge the right hon. Gentleman to clarify once again his Committee's position on the use of e-cigarettes in enclosed public spaces such as public houses and restaurants and not just transport facilities and so on. In many ways, there are two aspects to this issue. There is the nuisance aspect of smelling vapour, which often has a particular scent. There is also the aspect that many people will be trying to give up smoking, and seeing people using e-cigarettes in an enclosed space may induce their craving for cigarettes. It is very important to have a clarification on that issue. Personally, I would oppose any relaxation in the use of e-cigarettes in any enclosed spaces.

**Norman Lamb:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for that really helpful contribution. First, on the case for encouraging smokers to shift to e-cigarettes—that is clearly a big concern of his—let me quote Dr Jamie Brown of University College London:

“Any perceived risk associated with offering reassurance before we have the long-term data...must be balanced against the risk associated with the opportunity cost of failing to inform the millions of people who are currently smoking uniquely dangerous products that e-cigarettes are safer when they believe”,

wrongly, that

“they are not.”

That is a really important public health message to get across.

With regard to public spaces, we wanted to clearly distinguish between the public health justification for policies and the nuisance issue. The evidence clearly says that secondary vaping—someone taking vapour into their lungs because of the close proximity of people who are vaping—carries nothing like the same risk as secondary smoking, which carries a very serious risk and led to the legislation passed in this House to ban smoking in public areas.

However, there is a good justification, which I totally accept, for not allowing vaping because of the nuisance—because people find it invasive. I personally dislike the sweet strawberry flavours and so on that we are often confronted by at close quarters. What is frustrating is that some of the graphics used in relation to the report, including by the BBC, showed people vaping on public transport, but we were not making a recommendation on that; we were just saying, “Let's have a public discussion informed by the evidence and then reach our conclusions.” We should not just automatically treat vaping in the same way as what the academic I mentioned described as the “uniquely dangerous” activity of smoking tobacco.

**Chris Elmore** (Ogmore) (Lab): I welcome the right hon. Gentleman's Committee's report. Health is of course a devolved function in Wales and it is not for this House or any Member of it to suggest what policies should be implemented in Scotland or Wales. However, does he agree that it is important that when Select Committees of this House conduct these sorts of inquiries that information can be shared with the devolved Administrations, so that they can take part in a wider debate around these issues? At the end of the last Assembly term, there was a Bill to ban e-cigarettes in Wales. It was lost for various other reasons and not passed in the last days of the Assembly sitting. Does he agree that, with this new information and evidence coming forward, it is proper that Select Committees of this House do shared working on public health issues and pass on evidence where they think it is of worth for UK-wide issues, because smoking is not reserved to England or any of the other nations of the UK?

**Norman Lamb:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his helpful contribution and totally agree with him. I will make sure that we specifically send the report to the devolved Administrations, and he highlights the fact that there is now such strong consensus through all the organisations I referred to—Cancer Research UK, the British Heart Foundation and so on—of the relative harm reduction through adopting e-cigarettes as opposed to smoking. Any confusion of that message will result in fewer people giving up smoking and more people in our country dying, and we must stop that.

**Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): I was staggered to read in the right hon. Gentleman's report that NHS England does not have a dedicated person responsible for implementing the Government's tobacco control plan and failed to provide a representative to the Committee and that there is no one in NHS England in charge of the oversight of e-cigarette policies among NHS mental health trusts. Given that e-cigarettes are, according to NHS England, 95% less harmful and that early morbidity for mental health patients can take 15 to 20 years off their lives, is this not a shocking state of affairs that NHS England must address urgently?

**Norman Lamb:** I agree. It was extraordinary that NHS England was unable or unwilling to provide a witness for our inquiry. There is a sense that it is almost subcontracting its responsibility for this to Public Health England. Public Health England obviously has a clear interest, but given the awful death toll and in particular the fact that smoking prevalence among those with mental ill health remains stubbornly high at over 40%, NHS England, which is responsible for NHS trusts across the country, should and must take central responsibility for this and appoint someone with responsibility for driving through this policy.

**Carol Monaghan** (Glasgow North West) (SNP): Some of the evidence we heard during the Committee hearings was about e-cigarette users having to go out and use smoking shelters outside buildings, which one witness likened to an alcoholic being put into a pub situation and being expected to refrain. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that we must have a more realistic view of the use of e-cigarettes in public buildings, with perhaps a room or a dedicated area set aside, so that e-cigarette users are not forced to come face to face with the thing they are trying to give up?

**Norman Lamb:** I thank my fellow Committee member for that helpful contribution. She describes exactly what we should be discussing, and it addresses points made earlier from the Conservative Benches. To simply send vapers to the cigarette shelter outside is completely counterproductive and makes it harder for people to give up. Having a room in their building may well be an appropriate step for many organisations to take, given that there is no health risk associated with vaping, as there is with secondary smoking.

**Vicky Ford** (Chelmsford) (Con): It was most interesting to serve on the Committee during this investigation. Can the Chairman confirm that the report was not intended to suggest that e-cigarettes were zero-risk, because they are new products and the long-term risks are not yet known, and that the only zero-risk option is not to smoke?

**Norman Lamb:** The hon. Lady is absolutely right. This is about harm reduction and it is in a sense encapsulated in the position that Public Health England takes: it says that, as an estimate, e-cigarettes are 95% less harmful. It is not saying there is no risk, and the clear message to smokers is, "If you can give up completely, that's the best step to take for your health; if you can't, this reduces harm and ought to be followed."

**Nick Smith** (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): I want to take up that point, but first may I commend the Committee for this report, which will help a lot with public health across the UK? I note that the report says:

"A medically licensed e-cigarette could assist smoking cessation efforts by making it easier for medical professionals to discuss and recommend them as a stop smoking treatment with patients." That is very good. Does the right hon. Gentleman know what the Government are doing to encourage e-cigarette manufacturers to put products forward for licensing?

**Norman Lamb:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for highlighting that recommendation. I do not think the Government are doing anything in particular to encourage

organisations to seek medical licensing, but the potential prize here is that if there were a medically licensed product, it would reach a proportion of current smokers who would be reassured that the medical licence in a sense guaranteed that it would be a sensible step for them to take and would help them give up smoking.

**Stephen Metcalfe** (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con): I apologise for missing the very first hint of what the Committee Chairman was saying. This was an interesting inquiry and was as controversial as we thought it might be when we selected it. The evidence we received overwhelmingly suggested that it is 95% safer at least to take up vaping and to stop smoking. Will the Chairman speculate on why some persist in trying to put smoking and vaping side by side following the publication of the report?

On the debate on smoking in public places, there is a range of devices and flavours, and perhaps this will stimulate a debate that leads the industry to find devices that do not impinge on others' airspace, so that we can expand the opportunities for people not to have to associate with smokers when vaping.

**Norman Lamb:** I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman for his work in initiating debate about this issue in the previous Committee and for his work on this inquiry. On that final point, vaping without some of the offensive flavours—or flavours that some people find offensive—is certainly helpful in encouraging people to be tolerant of vaping. The great value of this report is to reinforce the public health messages and encourage people to understand the relative harm of e-cigarettes as against smoking.

On the hon. Gentleman's first point, it is interesting that the United States, Australia and some other countries take a different approach that appears to be based on doing nothing until they have all the evidence. As the evidence quoted made clear, however, there is a price to be paid for that caution, which is that we are not getting the clear message, based on evidence, to smokers that shifting to e-cigarettes will save lives here and now. So I think this country is leading the way with this strong consensus—coalition of support—around this clear evidence. The great value of the report is to reinforce this message to people: "If you can't give up smoking entirely, it is in your interests to shift to e-cigarettes because that will help save your life."

**Darren Jones** (Bristol North West) (Lab): I welcome the amount of public engagement received off the back of the publication of this report, which shows a desire by the public to understand the evidence on what is a relatively new product about which there are many misconceptions, but one of the key pieces of feedback I received from constituents was, I fear off the back of some misreporting, that our Select Committee report was recommending vaping on buses, so for clarity for this House, my constituents and the wider public, will the Chairman make it clear that we were not recommending that vaping be allowed on buses?

**Norman Lamb:** I believe the expression is "read my lips": we were not recommending vaping on buses. I hope that is helpful.

## Pupil Exclusion and Alternative Provision

### EDUCATION COMMITTEE

#### *Select Committee statement*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** We now come to the second Select Committee statement. The procedure is the same as for the previous statement. I call the Chair of the Education Committee, Robert Halfon.

12.49 pm

**Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con):** When I introduced my 10-minute rule Bill on the reform of the Social Mobility Commission in May, I said that social justice was the defining issue for our country, so I am pleased to be making this statement on the publication of the Education Committee's fifth report of this Parliament, "Forgotten children: alternative provision and the scandal of ever increasing exclusions". I thank the officers of the Committee, and particularly its hard-working members, two of whom are here today: the hon. Members for Colne Valley (Thelma Walker) and for Gateshead (Ian Mearns).

Social justice is the defining issue for our country. It is fundamental for ensuring that all pupils can climb the educational ladder of opportunity. At the moment, alternative provision is either a springboard or a millstone. For some pupils, it enables them to achieve in a safe and supportive environment; for others, the poor quality of provision and the lack of ambition of some teachers drag them down, opening them up to stigmatisation and underachievement at 16, which then sets them up for underachievement as adults.

Pupils attend alternative provision for a number of reasons. We find pupils who have been permanently excluded, as well as those who are too ill to attend school and those who have been sent to an alternative provider to improve their behaviour. The report certainly got a lot of coverage, which this forgotten part of our education system deserves, but it seemed to divide the education sector. Some welcomed its approach to greater transparency by schools and clearer, stronger rights for pupils who have been excluded. Others were concerned that the report and its recommendations were an attack on a headteacher's right to exclude and on the importance of ensuring that pupils can learn and staff can teach in a safe and welcoming environment.

I know that the Minister for School Standards is serious about this issue, and that he is doing a lot of work on it, but I was disappointed to see a senior adviser to the Department for Education describing our report by saying:

"It would make more sense if you held it upside down and read it backwards",

and that the exclusion figures represented

"too small an increase to panic about".

That is wrong-headed, not just because of the impact of exclusion on the children and their prospects in education and employment but because of the impact on society, which is estimated at a cost of £370,000 per child excluded in lifetime costs. It is not much of a surprise to learn that 58% of young prisoners were permanently excluded from school. I know that the Government are

conducting a review of exclusions, led by the very able Ed Timpson, so I was really very disappointed to see that response. I was also disappointed that the criticism focused on just one area, which formed only part of our Committee's inquiry. That means that people might have missed other aspects of our report, to the detriment of highlighting some of the remarkable work that goes on in alternative provision, as well as some of the gaping holes that the children involved can fall through. I will come to that in a bit.

Forty-one children are permanently excluded from our schools every day—the figure has gone up 40% in the past year—and 2,010 pupils are temporarily excluded every day. The latest Government statistics show that pupils with special educational needs account for around half of all permanent and fixed-period exclusions, and pupils who are eligible for free school meals account for 40% of all permanent exclusions. In a number of recent reports, *The Times* has highlighted the fact that other children are being off-rolled—that is, informally excluded by being encouraged to move to a different school or to be home educated.

Ofsted has warned that half the 19,000 pupils who left a school between year 10 and year 11 in 2017 did not reappear on the roll of another state school, and it is currently looking at around 300 schools that have high numbers of pupils leaving in years 10 and 11. These are the pupils the Committee is concerned about: pupils with special educational needs whom schools exclude because they cannot meet their needs, or without having tried to meet their needs; pupils whose results might have a negative impact on their school's Progress 8 score and are therefore encouraged to move to a different school; victims of bullying who are moved to internal exclusion; and pupils who are excluded for minor infringements of a uniform policy. We are concerned that those pupils and their parents are vulnerable to poor choices, hasty decisions and a lack of knowledge about their options.

To be clear, we are not saying that schools should not exclude pupils, or that schools must include pupils who are violent and dangerous and pose a threat to the safety of the school, but we do say that schools should be inclusive. They should support children with additional needs, not off-roll or exclude them without trying to meet those needs. If they do exclude, they should remain accountable for their pupils' results, which we hope will encourage schools to think much more carefully about the type of provision that they are sending their pupils to.

Our report looked not just at the reasons why pupils are excluded and attend alternative provision but at how alternative provision is commissioned and how pupils are referred to it, as well as at the quality of provision and the outcomes and successes of pupils. Unfortunately, we found that while many pupils have excellent experiences, that is not true across the board. There are real weaknesses in the system that educates some of our most vulnerable children. We do not think that pupils should not go to alternative provision, but we do believe that pupils who need to be there should attend, and that they should do so at the right time. We spoke to young people during our inquiry who said that it took failed moves and internal isolation before they found a suitable place to go to school.

We see our report and its recommendations as a bill of rights for pupils and their parents. We believe that if our recommendations are implemented, the experience

[Robert Halfon]

of pupils in alternative provision will improve. That is why we are calling for more information for parents and pupils; an inclusion measure to incentivise schools to be more inclusive; changes to the weighting of Progress 8 and other accountability measures; and a senior person in local authorities, similar to the existing role of the virtual school head for looked-after children, to champion these pupils and oversee the decisions being made by schools.

We know that 82% of teachers in alternative provision are qualified, compared with 95% in mainstream schools. Vacancies are between 100% and 150% higher in alternative provision than in mainstream schools, and pupils in alternative provision and special schools are twice as likely as their peers in mainstream schools to be taught by a supply teacher. Teachers are inspirational, and children in alternative provision deserve to be taught by inspirational teachers. Many of them are, but alternative provision is too often seen as the poor relation. We think that trainee teachers should experience an alternative provision or special school setting, and that mainstream schools should buddy with alternative provision schools so that they can share expertise, experiences and training. There are also pupils who are being taught in unregistered provision, and we are concerned that there is not sufficient oversight across the board to ensure that pupils who are attending are receiving high-quality, safe schooling. But we recognise the importance of it, and we recommended that any provider that wants to educate pupils for more than two days a week should be registered.

I should like to end this speech with the report's final recommendation. It is a vital one, and it brings out something that surprised me during our inquiry. There is no statutory duty for local authorities to provide alternative provision post 16. We want to see resources allocated so that alternative providers can keep pupils until they are 18 or provide outreach to help pupils to settle in post-16 education. It is absurd that we bring children into alternative provision, acknowledging their need for a style of schooling that is indeed alternative, and then expect them to survive in a further education environment that is much larger and busier than their current provision. If we gave these pupils a little more time, a little more support and a little more nurture, they might achieve higher GCSE grades and go on to a bright future.

Pupils in alternative provision should not be written off. No matter the reason for their attending, they deserve access to a high-quality education and to qualifications of which they can be proud. They deserve the chance to climb the ladder of educational opportunity, but at the moment we are providing too many pupils in alternative provision with a ladder whose rungs are too far apart, not closer together.

**Ian Mearns** (Gateshead) (Lab): Does the Chair of the Education Committee agree that the point of providing state-funded schools is to get children into them, to keep them there and to educate them? The idea of off-rolling children seems to have blossomed dramatically over the past couple of years, and the Minister for School Standards said in evidence to the Committee that off-rolling was "unlawful." Can we ensure that that process is brought to an abrupt end? We must ensure that youngsters are getting the opportunities that they

should get, not just being palmed off and, euphemistically speaking, home educated. To be frank, some good home education is going on, but it is rare. The growth in what is being called home education just cannot be sustained as an educational process.

**Robert Halfon:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his work on this "Forgotten children" report, and I absolutely agree with him. The Minister was right to say that the practice is illegal, but the fact that Ofsted is inspecting around 300 schools—I gave some other figures—and that *The Times* has done report after report into the matter shows that it is clearly a scandal that the Government must crack down on. I hope that the Ed Timpson review will make some clear recommendations.

**Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): I was stunned to hear that 58% of young offenders have been excluded from school and that there is no statutory requirement on local authorities to co-ordinate alternative provision for children who have been excluded. Persistently badly behaved pupils must be excluded, but proper alternative provision must be made. Does my right hon. Friend agree that in order to address growing criminality on our streets among young people, especially post 16, we must address this problem urgently? Will he also comment on the need for parents to take responsibility for their offspring's behaviour in school? We do not want the education of well-behaved pupils to be disrupted.

**Robert Halfon:** I agree with my hon. Friend that this is not just the fault of Government or of teachers; everybody is involved. When we talk about a bill of rights for parents and children, we do not just mean a charter of grievances; it is about ensuring that there is a fair appeals system and that parents know what to do. However, when there are clear instances of children bringing a knife or whatever into school, the parents must have responsibility for that.

**Thelma Walker** (Colne Valley) (Lab): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his statement. Does he agree that the evidence we heard from young people is of great value? Does he, like me, hope that this report will lead to a better understanding of the support that young people and their families need, so that as many young people as possible remain in mainstream education?

**Robert Halfon:** I thank the hon. Lady for her commitment and her work on this report. We called the report "Forgotten children" because too many children are being excluded every day. I always believe in parental choice, and some parents will want their children to attend alternative provision, but where it is possible to have qualified teachers in learning support units within a school for a child with severe difficulties, that is welcome.

**Norman Lamb** (North Norfolk) (LD): I warmly welcome the report. The number of children excluded in my county of Norfolk is shockingly high, and excluded children are often then put on a waiting list for other provision because all the units are full. When we know that, as the right hon. Gentleman indicated, children from disadvantaged backgrounds, children with special educational needs, children with mental ill health and children who have experienced adversity of various

forms in their lives are disproportionately affected by the propensity to exclude, it is vital that we change how the process operates. Does he agree that the fact that there is such variability between schools, with some well-performing, highly academic schools, often in disadvantaged areas, managing to avoid excluding children, demonstrates that it is possible to avoid it? That should be the rule for every school, and schools should remain accountable for the children they exclude.

**Robert Halfon:** The right hon. Gentleman makes a powerful point. As I understand it, schools in Scotland do not exclude any pupils—perhaps one or two over the past year—and I do not understand why there are some great schools that do not exclude pupils whereas others are excluding many. I am not against exclusion, and schools should have the right to exclude a pupil in certain circumstances, but we must learn from the examples of best practice in the schools that seem to succeed without using exclusions, which seem to have become a first resort rather than a last resort for some.

## BILL PRESENTED

### LOCAL ELECTRICITY BILL

#### *Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

Jeremy Lefroy, supported by Peter Aldous, Alan Brown, Jonathan Edwards, James Heapey, Peter Kyle, Sir Oliver Letwin, Caroline Lucas, Layla Moran, Antoinette Sandbach, Alex Sobel and Catherine West, presented a Bill to enable electricity generators to become local electricity suppliers; and for connected purposes.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 26 October, and to be printed (Bill 262).*

## Backbench Business

### Brexit, Science and Innovation

1.5 pm

**Norman Lamb** (North Norfolk) (LD): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the Science and Technology Committee's Second Report on Brexit, science and innovation, HC 705, and the Government Response, Fifth Special Report, HC 1008; further takes note of the Science and Technology Committee's Eighth Report on An immigration system that works for science and innovation, HC 1061; believes that the Government should seek to agree with the EU the far-reaching science and innovation accord proposed by the Prime Minister in her Mansion House speech and in The Future Relationship Between the United Kingdom and the European Union White Paper, Cm 9593; calls for this accord to be negotiated separately from wider EU-UK trade negotiations; and further calls for the science and innovation accord to include details of an immigration system that works for the science and innovation community.

It's me again, I'm afraid. The motion relates to two recent reports from the Science and Technology Committee, and I again thank the members of the Committee for their work on the inquiries. I also thank the Liaison Committee for recommending to the Backbench Business Committee that the House should have the opportunity to hold this debate today. The House has spent many hours discussing the implications of leaving the European Union for the big political issues, such as trade, regulation and freedom of movement, often in ways that are deeply divisive between those who support remaining in the EU and those who believe we should be leaving, which was the decision in the referendum. Today, however, we have an opportunity to explore the effects of Brexit on something which, at least in theory, is less politically contentious for many but just as important to get right.

No one is rushing to the barricades to demand the end to scientific collaboration, about which we should all be able to agree. I am sure that Members across the House will want to join me in underlining the absolute importance of science and innovation to the economy, but I hope that today will also help to generate some political momentum to make it certain that science does not become a casualty of the Brexit process, particularly given the concerns that no deal could emerge from the negotiations.

**Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): I welcome the right hon. Gentleman's introductory remarks. Despite our views on Brexit, I am sure that we are on the same page. Does he agree that this country has led the world in many scientific discoveries for hundreds of years and that there has been close collaboration on such discoveries across Europe for hundreds of years? Scientific collaboration did not start on 1 January 1973 and will not end on 29 March next year. Can we agree on that?

**Norman Lamb:** I thank the hon. Gentleman. In a sense, these reports are all about seeking to ensure that collaboration does continue beyond March next year, and I of course completely accept that fact about collaboration, not just across Europe, but across the world.

My Committee has produced two reports this year looking at the impact of Brexit on science and innovation. They build on work undertaken by my two predecessor

[Norman Lamb]

Committee Chairs and their Committees in the 2015 Parliament. One of those Chairs was the hon. Member for South Basildon and East Thurrock (Stephen Metcalfe), who continues to be a member of the Science and Technology Committee. I pay tribute to him for his work and note that he is in his seat for this debate. The first of this year's two reports, as referenced on the Order Paper, was published in March following a summit with more than 50 representatives of the science and innovation community. We are grateful for the community's willingness both to respond quickly to our call for evidence and to participate in that event.

The report recognises the current strength of British science on the world stage and the Government's commitment to science and research through a range of policies. For instance, the Government have made science a key pillar of the industrial strategy, and they have also committed to increase R&D spending further to the OECD average of 2.4% of GDP by 2027.

Those commitments are very welcome, but the shadow of whether the UK will participate in all aspects of EU schemes such as Horizon 2020 and its successor programme after March 2019 looms large. Whatever form of Brexit we end up with, there is a need to make sure that the international standing of UK research is protected, and indeed strengthened, following March next year.

A key recommendation of our report is that the Government should explicitly commit to seeking associated country status for Horizon 2020's successor programme, now known as Horizon Europe. The UK has received €4.73 billion from Horizon 2020 to date, and Horizon Europe is set to be a huge increase in ambition, and the pot of money available will total €100 billion from 2021 to 2027.

Since our report, the Government's no deal technical note on Horizon 2020 funding has underlined the importance of such close association. The note confirms that, without a deal that secures associated country status, we will not be eligible to participate in some very important elements of Horizon 2020 during its remaining years, including European Research Council funds. The campaign group Scientists for EU has calculated that we stand to lose around £0.5 billion each year in the event of no deal by not being eligible to access those funds, although it is important to say that presumably we would not be paying in during that period either.

The plans for Horizon Europe set out an enhanced role for third countries—in other words, countries outside the EU—in the new scheme when Horizon 2020 has run its course. The Government have played their part in shaping the programme for Horizon Europe, but the Minister has said that participation is contingent on three things.

First, it is contingent on the programme's continued focus on excellence. I think we have reassurance, but it would be helpful if the Minister updated us. Secondly, it is contingent on agreeing a suitable participation fee. The Minister has said that he supports participation but "not at any price". Thirdly, it is contingent on securing a suitable level of influence on the programme.

The last point remains a challenging issue. We are likely to be one of the biggest contributors to the programme if we do participate, but the proposed rules

for Horizon Europe prevent third countries from having "decisional powers" over the programme. In financial terms, it appears that we will not be allowed to get more out than we put in, as we have been able to do in the past.

The Minister will need to be able to sell the idea of participation to the Treasury, which on the face of it is made more challenging by there being no voting rights, according to the EU's current position. On the other hand, formal voting is rarely, if ever, necessary, and there may be other ways in which the UK could have influence over the programme if the EU will not shift on formal voting rights. Either way, the science community takes the view that striking an agreement is vital, as this international funding programme is so important and so highly regarded.

Incidentally, I also urge the EU negotiators to demonstrate some flexibility, because if the UK is to be one of the largest contributors to the programme, it does not seem unreasonable that we should be given decision-making powers as a third country.

**Graham Stringer** (Blackley and Broughton) (Lab): The right hon. Gentleman is making some sound and sensible points about the negotiations on the future of Horizon 2020. We have been a net beneficiary of those funds. Does he accept not only that, overall, as the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee said, we contribute a great deal more than that to the EU budget but that Horizon 2020, which deals with elite science, is not the only source of science funding? Taking into account the regional funds that go into science, we are actually a major net contributor to the science budget, not a gainer.

**Norman Lamb:** I accept the hon. Gentleman's point, but it is also important to say that, internationally, the Horizon 2020 funding scheme is regarded as the best in class. There are those, among both Brexiteers and remainers, who support participation in the scheme because it just makes sense for science. I would be grateful if the Minister updated us on progress on the critical issue of negotiating a satisfactory way for this country to participate.

Shortly before our report was published, the Prime Minister's Mansion House speech set out the Government's intention to secure

"a far-reaching science and innovation pact with the EU".

That would, in principle, address such concerns about our future relationship. A key recommendation of our report back in March was that the Government should therefore seek to agree such a pact as soon as possible. We argued that, because co-operation in science and innovation is a win-win for both the UK and the EU, getting an early agreement could set a positive tone for the rest of the negotiations. Sadly, that particular opportunity has now all but evaporated and discussions on the high-profile political issues are, of course, intensifying against a backdrop of red lines and deadlines, which are getting ever closer.

We see a need for urgency on this. Ongoing uncertainty is damaging to future collaborations, as partnerships and bids take time to develop. At the moment, no one who is considering bids for funding under the successor programme has any idea whether we will be part of it or not.

**Vicky Ford** (Chelmsford) (Con): The report was published in March. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that we have since seen the White Paper on the Government's wider Brexit strategy, which makes it clear that the Government wish to develop discussions towards having an association strategy? Many of the issues raised in March have therefore been followed by more detail in the White Paper.

**Norman Lamb:** I agree that what the Government have said is encouraging but, going back to the report, getting this agreed and ending the uncertainty is important because people want to develop bids now, and every month that goes by causes increased uncertainty. That is the key point I want to make.

**Hilary Benn** (Leeds Central) (Lab): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that one area where continuing uncertainty is a real problem for the future of our scientific research excellence, as mentioned in the report, is access to people? The expertise, the discoveries and the developments that the Exiting the European Union Committee saw on our visit to Cambridge fundamentally rely on the quality of research scientists and others.

One of the United Kingdom's great strengths is collaboration between people. The Science and Technology Committee reports on people going home and on a decline in applications. Until there is certainty about the continuing flow of the best people from around the world into the UK to carry on that work, will that not be a problem for the future?

**Norman Lamb:** The right hon. Gentleman pre-empted what I was going to say. That was the subject of our second report, and he is right that, whenever we go to a research lab in a university or a research institute, we find a global community—a community not just of Europeans but of people from around the world.

If our pre-eminent position is to be maintained and indeed strengthened, we need to make sure we can continue to attract people to our country.

I have one other point to make about the danger of this uncertainty. Why would anyone risk their bid, which might involve other universities from across the EU, by listing the UK as a lead partner if there are question marks as to whether we can receive funds on behalf of others? The danger of this continuing uncertainty is also that the UK, which has been very good at leading research collaborations, will lose out on the opportunity to do that during this period of uncertainty.

The Committee also argued that it was important to try to separate out science and innovation from the rest of the process so that it does not become collateral damage. The no deal technical note shows why that is a pressing issue; science could suffer as a result of a no deal scenario, and it is in no one's interests to let that happen. I would like to hear the Minister's views on the possibility of creating an accord on science and innovation that could withstand a no deal scenario. I hope he will address that during the debate.

Access to funding has clearly been a big issue in this report, but we are also clear that a science and innovation pact—this relates to the point made by the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn)—has also fully to cover the people element. We were told that a pact that did not address the need to attract and retain the people needed to support science and innovation

would be of limited value. We were given the clear message that access to the best people is the most important priority; beyond the collaboration and the funding issues, we have to be able to bring in the best people for research in this country.

At the time, the Migration Advisory Committee's report on immigration and the UK economy was many months away. We were told it was due in September, so, presumably, it is due any day now. We recommended in March that the MAC should be asked to bring forward its conclusions relating to the migration of scientists and researchers so that the comprehensive pact could be agreed early on. The Government rejected that recommendation in their response. We were told that agreeing a pact—now described as one of the “accords” in the most recent Brexit White Paper—remained an ambition but that we would have to wait until September for the MAC to produce its report before anything relating to immigration could be considered. We are in September now and this becomes a pressing issue.

**Jeremy Lefroy** (Stafford) (Con): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for what he has said. I declare an interest: I am a member of the board of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and the Innovative Vector Control Consortium. Does he agree that in attracting the highest calibre scientists and researchers from around the world, any legislation needs to look at the qualifications and experience of those people, not just a purely salary-based criterion? So often, science does not pay enough; the salaries are not high enough. We might find that if an arbitrary limit of £30,000, £35,000 or £40,000 a year were set, we would be excluding the best and the brightest, simply because scientists do not work for lots of money—they work for other, higher ideals.

**Norman Lamb:** Was I right in hearing that the hon. Gentleman was referring to the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, an amazing place, which I visited in my role as Chair? It undertakes incredible work in a previously deprived part of Liverpool and demonstrates that investment in science in some of the poorer regions of our country is vital. He makes an important point and, like the right hon. Member for Leeds Central, he pre-empted what I will say on this subject.

As a result of issues such as the one the hon. Gentleman raises, we decided specifically to explore the issue of immigration rules and what will be needed to ensure that the UK can maintain its pre-eminent position. Again, I do not think that this should be in any way controversial, for either Brexiteers or remainers; those who favoured Brexit were simply arguing that they wanted control of immigration rules, not that we should exclude the brightest and best people from our country. So for our report “An immigration system that works for science and innovation”, the second cited in today's motion, the Committee asked the science community to work quickly to set out what it wanted to see in an immigration system. We are particularly grateful to the Wellcome Trust for hosting a workshop so that we could develop some concrete proposals. I hope that they will be of use to the Government as they seek to navigate their way through to their future position for this country.

Our proposals were designed to tackle the rapidly approaching problem of what to do about European economic area immigration when the transition period ends.

[Norman Lamb]

We were warned that the worst thing to do after Brexit would be to roll EEA countries into our existing rest-of-the-world system, as that was seen as too restrictive and so would not facilitate the free flow of people to carry out research in our country. But in the future, if our proposals relating to EEA countries are accepted, we saw that there would be advantages to rolling out our proposals beyond the EEA, so that there is a single immigration system that works for science and innovation, and that attracts great people from wherever they are around the world to come to work in this country.

Our proposals for a new immigration system that works for science and innovation are based on several principles. We must bear in mind that this is important not just for academia, but for industry, and it is therefore crucial for our economy, too. Let me set out those principles. The first is that we need to be able to attract individuals who have different types and levels of skill, and who are at different career stages, as well as their dependants. That means going beyond the “brightest and the best” whom the Government refer to so that we can attract and retain people such as the technicians, who are so crucial to undertaking research; they may be part of a team we are seeking to recruit from overseas. Secondly, we need to be able to attract and recruit highly skilled people, wherever they are from, without being subject to an annual limit.

**Hannah Bardell** (Livingston) (SNP): I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on bringing this important report before the House. Does he agree that we are already seeing challenges—I have certainly seen them in my constituency—relating to technical staff and the thresholds in the immigration system as it stands, which are putting people off coming to the UK to work or have already caused them to leave? The UK Government will have to be very bold and imaginative and to embrace fully these proposals if we are to retain and attract staff in the future.

**Norman Lamb**: I thank the hon. Lady for her intervention and I agree with what she says. It should be in everyone's interests that we facilitate bringing bright and great people to our country, whatever level they are at, because that benefits our economy, employment, our ability to fund our public services and so on. Those who come here need to be able to travel outside the UK for research purposes without it harming that individual's ability to apply for indefinite leave to remain. The hon. Member for Chelmsford (Vicky Ford) was very persistent in pursuing that point during our inquiry. If spending time abroad on field trips and collaborating with others is part of someone's research, they should not be penalised if they decide they want to make this country their home for the longer term.

The system also has to be efficient, and streamlined, with a low-cost application process for employees and employers. We currently have some of the highest visa fees in the world, which can be off-putting and burdensome. The cost of a tier 2 visa for a researcher, their spouse and three children will rise this month to £21,000, a fee that is way beyond what many people involved in research can pay. We argued in our report that the Home Office should not just use salary as a proxy for skill—that point was made by the hon. Member for

Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy). It is a sad truth that some high-skilled jobs in research are relatively poorly paid, and the system needs to recognise that. This country should not do itself harm by denying those people the ability to come here and thereby benefit our economy.

The specifics of our proposals fell into two parts: for short-term migration to the UK, we proposed that the Government establish visa-free and permit-free work in the UK for up to 180 days for skilled workers. Eligibility should be verified at the border with proof of intent to leave within that period, and a letter from the employer describing the nature of the skilled work. For long-term migration, we outlined a five-year skilled work permit for those with either an offer of employment—with a minimum salary that reflects the going rate for the job, as well as regional and public or private sector differences in salary—or third-party sponsorship, such as from a university.

There are precedents for these approaches, both at home and abroad. For short-term migration, we currently allow visitors from Canada and the USA to visit the UK to do academic research, attend conferences and undertake training for up to six months without a visa. In the US, the ESTA—electronic system for travel authorisation—visa-waiver programme allows entry for business or tourism for up to 90 days. For longer-term migration, the French have a “talent passport” model, which includes a scientist category under which researchers who have a hosting agreement and the equivalent of a master's degree or above can apply for a visa for up to four years, with family members also able to apply for residence permits and to work.

A report commissioned by the Wellcome Trust analysed the visa systems of 22 countries and found that half of them have a dedicated immigration route or provision for researchers. Other countries do it to support science and research; we can do it as well. There is no reason why we cannot. We suggest that the Government would need to undertake further work with the science and technology community to co-create a system at the detailed level, but our proposals show the way forward. The Committee and the community have worked hard to be constructive and proactive on this issue, and those are the qualities that I expect to see in the Government response, when it arrives.

During our inquiry, we also uncovered opportunities for the Government to make changes now, unilaterally, to improve the current non-EEA immigration system while negotiations with the EU are ongoing. We saw a need to revise and clarify the criteria for tier 1 exceptional talent visas, which currently have low take-up. Some 2,000 visas are available each year, but there are currently only around 400 applications, which is way short of the potential capacity. Many believe that that part of the system is not working because the exceptional-talent criteria are too restrictive.

We called on the Government to reinstate the tier 1 post-study work visas, so that talented international graduates who have chosen to study at a UK higher education institution are able to contribute further to the UK economy by working here for up to two years. Our call has been supported this week by Universities UK, and a ComRes poll found that 72% of people think that international students should be able to stay to work for a year or more after graduation, with 52% in support of their being able to stay for two years or more.



Finally, we recommended that the Government remove the cap on tier 2 general visas. They have removed the cap for doctors and nurses, which frees up space for engineers and other professionals, but why should there be an arbitrary limit on skilled workers more generally? Surely it makes sense to encourage them to come to this country.

The Government's response to our second report is due later this month, but I hope we will get a flavour of what to expect from the Minister's response today. I hope that he will recognise the urgency of the need to arrange new immigration rules. The planned transition period gives us some time to develop an immigration system, but universities have said that they need two years' notice of changes to immigration processes so that the prospective staff and students can prepare properly. I hope the Minister will be able to give us an update on agreeing an accord on science and innovation, which has been discussed for many months now.

Many other related issues are not covered in detail in the two reports, but I suspect that Members will wish to raise them in the debate. Examples include the Government's decision to ask pharmaceutical companies to stockpile medicines as preparation for no deal; the future regulation of medicines when the European Medicines Agency moves from London to Amsterdam; and concerns about Euratom in respect of nuclear research and the availability of medical radioisotopes, which are essential tools for diagnostic tests and the treatment of cancer and other diseases.

To conclude, Madam Deputy Speaker—I am sorry to have tried your patience—I hope that, as a result of both reports and today's debate, the Government will work to secure the accord on science and innovation as quickly as possible, and include information on how they expect the people element to work for highly skilled workers. It is crucial that we do all we can to maintain the UK's pre-eminent position as a science and innovation superpower. It is in everyone's interest. Moreover, provisions need to be made to protect science in the event of a no-deal scenario. I would like to hear what action the Minister has taken on that, as well.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** Order. Quite a few Members wish to speak in this debate. I do not want to impose a time limit as yet; if colleagues could stick to around 10 minutes each, we will be able to fit everybody in comfortably.

1.35 pm

**Stephen Metcalfe** (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con): I will do my very best to stick to your advice, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I thank the right hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb), my successor as Chairman of the Science and Technology Committee, for securing this debate and for his comprehensive remarks, with which he did an excellent job of covering the contents of our two reports. I shall try not to repeat too many of his points, but there is always a danger in these matters that we cover the same ground.

For clarity, we are leaving the EU on 29 March next year. That is what the Government have stated consistently and it is what the people voted for on 23 June 2016 in the largest demonstration of a democratic vote. It is

now our duty to deliver on that. As we know, though, it is not without challenges, which are particularly poignant for the science community. The challenges were expressed almost immediately following that historic vote. Only five days later, we had our Parliamentary Links Day—for those who do not know, that is the largest interaction between the science community and Parliament—the subject of which was “Science After the Referendum: What Next?” It was a packed event and the first real opportunity for people from the science community to express their concerns, which they did vocally.

Since then, there have been many opportunities. With the help of the Royal Society, the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee, which I am fortunate enough to chair, held a number of meetings and eventually published a report, “Science priorities for Brexit”, which I think was the first report to try to bring together the views of the science community. That was followed up by a meeting last October, and we are planning another one for this October to try to keep gauging the temperature and the views of the science community on how it thinks things are going and what it thinks we should be doing.

Of course, there is also the work of the Science and Technology Committee. As we have heard, back in November 2016, when I was the Chairman, we produced a report called “Leaving the EU: implications and opportunities for science and research”, which has been followed up by a Brexit summit and subsequent report. More recently, we published our report “An immigration system that works for science and innovation”.

So, what did we hear? Time and again, we heard the same message: science is special and needs our and the Government's support to ensure that we as a nation continue to be a science superpower. That phrase is much used, but it is true: we have 1% of the world's population, yet we create 15% of the most highly cited papers. Pound for pound, we punch well above our weight. It is our scientists who are rising to the national and international challenges that face us.

**Alex Burghart** (Brentwood and Ongar) (Con): My hon. Friend is too generous in giving way; I am sorry to interrupt his flow, because he is making an important and lively speech. Will he join me in welcoming the fact that the Government have made the biggest investment in research in 40 years? Does he agree that it is important that we now find a way to make sure that that drives growth and an improvement in wages?

**Stephen Metcalfe:** I absolutely welcome the steps that the Government have taken to support the science community. I shall come back to that point later, but that investment is a very welcome step. Over the past eight years, the Government have been consistent in their support for science in Budget after Budget—there has always been something in there for the science community—but that does not take away from the fact that the science community is feeling anxious and concerned about the future. It is that uncertainty that we collectively have to try to address.

It is our scientists—scientists from the UK—working in collaboration with others who are coming up with the solutions to feed an ever-growing world population, to tackle and track climate change, to discover new ways to keep us healthy and happier for longer and to

[Stephen Metcalfe]

make breakthroughs in areas that would perhaps have struck fear in us. We have all heard about the big C. Being diagnosed with cancer 30 years ago was devastating news. Now, because of the work that British scientists are undertaking with others around the world, it does not necessarily have to be a terminal diagnosis. For the UK to continue to play a key role, we need to get a deal that protects the standing of the science community and addresses the key concerns that it has expressed. Those concerns fall mainly into four categories: people and talent; funding, both internally and externally; collaboration and networks and the ability to work together; and regulation and training.

In advance of this debate, not unsurprisingly, I was emailed rather a lot of support material from various places. I will just touch on a bit of it. The Campaign for Science and Engineering, which represents more than 110 scientific organisations and 380,000 people, is still concerned and wants the Government to co-ordinate efforts to unleash UK science and engineering potential. In particular, Professor David Price, Vice-Provost at University College London, highlights the fact that any restrictions on EU researchers coming to the UK post Brexit would damage the quality and impact of research, particularly at UCL and other universities.

The Royal Society of Biology wants the Government swiftly to communicate any decisions that they make, particularly those on immigration, that affect the science, technology, engineering and mathematics community. Again, there is a theme: it wants to remain, and see the benefit of remaining, part of global networks. That capacity to attract highly skilled people to the UK is vital.

The Royal Society of Chemistry highlights the fact that 29% of funding for chemistry in universities comes from the EU and is concerned that that may disappear. Again, it talks about the mobility of scientists between the UK and the European economic area. It says that the UK must continue to work in an uninterrupted full partnership with the European Chemicals Agency from March 2019 onwards.

The Royal Academy of Engineering highlights the fact that engineering business, research and innovation is a global endeavour and that we have to protect it. Universities UK says that £840 million of funding in our universities comes from EU sources and highlights the fact that international students are a particularly important source of income for universities.

Cancer Research UK says that the UK is at the centre of a web of international scientific collaboration and wants the Government to rule out extending the bureaucratic and costly non-EEA immigration system to EU citizens and, of course, points out that salary is not a proxy of skill.

The British Heart Foundation says that 60% of researchers have worked or studied in at least one other country outside the UK. Again, it offers the same themes around funding, collaboration and movement. The Wellcome Trust, which has already been mentioned, says that the Government must address the key issues for the science and innovation community in their Brexit negotiations. If they cannot do that, they must come up with a stand-alone agreement as soon as possible. The Royal Society has expressed concerns that no deal is a

bad deal for science and highlights the fact that one in six academic staff come from somewhere else in the EU. The list goes on and on.

Whatever happens with Brexit and the wider negotiations, I, like many others, encourage the Government to address the concerns of the community as soon as possible. With all that said, I want to pay tribute to the Government for what they have done: for appointing a chief scientific adviser in the Department for Exiting the European Union; for developing a modern industrial strategy that has put science at its very heart; for committing to raise the amount that we spend on research and development to 2.4% of GDP, with an aspiration to get it up to 3%; and for providing billions of extra pounds in investment in science between now and 2020. I have heard consistently from the Dispatch Box speeches that highlight the Government's understanding of the special nature of science. Ministers are trying to provide the reassurances and support that the community wants, despite not actually at this stage having any firm proposals. None the less, more still needs to be done.

We must start developing an immigration system that works for science. It must protect and reassure those who are already here, and it must allow for the easy movement of scientists in and out of the country for flexible periods. The system must recognise their value to the UK and to our global scientific endeavour, and that goes beyond sheer monetary worth, by which I mean that we do not want to use salary as an artificial barrier. A scientist's worth is not just what they are paid. We also need to recognise that scientists, as we have heard, are supported by teams of skilled technicians and other key members of their teams. Let us not harm our global scientific standing by not thinking through how our future immigration system can adapt to those challenges. We must demonstrate that we are open for business.

We must also take another look at whether we need to include student numbers. I am in two minds about that. The overall immigration figure is something that we have pledged to address, but whether a student coming here should be included in that does need to be looked at.

The other key area of concern is funding. As we have said, welcome steps have already been taken, but we have been substantial beneficiaries of the EU-wide funding programmes, particularly Horizon 2020. We need to remain associated both with that and with its successor programme, FP9, assuming—I think that this is what the Minister is getting at—that it is based on excellence. The Minister, I am sure, will be able to reaffirm that, and I know that that is the Government's aspiration. This will ensure not only that funding continues to flow into the UK, but, equally importantly, that the undoubted benefits of collaboration and cross-border working continue.

Brexit also presents opportunities. As we strike new trade deals and promote global Britain, we can also strike more bilateral research and development programmes with our friends—old and new—around the world.

I am drawing my remarks to a close, Madam Deputy Speaker. Of course, I could say much more, but I am sure that others will do that for me. For now, I just want to reiterate the importance of science and innovation to the UK and ask that the Government continue to do all they can to protect it, take heed of the recommendations in the various reports that we have produced and,

where possible, try to incorporate those as swiftly as possible and demonstrate to the community—the wider science and technology community—that this is a Government whom it can trust and a Government who are battling for it.

1.47 pm

**Darren Jones** (Bristol North West) (Lab): I thank the Backbench Business Committee and the right hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb), the Chair of the Science and Technology Committee, of which I am a member, for arranging this debate today.

Members from across the House will agree that scientific endeavour—the pursuit of truths and the ability to support the people with the brightest minds and the energy to solve some of our biggest societal challenges at home and abroad—is something that, as a developed nation, we wish to pursue as much as possible both for our own economic and industrial purposes and for our contribution to the world. The UK, as we have heard already today, plays a significant role in world leadership.

The European Union, as long as we continue to be a member of it, continues to be the leader in the world, counting for a third of global scientific output—34% more than the United States. That is a huge contribution, and as a member of the European Union, we are the second largest recipient of the total funding that goes into research, accounting for €4.6 billion since 2014 and second only to Germany.

We heard on the Select Committee and indeed from universities in Bristol, which I represent, that we also lead a lot of these international collaborations. We are very successful at having the lead academic institutions in the world, which is something that has caused great concern for other European universities as a consequence of Brexit because our ability to lead and be part of Horizon Europe, the successor to Horizon 2020, is in question.

This is evidenced by the fact that 62% of UK research is now based on international collaboration. It is absolutely vital that we maintain our abilities to collaborate, to ensure our output. In fact, I want to focus my remarks today on collaboration—not least because the hon. Member for South Basildon and East Thurrock (Stephen Metcalfe) read all the briefings that we all received before this debate.

Collaboration was at the core of the Select Committee reports on both Brexit and immigration. We have heard time and again today that there are two groups when it comes to immigration. In this context, this is not about individuals; it is about academics, their teams and their support staff, and we have heard about the pay threshold that might cause problems in that regard. But this is also about families. This is, I think, the most expensive country in the world for these visa applications. The Chair of the Select Committee mentioned the cost of £21,000 for a UK visa for a family to come to the UK, whereas the French talent passport is £250.

The Committee heard from researchers in what I think was a Select Committee first—an open dialogue session with members of the audience, which all went perfectly well. One audience member said that their research funding does not include the cost of visa applications for them and their family. In many cases, individuals need to be able to pay for these visa applications, even if they have managed to receive hundreds of millions of euros for world-leading research.

This is not just about people from the European Union, though. The Committee visited CERN, which I was amazed to see is not only trying to discover the basis of the universe, but has solved so many problems—from positron emission tomography for better cancer treatments, to the touch screens on our phones—as a consequence of trying to figure out the solutions. Many British scientists at CERN in Geneva live in France as a consequence of being an EU citizen, so we really need some clarity from the Minister and the Government about the rights of British citizens in Europe post Brexit and whether they will be able to lead their lives in France and travel to institutions such as CERN.

An important point on the immigration system is the exceptional talent visa, to which the Committee referred in our report. The Government have set a cap—thankfully, they have increased the cap for exceptional talent—both for academic research and for technology entrepreneurs, but we are actually not hitting that cap: there are visas that are not being used. The royal societies told us that this is a consequence of the fact that the requirements are quite high; there are not enough Nobel laureates in the world to meet the number of visas that we are offering. The definition of exceptional talent needs to be broadened a little, to include not only people who are professors in their 50s, but young exceptional talent, especially in the technology space. There are so many inspiring entrepreneurs who want—and will, we hope, continue to want—to come to the UK to set up and scale up their technology businesses, which are an important part of our research base.

Industry research and development is vital for our economy, as it is for many of my constituents, as my constituency has advanced manufacturing centres, specifically in aerospace and defence, but also in quantum computing at the University of Bristol and in other areas. We are part of many funds in Europe. With my other hat on, as a member of the European Scrutiny Committee, I look forward to clarification of the Government's intention to want to be part of each specific fund. For example, we do not yet have clarity on our future involvement in the European defence fund, which has a big industrial research component. In fact, the Government are apparently contributing to the European defence industrial development programme without knowing whether British companies can actually bid for it, which seems a bit nonsensical. We need some clarity on that.

The Erasmus project is an important European fund because, of course, we need students who are learning in the first place to become the professors of the future. The ability to collaborate and for researchers to see that collaboration as a normal part of their profession is vital. The European Commission has recommended a doubling of the budget for Erasmus in its next multiannual financial framework. As we have heard, if we are to be a third country, there is understandably an expectation from Europe that if we continue to get as much out of Erasmus as we do today, we probably need to pay more as we are currently getting more value than we pay for. It would be good to get some clarification regarding our future status in Erasmus and whether the Government intend to contribute to that project to ensure that we continue to be able to be a part of it.

The collaboration point is so crucial to this debate because, whether by perception or reality, the consequence of Brexit for many people around the world is that

[Darren Jones]

Britain does not want to collaborate any more—that we are drawing up the drawbridge and focusing on our navel and that people are not welcome here if they are not British. That is a great shame and it is a fundamental risk to the future success of our international collaborations in science and research.

We have to get through all the detail of budget allocations, which projects we want to be part of and fixing the immigration system, which I look forward to debating in the round when the Bill eventually comes to this House. However, I call on the Minister to say what more he is doing, perhaps with the Department for International Trade, the Foreign Office or others, to say to the world that we may be going through what the Government might like to call a period of change—people have different views, although everyone knows that I think that it is nonsense and that Brexit is a complete disaster—but that we are still open. We still wish to collaborate with the brightest and the best. We want people from countries around the world to work in our universities, to educate our students, to be at the forefront of our scientific and industrial endeavours, and we should recognise that the success of Britain and the role that we play in the world relies on that flow of talent, an openness to collaboration and a continuance in doing so.

1.55 pm

**John Lamont** (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) (Con): I congratulate the right hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb) on securing this important debate, and the rest of the Science and Technology Committee on their hard work on this issue.

It is only right that we closely examine what effects Brexit will have on all sectors and industries in our economy, and the Committees of this place are well placed to do that. I voted remain in the referendum, but in Scotland we know all too well the importance of referendums and how we must respect the results and the will of the entire electorate. Despite what our views may have been in the past, we must now all look forward to a United Kingdom trading on the global stage, yet one that still works closely with our friends and allies on the continent and across the border in the Republic of Ireland. The world of science and innovation is no different. We should not shut out academics and innovators from rest of the world, nor should we shut off those from inside the EU after we leave.

**Hannah Bardell:** I have great respect and affection for the hon. Gentleman, who comes to this House with experience from what is, in my view, the greatest Parliament in the UK—the Scottish Parliament. Does he agree with me on the matter of referendums, given the detail that is now coming out about the impact of Brexit? It would have been very helpful if his party and the Government could have given us and people across the UK more detail—the kind of detail that we now have—because his dream and mine of a remain vote may then have come true, instead of the mess that we now find ourselves in.

**John Lamont:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady for that point. Indeed, Scotland does have two Parliaments and two Governments. I have experience of both Parliaments,

and I would argue that both have their merits. We had a very good debate before the referendum in which both sides set out their case very clearly. It is arguably clear that during the 2014 independence referendum campaign in Scotland, the Scottish Government, the Scottish National party and the yes campaign did not put forward quite the full analysis that they should have.

It goes without saying that Scotland was, and continues to be, a proud nation of innovators and scientists, from the invention of the world-changing telephone by Alexander Graham Bell to the discoveries by Peter Higgs at the University of Edinburgh. Indeed, this innovation continues today in my constituency in the Scottish borders, where Plexus in Kelso is building some of the most cutting-edge machines in the healthcare, communications and computing industries and selling them right across the world.

Just last week the Economic Secretary to the Treasury visited Galashiels, where we heard from business leaders how they are taking advantage of innovations in FinTech that are being pioneered here in the UK. I look forward to such innovation post Brexit too, especially with the support of the Conservative Government, under whom we have already seen the largest increase in scientific research and development funding since 1979, meaning an additional £7 billion of investment by 2022. Just today, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced a £16 million funding boost to the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow to help develop quantum technology.

There is also the very welcome industrial strategy, which will focus our economy on becoming one of the most innovative in the world. That is not just good for our economy and our global science ambitions but will mean greener, healthier and cheaper housing for hard-working families. Improved healthcare technology will ensure that treatments on the NHS are world-leading and, most importantly, delivering for patients. The Government's commitment to growth throughout our regions and nations is also clear to see. The spaceport in Sutherland in the north of Scotland is perhaps the most tangible example of our global and, indeed, universal ambitions in science and innovation.

As the Committee's report highlights, to continue being at the forefront of science and innovation, the United Kingdom will still need to attract not only the brightest and the best but also the essential technicians and lab assistants, and many other roles that our universities and private sector businesses rely on. That is not an issue solely for the science and innovation sector, as many industries have the same concern. However, I do not agree that there will suddenly be no foreign workers the day we leave the European Union. There is a world outside and beyond the European Union desperate to engage with a new global Britain. That is already clear to see, with recent immigration figures showing that the highest net migration into the United Kingdom from non-EU countries since 2011 has just taken place. As the Committee reported:

“UK science is entering the Brexit process from a strong starting position.”

We are home to some of the most envied university institutions in the world. To say that suddenly the EU would not want access to that fantastic resource for their young, ambitious scientists is just not sustainable. I can understand the concerns that various organisations have when our country is going through such a substantial change, but plenty of our universities pioneered many

ground-breaking innovations and discoveries long before the concept of free movement in the European Union was developed, and I have no doubt that they will continue to do so long after.

Brexit will change things; we all know that. There will be challenges; we also know that. But as we see one of the biggest changes in the governance of our country in recent times, we must grasp the opportunities that Brexit will bring. A chance to make deeper and lasting relationships with countries around the world, and not only in Europe, will see our universities, science and innovation flourish.

2.2 pm

**Anneliese Dodds** (Oxford East) (Lab/Co-op): I am grateful to the Chair of the Science and Technology Committee for starting this debate in such a positive manner, and I am grateful for his work and the work of other Select Committees in this area. It is a real pleasure to follow the interesting remarks of the hon. Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk (John Lamont). Unlike him, I will refer to the impact of some of the matters at hand, particularly on my constituency.

That constituency is Oxford East, which contains a very high proportion of staff working in the fields of science and research. Many of them are very proud of what has been achieved through European research collaboration, whether it be at Oxford University, at Oxford Brookes University, or at other allied research centres such as the Culham Centre for Fusion Energy. Their research is not just important for my city—it is enormously important for the world and for dealing with global challenges.

**The Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation (Mr Sam Gyimah)** *indicated assent.*

**Anneliese Dodds:** I am pleased to see the Minister nodding his head. I have also been pleased to see him in my constituency learning about some of the technology associated with some of that scientific research. We see in Oxford, through European funding and collaboration, the development of new medical technologies and of new clean energies for the future, and important work on dealing with modern threats from cyber-attacks, for example.

This is a timely debate, because it comes after we have had some more clarification following the release of the White Paper just before the summer, and then, more recently, the different papers on preparations in the event of no deal. There are three areas where we have more clarity, particularly through the no deal preparation papers, but two big challenges still exist. First, in very recent weeks—I would have preferred it to be earlier—we have had an indication that the Government will continue to fund European research programme participation until 2020, at least in Horizon 2020. We had a useful discussion earlier about some of the challenges in trying to seek associate status in what is becoming Horizon Europe. We often speak about Britain being committed to preserving the focus on excellence in European science, but that is not unique to British politicians or British scientists. We can sometimes risk coming across as patronising in that regard. We have many allies in Europe who also want to preserve that focus on scientific excellence, even when there have been pressures towards, for example, more regionalised funding or other metrics

being used. It is important that we seek to collaborate with them rather than presenting the UK alone as having an interest in that, which would be thoroughly inappropriate.

Secondly, the Government told us in one of the no deal papers that after 29 March, if there was no deal, the UK would leave Euratom but continue funding for its share of the joint European torus—subject, of course, to the Commission extending the contract until then. We also received notice over the summer that the Government have finally, in my view, seen the light—I hope that does not come across as too pejorative—with regard to clinical trials. I have been quite frustrated by some of the discussions in this place on that topic. A lot of the time, they have focused on the shortcomings of the previous clinical trials regime rather than on the incoming regime. It is good to see the Government finally stating that in the event of no deal, the UK would seek to align, where possible and without delay, with the clinical trials regulation regime. The scientists I have talked to in Oxford are very concerned that we could be shut out of opportunities for research collaboration and data sharing if we do not align with the new regime that is coming into play, which is specifically focused on greater data sharing.

We have had some clarity, but we need far, far more. I want to push for that in two areas, one of which we have not yet gone into in detail on: nuclear research. I am concerned about the language that we still see in the no deal paper on nuclear research. That language, in common with what we heard in the Lancaster House speech, seems to be incredibly passive. The no deal paper states:

“When the Joint European Torus operating contract ends, the UK government is willing to discuss options to keep Joint European Torus operational until the end of its useful life.”

“Willing to discuss options” sounds incredibly passive when we are talking about a very important technology and very important scientific research. It almost suggests that we will wait and see what we are offered by the EU27. I hope that that language does not reflect the Government’s intentions, which are hopefully much stronger. I hope that the Minister can clarify that.

Thirdly, we still lack clarity around the immigration regime, particularly for early-career and technical staff. The Government have released details about the regime for staff who are already based here, although I know from my postbag—I am sure other Members do as well—that there are continuing concerns among those people. I continue to worry about language focused on the “brightest and the best”. As others have usefully said, if salary is viewed as a proxy for promise and skill, then we will not be where we should be. We should view the science and research career structure as a pyramid where we have at the bottom large numbers of post-docs and short-period researchers who are relatively low paid. They can stay in that situation for quite a long time before they start to proceed up the salary structure, but they are doing incredibly important scientific work. It is important that the Government listen on this subject, because that concern has frequently been mentioned to me on the doorstep by people who are in that situation—early-career researchers who want that mechanism to stay open to others from the rest of Europe in the future. It was also mentioned to me by many impressive researchers whom I met during my Royal Society fellowship in the medical sciences division of Oxford University. This is a live concern.

[Anneliese Dodds]

We need that clarity—and, as we have heard, we need it very, very soon. We are running out of time on many of these issues. After the White Paper was released before the summer, the head of Brexit strategy for Oxford University, Alastair Buchan, called for the aspirations in the White Paper to become firm, detailed commitments in advance of the October EU Council. We have just heard that we have been promised some more detail around the migration arrangements, in particular, in September. We are already into that month. We need to have that information, because this is affecting how future research projects are being designed.

I thank the Chair of the Select Committee and all colleagues for what has been a constructive debate so far.

2.9 pm

**Bill Grant** (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the enthusiasm of the hon. Member for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds). I thank the Chair of the Science and Technology Committee, the right hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb), for securing this important debate.

Many Members will agree that we need an immigration system that works for the science and innovation community. Back in March 2018, the Prime Minister, speaking on our future economic partnership with the European Union, called for

“a far-reaching science and innovation pact with the EU, facilitating the exchange of ideas and researchers.”

Collaborative research environments are currently being nurtured in our colleges and universities throughout the United Kingdom, and we must ensure that those arrangements do not simply survive but continue to thrive post Brexit. If we peruse the alumni of such colleges and universities, it is clear that students attend from many parts of the world, with many going on to complete PhDs here in the United Kingdom.

Similarly, several institutions and their professional journals cater for a global membership, again clearly illustrating the exchange of ideas and practices. Many members travel and participate in conferences around the world. One example is the Institution of Fire Engineers, which offers chartered engineer status to people throughout the world. We would not wish to lose such valuable contributions due to visa restrictions. Further evidence is to be found in medical and scientific textbooks. For example, one textbook on the complicated subject of polymyalgia rheumatica has 32 contributors from no fewer than eight countries. It is imperative that such contributors' expertise and skills transcend borders and are not held back by them, to benefit practitioners and patients alike, whether that be by visiting to collaborate on further publications, lecture on good practice or carry out and demonstrate life-saving procedures.

Some countries operate consortia, with scientists sharing expensive equipment, such as in the fields of astronomy and astrophysics. That allows access to data through computers within laboratories or universities in their own countries without the necessity of travelling. However, for practical experience, and where shortages exist in specific skillsets, it is often necessary to ensure free movement of scientists and students of science. Such talent is vital to fulfil the vision set out in the Government's

industrial strategy to raise the total research and development investment to 2.4% of GDP by 2027. The immigration system needs to be supportive of that strategy, and it must be affordable and have a degree of flexibility.

While addressing EEA nationals, it may be an opportune time to reflect on the current immigration system for non-EEA nationals and any possible improvements to it. According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, the number of applicants per vacancy has fallen since last summer across all levels of skilled jobs, and the number of people moving to the UK from other EU countries has fallen to its lowest level since 2013. In placing greater emphasis on the need, when taking back control of our borders, to honour the stated aim to maintain a close friendship with our European neighbours, we need to find a pragmatic way to encourage the continued exchange of skills and developments, particularly but not exclusively in the scientific and innovative arena.

I fully acknowledge that people cannot be looked at in isolation, and due consideration will need to be given by the Government to funding for Horizon 2020 and various framework programmes and their successors, together with appropriate regulation to facilitate fruitful contributions by future generations of scientists and innovators. I trust that the Minister will be able to confirm that all those issues are being urgently addressed, in order to secure the future of science and innovation here in the United Kingdom, which is, and I am sure will remain, world leading.

2.14 pm

**Luke Graham** (Ochil and South Perthshire) (Con): I congratulate the right hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb) on the Committee's report and on how helpful it is in informing this discussion.

We cannot underestimate the importance of science to our country. We are the country of the agricultural and industrial revolutions. The Government's recent commitment to increase R&D spending by £4.7 billion by 2020-21 is welcome. The UK is still a destination for science, technology and innovation. Whether it is satellites in Glasgow, batteries in Birmingham or FinTech in London, our constituencies have a fantastic opportunity to contribute to world-changing technologies and science that have an impact here in the United Kingdom and right across the globe.

But there is an opportunity that comes with Brexit, and that is our engagement with the wider world—not to substitute the EU with the wider world, but to be in addition to it. Members across the House have reiterated that we want to continue our scientific and technological co-operation with the EU. There are great examples of investment in this country with the EU and worldwide partners, such as the JET programme, mentioned by the hon. Member for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds), where we are looking ahead to fusion power. Before I reach for my Starfleet uniform, let me say that that is the most exciting new technology. It could revolutionise energy production here in the United Kingdom and around the world, not only providing energy security but helping to defuse a lot of tension in terms of military and governance issues around the world. That project has already contributed so much to European scientific progress and will hopefully continue to contribute

to world scientific progress, with the thermonuclear reactor project being constructed in France due to be operational in 2025.

There is a fantastic opportunity for the United Kingdom to not only underscore its commitment to European science projects but leverage in new partners. The University of Stirling, which neighbours my constituency but is making investments in it, has already been meeting partners in the middle east and further afield to look at what joint projects they can work on together post Brexit and what opportunities could be opened up to them.

Immigration has been touched on by various Members. The Government have made a clear commitment to allow skilled personnel into the UK. The report talks about immigration and the ease of verification at the border, which the right hon. Member for North Norfolk mentioned. From my experience on the Public Accounts Committee, where we have looked at customs and border control, I know that it is not just a question of looking at where checks could take place if they were at a border. We should be ambitious in looking at where borders could be. Some of our most successful border schemes have been where we have exported the border to other countries, so that a lot of checks on personnel and goods can take place before they even reach British seas or soil, and it is very clear that all the relevant checks have been made. When they come to a seaport, airport or other port in the United Kingdom, there is then a seamless transition and they can enter our country and hopefully make a fantastic contribution to both science and taxation.

When we talk about science, we are drawn to the sexy projects, such as those with fusion. We talk about the spaceport in Sutherland, and it is fantastic that the first British satellite will be launched from Scotland, but some sectors are not thought about so much. Innovation can happen in the construction sector, such as at Glenalmond Timber in Methven in my constituency, which is working on new manufacturing techniques for prefabricated houses. Diageo has invested more than £7 million in a new technology site in Menstrie, Clackmannanshire, in my community, which will help it to develop more advanced blends; I think everyone in the UK and worldwide will appreciate that product.

So what can the Government do? I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will make clear his commitment to welcoming skilled people to the United Kingdom to contribute but also to exploring what can be done to help universities across the United Kingdom to have meaningful partnerships with partners in the EU and the rest of the world, as well as supporting the Erasmus scheme, to ensure that young people get opportunities in the UK and British citizens get opportunities right across the world. I hope we will be able to contribute to Horizon 2020 and successor schemes, just as Israel does at the moment. It would be good if we had the clarity that has been provided with the £90 million of funding for the British global positioning satellite system. It would also be great to hear from the Government that, although we are making provisions for that system, we are still trying to work with the Europeans on a European and global system, through which we can share the benefits of our expertise in the UK and the expertise of European partners.

Scientific and technological innovation is one of the most exciting topics that we get to deal with in the House of Commons. It touches every single constituent's

life and can have some of the most transformational effects on them. I am very pleased to see the cross-party support for some of the report's recommendations. I certainly support it as much as I can, and I hope my Government colleagues will do too.

2.19 pm

**Matt Warman** (Boston and Skegness) (Con): I will be comparatively brief. I speak as a former member of the Science and Technology Committee—first under Nicola Blackwood, the former Member for Oxford West and Abingdon, and then under my hon. Friend the Member for South Basildon and East Thurrock (Stephen Metcalfe). I even had the temerity to run for the chairmanship of the Committee, but the less said about that the better.

What struck me time and again during my years on the Select Committee was that science is hugely collaborative and international. Horizon 2020, which is now Horizon Europe, is a hugely important part of that, but we should not have this debate imagining that it is by any means the only part. One of the most fascinating visits the Select Committee went on was to DeepMind, a private business that was started in Britain and then bought by an American company in the form of Google. We should not pretend that this conversation is happening solely in the context of funding from the European Union, or solely in the context of us as a net beneficiary of scientific funding when we are actually a net contributor to the EU.

I urge the Government and colleagues to look at this in the round. When we went to see DeepMind and other companies, it was very clear that immigration is a hugely important factor, but it is by no means the only factor. The question of what the Government can do to encourage more people to work in science and in business that relies on science goes far beyond the conversations we are having about Brexit. I do not want to harp on solely about DeepMind, but what did we hear at such private companies? What we heard was as much about regulation, insurance when it comes to driverless cars and a whole host of things on which the Government will have greater freedom to act when we leave the European Union.

There are opportunities that I urge the Government to seize in relation to this issue, but there are of course challenges as well. I welcome the fact that the Government have made some very encouraging noises on scientific funding—not just post the referendum, but in every previous Budget while I have been lucky enough to be a Member of this House. This Government have consistently backed science and innovation, and I hope we will continue to do so.

The industrial strategy demonstrates a much greater commitment to such an agenda than we have seen for many years. I welcome that, but I would caution the Government not to be too prescriptive. This is about allowing businesses and universities to empower themselves, rather than about picking winners. I know that my right hon. Friend the Business Secretary has never sought to pick winners, but I suggest that that is something we should always guard against. In my constituency, we need greater innovation in agri-tech, which is also driven by business, and our own regional industrial strategy will deliver a huge amount of that.

What are the continuing barriers to working in science and to driving forward scientific innovation? It is as much the constant reliance on soft money that stops people coming to and getting work in our universities as

[*Matt Warman*]

anything else. Those are the systemic issues in science and innovation that we can tackle regardless of our decision to leave the European Union. Immigration is of course one of the single most important issues in relation to recruiting to universities and within the scientific community.

I welcome both of the reports that the Chair of the Select Committee, the right hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb), talked about. As a deregulating Conservative, I wonder whether we could simplify even some of the suggestions in those reports. My own constituency voted more than any other to leave the European Union and free movement was a huge part of that, but I think many people might ask whether we could not look at something as simple as free movement for people with a PhD or something as straightforward as that. I am not by any means the first person to suggest it. That would allow us to send a very clear signal in contrast to some of the very unfortunate and inaccurate characterisations of the Brexit vote. There are legitimate worries in the scientific community around the world about whether Britain is the open and eager-to-collaborate landscape that it has been for many decades. I wonder whether we can do simpler things and be more attractive to the international scientific community even than the suggestions made in the Select Committee reports.

The most important thing in all that is to emphasise that this should not be a discussion about whether we are open to collaboration with the European Union or open for business. This must be a discussion about whether we are open to global collaboration that leads to future growth in our science and innovation sector. That is because science and innovation does not recognise the boundaries of the European Union or those of Britain; it is genuinely a global industry. We must do all we can to get across those borders and to meet those challenges.

We must have in mind what individual technology companies can be encouraged to do that will also be in our national interest. It worries me that Google has made a decision to avoid any contact with our military establishments, because some of the greatest innovations have come out of our military establishments and those of America. It is important that we recognise no barriers internationally, and that we recognise all the opportunities that come from working across sectors that have not previously thought of themselves as technology sectors. Thinking of my own county of Lincolnshire, the Air Force will need more computer programmers than ever before. If companies such as Google are disinclined to work with the Air Force, that will be a sorry state of affairs, although I am slightly simplifying the approach Google has taken.

These are the barrier-less worlds in which we must now live, and it is important to consider not just how the Minister sees this, but how he interacts with his colleagues in the Ministry of Defence, and of course in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and elsewhere. I hope we can use the opportunity of leaving the European Union to see what we can do in a freer and different regulatory world.

**Hannah Bardell:** The hon. Gentleman is talking of his concerns about such risks. In my constituency, I have a life sciences company called Hologic, which has

just told me that it is on the verge of losing a major contract because of the threat in relation to reciprocal agreements and the regulatory framework for batch releases. It is very concerned about job losses and about losing contracts. Does he recognise that, for many companies in my constituency, such as Hologic, not knowing means that, in their words, the game is potentially a bogey?

**Matt Warman:** I agree that uncertainty is the enemy of any business, whether it is a technology business or something else. That is why we should welcome the release of all the documents—no-deal documents or anything else—that the Government have been producing to try to provide as much certainty as they possibly can. I appreciate, however, that until there is a done deal, many businesses will take the cautious approach that the hon. Lady describes, and we must do everything we can to avoid that.

In closing, I return to the point that I made at the beginning. As many other speakers have said, this is a global industry in which Britain punches well above its weight. By seeking to look beyond the regulatory constraints that have been imposed by the European Union, as well as by looking beyond our borders and encouraging collaboration through the industrial strategy and the good work of the Minister, we can, I hope, not only preserve the brilliant position we are currently in, but enhance it. We can do that with some of the very sensible measures that the Select Committee has proposed in its reports, and we can even go further. In a debate on science and innovation, I hope that the Minister will be keen to embrace as many innovative suggestions as he possibly can.

2.29 pm

**Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con):** It is a pleasure to have worked with the Science and Technology Committee on this report, and to speak in this debate. Science and research drives innovation, and if we in Britain want to remain the world-leading, cutting-edge economy that we are today, we must continue to support it. As many have said, science and research helps to find solutions to some of the world's greatest challenges, such as climate change, health issues, and changing demographics. We are a world leader. We have less than 1% of the world's population but, as was said by my excellent Essex neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for South Basildon and East Thurrock (Stephen Metcalfe), we contribute more than 15% of the world's most cited research publications.

Increasingly, science is not just done by one person acting alone; co-operation and collaboration is important. Those of us who listened to the "Today" programme this morning will have heard about Jocelyn Bell Burnell who, as a postgraduate back in 1967, discovered radio pulsars. Her bosses got the Nobel prize; she did not. Today she has been awarded a \$3 million prize, which she has said she will use to set up a fund for women studying physics—thank you! The point made on "Today" was that more diverse science partnerships are more robust and more successful. That goes for supporting women in science, but also for supporting co-operation and collaboration, and especially cross-border co-operation.

I thank the Government for the positive approach that they have taken to science. I am proud that more money is going into science and research under this



Government than under any other Government for the past 40 years. The vast majority of public sector money that goes into science—about £6 billion per annum—goes through UK Research and Innovation, but about £1 billion comes from EU funding. In science, not only cash but collaboration matters, and it is important to ensure that scientists based in the UK can continue to collaborate easily with those in other countries. I know the Prime Minister has taken a personal interest in this issue because I was lucky enough to meet her within a few weeks of her taking up her role. I raised the concerns of scientists and their networks, and the Government and the Treasury were quick to issue a guarantee that anyone who already receives Horizon 2020 funds will continue to do so.

I must declare an interest because in my previous role as an MEP I was involved in negotiating the terms of Horizon 2020—I think I was the only British negotiator in the room—and I saw how the eighth framework for science and research was particularly helpful in areas such as the European Research Council, Clean Sky and the Innovative Medicines initiative, as well as for some of the infrastructures, nuclear fusion and the amazing work that goes on in bioinformatics. It is important that we keep those innovative partnerships going forward, and the Government's White Paper contains strong statements about our need and desire to continue to have an association with all those projects.

A lot of the recommendations that the Science and Technology Committee made in March were picked up in the White Paper in July, but of course there were questions about the detail, and whether we will take part in the next project. The Committee's report claims that the Government have not given a clear enough statement, and that they should say that they intend to participate, but that if the price is too high or the focus diluted, a change to that approach might be appropriate. That is exactly what the Government are now doing, and the Minister was in Brussels earlier this week, meeting MEPs who are considering potential amendments to the framework programme 9 and Horizon Europe. If some of those amendments are accepted, they could dilute the level of research money that goes into excellence, and might make the programme less good value for money than it currently is. That was a concern of the Committee, but I suggest to the Chair that the Government are intending to support exactly those recommendations that were made in March.

If the framework 9 programme turns out not to be 100% as Britain would like, I would urge the Government to participate anyway. If it is massively different, of course we should look at funding through our own projects, but if it is slightly different, perhaps we should err on the side of caution. We know that if we pull out of the next framework—framework 9—with what would now be quite a short period of notice, that could be disruptive. Therefore, provided that the changes are not too significant, I suggest we err on the side of caution. That is, of course, different from other decisions that we make about our future relationship with Europe, because this decision will affect the next seven years and is not a decision in perpetuity in the way that other elements of our future partnership could be. If the Government are entering the seven-year programme but are not completely convinced about how it may look in its later years, perhaps they should include a break clause at a mid-term point.

Another recommendation in the Committee's report was about the importance of staying in parts of networks, particularly clinical trials. In some areas—rare cancers, for example—we cannot do the research ourselves, and we need to be part of international clinical trials networks. That recommendation was made in March, and on the day the Government's White Paper on Brexit was published I sat down with researchers involved in cross-border clinical trials, and they reassured me that the document picked up on all they needed. Provided that the negotiations go through with Brussels, that issue should be covered.

On the visa system, it is incredibly important that individuals in science can continue to work with others. As part of our research, the Committee went across the river to St Thomas' Hospital and met the British Heart Foundation. World-leading research is happening at that hospital, and more than 60% of the researchers doing heart research, funded by the BHF in the UK are from other countries, including a large number from the EU.

**Hannah Bardell:** The hon. Lady's point about visas and immigration is vital, as are the support staff in science and innovation. I am reminded of the story about John F Kennedy going to NASA in 1962, meeting a janitor with a broom and asking, "What are you doing?" The janitor responded, "I'm helping to put a man on the moon"—and hopefully, eventually, then a woman. Does the hon. Lady agree that in reality we need staff with different types of skills, not just the brightest and the best, and that it is important to recognise that in the language used and in our policies?

**Vicky Ford:** I agree that the whole team is important, but it is also important that we invest in training for some of those support staff. In the past, previous Governments have perhaps not invested enough in ensuring that we can provide technological backup and support—lab assistance and so on—but over the past few years there has been a huge amount more investment in that in the UK, especially in the geographic areas where those jobs tend to exist. Having the team move is important as well because, as we saw at St Thomas', one lead brings the other.

During its work, the Committee heard about good practice in other parts of the EU, and leaving the EU will give us an opportunity to look at good practice in other parts of the world. We were also told by several experts that the UK Government had done some very helpful things, such as unlocking tier 2 visas and Rutherford fellowships, for example. We must make sure, however, that when we bring in a new visa system we do not lose the good easy movement we already have within the EU. We must continue that together.

To conclude, this report is an excellent report and the strategy the Government are putting in place today is entirely in line with its conclusions and recommendations. The negotiations in Brussels are key to our science and research, and that is key to our future.

2.40 pm

**Chi Onwurah** (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): I thank the right hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb) for opening this debate and the Committee for its report. I am a great admirer of its work under his leadership, as I was of its work under his predecessor,

[Chi Onwurah]

the hon. Member for South Basildon and East Thurrock (Stephen Metcalfe). I also particularly thank Members who have contributed to this debate.

We do not talk enough about science in this Chamber. All too often it is sidelined for other apparently more sexy subjects, but I hope this debate has shown that science is sexy too. I speak not only as shadow Minister, a chartered engineer and a fellow of the Institution of Engineering and Technology, but as a constituency MP who understands just how important science is to my constituents. As many hon. Members, including the hon. Members for South Basildon and East Thurrock, for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk (John Lamont), for Ochil and South Perthshire (Luke Graham) and for Chelmsford (Vicky Ford), have emphasised, the UK has a proud scientific tradition. From Isaac Newton to Stephen Hawking, from Ada Lovelace to Rosalind Franklin, and from Jocelyn Bell Burnell, who we have heard about today, to Newcastle-born Peter Higgs, British scientific giants bestride the globe.

Our science sector leads the world, powering our economy in the process. Science is an engine of job creation: 20% of the UK workforce is employed in science roles, and wages for these jobs are 40% higher than the average. Science is crucial to creating the high-skilled, high-wage, high-productivity economy we in Labour want to see. Our science sector is intertwined with our European partners' through pooled funding, the free exchange of talent and shared institutions. I shall talk to each of those.

According to the Government's own 2013 report, it is the increasing internationalisation of UK science, powered in part by European collaboration, that has allowed us to surpass the US in science productivity. I am glad, therefore, that the Government are committed to achieving what they call

"a far-reaching science and innovation pact",

but as the Committee's report points out, delays are

"undermining the UK's position as a science superpower",

and a no-deal scenario would be a

"very real threat to scientific progress",

according to the president of the Royal Society.

One quarter of our research and development funding stems from international sources, predominantly the European Union. As has been said, we are a net recipient of Horizon 2020 funding. While the Government have committed to underwriting this funding, they have failed to commit to the £90 billion successor framework programme. That means that Britain would access these funds as a third country, making it impossible for us to receive the benefits we currently do and preventing us from being a net receiver.

As it stands, we could lose access to over £1 billion a year in the event of a no-deal scenario, which has yet to be ruled out, and the Royal Society has highlighted that even with the UK Government's guarantees, UK-based researchers and businesses will still lose half a billion pounds a year in research funding, which will have an immediate impact on research under way in the UK. The Royal Academy of Engineering has emphasised that EU support for UK small and medium-sized enterprises, including the SME instrument, is critical, crucial and unique. Labour is committed to staying

part of Horizon 2020 and its successor programmes. Will the Minister commit the Government to doing the same?

The second key area is access to talent—an issue raised by many on both sides of the House, including the hon. Members for Boston and Skegness (Matt Warman) and for Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock (Bill Grant). One in six academic staff in our higher education institutions is from the EU, while R&D-intensive companies rely on the frequent transfer of highly skilled staff between countries to respond to day-to-day challenges. So as the Committee's report argues, a science and innovation pact that does not encompass people would be "pointless". While the Government have said that they do not want to stop the brightest and the best from coming to the UK, their reliance on tier 1 exceptional talent visas fails to recognise that innovation relies on contributions from a wide range of scientific and technical staff, as my hon. Friends the Members for Bristol North West (Darren Jones) and for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds) emphasised passionately.

In March, 48 leading science organisations wrote to the Prime Minister to say that

"the repeated rejection of skilled workers due to the Tier 2 cap being reached is already damaging the UK's international appeal."

Is the Prime Minister listening? More than 6,000 engineers and scientists from outside the EU have been denied visas this year alone. How many more have been put off applying? We cannot carry forward that approach to the EU. Even when visa applications are successful, cost can be a huge deterrent, as we have heard. Will the Minister say today whether EU nationals will be subject to these levels of visa costs? There is also the regional impact. I have repeatedly asked techUK to share the regional distribution of its visas, but it has refused to do so. Will the Minister look into this?

The Campaign for Science and Engineering has argued that

"immigration policy should be contributing to rather than fighting against Government's wider economic and societal aims".

Instead, the Government hide their incompetence behind an arbitrary migration figure, which they have never met and which damages our economic wellbeing. Labour would not set any such arbitrary figure and would guarantee the rights of EU nationals to remain in Britain.

Finally, I want to discuss regulation and institutions, an area on which the Government have said very little. International agreements and shared regulation are essential for so much of science, from chemicals registration, so that industry and academia know what it is they are using, to the movement of living animals and organisms, and from clinical trials to the exchange of medicines across borders. At present, 45 million packs of medicine move from the UK to the European Union each month, with 37 million moving the opposite way. Under a no-deal scenario, that would be impossible. AstraZeneca, our largest pharmaceutical company, is now openly talking about stockpiling medicines, and this morning, on Radio 4, the Health Secretary confirmed that this would be necessary. This is yet another example of the consequences of current Brexit uncertainty.

We know that Brexit raises complex issues and we also know that the Government lack the intellectual rigour or concentration to resolve them. An additional

failing, however, is the lack of communication highlighted by the Royal Society of Biology. That has led the Wellcome Trust to suggest that a standalone science agreement needs to be pursued. Is the Minister considering that?

Unsure and uncertain, scientists are either leaving our shores or not coming in the first place. Businesses are making investment decisions in a policy vacuum. Labour believes not only in our nation's scientific future, but in putting in place the policies to make it happen. We would build an innovation nation supporting our world-leading science sector by investing 3% of GDP in research and development by 2030, democratising and spreading both the benefits and the sources of scientific greatness. Our industrial strategy will build on scientific strengths, our national education service and growing innovation infrastructure to provide high skill, high wage jobs in every corner of the country.

Building an innovation nation means retaining and strengthening the innovation union from which we currently benefit, but the chaos at the heart of this Government is preventing that. I thank the Committee for its report and wish we had a Government who could give it the response that it merits.

2.51 pm

**The Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation (Mr Sam Gyimah):** I thank the right hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb) and the Select Committee for their report, which was published in March. I welcome its recommendations. A lot has happened since March, so while I would like to take the opportunity to respond to the points that were made in the report, I will also give reassurances in terms of developments since it was published.

The world is changing and the world of science is changing. For the UK to remain at the forefront of scientific research and endeavour, we need to invest financially, but we also need to be open to collaboration. The best science is done internationally and through collaboration. The best science is not just about curiosity and blue-skies thinking; the best science affects us in our day-to-day lives. In terms of our collaboration with the EU, from the development of an Ebola vaccine to the discovery of graphene, the toughest material ever tested, the partnerships we have built with the EU have led to life-changing discoveries.

It is heartening to know that the UK plays a vital role in this landscape. Since 2014, UK researchers and innovators have been awarded 15% of all Horizon 2020 funds—about £4 billion—and we have co-ordinated about 20% of all projects. From the Euratom research and training programme, the UK receives about 17% of its annual budget. The UK also hosts the most advanced nuclear fusion reactor on behalf of the EU.

The Government are not only putting their money where their mouth is on science, with this country's highest ever investment in public R&D, we are determined to be a top collaborator with the EU and the world in future. Currently, the EU is our biggest collaborative partner. We are a top-five partner with each of the EU member states and the EU as a whole. We are working to make sure that that remains so. That is why we want to agree an ambitious science and innovation accord with the EU, one which facilitates the exchange of researchers and ideas along with allowing for UK

participation in EU research programmes, including the successor to Horizon 2020—Horizon Europe—and Euratom research and training.

The Opposition spokesperson, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central (Chi Onwurah), said that Labour has committed to associate with Horizon Europe. Not only have this Government committed to doing so, but we have published our intentions in a position paper and we are actively in discussions to make this happen.

**Norman Lamb:** I am pleased to hear the positive tone that the Minister is taking. How confident is he, on the basis of the negotiations so far, that we will be a partner in Horizon Europe?

**Mr Gyimah:** I am extremely confident that there is scope for a win-win deal as far as science is concerned, and in my speech I will outline some of the reasons why.

To pick up a point that was made by the hon. Member for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds), it is important to be conscious of the language here. The language of the texts that are used is the language of negotiation, but that necessarily does not reflect our desire and our ambition, because in a negotiation we make sure that we play our cards very closely and often as close to our chest as possible. We do that and so do our counter-parties in the EU.

I want to give the House the assurance, having spoken with Commissioner Moedas and fellow Ministers in various member states, that it is clear that there is an appetite on their side as well to continue the EU's long-established relationship with the UK.

We want not only to confirm our relationship through a co-operative accord, but to build on that through exploring full association. We are taking steps to look at what it would take to achieve this, and, together with my officials, we are in constant dialogue with other association countries—my officials were in Switzerland last week to discuss the Swiss experience of going through the negotiations that we are going through—but as I have said in the past and to the Select Committee, association cannot come at any cost and any agreement must work for both the UK and the EU.

We must be sure that our priorities for the programme are recognised and understood. Those include ensuring that the programme remains focused on excellence. If there were desires to widen participation, for example, we would argue that that is what EU structural funds are for, rather than funds from the science and innovation programme.

We also want EU added value, and we want this to be open to the world, as outlined in our position paper, which was published in March to feed into the design process. We are also keen to ensure an appropriate financial contribution for associate countries, as well as a suitable degree of influence. As I said to fellow EU Science Ministers in May at the last competitiveness Council, it is important on the EU's part that they do not take actions or steps that devalue being an associate member and partner as they think about their own positions in this negotiation.

A number of points were made, particularly by the right hon. Member for North Norfolk, about the timetable on the regulations for Horizon. As he will be aware, the Commission published its draft proposal setting out the Horizon Europe programme on 7 June. This proposal is

[Mr Gyimah]

being discussed in detail in the Council, the working groups and the European Parliament. As such, the detail will not be set in stone until those institutions agree. This process may therefore continue beyond March 2019. Until that regulation is finalised, association to the programme will not be possible.

On why we do not have an early science deal, despite the fact that the desire and the will are there, it is difficult for us to associate with a programme that is still being discussed, negotiated and designed.

Quite rightly, a question was asked about what we mean by a level of influence. Until the draft Horizon Europe regulations are finalised, we would not want to comment on some of the specific details of the programme, but we would like the detail of specific elements to include participation, but also influence as associate members. We would want UK scientists, for example, to continue to play a role in technical discussions and exert soft influence in the process.

The Select Committee has been concerned about the level of urgency and focus as far as this negotiation is concerned—within Whitehall, but also within the EU. I give the House the assurance that we are playing a full and constructive role through discussions and the Council working groups on shaping the initiative, which will be supported through Horizon Europe.

We are determined that, while we are still members of the EU, we will use every lever of influence we have to help to shape the programme that we will want to associate with further down the line. The meetings started this week, and we will continue to play an active role until we are no longer a member state.

I am also aware that we are not the only ones who will be personally impacted by the results of these discussions. That is why I have asked the UK science base to inform the development of policy through the high-level group that I chair once a month. Its meetings provide an excellent forum for key members of the science and innovation community to offer their thoughts and concerns and have proven highly valuable.

We have also had two rounds of talks with the Commission. They were productive conversations, where the Commission agreed that science and innovation should be an area of co-operation between the EU and the UK. Through these mediums, we are ensuring that Horizon Europe and the Euratom research and training programme will provide value for money and be suitable for us to associate with. I can assure the House that an excellent team of professionals is working round the clock to make sure that science and research are not forgotten as we go through this important negotiation.

I am aware that this is not just about money; it is also about ensuring that the UK remains a partner of choice for international collaboration in the EU, but also on a global scale. The Select Committee will be aware that we have made significant progress in exploring new avenues with existing partners—signing agreements with the US and Canada, and publishing a joint UK-China strategy and, more recently, an agreement with the Israel Innovation Authority. Those achievements reflect our shared commitment to drive growth and tackle global challenges, and I want the UK to maximise all opportunities to continue to contribute to life-changing discoveries across the globe.

Mobility is absolutely crucial to success in this field, and I recognise that co-operation in this context is dependent on the UK's ability to continue to attract global talent, including from the EU. With that in mind, I assure the House that we are carefully considering the options for our future immigration system. The Department is in regular discussions with the Home Office, and I have personally had discussions with the Home Secretary on how to support the movement of those engaged in science and research. We look forward to the publication of the Migration Advisory Committee's report, and we will consider its conclusions and recommendations before taking decisions on the future immigration system.

We want to carry on bringing together brilliant talent and inventive minds from across the globe. We have shown that we are serious about this, with the recent introduction of the UK Research and Innovation-led scheme to support the temporary movement of scientists and researchers. We have also doubled the number of tier 1 exceptional talent visas for top global scientists to 2,000, but I note the concerns that were raised earlier in the debate. Removing doctors and nurses from the ambit of the tier 2 visa cap also provides more scope, but I take on board the points that have been made about friction.

Those changes will help to underpin the UK's position as a hub for international collaboration and research. The £1 billion UK Research and Innovation Future Leaders Fellowships programme is also open to international scientists, and that is example of us putting our money where our mouth is in terms of attracting the brightest and the best.

Despite that progress, there are other things we need to think about and act on, one of which is ensuring the existence of an appropriate regulatory environment. On that front, continued co-operation is in the best interests of the EU and the UK. I understand that there are further questions about what the future looks like, and I want to reassure the House that I am actively engaging with my European counterparts and with colleagues across Whitehall to make sure that we secure the right outcome for the UK science base as we exit the EU.

We are working constructively with European colleagues to find a positive path towards a future relationship on science and innovation, but we are also being a responsible Government in preparing for every eventuality. On 23 August, we published a technical notice setting out the actions we will take to enable continued participation in Horizon 2020. First, we have given UK participants a guarantee that the Government will underwrite EU funding for all ongoing Horizon 2020 projects, as well as for successful bids submitted before exit. This guarantee applies even if participants are notified of their successful bid after exit. In July, the Chancellor announced an extension to the guarantee, which will now, additionally, fund UK organisations that successfully apply to calls open to third country participation after exit day and until the end of Horizon 2020.

I am aware of some recent press reports suggesting that a no-deal scenario will threaten the ability of UK participants to co-ordinate Horizon 2020 projects. I am happy to clarify that UK entities would still be able to lead projects and carry out all usual co-ordination tasks as a third-country participant. The funding guarantee provided by the underwrite, and the extension that is in place if required, includes funding for co-ordination

tasks if they are carried out by a UK co-ordinator. This would help ensure that the UK remains at the centre of collaborative science and research.

On the practical considerations, to deliver the underwrite guarantee, we will soon launch an online portal where UK participants can register their details. The portal is designed to make sure that our delivery partner, UK Research and Innovation, has the initial information it needs about current participants. I encourage all UK participants to register their details when the portal is available; this will help UKRI to keep them informed of what they need to do to receive their funding if the underwrite is required.

We are considering what other measures may be necessary to support research and innovation in a no-deal scenario. This includes looking at how we continue to support excellence-based research such as that currently funded by the European Research Council and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, which are not covered by third-country participation. We should not, however, lose sight of the fact that a good deal, including an ambitious science and innovation accord, is the best outcome for both the UK and the EU, and this remains our top priority.

3.6 pm

**Norman Lamb:** This has been quite a triumph: we have had a debate on Brexit that has been rational and where there has been broad consensus across the House. We have had a proud Brexiteer, the hon. Member for Boston and Skegness (Matt Warman)—

**Matt Warman** *indicated dissent.*

**Norman Lamb:** Well, someone representing a Brexit constituency then has made the case for a more liberal position on immigration for scientists and PhD students. I think there has been a clear call from this debate to the Government, and I welcome the constructive response from the Minister on the absolute importance of a deal for science that protects and, indeed, enhances science in this country. We cannot take our pre-eminent position in science for granted. We have to protect and, indeed, strengthen it, and the deal we do with the EU will be of vital importance to achieve that.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House takes note of the Science and Technology Committee's Second Report on Brexit, science and innovation, HC 705, and the Government Response, Fifth Special Report, HC 1008; further takes note of the Science and Technology Committee's Eighth Report on An immigration system that works for science and innovation, HC 1061; believes that the Government should seek to agree with the EU the far-reaching science and innovation accord proposed by the Prime Minister in her Mansion House speech and in The Future Relationship Between the United Kingdom and the European Union White Paper, Cm 9593; calls for this accord to be negotiated separately from wider EU-UK trade negotiations; and further calls for the science and innovation accord to include details of an immigration system that works for the science and innovation community.

## Global Britain and the International Rules-based Order

*[Relevant documents: Second Report of the Foreign Affairs Committee, The future of UK diplomacy in Europe, HC 514, and the Government Response, HC 918; Fourth Report of the Foreign Affairs Committee, 2017 elections to the International Court of Justice, HC 860, and the Government Response, HC 1012; Sixth Report of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Global Britain, HC 780, and the Government Response, HC 1236; Seventh Report of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Global Britain and the 2018 Commonwealth Summit, HC 831, and the Government Response, HC 1427; Eighth Report of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Moscow's Gold: Russian Corruption in the UK, HC 932, and the Government Response, HC 1488; and Tenth Report of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Global Britain and the Western Balkans, HC 1013.]*

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle):** Before we begin, in light of earlier comments during business questions and subsequent exchanges, I should say that the matters referred to in the Prime Minister's statement on the Salisbury incident are not at this stage sub judice. Nevertheless, Members should exercise discretion and not say anything that may prejudice any future trial.

3.8 pm

**Tom Tugendhat** (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House welcomes the Government's aspiration to ensure the UK retains its influence and status as it prepares for departure from the EU; notes that for Global Britain to be more than a worthy aspiration the slogan must be backed by substance; further notes the threats to the international rules-based order posed, in particular, by the aggressive stance of the Russian Government; and therefore calls on the Government to publish by 31 October 2018 its assessment of the threats posed by Russia and other hostile states to the international rules-based order, and the Government's strategy and resources for countering those threats.

It is a pleasure to rise to speak on this motion, which stands not only in my name but in the names of every other member of the Committee that I am privileged to chair. I am particularly privileged because we have such a wide range of views and yet such a harmonious existence; that is naturally down to their skill as politicians rather than mine as their convener. I am grateful they have kindly agreed to allow me to speak on this motion today.

We are here to talk about global Britain, and that is because—as the Clerk who will be expertly advising you throughout this debate, Mr Deputy Speaker, will be able to tell you, having been such an expert Clerk of my Committee beforehand—the debate is about how Britain resets its relationships as we move away from the structures that have kept us propped up according to some, or stable according to others, for the past 40 or 50 years. The argument for this country is really about how we set ourselves in this new, turbulent world. The Committee has asked the Foreign Office that question and we have, I am afraid, been extremely disappointed by the answer; we have found a headline and a slogan, but that is largely it.

**Mr Bob Seely** (Isle of Wight) (Con): I should like to echo my hon. Friend's thoughts. With the best will in the world, and despite the fact that the Foreign Office is

[Mr Bob Seely]

full of remarkably intelligent people and very good Ministers, there seems to be a great paucity of thought on what global Britain will actually consist of post Brexit. It will be different from now.

**Tom Tugendhat:** I am grateful to my fellow Committee member for making that point; he is absolutely right. That is exactly why we have called this debate. We want to explore the depths of this question and to challenge and push the Government. It is no accident that the motion calls on the Government to publish their assessment. We want to ensure that the House has the ability to exercise power over the Executive and call on them to deliver what we ask for. In this case that is an assessment, and I will say more about that in a moment.

Let me touch on a few of the areas where we have found answers to be lacking. The former permanent under-secretary at the Foreign Office, Sir Simon Fraser, told the Committee that there was a lot of “mushy thinking”, and Lord Owen, the former Foreign Secretary, has bemoaned the lack of consistency in what the Government are saying on the subject. He also said, in words that are now somewhat historical but that speak to the truth, that if he listened to the radio and heard the Foreign Secretary saying something that the Prime Minister would then contradict, he wanted to throw something at his radio. I think his radio has been saved by a recent change in appointments, and let us hope that the situation will be improved by some co-ordination. I hope that the Foreign Office will manifest the same change through improvements in its thinking.

The question of a global Britain is a wide one, and we have produced a series of reports to cover it. In our first chapter, we look at what the Government will do differently and how they will change their approach. A lot of that is to do with the reality of bilateralism in Europe and how Britain will work when we are no longer working through the structure of the European Council, Commission and Parliament. For example, we will have to increase the number of our diplomats around Europe who speak Dutch, French, Italian, Spanish and other languages. The bilateral missions will do the range of jobs that bilateral missions would otherwise normally do, but for various reasons have not needed to because the European Union has been our focus. We have looked into that question, but as yet we have not found the detail we would like to see. We have heard talk of money, true, and we have heard talk of languages, which again is good, but we have not heard talk of strategy, co-ordination or delivery.

We need to be clear-eyed here. We need an assessment of our place in the world, and we need to be clear-eyed about what we are going to do to maximise our position in the future. That involves understanding who we are and what we want. We have a real choice: either we choose to shape events or we will be shaped by them. Over many centuries, the people of the United Kingdom have got into the habit of being actors in this world, rather than being acted upon by it. I would like that to continue, but it will require co-ordination.

We have seen what happens without such co-ordination. We have seen the lack of co-ordination in some areas of eastern Europe as well as the expansion of Russian influence and the spread of corruption. We have seen

the physical reality of that in the energy markets, with the Russian Government deliberately salami-slicing those markets in order to salami-slice alliances. That is why I have spoken out so strongly against the Nord Stream 2 project. But there is more: we have seen that happening there, but we are also seeing it happening in other parts of the world, as well as in our own alliance of NATO. In NATO, however, it is different. The truth is that NATO has not spent nearly enough on its own defence. Indeed, if every nation were to achieve the 2% target, rather than just a few, we would be talking about another \$100 billion or so being made available for the defence of Europe. The fact that some nations are not willing to carry the burden of their own responsibility shames us all, because it weakens us all, so when we talk about global Britain we must be clear that we are actually talking about Britain in a network of alliances.

If I may, I would like to mention the late Senator John McCain. He was a friend to many in this House, and I see one of his good friends sitting here, my right hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Sir Michael Fallon). Senator McCain spoke out passionately for the transatlantic relationship because he fundamentally understood that the sovereignty of nations is not diminished by alliance but enhanced by it and that the freedoms of individuals are not hampered by co-operation but increased by it. That is the message that we must carry forward, and that is why I have been urging NATO to name its new headquarters after the late Senator. There would be no greater tribute to a great friend of the United Kingdom and Europe. I hope that we will see that change.

**Hilary Benn** (Leeds Central) (Lab): I echo the hon. Gentleman's praise for the late Senator McCain. Given that the threats to the international rules-based system come not just from Russia but from other directions, does he agree that, even though we are leaving the European Union, we must ensure that we maintain the strongest and closest practical co-operation with our European neighbours? Does he also agree that imagination and flexibility will be required on both sides to find a means of doing that so that Europe can continue to speak with one voice even though we will no longer formally be part of the institutions?

**Tom Tugendhat:** I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman, my fellow Committee Chair, for bringing that up, because he is absolutely right. The reality is that we have many people talking today as though isolation were a possibility or a desire, which is simply not true. The reality is that co-operation was what overcame the centuries of war preceding the building of the alliances that grew out of the disaster that ended in 1945. We need to see that continue.

Many people today do not believe in the devil—they do not believe that the evil of war will come back to Europe and do not believe in the dangers of the international system being undermined. They believe in many ways that rules are somehow optional, but the truth is that they are simply not. I can say that because I have seen myself the cost of believing that. I have been into middle-class homes in Baghdad, in wealthy areas, where people lived in civilised society in the '50s and '60s. I have been to Kabul and seen family photos showing daughters going to university in miniskirts, but those people are now living with the reality of Islamic

fundamentalism, barbarity and war. I can say clearly that just because someone does not believe in the devil does not mean that he does not exist and cannot return.

I do not think that that is a danger for us here, but the danger is only realised if we pretend it is not. If we remember that it is a possibility, and if we acknowledge the threats and the dangers that we can face, we can co-operate and ensure that they never happen. That is why our position on global Britain is not just about Britain; it is about all of us. I therefore welcome the work that Her Majesty's Government do around the world, but I call upon everyone to act together. Defending the rule of law and defending the network of alliances that has made us happy and prosperous is essential to our future.

When I talk about the rule of law, I am of course talking about the international order and the rules-based system, but I am also talking about other rules. I am talking about governance, which is one area where the British could lead and in which the Foreign Office must be the strategic organising body for this country. Looking at the spread of aid dependency in some parts of the world, we can see that aid is not a solution in itself. I welcome the Prime Minister's recent speech in Africa about trade and having a strategic approach that links development, trade and foreign policy, but I also want links with our Ministry of Justice and our Ministry of Defence to improve the security of individuals and links with our Treasury and our markets for loans.

If we want to see the alternative, it is very clear. It is situations such as the port in Sri Lanka that has indebted a nation so greatly that it has been left in hock to a power that has no interest at all in the development of that country. We are seeing that problem spread throughout Africa, too, because what other countries see as the rule of law is not. It is a new form of economic colonialism that threatens not only the UK's interests but those of our partners and friends.

That is why I welcome the fact that the Royal Navy recently sailed through international waters unconcerned by the claims that others make on land that is truly not theirs. I will not go into detail on the nine-dash line in the South China sea, but we know that if we do not exercise such rights, and that if we are not willing to stand up for the rights of individual countries that are less able to defend themselves, we will wake up in the morning and find that those we thought would stand with us are no longer able to stand alone.

We hope this global Britain report will be built on not only by the work of our Committee but by Her Majesty's Government and her diplomats around the world. It is about placing the United Kingdom in its rightful place, and placing our allies at its heart.

I will not go into the details of the Salisbury incident, which speak to so much of the evil we see today, nor will I go into many other areas of detail that would perhaps make it easy to punch out at particular incidents and at moments where we have made errors. Nor will I go into detail on the middle east, which my right hon. Friend the Minister knows so well and manages so expertly.

I will not go into the criticisms that one could certainly make about the operations in Yemen, which are fundamentally against the interests of the Saudi Government and people and of the Emirati Government

and people, but I will touch on one thing: the reason why they are there, which is another malign influence we have a duty to face up to as global Britain. I will touch on it because it speaks to another essential part of British foreign policy.

What is global Britain for? The answer is simple: it is for all of us. It is for the people of these islands. It is for individuals here who find themselves seeking foreign goods and friendship, it is for individuals who find themselves trading abroad, and, should tragedy occur, it is for individuals in the most horrific situations such as the poor mother who was taken from her child and has been held in captivity for the best part of two years in a Tehran jail. Global Britain is for nothing if it is not to stand up for people like her, to resist the violence and repression of the mullahs, to partner with our allies in the region and to help them do a better job of standing up for the values that we hold so dear.

Our alliances must be based on the values we hold. They must be based on the interests of our islands, of course, but fundamentally they have to be in the interests of the people of this country. Foreign policy is not about foreigners; it is about us. It is about how we make ourselves happier, safer and more prosperous.

I will leave it there and welcome the contributions that I am sure will come from both sides of the House, but I will not be leaving the issue this afternoon. The Committee will be looking for the Foreign Office, under its new Foreign Secretary, to give us a strategic, overarching vision of Britain's role abroad and of how to bring it together, co-ordinate it and deliver it in the interests of the people of these islands, our friends, our allies and our whole country.

3.24 pm

**Mike Gapes** (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to follow my friend the Chairman of our Foreign Affairs Committee. As so often, I find that I agree with every word he said. Our Committee has produced a series of reports, to which he has referred. I have served on that Committee on and off for almost 20 years in this House, and it is very frustrating to serve on that Committee and experience a Foreign Secretary whom we know is not up to the job and is not taking seriously the issues that confront our country. I am referring not to the current Foreign Secretary, whose appointment I have welcomed very much, but to his predecessor, the right hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson).

When I was first elected, in 1992, I served on the FAC in that Parliament, when the then Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, used the phrase that the United Kingdom was going to "punch above its weight". What we have seen with the last Foreign Secretary was somebody who was flailing around but not hitting any target, and who was counterproductive in so many ways. I therefore believe that this is the time for a reset and a restart. I hope that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will take seriously today's motion, which has been signed by all members of the Committee—and we do not all agree on everything—and comes from many different points of view. It comes from members of the Labour, Conservative and Scottish National parties, and from leavers and remainers, who are united in the view that this Government need to take seriously the questions we are raising.

[Mike Gapes]

I do not want to speak for too long today. I could easily give a 40-minute speech, because there are so many issues—[*Interruption.*] I will not do that—

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle):** I know you won't!

**Mike Gapes:** But I do want to say a few words about Russia. Given the challenges to the global international order that we face and the direct challenges to our country as a result of the criminal murder in our country by the Russian state, this is the worst possible time for our country to be leaving the European Union. We need partners, allies and international co-operation. I asked the Prime Minister about this yesterday and she confirmed how important it is that we continue to have security and defence co-operation with our EU neighbours and friends. That is not guaranteed if we get the no-deal situation and we have no agreement—I will leave that there.

What is also clear is that we need to be serious about not only the crimes in Salisbury, but the 14 other suspicious deaths linked to Russia that have occurred in recent years. There has been a remarkable development this week, with the Chair of the Select Committee on Home Affairs being written to by the Home Secretary in a letter that said:

“I can now formally confirm that the Government's assurance work around the 14 cases is complete. The Police have confirmed that there is no basis on which to re-open any of the investigations. Clearly, should any new information become available, then the relevant police force will continue to monitor this position and take additional action as necessary”

That letter was written on 23 August. In the light of what we now know and the Prime Minister's comprehensive and detailed statement yesterday, I call on the Government to revisit this issue, because there have been other murders and other deaths of Russian exiles in this country, over several years. I am not convinced and satisfied that they are not linked to the way the Russian state carried out an attack in our country in Salisbury this year. I therefore ask the Home Office to look again at that issue.

While we are talking about Russia, I wish to say something to my party and to my Front-Bench colleagues. In March, the spokesman for the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Seumas Milne, was quoted as saying to journalists that

“the government has access to information and intelligence on this matter which others don't; however, also there's a history in relation to WMD and intelligence which is problematic to put it mildly.”

When pressed on whether he thought that Russia was being framed for the events in Salisbury, he then said that

“if the material was from the Soviet period, the break-up of the Soviet state led to all sorts of military material ending up in random hands.”

Frankly, he was implying that the Russian state was not responsible. In the light of what we now know, we need an unequivocal, unambiguous, clear statement.

In my opinion, Mr Seumas Milne has been dissembling and attempting to divert attention from the real cause and the real culprits: the Putin regime in Moscow.

Perhaps that should not come as any surprise, because this is the man who hosted President Putin at the Valdai forum in Sochi. This is the man who said in *The Guardian* on 4 March 2015, under the headline “The demonisation of Russia risks paving the way for war”, that the events in Ukraine were justifiable from the Russian perspective. He wrote:

“Russian covert military support for the rebels, on the other hand, is denounced as aggression and ‘hybrid warfare’”.

He criticised the fact that Putin was portrayed in the west as a “reckless land-grabber”, and he criticised attempts to challenge this as “interventionism and even neoconservatism”.

Frankly, all that goes against the whole basis of the historic Labour tradition of standing up to the aggression that came from the Soviet Union in the cold war period, our establishment of NATO under Clem Attlee's Government, and the consistent support for our values and for the defence of our society by successive Labour Governments. I believe very strongly that the Labour party would be in a much better place, and that we would have much greater clarity on foreign affairs matters, if we had people working for our party leadership who actually believed in those Labour values.

**Mr Seely:** I am interested in the fact that the hon. Gentleman quoted from that 2015 article. Is he aware that Seumas Milne wrote at least four articles in 2014 and 2015 that are highly instrumental and manipulative in their device? They all have a very similar message: “You may not like Russia, we all hate the United States, Ukraine is Nazi, but one thing we can all agree on is this central argument about the need for autonomy and federalisation.” That was exactly Russia's political aim at the time. At best, he is a useful idiot, and at worst, he is something much worse.

**Mike Gapes:** I do not wish to go any further down that route, because I am getting signals from Mr Deputy Speaker about time. The hon. Gentleman can no doubt make his own speech when the time comes.

I want to conclude by focusing on one other area, which is what the United States Administration are doing to the global order. The Chairman of the Select Committee made reference to Senator John McCain. The suggestion has been made that the new NATO headquarters should be named after the senator. I met him when I was previously on the Foreign Affairs Committee and we were always given the greatest courtesy. He took us on a tour to the Statuary Hall to have an informal chat with him as well as a formal meeting. He was an outstanding internationalist—one did not have to agree with him on everything, but he was always polite, friendly, warm, interesting and engaged. What a tragedy it is today that the President of the United States and some of those around him are the opposite of that. They are challenging the international order, which the United States and the Labour Government established in 1945, with Eleanor Roosevelt playing an important role in the United Nations system and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In those days, we had co-operation to build a new peaceful world. Unfortunately, the demagogues, the populists, and the extremists—on the far left and the far right—are undermining that order. It is under serious threat and serious challenge and we in this country and we in my party must fight to defend it.



3.36 pm

**John Lamont** (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Ilford South (Mike Gapes). He made a number of very thoughtful remarks, particularly in respect of his own party's position on these important issues facing our country and indeed our world.

I thank and pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Tom Tugendhat) for bringing this timely debate to the House. It is timely because recent events, most notably our impending departure from the European Union and the threat posed by Russia, require us as a nation to take stock of our place and our role in the world.

The confirmation yesterday from the Prime Minister that the suspects of the Salisbury poisonings were members of Russian military intelligence and that their actions were almost certainly approved at a state level will no doubt focus our minds today. This is a stark reminder that, although peace is what most British citizens have grown used to, there are countries out there that wish us harm and represent a very real danger to us.

I commend the tireless work of the Foreign Affairs Committee and its Chair in seeking to scrutinise the Foreign Office and its plans, or perhaps its perceived lack of them, for the future of British diplomacy. I look forward to our new Foreign Secretary bringing a fresh perspective. Perhaps the Minister can give us some more detail about the plans for global Britain today.

I want to use my time to make some positive remarks about Britain and our role in the world. The reality is that, whatever the future for British diplomacy and foreign relations, our achievements so far have been remarkable. We should not forget that this tiny island in the north Atlantic punches well above its weight on the international scene. We have some of the finest, most highly skilled armed forces who not only keep us safe, but are world leaders in providing aid in times of crises around the world.

Britain continues to command the respect of other nations. The international response to the Salisbury poisonings saw the biggest ever co-ordinated expulsion of Russian envoys by our allies. The Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in April was an example of Britain leading and securing agreement on a range of international challenges. We remain an international development superpower, too, with a world-leading and legally binding commitment to provide a percentage of our wealth to those most in need around the world. Our decision not just to be a leading aid donor, but to legislate for it, sets a powerful example and makes a statement about the country's role on the world stage. France and Ireland have recently set out their intentions to follow Britain's lead.

Despite an apparent consensus that our world is in crisis, the truth is that the world is safer, healthier, wealthier and smarter than it has ever been, and Britain has made a significant contribution to achieving that. It does not make the headlines, but since yesterday worldwide life expectancy went up by 9.5 hours, 137,000 people came out of extreme poverty, 305,000 people got safer water, 295,000 people got electricity and worldwide CO<sub>2</sub> levels fell by 2,000 tonnes. The UK has often led the way in tackling these international problems through our international aid programme, through tackling extremism abroad, and through our world-leading climate

change programme and clean growth policies. Beyond and including that, Scotland has a proud tradition of contributing to this international effort.

UK Aid has its joint headquarters in East Kilbride, where over 900 DFID staff administer our world-leading international aid project. They do so by supporting a range of Scottish charities, such as Edinburgh-based Mercy Corps, which works in more than 40 countries including in war-torn Syria, Iraq and Yemen, and in the horn of Africa helping farmers escape poverty. EMMS International, which is based in Edinburgh, is providing palliative care for people and their families in the most poverty stricken parts of the world. Outside the UK Aid framework, we have many examples of organisations doing great work abroad. In my constituency, the Rotarians are involved in some remarkable projects abroad. For example, Peter Croan from Galashiels Rotary club secured breast screening trailers for rural parts of Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Scotland also benefits from being part of a truly global power. We have a seat at the top table of the UN Security Council, the G7 and the G20. Our businesses and citizens have access to the UK-wide embassy and consulate network—one of the largest in the world. I look forward to the Government setting out their vision for the future of Britain and our global role, but we should also recognise the significant role that the United Kingdom, and Scotland as part of the United Kingdom, has played in making the world a safer and healthier place.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Lindsay Hoyle):** During this global debate, we ought to welcome our visitors in the Gallery: the Royal Westminster Regiment, the Lorne Scots and the Australian Royal Victoria Regiment. It is a pleasure that this debate is going on in their presence and given their affiliation to the Fusiliers, who have a great history back in Lancashire.

3.42 pm

**Darren Jones** (Bristol North West) (Lab): I also welcome our guests in the Gallery, although their presence does give me some intellectual distress in my contribution to this debate, to which I come as somewhat of a novice, although so many of my constituents are engaged in the defence of our nation and our allies.

It is clear that the international order established after the second world war has been an enduring structure—as the Chair of the Select Committee so eloquently put it earlier—but, with the obvious geopolitical changes including the population changes and economic changes of global powers, it is under strain. I want to touch on two elements that cause me concern, given the strain on the global world order that flow from them. These elements are technology and climate change—two topics on which I feel a bit more comfortable making contributions in this debate.

Many of us will have read in the press about unmanned aircraft and the use of drones, with some air forces in the world now having more unmanned aircraft than manned aircraft in use as commonplace weapons. With the adoption of artificial intelligence and machines processing huge amounts of data to make decisions better and quicker than humans can, the use of autonomous weapons should cause us concern in this debate. As we move from drones making decisions around navigation to self-protection and now into the execution of specific

[Darren Jones]

missions themselves—with or without the decision making of military personnel—this will evidently lead to an arms race between nations around the world. Indeed, here in the UK we are investing in autonomous defence weapons. I was pleased to see the future combat air strategy announced by the Defence Secretary before the summer recess, not least because many of my constituents will be involved in building the engines that will go into these semi-autonomous machines. We have had announcements on the Autonomous Warrior programme, for example, whereby there will be artificial intelligence programmes looking at how the different armed services use these types of technologies.

What are the new red lines—the new rules that apply to the use of autonomous machines around the world? The use of chemical weapons has been seen to be a red line, and I welcome the Prime Minister's decision on the Government action in Douma, but what are the new red lines for drones, for online hacking, for disinformation, or for state interference in elections? Apparently, as I learned when I was hosting a book launch with the author Carl Miller for his new book, "The Death of the Gods", anyone can hack into our wind turbines and set them on fire. What about state interference in our national infrastructure? What are the defence and reaction red lines in terms of the new rules that need to be established in an ageing world order? What resource are we giving not just to our military personnel but to our law enforcement personnel so that we have the capability and skills to be able to respond to this technological change in our security at home and abroad?

This is why I have been involved in the AI Global Governance Commission, which came out of the all-party parliamentary group on artificial intelligence, chaired by the hon. Member for South Basildon and East Thurrock (Stephen Metcalfe) and the noble Lord Clement-Jones: to work with a network of politicians from around the world who want to have this type of conversation. How do we regulate the use of artificial intelligence? What are the international standards? What are the rules that need to be established within the old institutions to deal with the new world in this technology space? I would welcome any thoughts from the Minister or the Chairman of the Select Committee about what more could be done to help that process.

We have seen over the summer many outcomes of a process of climate change. This is not just an environmental debate: there will be impacts in terms of climate change migration that will create security issues. I have recently seen a modelling of what the world will look like when the earth warms by 4°. I welcome the commitment in the Paris accord to a 1.5° limit, although I am distressed by the United States pulling out of that. In a world where we eventually reach 4° increases in our global temperature, the main areas of habitation for humans are essentially Canada, north Europe and Russia. The United States, southern and middle Europe, Asia and China become uninhabitable. What does that mean for our old institutions in a new world where suddenly, perhaps quite rapidly, we have the movement of people and the movement of power? Where is the ability to respond to these changes?

I hope that those two issues—technology and climate change—are part of this debate as well. It is not just about—I agree entirely with my hon. Friend the Member

for Ilford South (Mike Gapes)—the maintenance of what we secured after the second world war and the maintenance of our relationships with the established institutions. It is also about making sure that Britain, with its research base and leading thinking in these spaces, contributes around the world to ensure that—

**Antoinette Sandbach** (Eddisbury) (Con): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that Britain has played a world-leading role in setting global climate change standards, and that we would very much like that to carry on in future as we seek to achieve the aims of the Paris agreement and, moving forward, to strengthen other countries' commitment to tackling the problems of climate change?

**Darren Jones:** I agree entirely. That is why I raised the issues of climate change and technology: two areas where the United Kingdom really excels in its leadership in the world and in the contributions it has made. The UK also excels in its thinking and research, and in setting the tone around the world about what is acceptable. I was very proud that it was a Labour Government and the then Energy Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband), who brought in the first piece of legislation on climate change—the Climate Change Act 2008.

These types of issues often do not get debated enough in the context of domestic and international security, the role of defence, and the institutions that exist. I hope that because we have strengths in the areas of climate change and technology, the Minister will say that Britain's contribution as a strong global player is on the agenda as we try to maintain security and peace at home and around the world.

3.49 pm

**Mr Bob Seely** (Isle of Wight) (Con): It is a genuine privilege to follow the hon. Member for Bristol North West (Darren Jones), who spoke very eloquently; it was a pleasure to listen to him. I thank the Minister for being here to listen to us. Not every Minister is impressive, but this one undoubtedly is.

It is a privilege to be here with representatives of the two Canadian units and the Australian unit in the Gallery. My great-great-uncle was the last member of my family to represent my seat, the Isle of Wight, which I have the huge privilege to represent. He served in world war one with the Canadian Cavalry. In fact, he led the Canadian Cavalry Brigade in world war one, and at Vimy Ridge, which was remembered in France earlier this year, it was the Canadian Cavalry charge that halted the German advance and saved the splitting of the allied forces and possibly the war in March 1918. He was very proud of his service with the Canadian Cavalry. He was a Brit from the Isle of Wight, but he was associated with the brigade. It is a pleasure for me to be here with them.

I would like to talk briefly about two things. First, I shall ask, what is global Britain? Secondly, I shall make some points about the international order that relate to China, Iran and Russia. I do not wish to be too critical of the Minister, for whom I have high regard. Global Britain is a great phrase, but we really need to fill it out. I have some questions about it. What are we prioritising? Every time our Foreign Affairs Committee says, "What are you prioritising?" the answer is, "Everything." Correct

me if I am wrong, but the FCO does not have unlimited resources. Global Britain is about more than just opening half a dozen extra posts in Papua New Guinea. It has to amount to something. Is the priority trade? Is it aid? Is it security?

For the past 15 years, we have had a foreign policy that has been somewhat gesture politics, and much more in the world besides. In the past five years, foreign affairs, threats to Britain and our role in the world have become much more serious, urgent and pressing questions. There is a strong argument that our priority has to be trade and then security and aid. That is not to underestimate the importance of aid, but it is to say that we have vital national interests that we have to try to meet.

**James Cleverly (Braintree) (Con):** I co-chair the all-party parliamentary group on trade out of poverty. Does my hon. Friend agree that trade, aid and global security are three legs of the same stool and that success in those three can be mutually reinforcing?

**Mr Seely:** My hon. Friend makes a good point. My answer is that they can be, but not necessarily; it is dependent on how the money is spent. I will come to that a bit later. They are not separate—that is certainly true—but it is how we deal with them as a whole that is the issue.

The next question is, what role is there for the Anglosphere? We talk about deepening relationships with Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States. What does that mean in practice? Is there a role for a global NATO and a NATO that looks at not only physical force but threats to democracy from cyber-attacks and other organisations and criminal and state actors?

What should the structure of the FCO be after Brexit? I am quite a fan of the argument that the FCO should be a super-Ministry, with oversight and a stronger role in leading—[*Interruption.*] I am glad that the Minister has just signed up to that. With the Department for International Trade, the Department for International Development, the Ministry of Defence, the Cabinet Office and the Prime Minister's office, there are so many bits of government that are now involved in foreign affairs. We want coherence.

Above all, the critical thing we need to learn is how we integrate government better, not only here but at home, to deliver efficiently. I do not like Russia's hybrid war, but it is an incredibly efficient use of power. I am not saying that that is our model, but efficiency and integration are important.

We need to rebalance our overseas spending. I do not believe that how the 0.7% is spent should be dictated by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe. We should dictate how we spend that money. There is an argument to suggest that the BBC, which is part of the broader aid budget, should be entirely funded through DFID, as should all peacekeeping operations, which are fundamental elements of aid.

**Tom Tugendhat:** I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me for intruding just for a moment. Does he agree that the establishment of truth and facts is one of the fundamentals in building fair societies and therefore that the BBC's role is not simply informative, but fundamental to the democratic survival of our partners and allies?

**Mr Seely:** Yes. One of the points I am coming to later—I thank my hon. Friend for mentioning it—is that we are at the moment in a global struggle with authoritarian states that wish to use cyber but also open societies to undermine those open societies and the freedoms that we have. Therefore, to see the BBC—the World Service, radio and TV—endlessly begging for money is, again, a luxury that we cannot afford. I believe that we should rebalance overseas spending, respecting aid, but redefining how that is done.

Do we have a grand strategy, or is grand strategy a thing of the past? It very much feels that we are simply muddling through with a foreign policy. We have stumbled into Brexit. I voted for Brexit, but we have stumbled into it. The European Union has treated this like the mother of all vicious divorces, while we have treated it as a flat-share partnership in which we are going our separate ways. I think that if we stumble into a global Brexit, it will not be particularly helpful to our future.

Those are just some of the questions. I will also be thinking about these themes, and writing about them, as I have today on ConservativeHome. I know that the Foreign Office and other parts of our Government are very focused on Brexit—in fact, politically, our political classes are obsessed by it to the diminishment of the domestic agenda, which I think is extremely serious in its own right—but more thinking on global Britain would not go amiss.

To come on to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, the international order is under threat.

**The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt) rose—**

**Mr Seely:** Does the Minister want me to give way, or is he getting a glass of water?

**Alistair Burt:** I am getting a glass of water.

**Mr Seely:** I am so sorry, but one never knows.

**Alistair Burt:** Don't worry, you'll know when I want you to give way. [*Laughter.*]

**Mr Seely:** The Minister was waving earlier, and I thought he was just being friendly and agreeing with me, as ever.

The international order is not being helped by President Trump, whose actions are deeply rash and foolish. However, the main structural threat to the international order comes from authoritarian states that are trying to break down the current system. As I have said, one of the key battles we face is how we will protect the future of open and free societies against states that want to undermine them. China is doing it gently, while Russia and Iran are doing so much more aggressively.

Although China is being more subtle, its aims are somewhat the same. It does not have Russia's little green men, but it has little blue men pushing the maritime boundaries. It has claims in the South China sea, it has tried to change the law of the seas and it is building artificial islands. It is offering loans to Vanuatu and other Pacific states, and it is building up an unhealthy degree of influence in New Zealand and Australian politics, some of it corrupt. Against that, we need global as well as Atlantic and European alliances. That leads

[Mr Seely]

me to raise this question: NATO—the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation—has been a force for good in our area, but does it need to be extended to have a global front?

The international order is not perfect, but it is worth defending, but one of the things that is changing and making it more difficult for the international order to work is the nature of warfare. Conventional warfare is becoming rare and forms of non-conventional warfare are becoming much more common. Indeed, one of my roles when I was serving in the military was to understand these new forms of unconventional war. This has put significant pressure on the norms of war. For example, in Syria, the Syrian war—now in its seventh year—is arguably the first in history in which hospitals and medical facilities are the primary and, indeed, the priority targets for the Syrian regime backed by the Russians. Yesterday, we talked a great deal in this House about bringing to justice people in Myanmar, but there is an embarrassing degree of silence in the western world about naming Russian regiments and Russian planes that are dropping bombs on hospitals.

**Antoinette Sandbach:** Does my hon. Friend hope, as I do, that the International Criminal Court will eventually indict those responsible for what are, in effect, war crimes happening in Syria?

**Mr Seely:** Absolutely. I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention, but there is no “in effect” about it. The words “war crime” are bandied about quite often, but dropping a bomb on a hospital—is it in chapter 35 of book 4 of the Geneva conventions?—is absolutely specifically forbidden. There can be no other interpretation, yet for the past year and a half it has become one of the key de facto means of war in Syria.

Let me now turn briefly to Russia because I want to suggest some ideas to the Minister. Since March, the Government have been sensible and robust in the measures they have taken, but I believe it might be useful for them to consider some additional ideas, which I have outlined in an article today, when dealing primarily with the Russian threat but also more generally with the subversive threat to the United Kingdom. First, we need to systematically expose what the Kremlin is doing, not on an ad hoc basis through the Foreign Affairs Committee or other Committees, but by setting up a small, permanent, multi-agency group whose role is to understand and expose those subversive activities.

In the 1970s and '80s the United States had such a group. It was called the Active Measures Working Group and was reckoned to be extremely successful in investigating and exposing Russian—then Soviet—subversive activities. Such subversive activities were called “active measures” in those days, but they meant assassinations, propaganda, smears, blackmail and all those other forms of spy warfare, with occasional support for terrorist groups and so on. I believe we need such a group now. It does not have to be big, and it could be seconded from other Departments, but I believe we need something more than what is done on an ad hoc basis.

Secondly, we need to introduce a list of PR agents, reputation management firms and others who work as agents for Russian influence in the UK, either directly

or via proxies or third parties. Thirdly, we must consider laws that introduce a health warning on broadcasters. A counter-propaganda Bill is currently going through Congress to do just that, and we should consider the same thing. Fourthly, as I have mentioned, we need properly to fund World Service TV and radio, and specifically the Russian service.

Fifthly, we need to look at our visa regime, which I know my colleagues on the Foreign Affairs Committee are extremely concerned about. For Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and other states from the former Soviet bloc, we make it very easy for oligarchs—basically kleptocrats—to come here, but very difficult for ordinary people. I believe we should make it much easier for ordinary Rusksies, and ordinary Ukrainians, Azerbaijanis and Kazakhstanis to come here if we judge them to be decent to do so, and much more difficult for the people who have stolen their money in the first place. We need to flip the system around.

Sixthly, the FCO needs to be more active in seeing Russian influence in the round. My hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Tom Tugendhat) made, expertly as ever, a point about Nord Stream 2, which is not just a commercial venture; it is a critical piece of geopolitics that will affect Europe for years to come. We should have been much more active.

**Tom Tugendhat:** My hon. Friend is making a key point about that pipeline, but it is not just about that. When we see one of our important European partners invite a dictator to the wedding of the Foreign Minister, and we see them dancing together as though that dictator were some sort of champion of freedom and a partner of choice, and then at the end of the dance we see the Foreign Minister—the Foreign Minister of a NATO power and a European partner—curtsey to a murderous dictator, we must ask ourselves what is happening in our neighbourhood under our watch.

**Mr Seely:** I completely agree with my hon. Friend. Our glorious Prime Minister might not be as good a dancer as Putin, but I would rather have her as our leader.

Seventhly, we should give Ofcom greater powers. The Latvian Government regularly highlight the negative content of Russian broadcasters based in London that spew propaganda into the Baltics. I do not believe that we should close such people down, or Russia Today or Sputnik, which churn out a regular diet of anti-western nonsense. However, we need to strengthen fines and rights of reply and ensure that Ofcom investigates those potential offences more quickly. Eighthly, we need to use financial and legal powers to hurt those people around Putin. I have talked to the Minister for Security, and I am aware that things are in the pipeline and happening, so watch this space.

Ninthly, we need to look at conventional deterrence. Russia's political and financial dealings with the west are part of a multi-faceted strategy. We need to relearn the art of deterrence for both conventional weaponry and non-conventional conflict. It is better to be robust now than to encourage the sort of adventurism that we are now seeing—perhaps we should have been robust 10 years ago.

Tenthly, we need to understand the threat to our electoral system posed by cyber-infiltration and fake news. We have seen how divisive disputed elections can

be in the United States. There is little doubt that the Russians had an extremely sophisticated operation, going back to 2014, to begin the process of manipulation, by using cyber-means to break into state boards of election, by backing people around Trump, by attacking Hillary Clinton and by understanding the Democrats' strategy by stealing the information from their servers. That was not just a case of embarrassing the Clinton campaign; it was more sophisticated and far more malign.

Indeed, we have cyber-attacks and cyber-problems here. I should declare that I wrote a definition of Russian warfare for the Henry Jackson Society, which has about 440 brute force attacks on its website per month, many of them coming from Russian IP addresses. There are regular Russian attacks on Dr Andrew Foxall, its excellent Russia expert. We are seeing these attacks, probably from Russia, perhaps from other more sophisticated state actors, on think-tanks in the United Kingdom. As well as myself, the Henry Jackson Society has hosted, rather more importantly for Mr Putin, Bill Browder and the wonderful Marina Litvinenko. We should be wary of what the Russians and others are doing here and elsewhere. It is a global problem. In the new kind of political conflict we are facing from authoritarian states, hackers, assassins and trolls, as well as market manipulators and criminals, are perhaps more useful than conventional forms of warfare.

I will leave it there, Madam Deputy Speaker. I apologise if I have spoken for too long, but I would appreciate the Minister's thoughts on both global Britain and some of those suggestions.

4.6 pm

**Paul Masterton** (East Renfrewshire) (Con): It is a pleasure, as always, to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr Seely), although in this debate it is probably a misfortune, as his experience, knowledge and passion in these areas are pretty much unmatched in the House and certainly unmatched by me. Nevertheless, we will see how we get on in the next few minutes.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Tom Tugendhat) and the Foreign Affairs Committee on securing this important debate. I also welcome the Government's aspirations to ensure that the UK retains its influence and status as we prepare to leave the EU. It is easy to be glib about the phrase "global Britain", as a succession of individuals on the Government Benches try to shoehorn it in pretty much everywhere they can. It is important that that soundbite does not come to be perceived as not meaning anything, so the Committee has been right to push and prod at what the Government mean by "global Britain". What is the practical vision, and what would its implementation look like? What are our priorities? What are we seeking to achieve? The United Kingdom has always known the concept of a global Britain. We have constantly taken a leading role in responding to global challenges and standing up for the rules-based international order. What matters is the substance sitting behind the phrase and how we ensure that it becomes not just a tagline but a credible position where our vision and values are put into action.

Once we leave the European Union, our interaction with the rest of the world will change. There is no point denying that in the last decades our influence has been amplified by the force multiplier advantage of

EU membership. It is also true that, after exit day, we will gain more flexibility and agility to react. Our main challenge, and one of the big challenges for the Foreign Office, will be to combine that extra flexibility with a strong foreign policy capability that ensures we continue to be one of the major global players.

The resources the Foreign and Commonwealth Office allocates to its European network will be crucial to its ability to implement a coherent diplomatic strategy both in Europe and around the world, particularly post Brexit. I am pleased that the FCO has taken my hon. Friend's Committee's advice and started increasing its diplomatic presence in EU27 capitals, focusing, in the first instance, on Berlin and Paris, and prioritising political and economic staff and research analysts. The key thing as we move forward, however, is that the allocation of resources cannot come at the expense of existing networks in other parts of the world, both those that are already pretty well established and those we are seeking to establish.

We have networks around the world that are not fully developed simply because our Government and our citizens have for years been able to rely on other EU states' existing networks. If we are truly to be global Britain, we cannot start hiving off or undermining our presence in one part of the world to build it up in another. I would be interested to hear from the Minister, therefore, how the very welcome additional funding of £90 million to support the Government's global Britain ambitions is intended to be used.

Our strong diplomatic footprint does not just help us to promote a set of values founded on democracy and the rule of law; it helps to keep the citizens of our country safe. We have seen how a weakened rules-based international system can lead to episodes such as the Salisbury incident—vile actions commissioned by a rogue state that systematically makes a mockery of international rules and basic principles of decency, whether in Georgia, which I have banged on about quite a lot since I was elected because not many people seem to talk about it, Crimea or the middle east.

I remember as an honours year student at Dundee Law School doing my dissertation on how international institutions responded to 9/11 and conflicts that had come before it, and how often such very significant events expose weaknesses in the very international institutions we expect and demand to uphold the rules-based order. I will be honest: my dissertation was not very good—I found lots of other things at university on which to focus my time rather than the library—but I think the underlying point I was supposed to be investigating was right. We still see it today in how multilateral organisations respond to Russia, Syria and so on—there are plenty of other examples. Establishing and upholding accepted standards of the rules-based order must be a central tenet of what global Britain stands for, because countries such as Russia exploit instability.

To me, global Britain is about championing Britain's place as a force for good in the world. It is about ensuring that we are an outward and forward-looking nation that seeks to build friendships and stands up for our values where they come under threat. Global Britain in action was the internationally co-ordinated expulsion of Russian envoys following Salisbury. Global Britain is the soft power and reach of over 5 million British citizens living overseas. It is the BBC World Service, and

[*Paul Masterton*]

our phenomenal universities and research institutions, which export talent, friendships and contacts. It is being the only permanent member of the UN Security Council that meets both the defence target and the development target. Global Britain is not an empty soundbite; it is a definition of what our country must and needs to be as we face the challenges of today, as well as those that lie ahead.

4.11 pm

**Julia Lopez** (Hornchurch and Upminster) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for East Renfrewshire (Paul Masterton) and to hear his positive case for a global Britain. I am also grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Tom Tugendhat) for speaking with such passion about this extremely timely subject.

In Brexit, we are managing the most momentous political change of my lifetime. This period of renewal is taking place in an era when the effectiveness of international governance structures is being questioned, the power dynamics across the world are shifting fundamentally, and technology is altering the possibilities available to citizens of every country. Faith is withering in established international rules and institutions, many of which were drawn up in the aftermath of the second world war to lock in peace, as they struggle to reflect new realities such as mass migration and the movement of global capital. That is raising real questions about what it means to be a citizen, to whom Governments should extend assistance, to whom global companies should be accountable, and the very nature of the bonds and values that glue societies together. Meanwhile, as China and other nations grow in economic power, our certainty that international norms necessarily reflect universal values is being challenged.

Those trends are unnerving, but they also present an opportunity to a global Britain that is ambitious to carve a new place in the world: a place that proudly reflects who we are now, rather than what we might have been in some nostalgia-tinted past; a place that sees us regain confidence in the values we bring as a nation that upholds the rule of the law and individual freedom; and a place that encourages technological and scientific advance.

**Antoinette Sandbach:** Does my hon. Friend agree that the values we hold as global Britain are also held by our European allies and neighbours?

**Julia Lopez:** Yes. I do not want this to descend into a Brexit debate. I was a floating voter during the referendum. I very much hope that having voted to leave the European Union, we are not seen as having an isolationist instinct, because my hon. Friend is right—we share a great number of values, and those relationships will be extremely important as we go forward in an increasingly uncertain world.

**Mr Seely:** As well as being European values, does my hon. Friend not agree that they are global values?

**Julia Lopez:** I thank my hon. Friend for his point. The point I was making is that although we might assume that these are universal global values, we have

seen in recent years that we cannot assume their universality. That is why we, as a nation, need to stand for something in the world. There is a debate to be had about those values, and it is important that the UK has a strong independent voice in that debate.

The challenge for us as politicians is to give those whom we represent both a sense of security and priority and a clear understanding that our engagement with the rest of the world has practical relevance to their lives. To echo what others have said today, though, if we do not act in the world, we will be acted upon. With that challenge in mind, I want briefly to share some thoughts on how we might begin this new journey.

First, I echo the view that my hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling has expressed on a number of occasions: we want to see a much more prominent role given to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as we leave the EU. If we are to make the most of this period of momentous change, we require intense, sustained relationship building at all levels, and a strong narrative about our direction of travel.

The Department for International Development became an independent Department in 1997, as a key component of new Labour's self-proclaimed ethical foreign policy. Overseas aid moneys previously distributed from the Ministry of Defence and Foreign Office budgets were centralised, leaving less financial autonomy for both those major Departments of State.

With the aid budget now ring-fenced by law, in recent years we have seen DFID rushing to spend its budget before year-end on projects that have undermined the otherwise strong case for its broader work on disease prevention, disaster relief and security. Meanwhile, the FCO has struggled to sustain its existing network of operations, so while the FCO may have the grand trappings and the historical clout, it can at times feel rather hollow when it is DFID that has the cash. Brexit should provide us with the perfect opportunity to refocus our outward-facing Departments and infuse our international work with strategic intent.

**Tom Tugendhat:** My hon. Friend is making an extremely important point. Many of us would like to see greater co-ordination. While we recognise the skillsets that are particular to DFID, that does not take away from the co-ordination that could be so well done if experts such as the DFID permanent secretary, Matthew Rycroft, were able to work better with partners across Whitehall.

**Julia Lopez:** Certainly. The problem with the debate on aid is that it is so often perceived as a DFID-bashing exercise, and that is not what I intend my comments to be. They are a statement that, actually, the Foreign Office needs to take a strong leadership role so that DFID money is not frittered away on projects that have no strategic value to what we are trying to achieve in the world.

**Mr Seely:** I am sorry to intervene again, but there is an important point here. We all complain about DFID, but the fact is that, as far as aid agencies go, DFID spends its money about as well as it can. There is a stronger argument to suggest that the £2 billion of public money spent by other Departments—including, sadly, the FCO and the Home Office—is potentially not as well spent. That is a separate argument about the overall balance in overseas spending.

**Julia Lopez:** I agree with my hon. Friend. I welcome the cross-departmental work that FCO and DFID Ministers are already doing in trying to move us towards that approach, although I would like that work to develop through the further integration of aid with our military, diplomatic and trade commitments, and I would like the FCO to be given the premier leadership role in that regard.

In withdrawing from the political, legal and diplomatic structures of the EU, we will, by definition, need to construct an entirely new approach to our global relationships. I would be keen to hear from the Minister what work is being done to set out a framework for engagement with European allies in future.

Party-to-party engagement can be vital in building political relationships that later bear fruit—something in which appointed civil servants inevitably face a level of restriction. Each major party already engages with counterparts in its European Parliament political grouping, and we have the Westminster Foundation for Democracy and bodies such as the International Democrat Union for broader international party engagement, but going forward, we will need to think much more carefully about how we use these bodies to our advantage.

Our German counterparts, particularly in the CDU, have been very wise in using the Stiftung model to advance their nation's political and economic interests. Is there a post-Brexit case for a strong equivalent body here to ensure that key political relationships are kept warm whether a party is in government or in opposition? Too often, those relationships die when a particular politician moves on, and we need some kind of sustained involvement in those relationships.

In the face of rising popular discontent, the challenge for all nations will be how to reshape global institutions to reflect new realities and refresh their legitimacy in the eyes of the people we are elected to serve. The UK has a unique opportunity to be ahead of the curve on this and to help move the world towards global standards in trade and technology that would benefit British businesses and safeguard the interests of our citizens in the face of rapid, unpredictable technological advances. That will be much easier to do if we are able to define our future relationship with the EU in a way that leaves room for a truly independent trade policy.

That is not to suggest that free trade agreements are a panacea, and we should certainly avoid entering into substandard deals out of political imperative. However, free trade agreements can act as catalysts through which broader diplomatic and trade objectives can be fulfilled, making them particularly relevant to our global Britain ambition. Indeed, other nations have been aggressively using their own trade policies to advance broader economic and security interests.

The UK has not presided over its own independent trade policy for 40 years, and while urgency must be injected into the development of stronger trading links with the likes of America, India and China, negotiations will be complex and will require careful consideration of potential trade-offs. The Government therefore rightly see Australia and New Zealand as a good place to start. Neither economy is especially large, but both have valuable experience from which we can learn. New Zealand was the first country to strike an FTA with China, and each antipodean nation has suggested smarter ways in which we might work together—for example, in

fulfilling the demands of the burgeoning far eastern middle classes for the safe, high-quality agricultural produce they sometimes find it difficult to source in their own countries. New Zealand and Australia are also looking to deepen their strategic alliances as Chinese power in the south Pacific grows.

Strong relationships on that front could also give fresh impetus to Australia and Singapore's pioneering work at the World Trade Organisation on e-commerce and the dismantling of barriers to digital trade, allowing us to play a more active role in the development of global standards for the kinds of services that now account for nearly 80% of our economy. That could deliver tangible economic benefits to our own citizens.

We can also use the development of our independent trade policy to deepen ties with other natural allies, such as the US, working together to cement norms on financial and professional services regulation and strengthening our military and defence co-operation. The US and UK have already set up a working group to discuss stronger trading ties post Brexit, and the Department for International Trade and the FCO are investing more in personnel across the US, but to maximise opportunities for UK businesses we shall need much deeper engagement at state level. In that regard, I fear we are moving towards greater use of temporary contracts and less attractive salary packets, making it difficult to attract in-country staff of the right quality and with the right contacts. I would appreciate the Minister's thoughts on the Government's approach to recruitment and on whether we are attracting the right candidates.

I would also like to echo some of the things my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr Seely) said about the importance of the BBC. Looking at it on an anecdotal basis, I have tried on recent trips abroad to source BBC material on the television and the internet, but it has been very difficult, whereas other countries, such as Russia and China, are stepping up their soft power messaging via their media outlets.

Much of the work we do internationally over the coming years will relate to how China emerges on to the world stage, and we must give urgent priority to developing our approach to that nation's increasing economic, diplomatic and military ambition. The sheer scale of its population, and its growing wealth, means that nations across the globe will very quickly be faced with questions over the extent to which that wealth and influence should be embraced, managed or indeed actively resisted.

When I was in Kenya over the summer, I was struck by the colossal scale of Chinese investment in east African ports and roads. Trade facilitation measures are welcome, but the debt arrangements for those investments are causing some concern in the region and elsewhere. There will be much more to say on that issue in the coming months, but I sense an increased appetite in such regions for alternative sources of investment that come with greater legal certainty. Here, the UK can carve a niche as countries look to diversify away from that approach, which has been presented as "no strings" but is actually beginning to reveal some conditionality. I would appreciate the Minister's thoughts on how the FCO is approaching the belt and road initiative and on the experience he has had in the countries with which he has influence.

Charting our new global path beyond the EU will not be easy, and there is no room for complacency, nostalgia or timidity. However, those who believe the UK to be an

[*Julia Lopez*]

irrelevance on the international stage are wrong. If we get our strategy right, Britain can be at the very forefront of shaping the governance of new technologies and upholding the values that will change people's lives in the 21st century.

4.23 pm

**Kirsty Blackman** (Aberdeen North) (SNP): I would like to start by thanking the Foreign Affairs Committee and particularly the hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Tom Tugendhat) for bringing this debate before us. I also thank him for the excellent way in which he put forward the position held by the Committee on these matters, as well as the position he holds. That was incredibly useful.

It has been a really interesting debate. I was particularly interested in the speech by the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr Seely). When he began, I thought, "Gosh, I agree with almost everything he is saying," but it went steeply downhill. Now, we are back on the correct sides of the House, and I felt a bit better after we began to diverge.

Thinking about the international rules-based order, some of the conversations that have been had today around global Britain have been about what exactly we want our aims to be. What do we want our position in the world to be? What do we want to do in terms of the influence we exert on others? What do we want to get them to do? The Scottish National party is focusing on furthering things like the sustainable development goals. We are looking to build capacity, peace, fairness and gender equality in other countries, many of which we have by right here every single day. Whenever we make decisions about what global Britain will do, we must hold those values in the forefront of our minds. That is certainly what the SNP would be doing in an independent Scotland if we were making those decisions for Scotland.

Britain has enjoyed a position of influence in the world that has been entirely disproportionate to its size, and that is largely because of its past wealth and empire. But the world has changed, particularly in the past 30 years, and I am concerned about some of the rhetoric that comes from some Conservative Members—although largely not today, I hasten to add—about dragging us back to the position we were in 30 years ago and trying to have Britain look like the Britain of 30 years ago and having the influence it had in the world then. I would suggest that that is not where we need to be. We should not be looking backwards; we should be looking forwards and seeing how the world has changed. We should be seeing where the levers are now and making sure those are the levers we are seeking to pull in order to help build capacity and create the world we want to live in.

I want to make it clear from the beginning that the SNP supports the retention of the international rules-based order and we will do what we can to ensure it endures—which is quite important—but we do not believe in many of the policy directions that successive UK Governments have adopted. We have major concerns that "global Britain" is just another of those follies. We do not make friends and gain influence by telling everybody how great we are. We make friends by showing everybody what we can do to help them; we do so not by standing there and saying, "Hey, look at us, we're wonderful,"

but by doing the capacity-building things I am talking about to make life better for people. That is how "global Britain" could become global Britain.

I want to talk about some of the specific different political choices we would make. In Yemen, in the first nine days of August there were 450 civilian casualties, 131 of whom were children. Nearly half the children in Yemen aged between six months and five years are chronically malnourished. The difference in the position the SNP and an independent Scotland would take is that we would not be having weapons sales that are 18 times the value of the aid we are spending; the value of our weapons sales to Saudi Arabia is 18 times higher than the aid we are spending in Yemen. Making sure those children are not chronically malnourished should be more of a political priority than getting the money from those lucrative weapons sales.

The escalation caused by the UK's bombing of Syria has ceded any prospect of the UK acting as a peace broker in Syria, which is what is needed there. Lessons were not learned from the lengthy and expensive Chilcot inquiry. In contrast, the Scottish Government have been funding a UN project in Syria to grow the role of Syrian women in conflict resolution. That is incredibly important; women have a hugely important role to play in conflict resolution, and it is often under-reported and under-recognised. Such excellent projects are much more important than, and cost much less than, bombing campaigns, and make more of a positive difference.

On international aid, I agree with the majority of speakers. I am pleased that so many Members talked about the 0.7% aid target and have spoken positively about the fact that we are spending that. I acknowledge that many have discussed how that money is spent, and it is healthy that we are scrutinising that and making sure it is spent in the very best places in order to ensure that the best outcomes are created from that aid money. We will continue to champion that amount of money being spent on aid, and we appreciate the fact that the Government are continuing to do that.

There is more that the UK could do internationally, particularly in regard to humanitarian crime. As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, the UK could help to strengthen and support the international rules-based system by calling for the International Criminal Court to investigate the atrocities that have taken place in Myanmar. Members across the House have spoken about the atrocities and crimes that are being inflicted on the Rohingya people there, and I believe it would be helpful if the UK were to use its international influence in that way. Crimes such as those cannot be committed with impunity; they need to be properly investigated. We need proper results in that regard, in order to prevent them from happening in other countries and to show everyone that if such crimes are committed, the international community will speak out against them and do what it can to clamp down and prevent them from happening again.

Turning to Brexit, we believe that the UK should pledge to remain a member of the European Union's Foreign Affairs Council Committee, post Brexit. This is particularly important in relation to where we are with Russia just now. Having a close relationship with our European allies would be incredibly important, and continuing to have a place there would be useful in ensuring that we can continue to have those close links.



Acting in concert with our international allies is vital, not only in regard to the many things that we have spoken about so far. There has not yet been a huge amount of mention—perhaps a bit—of international financial crime. Whether that involves offshore trusts, Scottish limited partnerships, the Chancellor’s possible taxation of digital organisations, retail companies or the implementation of trade remedies, we need strong international relationships in order for any of those things to happen. Countries need to work in concert with one another and to agree common goals and objectives for cracking down on international financial crime. In the light of some of the comments and decisions being made in the United States just now, particularly around the World Trade Organisation, we need to stand firm on these issues and put what pressure we can on our allies there to convince them to continue to support the WTO.

To sum up, global Britain should prioritise the sustainable development goals. I think that those are the most important things, and that the decisions that are made in our international relationships should ensure that we are doing that capacity building. That would make the world a better place for everyone.

4.32 pm

**Emily Thornberry** (Islington South and Finsbury) (Lab): I thank the Foreign Affairs Committee for initiating this vital and timely debate, and I thank all Members who have contributed to it this afternoon. I will say more about those contributions in a moment, but at the outset, I believe that this is an apt debate in which to pay tribute to the great Kofi Annan, who sadly passed away three weeks ago. I was looking back at a speech that he made to this Parliament in 2007 to mark 200 years since the abolition of the British slave trade. What he said that day resonates just as strongly now. He talked about the men and women who fought to abolish the slave trade, saying that they

“represented a moral truth...a moral passion that must at first have seemed utterly impracticable. Yet by persistence, by resolve, by eloquence, and by imagination, they changed history. They showed that moral suasion could prevail over narrow self-interest.”

For me, this entire debate today boils down to that same basic challenge. When we talk about global Britain, do we just mean aggressively pursuing our economic self-interest around the world in the shape of trade deals? Or do we believe in a Britain that acts as a global force for moral truth, moral passion and moral suasion and that seeks to change the world in which we live? We only have one planet.

When we talk of a rules-based international order, do we mean that those rules should be applied equally, consistently and with the same moral force to all countries, whether friend or foe, or do we decide in practice that there is one set of rules that we rightly apply with great vigour when it comes to countries such as Russia, Syria, Libya, Venezuela or Iran but another that we apply to America, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel or China? That is the crux of today’s debate and why I have been so interested to hear speeches from both sides of the House. I applaud the many excellent contributions about Russia and the crimes committed by agents of the Russian state on our soil.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford South (Mike Gapes) rightly challenged the Government about suspicious deaths of Russians that have happened in the UK over

the past few years, and he called again for those investigations to be reconsidered. He is right that the evidence is clear that there is no doubt of the culpability of the Russian state in the Salisbury poisonings. We also heard a condemnation of Russia from the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee and he was quite right to do so. I was particularly interested to hear the speech of the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr Seely), who is creative and used lateral thinking in his contribution, which was of great value. I did not necessarily agree with all of it, but it is important to have people with an independence of thought who can help to inform not just the Government’s thinking but, frankly, that of the Opposition.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol North West (Darren Jones) is right to say that, given that we continue to recklessly warm up our planet, it only has any chance if we work together with internationally recognised rules. At a time when the very rules that we have been abiding by until now seem to be being undermined, we must also face the challenge of having to develop new rules in order to maintain the planet on which we all live. I was very impressed by the hon. Member for Hornchurch and Upminster (Julia Lopez)—I hope that this is not a blight on her career—and her extremely thoughtful speech. The hon. Member for Aberdeen North (Kirsty Blackman) said many things that we agree with, particularly about the importance of a change of policy on Yemen and the importance of us having a proactive role with regard to the Rohingya.

All the speeches were timely, not just because of yesterday’s revelations, but due to several other factors that we must discuss today. We are living through a period in which the world order and the international rules that are supposed to underpin it are under greater threat than at any time since the 1930s. In every instance, the problems that we face come down to countries simply ignoring the rules that should govern our world. From Venezuela and the Philippines to Turkey and Egypt, we see the rule of law ignored. What were once democratically elected Governments have turned into autocratic regimes. From Yemen and Myanmar to Cameroon and South Sudan, we see the indiscriminate killing of civilians in flagrant breach of international humanitarian law. From the battlefields of Syria to the streets of Wiltshire, we see the convention on chemical weapons brazenly ignored and innocent victims injured and killed.

In North Korea, despite Donald Trump’s efforts, and in Iran, because of Donald Trump’s efforts, we see the threat of hostile states becoming nuclear states in breach of the non-proliferation treaties. In Russia, Israel and the United States, we see three leaders behaving as if none of the normal laws applies to them and actively trying to undermine the institutions that uphold them. Faced with such challenges, it is incumbent on us all to stand up for the world order, to stand up for human rights and international treaties, and to insist on working for peace through the United Nations. We cannot do that if the concept of global Britain, if our entire foreign policy approach, is not driven by values, ethics, rules and principles but is a simple case of what works best for our balance sheet.

For example, on 7 June 2018 *The Guardian* ran a special feature on the brutal campaign of violence by the regime of Cameroon’s President Biya against English-speaking communities in the west of the country, which

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was formerly known as British Cameroon. We owe those communities a historical responsibility. *The Guardian* quoted the ordinary men and women who saw their villages attacked by Biya's military, who saw their neighbours and family members killed and who were forced to flee for their lives. It quoted the charity workers who are looking after thousands of displaced women and children, for whom they warned that going home would be suicide.

By any normal moral standard, the UK Government would be expected to be appalled by those reports, but not this Government. The very next day after that report was published the British Secretary of State for International Trade announced a £1.5 billion deal with a British natural gas company and President Biya's regime, a deal which, in the words of the Department for International Trade's press release, will generate a "huge revenue stream" for Cameroon's public treasury. Cameroon's regime is ranked as the 25th most corrupt in the world. Its ruler, in his 43rd year of autocratic power and with personal wealth of more than \$200 million, is engaged in a systematic campaign of brutality and killings against the English-speaking community in his country, and all the UK Government can do is boast of doing trade deals that will only enrich him further. That is what this Government mean by global Britain.

Under the previous Foreign Secretary we saw the same approach over and over again, where the sole consideration on every foreign policy issue was how to help British businesses make a quick buck. We saw that in Libya with his horrific talk of British developers turning the country into a paradise of beach resorts just as soon as they could clear away the dead bodies of the Libyans who died fighting Daesh. We saw it again in Yemen, where there was literally nothing Saudi Arabia could do—not using starvation as a weapon of war; not cutting off supplies of food, clean water and medicine; not bombing farms, schools and hospitals; and not killing thousands of innocent men, women and children—that would persuade the former Foreign Secretary even to suspend the supply of arms for use in that conflict, pending a proper war crimes investigation.

We saw it in Myanmar with the Rohingya, where the former Foreign Secretary toured the killing fields of Rakhine state and called out what he saw as industrial ethnic cleansing, but he refused to take the next logical step of asking the UN Security Council to refer Myanmar to the International Criminal Court. The Government were afraid of upsetting China and jeopardising future trade deals.

**Mr Seely:** The shadow Minister makes an interesting and valid point about moral equality. I accept that, but it is slightly concerning that your side of the House tends to focus on Yemen a great deal.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** The right hon. Lady's side.

**Mr Seely:** I apologise. The right hon. Lady's side of the House focuses on Yemen a great deal. Does she understand the difference between the Saudis doing something badly and the Syrians, with their Russian support, bombing hospitals as a deliberate policy? There is

a moral intent, which is different. One may criticise the Saudis for being sloppy and not valuing human life enough, but there is a difference.

**Emily Thornberry:** Dead is dead. Whether a person has been killed because those with the bombs have been behaving recklessly or doing it intentionally, they are still dead, and it is still in breach of international humanitarian law to do either. I understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying, but we should strive to apply international law to countries equally. The idea of balancing one above the other is a slippery road.

In the end, the rule of law is one whereby we treat everyone equally before the law. If people have breached international law, they have breached international law and they should be held to account for that. That is my view and indeed it is our policy.

I was talking about Myanmar and the Rohingya, but then I wanted to move on to talk about Egypt, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Honduras and Sudan. The list goes on and on, and always with the same common factor: under the former Foreign Secretary, if there was a trade deal to be done, any concern for human rights and international rules would go out of the window. Above all, we saw it in his consistent policy, and that of the Prime Minister, towards Donald Trump: every abuse of human rights has been tolerated; every effort to destroy international treaties has been indulged; every attack on the UN has been pampered; and every mild criticism of him by this Government has had to be forced out of them, usually after 48 hours. Whatever Trump has done, this Government's hand has remained outstretched, all in the hope of some mythical free trade deal to solve the almighty mess they are making of Brexit.

Even though the new Foreign Secretary has not taken part in today's debate, I genuinely hope he will usher in a change of approach from that of his predecessor. The test will be whether he can show, through his actions rather than his words, that "global Britain" is about more than trade and that it is also about morality, values and principles. If we want to have a world order based on international rules, we must apply the same rules not just to Russia, but equally to every country, whether or not we have military alliances with them, whether or not we trade with them and whether or not Donald Trump wants us to. That is the only way we can restore what Kofi Annan called for, which was "moral truth", "moral passion" and "moral persuasion", to our country's foreign policy. If this Government cannot do that, it is about time they made way for a Government who will.

4.46 pm

**The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt):** It is a pleasure to respond to this debate. First, may I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Tom Tugendhat), the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, on securing it and on all he does to support and challenge United Kingdom foreign policy through that chairmanship and his team? I am grateful for the contributions made by other hon. Members. We always face a limitation in this debate; we get 10 minutes or so to respond to thoughtful and considered contributions that have added up to nearly a couple of hours, and it cannot really be done. It can be done better by speeches

and by conversations with the Select Committee, and I commend the Foreign Secretary's recent speech in Washington as a start. I will do my best to make some points in relation to what has been said.

I will cover some of what my hon. Friend said in these remarks. As to what is going to be different, that might be difficult, because we have always been global Britain; it is not that there has suddenly been a gear change because of Brexit. The issue of the EU and EU engagement is a really important one. He spoke of John McCain and his recognition that the US was enhanced through alliances, and I have always believed the UK was enhanced through alliances. One problem of Brexit will be that we lose the automatic political structures that the EU provided, and colleagues have rightly said that we need to find a way of re-engaging. For the Foreign Secretary, for other Ministers in the Department and for me, the speed-dial remains, "Paris, Berlin, Rome". These are the places we contact, and we will build these things up. My hon. Friends the Members for East Renfrewshire (Paul Masterton) and for Hornchurch and Upminster (Julia Lopez) spoke about that. May I also commend what she said about the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung? I made my first visit with it 35 years ago, and I am still in touch with it, and with friends in the Christian Democratic Union and in the Christian Social Union—we built up through there. Those foundations were vital and we miss those party links at our peril. They are so important.

My hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling spoke about the cost of war. He and others, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr Seely), have experienced that in a manner which others have been spared, and he is right to recognise that at the heart of policy is a determination to do all we can to prevent that. He spoke of governance and the importance of government; that is absolutely right. In so many of the places where we see conflict or the likelihood of it arising, the failure of governance has been catastrophic.

My good friend the hon. Member for Ilford South (Mike Gapes) made a typically brave speech. I commend him for reminding us of successive Labour Governments' commitment to defence and security through NATO. I notice that the right hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury (Emily Thornberry) responded to some of his challenges, but not all.

My hon. Friend the Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk (John Lamont) reminded us of the good things in the world—the things that have changed—and that is positive, but also why we have to have great expectations. There is a lovely line in "The Way We Were", when Robert Redford turns to Barbra Streisand and says in frustration, "You expect so much", and she looks at him and says, "Look at what I've got!" We are the same with the world: we expect, because look at what we've got. Look at what we risk if we do not keep it.

The hon. Member for Bristol North West (Darren Jones) offered particular challenges on climate change, as well as on other matters.

My hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight made a series of challenges in relation to his ConservativeHome article, and spoke of some structural changes that he wanted to see.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen North (Kirsty Blackman) spoke of the importance of the sustainable development goals—I am wearing the badge; they are important. It is most important to find ways to prevent conflict by making sure that a conflict has ended effectively.

I commend the right hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury for speaking of Kofi Annan, who was probably the first UN Secretary-General whom I got to know. His stature and what he stood for are immense.

The right hon. Lady also touched on something that is important to bring into a debate such as this: the messy area of compromise. It is great to bang the table and be very clear about our values, but what do we do when the restatement of values does not produce the results that we want, in a world where people do not do what we want, where our friends sometimes do not do what we want, and where things are more nuanced? That is where diplomacy comes in, and that is what is sometimes the difference between standing at this Dispatch Box and standing at the Opposition one. My hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling will experience what it is like in relation to foreign affairs, I have no doubt. Sometimes, an ethical foreign policy lasts only the distance between the Dispatch Boxes, in every effort. Unless we have that at the back of our mind and unless we reject what the right hon. Lady said about the core of British policy, which is not all about trade—it is about the whole variety of other things for which we stand—we will risk losing something. Alas, life is sometimes messier than we would wish.

Global Britain describes the Government's vision for this country as an outward-facing, globally engaged nation; influencing and leading on the world stage; reinforcing what it has always been; projecting our influence; championing democracy, human rights, and the rule of law; protecting our people; and promoting our prosperity. It was coined in the aftermath of the vote to leave the EU, partly in response to the narrative that the UK would turn in on itself after Brexit. Global Britain is a clear rejection of that narrative, which was never at the core of those of my colleagues who took that particular line. It is not an empty slogan. Although our departure from the EU is an important factor, it is not the only one, because global Britain is also about how the delivery of UK foreign policy must adapt and evolve in a rapidly changing world. It is about strengthening our bilateral relationships around the world, as well as our partnerships with important regional bodies. That is why we are expanding our diplomatic network with 10 new posts and more than 250 new diplomats.

New investment is also necessary to protect and defend the system of international rules on which our prosperity and security have depended for more than 70 years—a system that is under strain. Some challenges are natural. There is nothing in a post-1945, heavily western-orientated order that should not be open to evolution. Some challenges come from the shift in economic gravity from west to east. As the second largest global economy, China's desire to take on a greater leadership role and to change some aspects of the system to better reflect its position is entirely understandable. However, China's mixed record on respecting the existing system and its rejection of liberal democratic values remain a concern. Other challenges come in the form of anti-globalisation and populist movements that question the

[Alistair Burt]

wisdom of international co-operation and free trade. Others criticise the multilateral system for failing to deal with conflict, inequality, and human rights violations.

The debate was right at various times to highlight the threat from Russia in particular. I welcome a statement made in the past hour from international partners expressing full confidence in the Prime Minister and the United Kingdom's response as articulated in the House yesterday. Russia has the privilege and responsibility of a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, but continues to flout its responsibilities, annexing territory in Europe, shielding the regime in Syria, which violates the international ban on chemical weapons, and instituting cyber-attacks that are reaching deeper into our politics and our critical infrastructure. I note that a number of colleagues have intervened on this issue and I commend some thoughtful speeches.

The rules-based system is, however, resilient. It continues to ensure that the great powers have not been involved in a global war, but flexibility must not become fragility and confidence must not become complacency. Any erosion, as opposed to evolution, of international rules and institutions threatens the very basis of our advanced democracies, our open societies and those free economies. That is why objectives for a global Britain are predicated on the conviction that strengthening the rules-based international system and the institutions and the values that underpin it remain the best way to ensure our collective and individual security and prosperity.

My hon. Friend, the Chair of the Select Committee, spoke of the importance of shaping events, rather than being shaped by them. We continue to work at the UN as shapers and as penholders in a number of areas including in Libya and Burma. In Yemen, we are actively supporting the efforts of UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths to build trust between the parties and to bring them to the negotiating table. We know how important it is just to bring that conflict to a solution. We also remain concerned about Iran's destabilising role there and other places.

In Syria, we are supporting the urgent diplomatic efforts being made by Turkey and the UN to avert a human catastrophe. Those of us still scarred by the events of August 2013 know now that the international order has to consider inaction as well as action as it looks at how to establish itself.

It has been understandable to characterise recent crises in foreign affairs as a challenge to the world order and fear that what has been so painstakingly built following the tragedy of the wars of the 20th century might be lost. It is not surprising. I was born in 1955 within striking distance of the war's end. While I was

growing up, unknown to me, the architecture was being put together. The EU, born out of the disaster on our continent, was a deliberate attempt to forestall the accumulation of the then requirements for a war economy—iron, coal and steel.

That generation has gone. It is essential that what drove it is not forgotten, but, as the debate has indicated, while we worry about what we might lose, let us recognise and cherish the world that we have and defend it and its values robustly even though it sometimes calls upon compromise. We must not mistake evolution for fragility or allow the undermining of rules under a guise of seemingly benign objection. Let me echo a great phrase of Robert Kennedy: global Britain will continue to see the world as it is and question why, but never lose sight of a world as it might be and ask why not.

4.58 pm

**Tom Tugendhat:** May I pay credit to my right hon. Friend the Minister for his closing words and thank him very much for his consideration, thought and leadership in foreign affairs in our country? He has been an inspiration to many of us. I also thank the members of the Committee who have supported this debate so ably and all those who have contributed.

The one place that I wish to bring up finally is India. A global Britain without India, a global Britain without our partner, our ally and our friend, is not one that many of us can envision. As we close and we all go home this evening, we should think about the place that that country has held in our hearts, and still holds, I hope, for all of us. I hope that we will also go away and think about what has built us, what has come to us, and what has made us. It is great to see the right hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy) in his place. We should think about generations such as those from Windrush—generations that have built Britain—because together we can all go out and build a global Britain that will shape the world and indeed determine a true vision for the rule of law, for co-operation and for the values that this House has been so active in promoting.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House welcomes the Government's aspiration to ensure the UK retains its influence and status as it prepares for departure from the EU; notes that for Global Britain to be more than a worthy aspiration the slogan must be backed by substance; further notes the threats to the international rules-based order posed, in particular, by the aggressive stance of the Russian Government; and therefore calls on the Government to publish by 31 October 2018 its assessment of the threats posed by Russia and other hostile states to the international rules-based order, and the Government's strategy and resources for countering those threats.

## Immigration Control

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

5 pm

**Mr David Lammy** (Tottenham) (Lab): I am very grateful to have the opportunity to bring this issue to the House.

Like an immigrants, my constituent Alberta came to this country with the dream of a better life. Hers was to serve the NHS as a midwife. Aged 19, she was studying health and social care at college. Life was going well—so well, in fact, that she used her free time to help others as a mentor for young children at her local primary school. Arriving in Tottenham from Ghana in 2012, she was a shining example of what migrants contribute to the United Kingdom.

Alberta was, and still is, a proud and intelligent young woman with dreams, the capacity for hard work and the compulsion to help others on her way up. But one June morning last year, everything changed for Alberta. It was a day that she would later describe to me as one of the worst in her life. Showering to get ready for college, she heard a loud knock at the door. Quickly, she began to get dressed, but she was too slow. When five immigration officers burst open the front door, she was still half naked. Loudly, they ordered Alberta to come out of the bathroom. The indignity of her situation grew as, in her own words, she felt a “spontaneous gush of blood” between her legs; the terror caused her period to come early. Mortified, she explained to the officers that her five-year immigration permit was still valid. They did not listen. Instead, they arrested her and locked her in the back of their van, where she remembers feeling “like a caged animal.”

Alberta was taken to Yarl’s Wood detention centre, imprisoned despite committing no crime. Yarl’s Wood, of course, is essentially a prison. Victims of rape, torture and trafficking are held inside. Almost half the women detained in Yarl’s Wood have experienced suicidal thoughts. In 2015, the chief inspector of prisons described Yarl’s Wood as a “place of national concern”. After more than three weeks of misery and detention, the Home Office released Alberta, admitting that it had acted on incorrect information. But this was not the end of her suffering at the hands of immigration control.

While detained in Yarl’s Wood, Alberta missed critical deadlines and her grades dropped rapidly. With this handicap, her performance in college began to decline. To this day, bi-weekly visits to the immigration reporting centre force Alberta to revisit her trauma. For days ahead of these visits, she struggles to eat, has problems sleeping and breaks down in tears. Because of the Home Office’s gross errors, her dream of becoming a midwife is now uncertain. Alberta’s story is one of mistreatment, cruelty and inhumanity, but sadly it is not unique. So many others echo these horrors when they recount their experiences of living under immigration control.

Each year, the Government pay out more than £4 million to people as compensation for having been detained unlawfully. Half those detained between 2013 and 2018 were ultimately released back into their community. They were therefore people the state deemed had the right to remain. Alberta’s story illustrates a broken

immigration system that treats humans without dignity—a system that stains the fundamental principles of our legal system and our state.

Over the past year, attention has been drawn to the Government’s hostile environment. The Windrush scandal revealed that thousands of British citizens were incorrectly deported, detained, made jobless, left without housing and healthcare, split from their families, left destitute and treated like strangers in their homes. But Windrush is not an isolated mistake. The Home Office has been broken by a public discourse that has got out of control—a xenophobic rhetoric that has become accepted by too many in this House, with the UKIP-ification of our newspapers, of our television and of the Government themselves.

The United Kingdom has built a proud reputation for liberalism and fairness. As a member of the United Nations Security Council, we have been a world leader in the spread of human rights and justice, but our treatment of immigrants leaves us no better than the human rights abusers. It leaves our moral authority, frankly, in the gutter. Government-condoned prejudice permeates every one of an immigrant’s first encounters with the state. The Home Office imprisons tens of thousands of people every year, including survivors of torture, trafficking and rape, with no time limit. We are the only EU country that allows the indefinite detention of migrants.

But it is not only this that singles Britain out. We have one of the slowest and least efficient immigration processes in the developed world. In France, the average stay for detained migrants is just one month. In the United Kingdom, the average stay in a detention centre is 19 months—yes, 19, more than double the EU average. Detention has the potential to be harmful and unlawful from the very first day to the very last. Why has detention become the default, and why are alternatives never used? Bail with reporting restrictions and electronic monitoring should surely be considered before we lock migrants up and throw away the keys.

The brutal treatment of immigrants such as Alberta not only denies them their freedom; it can leave emotional scars that torment them for the rest of their lives. In a fair society, only a court should have the power to detain. In a fair society, detention is not the default response—it is the last resort. In every other sphere of British life, innocence is presumed while guilt must be proven, but the legal basis of our immigration system is upside down. The burden of proof is the wrong way round. Why are people imprisoned by the Home Office without the assessment of any judge or jury? Instead of forcing detainees to demonstrate why they should be released, why does the Home Office not have to demonstrate why they must be detained?

Access to justice is another principle that runs across every aspect of UK law. It allows people to have their voice heard, to exercise their rights, to challenge discrimination and to hold decision makers accountable. But access to justice is impossible without legal representation. So why is legal representation impossible to access for so many under immigration control? In the UN, we prescribe these standards internationally, but on our own soil, more than half the people in detention are denied access to a lawyer. These legal aid deserts have grown due to systematic cuts to legal aid. There has been a 56% fall in the total number of legal aid

[Mr David Lammy]

providers for asylum seekers since 2005. This lack of legal representation means that vulnerable people are sent back to their country of origin when they should have been granted the right to remain.

As champions of human rights and the rule of law, MPs in this House must ask ourselves some tough questions. How can we deport migrants without granting them legal representation? How can we split migrants from their children and partners without giving them access to justice? How can we pull migrants away from their homes and livelihoods without respecting our own rule of law?

Our current system is not only cruel, unjustifiable and damaging to the lives of detainees; it is a great burden on the British taxpayer. The country's detention estate is one of the largest in Europe, costing more than £160 million a year. The average cost of detaining one person in this system is about £36,000—greater than the fees of Eton, Harrow or any of the country's poshest boarding schools. What justifies this enormous waste of money? What justifies a system that treats the vulnerable as criminals and expects taxpayers to foot the bill?

For individuals, too, the cost of being trapped under immigration control continues to spiral. The Home Office is making up to 800% profit on applications and putting profit before principles, even when it means ruining people's lives. As the hon. Member for Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East (Stuart C. McDonald) said in Westminster Hall on Tuesday, the fees for children under immigration control in this country are a particular disgrace. It is a shame on our nation that it is 22 times more expensive for a child to become a citizen in this country than in Germany. The Minister for Immigration was responding in that debate, as she is today. I understand her claim that the Government need to "balance the books", but when the Government are intent on keeping taxes low for the richest in society, can flagrant profiteering off the most vulnerable ever be justified?

Much of the blame for the state of the immigration system in this country lies with this Government and this Prime Minister, who single-handedly coined the "hostile environment" policy. However, any constructive debate on immigration will recognise that no party—and that absolutely includes my own—has been innocent. The Labour party should also be ashamed of its treatment of people under immigration control during its three terms in power. With the mutual recognition of past failures, we can begin a cross-party response to heal these wounds, but to do so, we must first clean up the injuries of the past.

The Home Office's war against undocumented immigration has built a shadow economy fuelled by workplace exploitation, human trafficking, drugs and other crime. Some 600,000 people live illegally in the UK, and they will remain here regardless of their legal status. The question is whether to keep them illegal, fuelling crime and the shadow economy, or to regularise their status, allowing them to pay income tax and national insurance, live safely and become respected members of society. I support the latter option as the first step in cleaning up the Home Office failures of the past. I urge those who think that proposal too radical or perhaps too left-wing to consider the comments of my

unlikely ally on this issue, the former Foreign Secretary. In the wake of Windrush, even the right hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson) called for the very same measure. A one-off immigration amnesty would allow this country to start afresh and to create a new system that respects migrants' rights and their contribution, while apologising for the mistakes of the past.

Today, we must recognise that this is a crucial turning point in British history. The Government's lurch to the hard right and their decision to leave the European Union leaves Britain alone, isolated and on track for decline. If the Government continue to pursue Brexit, as they are minded to do, they must do so while learning the lessons of the past, not by compounding them. The opportunity to reshape our immigration system that comes with it must reflect back on the hostile environment that has routinely abused human rights and brought shame on our nation.

If we are to build a truly open, global Britain that engages with the world, as the last debate demonstrated, redrawing our immigration policy is a vital part of that. We must continue to attract the talent and hard work of immigrants such as Alberta. Otherwise, our public services, our schools, our NHS and our businesses will be starved of workers and will further decline. We must look forward to a future with a just immigration policy, motivated by compassion, fairness and the rule of law—an immigration system where migrants are treated like human beings, not criminals.

When we discuss in this House the trade deals that we will strike with the Chinese and the Indians, let us be honest: the first thing those nations will ask for is the immigration of their citizens to this country. Because of the position this country finds itself in, with no significant trade deals with the rest of the world, we will grant them that right. For all those reasons, it is time to reform cross-party our response to those controlled by immigration in this country.

5.14 pm

**The Minister for Immigration (Caroline Nokes):** At the outset, I want to congratulate the right hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy) on securing this important debate. Listening to his impassioned, articulate and thoughtful contribution, one is perhaps also obliged to extend him sincere congratulations on his award last night as *GQ's* politician of the year at its men of the year awards. Listening to his description of Alberta's story, one can but be convinced that the award was justly deserved.

The right hon. Gentleman is of course right to point out that people from all over the world have come to the UK and helped to make this country what it is today. We welcome their contribution and the fact that Britain is one of the best countries in the world to come and live in. That is why we need a fair immigration system under which people can come here, be welcomed and become part of our communities, and a fair system that treats people with decency and respect.

That is why this Government are taking action and will continue to do so. We are fighting modern slavery to stop people being trafficked here and stripped of their freedom by slave drivers. We have changed the law to stop children being routinely detained in the immigration system. In 2009, over 1,100 children entered detention,

and last year only 44 were held for a very brief period. We have set up a scheme to resettle 20,000 people fleeing Syria so that the most vulnerable, such as disabled people and torture victims, get refuge, not just those fit enough to travel here alone. We are also working to put right the wrongs done to the Windrush generation.

However, we also need to have a controlled system, because Britain is one of the best countries in the world to live in and many people want to come here. We need a controlled system under which the rules that make that possible are followed. That is what the Government are building, and it is what the public expect. When people break the rules and try to play the system, it is unfair, and the people it is most unfair to are those who have come here and played by the rules. That is why we have broken up the UK Border Agency to make the system more effective, reintroduced exit checks and toughened the penalties for people employing illegal workers. Migration benefits the UK, but that system has to be underpinned by rules.

I remain absolutely committed to improving the border, immigration and citizenship system. As hon. Members will recall, the system was labelled “not fit for purpose” by a former Labour Home Secretary. I have listed some examples of the progress made since 2010, but I absolutely recognise that there is more to do. That is why we are listening to Members in both Houses, to those using the system, to partners and to independent advice. I really welcome the constructive engagement I have had with members of Her Majesty’s Opposition. I have sought to keep my door open to colleagues from across the House, and while there has certainly been a great deal of challenge, there has also been much positivity and many constructive suggestions of ways in which we can work together to make the system better.

As I have said, the Government have made a strong commitment to learn the lessons from the wrongs experienced by the Windrush generation. On 19 July, the Home Office published the terms of reference for the Windrush lessons learned review. The review will have independent oversight by Wendy Williams, who I know the right hon. Gentleman has already met, and it will aim to publish its report by the end of March 2019.

However, we are not waiting for that review to take action to improve the system. The review is part of a whole series of examples of independent scrutiny bodies that the Government are working with or have commissioned. For example, we have commissioned the Migration Advisory Committee for advice on a migration system for European economic area nationals following our exit from the European Union, and asked it to conduct a full review of the shortage occupation list. The independent chief inspector of borders and immigration continues to scrutinise the border, immigration and citizenship system.

We are not only implementing the recommendations from Stephen Shaw’s review of detention, but, as my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary set out in July, going further and undertaking a series of improvements. As part of our response to Shaw, the Government will explore alternatives to detention with faith groups, non-governmental organisations and communities. As a first step, we intend to pilot a scheme to manage in the community vulnerable women who would otherwise have been detained at Yarl’s Wood immigration removal centre. Home Office officials have been working with

the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to develop that pilot, which will mean that rather than receiving support and care in an immigration removal centre, the women will get a programme of support and care in the community.

We will review the adults at risk policy, ensuring that the most vulnerable and complex cases get the attention they need. We will look again at how consideration of rule 35 reports on possible cases of torture can be improved, while avoiding abuse of the processes. We will pilot an additional bail referral at the two-month point and increase the size and scope of the detention gatekeeper function. For now, the policy is one of senior civil servant sign-off for detention decisions, and we will strengthen links with pre-departure teams by putting additional Home Office people in removal centres to increase face-to-face engagement with detainees and resolve possible problems with detention.

We will commission the independent chief inspector of borders and immigration to report each year on whether and how the adults at risk policy is making a difference. We will pilot the use of Skype so that detainees can contact their families overseas and in the UK. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has asked officials to review how time limits work in other countries, and how they relate to other protections in their detention systems, so as to have a better-informed debate based on what works to tackle illegal migration and what is humane for those detained. Once that is complete we will consider further the issue of time-limited detention.

I point out to the right hon. Member for Tottenham that the Government currently manage 95% of those in the removal pool in the community, and of those in immigration removal centres, 63% leave within 28 days and more than 90% within four months. He mentioned the debate held earlier this week in Westminster Hall, which was initiated by the hon. Member for Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East (Stuart C. McDonald), in which we discussed immigration fees. Of course we keep all Home Office fees under regular review, and when setting immigration and nationality fees, which are approved by Parliament in line with the Immigration Act 2014, we take into account the wider costs involved in running our border, immigration and citizenship system, so that those who directly benefit from it contribute to its funding. That reduces the burden on UK taxpayers.

I am carefully considering points made during a recent debate in the Lords on child citizenship fees, and in other debates held this week, and in due course I will take account of the findings of the imminent review by the independent chief inspector of borders and immigration. It is important that we have a fair charging policy that considers a customer’s circumstances and requirements and supports the effective operation of our immigration system. We will continue to set fees that take into account the benefits accruing from a successful application, for example across the labour market.

Now more than ever, we are listening to independent advice, developing policy that is rooted in evidence and taking feedback from customers to ensure that we continue to have a world-leading border, immigration and citizenship system, and that those subject to immigration control are provided with the appropriate service. The right hon. Member for Tottenham and others are right to bring matters to my attention, but I remind the House of the scale of the immigration system. Thousands of

[*Caroline Nokes*]

decisions are made every day, and the overwhelming majority are completed within published service standards and enable people to visit the UK, study or work here, or rebuild their lives.

UK Visas and Immigration offices make more than 3 million decisions a year, and the Border Force enables 250 million people to cross our border while keeping our country safe and secure. Immigration Enforcement ensures that 95% of individuals who require leave to remain, but do not have it because they have overstayed their visa or are not eligible to have it extended, are managed in the community and receive guidance on departure.

I am not complacent, but I list those achievements because they are not insignificant. For every case in which I have conceded that the system could have done

better, and must do better in future, there are thousands more people who are satisfied with their experience of the immigration system. I am proud of the hard work and dedication of officials in the Home Office, and their integrity will always be our first line of assurance. The treatment of the Windrush generation has been unacceptable and we will put it right. Britain is one of the best places in the world to come and live, and I want it to stay that way.

In conclusion, I welcome the offer made by the right hon. Gentleman and many of his colleagues from across the House to work on a cross-party basis to ensure that our future systems are the best they can possibly be.

*Question put and agreed to.*

5.24 pm

*House adjourned.*



# Westminster Hall

*Thursday 6 September 2018*

[DAME CHERYL GILLAN *in the Chair*]

## Integrated Care

1.30 pm

**Dr Sarah Wollaston** (Totnes) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the Seventh Report of the Health and Social Care Committee, *Integrated care: organisations, partnerships and systems*, HC 650, and the Government Response, Cm 9695.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Dame Cheryl. I thank all those who contributed to our inquiry in writing and in person, my fellow Select Committee members, and the Select Committee team, which was ably led by our Clerk, Huw Yardley, with special input from Lewis Pickett. I also thank our special advisers, Professor Sir Chris Ham, Dr Anna Charles and Professor Pauline Allen.

We are all immensely grateful to the South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw sustainability and transformation partnership, the Doncaster Royal Infirmary and the Larwood practice, not only for allowing us to meet them and their teams, but for facilitating the Committee's meetings with local and national leaders from across the healthcare system, the third sector and many other providers to hear evidence during our inquiry. Without them, the report would not have been possible.

I will start by setting out what we are talking about, and why it matters. It is one of the greatest triumphs of our age that we are living longer but, as that happens, many more of us are living with complex, long-term conditions that require support and input not only from dedicated family and formal carer networks, but from across the health and social care system. If those systems do not join up, if they do not share information, or if they are poorly co-ordinated or inaccessible, patients' care is poorer and everyone has a worse experience. Don Redding from National Voices said that patients and the public

"want to feel that their care is co-ordinated, that the professionals and services they meet join up around them, that they are known where they go, that they do not have to explain themselves every single time, and...that their records are available and visible."

That is essentially what we mean by integrated care.

Integrated care can happen at three levels. It can happen directly, in the teams around the patient who deliver care in the patient's home—for example, through joint assessments. It can happen at the service level—for example, with services brought together in a one-stop clinic. It can happen at an organisational level—for example, in commissioning or the pooling of budgets. We should all be clear, however, that none of that matters unless we keep the patient at the front and centre of those discussions. If the result is not delivering better care for patients and their families, it is not worth doing.

Integration does not save money in the short term or, sometimes, in the medium term, which acts as a key barrier to putting in place integrated systems for the long-term benefit of patients. Unfortunately, particularly with the current financial pressures, we have a system that is sometimes dictated and hampered by short-term

pressures to deliver financial savings—I will come on to that later. In essence, we have to keep sight of the fact that integration is about people and families. Although our report focuses on organisations, partnerships and systems, we have tried to relate it back at every stage to why it matters to patients, rather than it being a dry discussion about systems.

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): We are very ably led by the hon. Lady on the Health and Social Care Committee. The Committee's approach to the public was the right one, and I hope that, in its future communications with the public, the Department of Health and Social Care might learn that lesson about having the patient at the heart. That is what this is about, because it is so complicated and difficult for the public to understand.

**Dr Wollaston:** I thank the hon. Lady, my fellow Committee member, for her input. We on the Committee heard that there is a complex spaghetti of acronyms—STPs, ICPs, ACOs—and nobody knows what they mean. Even those working in the system struggle to keep pace with them and with the changes. We have to keep bringing it back to plain English and why it matters to people and hold our attention there.

The integration of health and social care has been a long-term goal for successive Governments for decades, so we might ask why it is not happening everywhere if we have been striving for it for so long. We saw and heard about many fantastic examples of good integrated care, but they sometimes felt like oases in a desert of inactivity. It is also possible to have an area that does some things very well but others not so well.

**Luciana Berger** (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab/Co-op): I commend the hon. Lady for the way she is making her remarks on our report, which I welcome. I looked closely at the Government's response, in which they said that they

"remain keen to consider how to build political consensus on the case for reform and funding as part of the development of the NHS"

10-year plan, but we have heard no reference to exactly how any mechanism for reaching such a consensus might be pursued. We have heard a lot of talk about integrated care for many years, but we now find ourselves at a critical moment. The Government are about to launch their 10-year plan, and it must be front and centre of what they put forward.

**Dr Wollaston:** I will respond further to the hon. Lady's remarks when I comment on legislative change and how we can get legislative change through a hung Parliament. I will also comment on the importance of engaging with the service and why that needs to come bottom-up from the service, and the importance of politicians from across the House listening to the service and being focusing on its message and the message from patients and patient representative groups. I thank her for her constructive input. The Committee has been successful in building consensus about how this should go forward. I hope the Minister has heard that intervention and that he will respond specifically to that point in his closing remarks.

**The Minister for Health (Stephen Barclay)** *indicated assent.*

**Dr Wollaston:** Coming back to why integrated care does not happen, there are many deeply ingrained structural divides. Since the inception of the NHS 70 years ago, we have had a system that is free at the point of use for the NHS, but means-tested for social care. That presents an extraordinary hurdle when systems are trying to join up. It is not just that; it is different contractual arrangements and working practices. Good integration comes down to individuals and teams being prepared to work together, but it often feels like they are working together to achieve integration despite the systems around them, not because of them.

We need a system where everybody is focused on helping the right kind of integration to take place, and we need to go back and look at that fundamental structural divide between the systems. I ask the Minister to look again at the joint report, “Long-term funding of adult social care”, because that is an important issue that goes to the heart of the barriers to joining up services. It is about contractual differences, different legal accountabilities and payment systems that work against the pooling of budgets, and financial pressures within the NHS.

A certain amount of financial pressure can encourage systems to come together to pool their arrangements and provide a more efficient service, but as the Minister will know, when the elastic is stretched too tight and the financial strain becomes critical, we see the opposite—systems are forced apart. I have seen that happen in my area, where people suddenly feel that they have to retreat to their organisational silos to fulfil their legal obligations. There is no doubt that, for the process to work effectively, we need the right amount of funding—and sufficient funding—and tweaks to the legislative arrangements to allow people to come together, so it does not feel as if they are working together despite the system.

**Dr Philippa Whitford** (Central Ayrshire) (SNP): I am grateful to the Chair of the Committee for giving way. Does she agree that when there is an attempt to elicit change through turning off the financial tap, what happens in fact is that people cut what they think is easiest to cut, which is often the most innovative solution, rather than step back with a clear head to consider where they want to get to in the end? Does she also agree that we often find that the result of that kind of cost-cutting is a backward step rather than a forward one?

**Dr Wollaston:** I thank the hon. Member for that intervention and for her own service to the Committee previously—she is very much missed. Her remarks are typical of the constructive input that she has always made to the health debate in emphasising the need to take the long view. Financial pressures so often force us into short-term solutions, not only in the way she set out but through the salami-slicing of services.

One of the points that our Committee feels strongly about and that I was going to make to the Minister is the need to ring-fence transformation funding, because it is so easy for that funding to get lost. I welcome the uplift in funding—a 3.4% increase will be very helpful—alongside a 10-year plan. However, we have to be realistic about what that uplift can achieve, because there are

very many demands on that budget, as the Minister will know and as we have seen in the past. We saw it with the sustainability and transformation fund, which tended to get sucked into sustainability and not into transformation. That has been the pattern of recent decades. There is good intention to ring-fence money for transformation, but that money disappears because of other priorities around deficits and, as I have said, the many other calls on the funds available.

That is why we feel that, in order to prevent the continuation of that cycle of past mistakes, it is important that the pattern is recognised and that funding is earmarked for transformation—not only for capital projects but for things such as double-running.

I will give an example from my area. There will be a complete destruction of public trust in new models of care if money is not set aside for double-running. The community was prepared to accept that there would be a new facility—nobody wanted the closure of the local community hospital in Dartmouth, but there was an assurance that there would be a new facility. Unfortunately, despite many of us opposing the closure of the old facility, what happened was that it was closed and then there was a breakdown in the arrangements for the new facility. The community was left with nothing and there has been a huge destruction of public trust in the process, which unfortunately will have ripple effects across other communities. Had we received the money to keep the existing service while the new service was built and got up and running, it would have left us in an entirely different situation. I am afraid that we see that too often across health and social care. There is good intention, but without double-running, which is part of having a ring-fenced transformation fund, I am afraid that the system has broken down too often in the past. I would like the Minister to focus on that when he makes his remarks.

The Committee is also looking forward to the 10-year plan—we look forward to working alongside both NHS England and the Department of Health and Social Care to examine how that plan emerges—but is important to draw attention to legislative changes. Our Committee made a recommendation that legislative proposals should come from the service itself rather top-down from the Department, which would immediately run into difficulties. However, as a Committee we also offered to subject such proposals from the service to pre-legislative scrutiny.

As the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) pointed out in her intervention, we need to build cross-party consensus at every point. As it has not been covered in the formal response to the Committee’s report, will the Minister say in his closing remarks whether the Government would support the Committee conducting pre-legislative scrutiny?

I am pleased to have had a conversation with Simon Stevens, the chief executive of NHS England, who has confirmed that, as it emerges, the NHS assembly will consider that within its remit—NHS England hopes to produce proposals in draft form before Easter 2019. Nevertheless, as I have said, it would be helpful to receive the Minister’s assurance that proposals will come to our Committee for pre-legislative scrutiny as part of the process of building consensus.

**Diana Johnson:** Like me, the hon. Lady was in Parliament when we went through the 2012 reforms. We had to have a period of pause because of the complexity of the

legislation. Pre-legislative scrutiny is absolutely essential and I wholeheartedly support what she has said as the Chair of the Committee.

**Dr Wollaston:** Hon. Members know that a lack of proper pre-legislative scrutiny that responded to concerns expressed led to many of the barriers. We have to go back and address them when they could have been addressed in a more collaborative process during the passage of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. I am thinking of the need to reconsider the legal basis for merging NHS England and NHS Improvement, and how we establish a better statutory basis for the process so that provider partnerships do not always have to go back to separate boards to gain their approval. It is about considering how we address issues such as geographical arrangements so that they make more sense to local communities. The Committee could play a constructive role in a host of areas but—I say this to the Minister—unless proposals are subjected to pre-legislative scrutiny and unless a cross-party consensus is established, proposals are likely to fail.

My final point—other Committee colleagues will probably want to develop it further—is this: what will happen around establishing a legal basis for integrated care providers? For two reasons, the Committee welcomes the change of name from “accountable care organisations” to “integrated care partnerships”. First, the original name confused the debate about Americanisation. The “accountable care organisations” proposed were not the same as those organisations in the States, and the original name caused a great deal of unnecessary anxiety. We do not see the process as Americanisation.

A concern raised with the Committee was that the process will be a vehicle for privatisation. We did not agree. In fact, we thought the opposite: we agreed with the witnesses who told us that the process provided an opportunity to row back from the internal market and away from endless contracting rounds, and move towards much more collaborative working. We would like that change to be properly reinforced within the legal status of health bodies, and are disappointed that the Government have not agreed to say categorically that these bodies would be classed as NHS bodies. When the Minister sums up the debate, I would like him to reflect on whether any form of wording can put the matter beyond doubt and ensure that these health bodies will not be taken over by large, too-big-to-fail private sector organisations.

It is not a concern that groups of GPs might want a leading role in the bodies. The Minister will know that the public concern is more about them being taken over by very large too-big-to-fail private sector organisations. It should be possible to come up with a solution. The Committee heard—the Minister knows this—that those working in the service have the view that the bodies are not likely in practice to be taken over by private sector providers. However, that public concern exists and is a barrier to change. If we can put this matter beyond doubt, we should try to do so.

**Luciana Berger:** I would add a bit of clarification on that point about the size of private organisations that might become involved. My concern is that, irrespective of size—whether private organisations are big or small—the threat of a takeover happening within our NHS has distracted the debate. Anything that would categorically rule it out would be very helpful.

**Dr Wollaston:** I thank the hon. Lady for her helpful clarification. I was trying to distinguish GPs, who are private contractors to the NHS. Sometimes that status is used as a reason why integration cannot be done. I do not think there is concern about that level of leadership involvement but, as she rightly points out, there is concern about other aspects of the private sector. It is acting as an unhelpful distraction when there should be a consensual approach to ensure, as I said at the beginning, that we keep focused on the purpose, which is to provide better services for patients. Anything we can do to facilitate making it easier for that to happen—rather than feeling like we are wading through treacle—will be a positive way forward.

I thank my colleagues and all who helped with the inquiry.

1.50 pm

**Dr Paul Williams** (Stockton South) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Dame Cheryl.

I thank the hon. Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston) for securing this debate and for her outstanding leadership of the Health and Social Care Committee. As a GP and a public health doctor, I have a lot of experience of care that has not been adequately integrated. Too many times, I have seen patients repeat their story again and again to different health and care professionals. Too many times, I have seen doctors, nurses, managers and secretaries waste time searching for information that has not been passed from one part of the system to another. Too many times, I have seen dedicated community nurses, social workers, GPs and therapists all providing care that either overlaps with or contradicts care provided by other health workers.

Integrated care, as the Committee has acknowledged, is a very laudable aim, and the Government have some credible plans on delivering more integrated care. I will use my speech to focus on where those plans need to be strengthened. I will talk about resource, about what success should look like, a little bit about legislation and governance, about keeping the NHS as a public sector organisation, and about leadership.

First, integrated care needs to be properly resourced. The new care models pilots have had significant resource to facilitate change, as the hon. Lady indicated, and that may be a key factor in any reported success. Greater Manchester has also had significant investment of extra funding. Can the Minister assure us that, as other areas move towards integration, we will not see what usually happens: the pilots get extra resources and then the roll-out fails because of a lack of extra resource?

**Dr Whitford:** I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has highlighted that problem, which we have been seeing for literally decades. Early adopters are well resourced and well supported and have the ear of the health board or the Government, but during roll-out, all the people who did not have that experience are told to do it out of existing budgets, and it fails.

**Dr Williams:** I thank the hon. Lady for emphasising that point.

My second point is on what the broader health goals of an integrated system should be. The NHS is focused on reducing unplanned hospital admissions. Although

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that is important—it is especially important because of the financial costs to the service of unplanned hospital admissions—I want to see integrated care providers trying to achieve broader health goals. Success should not be measured by a reduction in secondary care activity alone, although I agree that in many cases the use of unplanned secondary care is a failure of prevention. ICPs will provide healthcare for a population of people. They need to take a population needs-based approach to healthcare, and they need to be prepared to invest outside the traditional medical model of care, including investing in the voluntary and community sector. We know that loneliness, social isolation and bereavement can have a huge impact on health, and we need integrated care not to be integrated medical care, but integrated holistic healthcare. I consider that integrated care providers will have succeeded if resources are focused on improving the health of the members of our population who have the greatest health needs.

Health needs are often not expressed. The inverse care law tells us that those with the greatest needs often have the least access to healthcare. A clever healthcare system does not just react to the people who turn up; it works with communities to identify and address needs within communities. For example, many people with mental health problems simply do not access healthcare, and it is not only their mental health that suffers as a result; their physical and social health suffer, too. On average, people with learning disabilities die 15 years younger than those without. They do not die because of those learning disabilities; they die because they are not accessing healthcare, both preventive and curative. We know about the health issues suffered by people living in poverty and other vulnerable people, including those with substance misuse problems, homeless people, veterans and vulnerable migrants.

Overall, I will consider integrated care to be a success if the share of healthcare expenditure that goes to preventive care, community care and mental health care increases year on year. Also, prevention must be prioritised, and I am pleased it is one of the three named priorities of the new Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. We need prevention at all its levels: better early detection, better immunisation and screening coverage, better prevention of falls, and better prevention of mental health problems, including investment in prevention right at the beginning of life—the first 1,000 days—where it has the greatest impact.

My third test for success is that performance, quality and safety are all maintained within a system that is taking out competition. There is a genuine risk that taking away some of those internal market forces might take away some of the incentives to keep waiting lists and waiting times down and to improve quality. As we integrate care, we need to ensure that we maintain those things.

**Luciana Berger:** I am listening closely to my hon. Friend's remarkably informed remarks. Taking him back to his second priority, prevention, does he agree that the Minister should be thinking about what he should be doing beyond his own Department? The Minister and his colleagues in the Department of Health will not on their own be able to do what is needed on prevention as well as tackle this country's mental health crisis and

increasing lifestyle-related disease. If we are to address those challenges seriously, it will also be about what happens in our communities, our schools and our workplaces. That comes from local government and is what will ultimately make the difference.

**Dame Cheryl Gillan (in the Chair):** I remind colleagues that interventions are meant to be short. I hope Members will be able to keep them a little briefer.

**Dr Williams:** I thank my hon. Friend for her informed comments. I agree with her. We need a cross-governmental approach, particularly for children. There is a glaring absence of a cross-governmental strategy that would enable us to focus on all the things that have an impact on children.

The third area I want to mention is legislation. Under current rules, clinical commissioning groups will remain the statutory accountable bodies, even as the relationship between commissioners and providers starts to evaporate. At the moment, STPs, where the providers and commissioners are getting together, are making decisions—often behind closed doors—which are then rubber-stamped by the accountable bodies, which are the CCGs. That does not feel to me like particularly good governance. Legislation needs to follow the new provision arrangements.

We might also need to consider legislation to improve information sharing. The duty to share information—the eighth Caldicott principle—is often forgotten. In my experience the biggest barrier to integration is the fear that NHS providers have about sharing information with other parts of the system, and their resistance to do so. We are not necessarily doing enough in legislation to protect that duty to share information in the interests of providing good-quality clinical care.

The current situation on procurement is very difficult for CCGs. The law says that many services have to be procured if they are over a certain value. CCGs, as small organisations with accountability for their local pot of NHS funds, genuinely fear legal challenge. When they ask lawyers they are, unsurprisingly, advised that they have to follow the law, but the political and NHS England leadership strategy is to integrate care, which often cannot be achieved when care is fragmented by putting services out to tender, and provided by numerous different organisations. Many CCG governing bodies want and need to be cautious. They are just not going to take the risk given the current legislative framework.

Quite simply, if we, as elected politicians, want the NHS to collaborate, we should legislate for collaboration. In my view, the Health and Social Care Committee should be an enabler of that process. We would like to provide pre-legislative scrutiny, but we would like first to ask the health and care community what changes in the law would enable them to achieve their goal of providing integrated care to patients. I would like to know whether the Minister agrees with that proposition.

My fourth point is that integrated care providers should be NHS organisations—a recommendation the Committee made in its report. There is a well-founded concern in the health and care community that, under current legislation, private companies might bid to win contracts to provide significant chunks of our health services. That concern could be alleviated if it were made clear that integrated care partnerships need to be NHS bodies. In their response to our report, the

Government did not accept that recommendation, arguing that ICP contracts could be held by GP-led organisations. It would be a very good thing to have GP-led organisations running primary and community care and other parts of the health service, but I see no reason why those GP-led organisations cannot be NHS organisations.

It is a barrier to progress in the NHS that there are not community-based NHS organisations that GPs can lead and work for. I urge the Government to look seriously at the recommendations in the Institute for Public Policy Research report “Better health and care for all”, published in June, which suggests the creation of integrated care trusts in communities and a right to NHS employment within such organisations, which would provide all non-hospital care in an area.

My final point is about leadership. My hon. Friend the Member for West Lancashire (Rosie Cooper), who is a member of the Health and Social Care Committee but cannot be here today, has done significant work shining a light on leadership failures within the NHS. Integrated care is possible only if we have the best and most talented managers in the NHS. As was evident in the failure of management in Liverpool Community Health NHS Trust highlighted by Dr Bill Kirkup, we are far from achieving excellence and need to be certain we have the right mechanisms in place to ensure that we have only the best and the brightest. Will the Minister assure us that the Kark review will be expansive in its remit and that those NHS leaders charged with fixing the mess in Liverpool have been consulted for their expert views?

To conclude, the purchaser-provider split has not always achieved the best NHS care for patients. I welcome the step towards integrated care, but I do not think it will succeed when the legislation promotes, and sometimes mandates, competition. There is political will—certainly from the cross-party Committee—to work with the NHS and care system, including the NHS assembly, on proposals to change legislation, keep integrated care providers within the NHS, improve governance and remove mandatory competition. I hope the Minister will respond positively to those concerns. Integrated care has the potential to transform the lives of millions of patients in our health service. I commend the Committee’s report, and I thank the Government for the changes they are making.

2.4 pm

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): It is a pleasure to speak on this matter. I commend the hon. Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston) for setting the scene, and the hon. Member for Stockton South (Dr Williams) for making such a valuable contribution. I do not have the expertise of those two hon. Members—far from it—but I have a deep interest in the health service, and the treatment and service that is provided, which is why I am here. I thank the hon. Member for Totnes and all those who made a contribution to the Health and Social Care Committee’s seventh report, “Integrated care: organisations, partnerships and systems”.

We are ever-mindful of the anniversary of our own NHS. A lot of minds have looked back over the past 70 years, and we have all looked back over the years that we have been here, and we are thankful for the institution, which has been a beacon of the best of British by far. Just last

weekend, I was present as my local council, Ards and North Down Borough Council, conferred the freedom of the borough on the NHS as a gesture of good will and a vote of thanks to those who work so hard in adverse conditions to provide care to those we love. As an active representative, I speak to those who work in the NHS and are recipients of NHS services every week. The hon. Member for Totnes made many telling comments, but one that I took from the very beginning of her contribution was that the purpose is to deliver a better service for patients. That really is the core of what we are about in the NHS, and at the core of the report’s recommendations.

Until recent years I had little cause to visit doctors or use the NHS but, as often happens, with age came complications, and diabetes was one of those. The doctor then said, “You need a wee tablet for your blood pressure. Well, you don’t really need one, but we’ll give you one anyway, just to keep you right.” Along with that, last year I was in hospital on three occasions for surgical operations. Not having been there for more than 40 years, suddenly finding that I was almost a regular visitor to the hospital gave me a really good idea of what our NHS is like today. I put on record my thanks to all those who made valuable contributions to those operations. I know it was down to the skills of the doctors and surgeons, but it was also down to people’s prayers.

We all know that the NHS is hanging on by a thread in many cases. It sometimes seems like that, but when I hung in the balance the NHS rose to the challenge. Sometimes we think that the NHS cannot deliver, but very often it does, and it delivers well. Any discussion about the NHS must begin with thanks to those who make it work against all the odds and who make what should be impossible possible. All of us here—myself in particular—say, “Thank you.”

I thank every person involved in the report, and I thank the Minister who is here to respond to it; I know he will do so very positively. As I began to read the report, the massive amount of work that went into it became abundantly clear. We need to bring on board the people with the vision for the NHS, as put forward in the report. I can see the vision for the NHS—I can read it on paper anyway, and then picture it. I understand the rationale behind the vision, but I also see the fear of secret privatisation, which people believe to be taking place. Some of the hon. Members who intervened referred to that.

We have all seen what happens when things move from public to private, and people fear a lack of services. That is easy to understand when talking about the loss of a rural bus link, but not when discussing whether a mother who is 72 years of age and has cancer will get treatment on the NHS. There is a fear among the general public that risk assessments will mean that we do not give such people a chance. I know that that is not the case, but we have to consider public opinion, and how people assess and see the situation. People see things quite simply at times. It is good to see things simply, because it makes it easy to follow through with the solution—those are my feelings anyway.

My feeling is that something has to change in the NHS. We all understand that bandages are not enough—it needs clinical surgery and massive intervention, some elements of which are in the recommendations. However, in order to be able to do that, we need to first prep the patients—the general public. We need to convince them

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that the proposed changes are for the better. We need to do a better job of preparing the public and explaining exactly what the plans are.

As the report was at pains to show, people do not fully understand how the NHS works. Information is not shared between emergency services and GPs in the detail and with the connections that it should be, and healthcare is provided from different sections who are not working together as well as they should. The integration referred to in the report can only work through partnerships that are truly trying to work together. When there is no understanding there is fear, and while people may not understand the current system, by and large they trust it. They trust that when they dial 999, an ambulance will arrive and bring them for care to their local emergency unit. When we tell them things are changing and we abbreviate terms using initials that save time but increase complexity, they fear that the very thing that they can trust no longer exists, because it is different from what it was five or 10 years ago, and they do not quite understand what is being said. That is why it is important to keep it simple. Of course, however we change the NHS, an ambulance will always be sent in response to a 999 call, but the simple fact is that people do not trust to that, so they will be unsure about what will unfold.

As a lay person, without the expertise that many on the Committee have—I bow to their knowledge and expertise—it is my humble opinion that we must do better in informing people how things are working now and how they can improve with changes, but understanding takes time and it is better to bring the public along, clarify uncertainties and address the issues at an early stage. Such corrective surgery has to take place, but the theatre must be prepped. People must be allowed to understand and that has to come with co-ordination and better working relationships with the press, as well as one-on-one discussions with patients when possible. It must happen with easy-to-understand information and it must happen before the changes are implemented.

I congratulate the hon. Members involved in preparing the report. I look forward to the Minister's response, as well as the contribution of the shadow Minister.

2.12 pm

**Andrew Selous** (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): It is a pleasure to contribute to this important short debate this afternoon. As has been said, for most of our constituents, this world of ICPs and various other acronyms is a bit of an enchanted forest or secret garden that they do not really understand—they just want their healthcare to go on being delivered properly and professionally—but it does of course matter. I completely agree with the Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston); we need to keep seeing this from the patient's perspective.

Like many others, I was struck by the clarity with which Don Redding, the director of policy at National Voices, explained how this should look from the patient's perspective. He said that patients

“want to feel that their care is co-ordinated, that the professionals and services they meet join up around them, that they are known where they go, that they do not have to explain themselves every single time, and, therefore, that their records are available and visible.”

That is a succinct, powerful way that encapsulates what we are all trying to achieve—what the Government are doing and the purposes in this debate this afternoon. The last part of that sentence—making sure that their records are available and visible—is highly topical, given what the new Secretary of State for Health and Social Care said this morning. He is absolutely right to make sure that the NHS has the technology so that its brilliant workforce get the information they need to give first-class patient care, and that patients can use that technology to their own benefit and to the benefit of the health service generally.

I remember a Department for Work and Pensions initiative from some time ago that was called “Tell us once”. In terms of benefit claims, all of us as Members of Parliament will have had constituents who come in and recount giving their details, endlessly, to different parts of the Department for Work and Pensions. The principle should be the same in health. Our constituents' time is precious. It is not just Members of Parliament who are busy people; our constituents lead highly busy, demanding lives, juggling work, family and everything else. The more we can make it simpler to capture what they say once, the better for them and the better for hard-pressed NHS staff, and it has to lead to a better outcome. I hope that is part of what our excellent new Secretary of State, who follows the last excellent Secretary of State, is looking to achieve, in light of his speech in Manchester this morning.

There were various highlights in the Committee's inquiry. The one that stood out for me above all others was our visit to the Larwood practice in Worksop. I have spent a large part of the summer speaking to every single general practice in my constituency. I asked them to tell me about the pressures they face and what the NHS and the clinical commissioning group can do to help them, because I am very aware that general practice is under a lot of pressure. I know the Government are recruiting 25% more doctors, which is brilliant, and last year 3,157 of those doctors went into general practice, which is also brilliant, but we have to retain them as well and some of the workload pressures are challenging.

When the Committee arrived at the Larwood practice, it was incredibly exciting and invigorating, because we saw a practice that was joining up primary care, secondary care, social care and the voluntary sector. It was using paramedics and had its own pharmacy on site, so that people are not sent down the road in the rain to get their prescriptions. There was a buzz about the place. The GPs who worked there were bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, because I think they knew they were delivering a good service and serving their patients well. I am aware of the variability across general practice. If integrated care is going to mean something, the Larwood practice—which was selected for us by NHS England because it is doing well—and practices like that show the way. My challenge to the Minister is, how do we help all those other GP practices to rise up and perform in the same way?

Although not the direct subject of the report, the other huge area of integration that is so important that I cannot fail to mention it is the join-up between health and social care. The Committee wrote a separate report on that earlier in the summer, jointly with the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, which I thought had excellent recommendations. I am absolutely convinced that integrated care providers will not succeed

in providing the integrated care we want unless social care has been put on a proper and sustainable financial footing so that it really does work hand in glove with our NHS at every level, primary and secondary.

Our report has been really useful in slaying a few myths about privatisation. Some of those myths have been around for a very long time. When Simon Stevens gave evidence to the Committee, he did a particularly good job—he went back through some of the allegations of privatisation of the past 20 years or so and showed that, over that period, those various allegations had not proved well-founded.

I very much welcome the Government's commitment to amend the legislation where necessary, and where helpful to provide better-integrated care. That is a sensible and pragmatic step, which I would expect from the Prime Minister and the Government. It is very welcome.

I very strongly agree with what the hon. Member for Stockton South (Dr Williams) said about prevention. He said something very true about the Committee that I have never forgotten: he said that we are a Health and Social Care Committee, but sometimes we could be mistaken for an NHS Committee. That is not because he and I do not think that the NHS—the organisation that is there to look after our health—is absolutely brilliant, but because health is wider than the NHS.

Unless we are absolutely passionate about dealing with childhood obesity—I am the chair of the all-party parliamentary group on obesity—and improving air quality levels in our inner cities, where children with asthma and other illnesses are deeply affected by breathing in poor air every day; unless we get more of our fellow countrymen and women walking and cycling; unless we do something about reducing the proliferation of takeaways, which sell highly calorific food; unless we do something about getting our supermarkets and big food producers to do better in producing healthier food, we will not succeed in this key area of prevention.

It comes down to detailed things such as planning policy for local authorities, which should not have to fight a rearguard action against the Planning Inspectorate to limit the number of takeaways in an area. They absolutely need to ensure, as we build new houses—which we desperately need to do—that cycle routes are built into new housing developments so that as many people as possible, including children, can cycle to stay fit and healthy.

It is worth noting that the integrated care partnerships are helping that to happen. The Committee heard from Ian Williamson from Manchester Health & Care Commissioning. When we were in Sheffield, he said that he thought conversations were now starting up about how Manchester could reduce childhood obesity and reduce the emissions and pollution that harm the local population. Such conversations are happening, but we need more than conversations; we need action, and we need to join up these different policy areas and produce results, because they are urgently needed.

2.22 pm

**Dr Philippa Whitford** (Central Ayrshire) (SNP): I, too, welcome the opening speech of the hon. Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston), who is a superb Chair of the Committee. The marketisation in NHS England goes back more than 30 years—it has certainly been happening for most of my career. It started with terms such as

“resource management”, and in 1990 the internal market—the purchaser-provider split—was introduced. In the early 2000s under Labour, private companies started to introduce independent treatment centres. The Health and Social Care Act 2012 turned it into a massive external market and created the pressure to put all possible contracts out to tender.

The problems are well known. If we base a system on competition and not on collaboration, we inevitably create fragmentation and destroy integration. That has broken up patient pathways and made the system very confusing, to the point that CCGs were looking to employ what they called primary providers, which would have been another layer of cost and health organisation, to try to join things up for patients. Thankfully that has been shelved, because there is a sense of going in a different direction, but up to now there has been a repeated sense that everything can be solved through a healthcare market. That is why, in Scotland, we have grave concerns. One of the 24 powers coming to Scotland is power over public procurement—we do not see the market as the solution to everything.

Just five years on from the actual on-the-ground changes of the Health and Social Care Act, NHS England is facing another big reorganisation. As other Members said, unfortunately the rushed sustainability and transformation plans and the lack of consultation with both the public and staff has created anxiety and fear. As is now recognised, the term “accountable care organisations”, which was copied from the American system, was a PR mistake of the highest order.

In 1999 in Scotland—after devolution—we simply went in a different direction. We merged trusts and then abolished them in 2004. We got rid of primary care trusts in about 2009. We already had an area-based health service for the entire population—not just for people registered with their GP—based on per-capita funding. That meant that we could start to look at how to integrate acute hospitals with community hospitals and even local village hospitals for step up and step down—not everyone who is unwell and cannot be at home needs to be in some big, shiny 10-storey block, and might just need a bit of extra care for a few days, so there is an argument for community hospitals.

In 2014, we started looking at integrating health and social care. Because of the fragmentation in NHS England, it will be necessary to integrate health first, and then integrate social care. Integrating social care is much more challenging because it is made up of different players in the market and is done in a different way. As the hon. Member for Totnes pointed out, the overarching difference between free healthcare and means-tested social care creates major challenges.

**Andrew Selous:** The hon. Lady used the term “village hospital”, as well as the term “community hospital”. “Village hospital” is a new one to me. Could she elaborate on what it means?

**Dr Whitford:** It is not a particularly formal term. I simply mean that there has been a tendency to think that, because community hospitals cannot provide the full range of acute healthcare, they have no place, whereas someone might require only a low-level of in-patient care, such as an elderly person who has a urine infection and lives on their own may need intravenous

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antibiotics, fluids or extra care. Such hospitals allow us to have much more healthcare—things such as minor injury units—close to the public. The more we take forward to people, the less worried they will be about the fact that we are coalescing specialist services. If they see services coming towards them, they will not have the sense that everything is being taken away. We have utterly failed to impress on the public that healthcare is not about buildings, but very much about people and services. That is what integrated care should be about.

**Diana Johnson:** I am very interested in what the hon. Lady is saying about Scotland. Does she know that areas of England have integrated financial plans involving local government and health to try to bring together that continuity and put patients at the centre?

**Dr Whitford:** That is exactly what we have in Scotland—it was introduced in legislation in 2014, and all areas were up and running by the beginning of 2016. More than 60% of the budget goes to what are called integrated joint boards, which use innovative solutions to deal with all sorts of local groups to try to prevent people who do not need to be in hospital from ending up there, and to try to allow people to come out of hospital when they are ready. It has led approximately to a 9% per year decrease in things such as delayed discharges. Those two measures—acute admissions that could have been avoided and delayed discharges that lead to people being stuck in hospital—are very much looked at. In my early career, if someone was in a bed and ready to go home, they would be told, “Well, it’s your problem. We don’t have room.” There was always friction between secondary and primary care, and between health and social care. That is where we are, but it is not easy—it is not even as easy as integrating within health.

There is no escape from legislation. Some legislative change is critical for NHS England to be able to take the barriers out of the way. At the moment, as the hon. Lady mentioned, people are trying to work around those barriers, but when things change in an informally integrated care system, the acute hospital is put into financial difficulties. It is being asked not to admit people, but the existing tariff system rewards the hospital only when it admits people, so when it starts to get into difficulties, we are asking it informally to sacrifice its budget line for the greater good. I am sorry, but tariffs need to be reformed. It is a bizarre system if the aim is not to admit. Hospitals make money on the people who almost do not need to be there and lose money on the sickest, who do need to be there.

**Diana Johnson:** Again, that is very interesting. A good model of that, which is already happening in England, is in my own backyard: Hull. The hospitals have agreed that they will take a sum of money and will not look for additional money from the CCG if they need to treat more people. That is an integration of social care—the local council—and the acute sector, which is important in making this work. It can be done without legislative change, but overall I agree that change is vital.

**Dr Whitford:** That is fine in one place with good leadership and good relationships, but if things got tight it would be very difficult for one chief executive to

accept the failure of their budget in order to keep the whole system going. Legislative change is crucial, towards more per-capita funding and away from tariffs, and towards more area organisation of that integrated care partnership.

Reform of section 75 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 is crucial, because it pressures CCGs to put out to tender all possible contracts. In Surrey, six CCGs were sued by Virgin not for breaking a contract but for not renewing one. We estimate—actual figures are hidden behind commercial confidentiality—that more than £2 million ended up away from the frontline, instead going into Virgin’s pockets, which is not helpful.

In fact, the administration of the bidding and tendering market is estimated to cost between £5 billion and £10 billion, which contributed to the debt that NHS England got itself into by 2015, a mere two years after the changes in the Act came into effect in 2013. Before that, by looking down the back of the sofa and scraping around, and with a little bit of moving money around, the NHS in England usually managed to get to the end of the year in balance.

Moreover, that debt has led to rationing. The problems are not hypothetical ones on a piece of paper. They result in older citizens—we will be having a lot more of them—being held back from hip or knee replacements, cataract surgery and other things that allow them to see or walk, get out and meet friends and keep active, which is crucial.

Finally, it is critical for the accountable care organisations or whatever they are called now to be statutory. The model contract published last August would still allow a private company to bid for and run an entire integrated area. The report states that that is unlikely, but it should be simply ruled out in order to get rid of a huge amount of concern about a threat that might lie around the corner or down the line. Without that statutory basis, a company could hide from freedom of information requests and use its commercial sensitivities even though it is being handed billions of pounds of public money and getting to decide what is delivered to the population in its area. I am sorry, but that cannot be a private company and has to be a statutory body.

There are challenges ahead and we all face similar ones—increased demand, workforce and tight budgets—but we have talked about that before. At the moment, however, the structure for NHS England is hampering the staff on the frontline who are trying to look after people. The challenge of merging a free system with a means-tested system will not go away; it will have to be addressed. In Scotland, we have a slight advantage because we have free personal care, which takes away one of the problems, because it allows us to keep more people at home—in their own home, where they want to be—rather than in hospital.

Even though it is only five years since the last big reorganisation, NHS England is at another major crossroads, so there will be a lot of upheaval. It is important to get that right and to do it in a measured way in the House. Legislation should allow innovation in different parts of the country but get rid of the barriers. We should be radical and, as Members have said, to put the patient or the person right in the middle of the design. That involves more than just the delivery of treatment. Health is not given by the NHS—the NHS catches us when we fall and ought to be called the



national illness service, but we would have even worse workforce challenges if we called it that. I echo the call for health in all policies, within the integrated systems and in the House, so that we are actually investing in the health of our population.

2.35 pm

**Justin Madders** (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Dame Cheryl.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston) on her knowledgeable and measured introduction to this extremely important debate. I also thank the Health and Social Care Committee for an extremely useful and detailed piece of work on a rapidly changing area. In her speech, the Chair of the Committee set out from a patient's perspective why it is so important for us to have a more co-ordinated approach than we do. "Having to tell the same story over and over again" was a phrase mentioned by not only the Chair but a number of other Members, and we all recognise the frustrations that we and our constituents have when that occurs. She was right to say that it is important that we look at the subject primarily from the point of view of patients. Their experience has to be at the very front and centre of all our plans for the future.

The hon. Lady articulated clearly how the financial pressures in the existing legislative framework, which we have all talked about many times, can inhibit transformation. She was right to say that an earmarked fund for transformation has to be protected, and it should not just be a capital pot. She set out clearly the need for a degree of flexibility.

As always, it was a pleasure to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton South (Dr Williams). He made a pertinent point about the challenge for integrated care partnerships: to be considered successful, they should make a difference for those with the greatest health needs. He is right that we need to do much better as a nation on health inequalities, but how we approach prevention and health generally in this country does not necessarily lend itself to that. It would be most welcome if we can tackle that as part of integrated care.

My hon. Friend also expressed the genuine concern about the risk that changes could affect performance quality and safety, which are the pillars of an excellent health system. He made a strong point about governance and how existing decision-making processes are probably the wrong way round. The report acknowledges that they are certainly cumbersome and do not lend themselves to streamlined decision making. He highlighted well the dilemma faced by CCGs when tackling that agenda. This place needs to take a lead on that. He concluded by saying that integrated care has the potential to transform the lives of millions of patients—that really underscores why it is so important for us to get the integration right.

The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) made a typically thoughtful contribution. I agree with him about the need to bring people along with us when we set out our vision for the health service. The report touches on how that has not been as successful as we might like in recent years. His comments on the use of acronyms were particularly perceptive—they may initially save time, but they actually increase complexity. Although I agree with the sentiment that we should keep things

simple, anyone who looks at the Health and Social Care Act will realise that at the moment we probably cannot achieve that readily.

The hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous) made an important contribution. No one will disagree with what he said about putting patients at the centre of all this and the quote he gave about the kind of care they want. I was very interested to hear about his visit to the Larwood centre in Worksop; that sounds like the kind of model that we need to showcase what a good new procedure looks like.

It is clear from reading the report that I am not alone in being critical of the way some of the proposals in the past few years have been communicated. I do not underestimate the damage that has done to public confidence in the aims of the policy. Releasing the new draft ICP contract in the middle of the summer with no publicity has not increased transparency about the Government's agenda. It was interesting that the report described how public understanding of the proposed changes has been seriously compromised by the "acronym spaghetti," which a number of Members mentioned. At another point in the report there was a reference to the acronym soup of

"changing titles and terminology, poorly understood even by those working within the system."

That highlights well the difficulty we all get into sometimes when acronyms can take over—that will resonate with anyone who is a member of a political party. The use of food terminology in the report shows that perhaps the author was a little hungry when they wrote it.

To reinforce the point, since the report was published we have ICPs on the horizon—yet another acronym. Although I appreciate that the change was made to avoid conflation with the American model of ACOs, it is clear that we do not need new acronyms, but a clear explanation from the Government along with a timeframe for what they are seeking to achieve and, importantly, the criteria they will use to determine whether those objectives have been achieved. The chief executive of the Nuffield Trust, Nigel Edwards, described this as

"perhaps the biggest weakness, not just with the STP process but arguably with the 'Five Year Forward View'."

It is clear from both the evidence sessions and the report itself that confidence in the Health and Social Care Act 2012 is at an all-time low and that the current direction of travel is really an admission that the Act has not worked. As we know, the last top-down reorganisation put in place a siloed, market-based approach that created statutory barriers to integration. Now, there is a lot of tiptoeing around the current legislation but we need an admission that that legislation has had its day. We need new proposals that are properly scrutinised.

The initial STP process was imposed from the top and was based around 44 geographical areas that were determined very quickly without recourse to the public. The Government acknowledged in their response to the report that perhaps that was done rather too quickly. Although some of the areas that emerged after that initial consideration had well-established networks of co-operation, in others there was a vast and unwieldy network of commissioners and providers with completely different approaches put together at very short notice. They were told to produce plans in private, again very quickly, which were focused not on integration but on

[Justin Madders]

organisations balancing their budgets. The only beneficiaries of this process seem to be the private consultants who were drafted in to complete those hastily arranged plans. As Professor Chris Ham pointed out,

“most STPs got to the finishing line of October 2016, submitted their plans and breathed a huge sigh of relief. No further work has been done on those STPs.”

Will the Minister set out what his plans are for those areas, as the local bodies appear to be working in a vacuum? They want to work together, but at the moment they have a legal duty to compete.

The report makes it clear that being asked to solve workforce and funding pressures caused by national decisions exacerbates tensions and undermines the prospect of each area achieving its aims for its patients. The report also makes it clear, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton South said, that where support has been provided towards integration, it has been directed at those who are furthest ahead. Those at the bottom of the curve, sometimes through no fault of their own, have lost potential funding that they need to work together to improve services. The chief executive of the NHS Confederation, Niall Dickson, told the inquiry,

“There is a sense in which some organisations find themselves in a really difficult position. Just taking their STF money away...is like somebody digging a hole. Instead of...helping them to get out of the hole, they jump in with a larger spade and dig even faster.”

That is a colourful and alarming analogy.

Where local areas are able to proceed to the next stages of integration, there is understandable concern among patients and staff about precisely what that will mean. The integrated care provider contract has the potential to radically alter the entire health and social care landscape, but is continuing without any parliamentary scrutiny. Despite assurances that it is unlikely that a private company will win the contract to be an ICP, it remains the case that it will be possible, as a number of Members have said. As we heard, not long ago the NHS was forced to pay out millions of pounds to Virgin because it lost out on a contract. I am concerned that we will face similar challenges if this process continues without legislation.

It is not scaremongering to say that the Government are introducing a contract whereby a private company could be responsible for the provision of health and social care services for up to 10 years—it is a fact and a possibility under the legislation. The Chair of the Select Committee was right to say it would be extremely helpful to have a clear statement from Government to rule that out. It is within the gift of Ministers to say there will be no private involvement in those bodies in future. Will the Minister make such a commitment today?

It is clear in the report that staff are concerned about the lack of engagement in a process that in some areas has excluded them completely. They are also concerned about their jobs being transferred to non-NHS organisations; hopefully the Minister will deal with that today. Almost half all NHS providers were in deficit last year and we are entering uncharted territory in budget setting, so what steps will be taken in the event that an ICP reaches a significant deficit position that it is unlikely to be able to resolve alone? Given the recent news that loan repayments to the Department of Health are now a bigger financial burden to providers than

private finance initiatives, will the Minister confirm that deficits caused by structural funding issues will not be resolved through further loans being issued?

It is also clear from the draft contract that the ICP rather than the CCG will be responsible for managing demand. That raises questions about accountability and transparency. What safeguards are in place to prevent further rationing of services and who will be accountable in the event that patients want to challenge such a decision? These are important questions that I hope the Minister will respond to. Will he also commit to set out in full the direction of travel, the Government's objectives, the criteria that will be used to determine when those objectives have been achieved, and a timeline for primary legislation, which just about everyone across the sector believes is needed?

**Dame Cheryl Gillan (in the Chair):** Before I call the Minister I remind him, although I am sure he knows, that we like to leave two minutes for the Member leading the debate to make her closing remarks. I call the Minister.

2.47 pm

**The Minister for Health (Stephen Barclay):** Thank you, Dame Cheryl, it is a pleasure once again to serve under your chairmanship. I join the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Justin Madders) in paying tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston) as Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee, and to all the members of the Committee, for a very good report and for raising important issues regularly on behalf of the NHS and the wider health fraternity.

As a country, we are living longer, which clearly is to be celebrated. However, it means that people live with multiple long-term and more complex conditions. For the NHS to continue to deliver high-quality care as it has done for the last 70 years, it is increasingly important for NHS services to work closely with social care. We got a flavour of that from a number of the remarks made in the debate.

I very much welcome the Committee's conclusion that fears that integration might lead to privatisation are unfounded. Indeed, the Chair of the Committee said,

“The evidence to our inquiry was that ACOs,—

now referred to as integrated care partnerships—

“and other efforts to integrate health systems and social care, will not extend the scope of NHS privatisation and may effectively do the opposite.”

That relates to some of the points I will make on pre-legislative scrutiny and points to the value of the work done by the Health and Social Care Committee to provide a cross-party view of proposals, which has allowed us to address some of the myths built up in the past. The Committee has done the House a service by slaying some of those misconceptions.

**Dr Wollaston:** I thank the Minister for referring to my remarks, but does he accept that the Committee went on to say that we felt the issue of privatisation should be put beyond doubt in legislation?

**Stephen Barclay:** The Chair of the Committee is absolutely right. We have always been clear that integration is about improving patient care, and that the NHS will remain free at the point of delivery.

A number of key points arose from the debate. Remarks were made about ensuring that the service is patient-centred, and concerns were expressed about whether transformation funding may be diluted. I will come to pre-legislative scrutiny, to which the Chair of the Committee referred, and primary legislation.

The hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford) raised concerns about private firms and the role of GP-led organisations. The hon. Member for Stockton South (Dr Williams) and my hon. Friend the Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous) referred to focusing on prevention and taking a wider needs-based approach. A number of Members referred to information sharing, leadership and the lessons from Liverpool Community Health NHS Trust—the hon. Member for West Lancashire (Rosie Cooper) performed a great service by highlighting that. That is reflected in the work I have commissioned from Tom Kark on the fit-and-proper test.

[Ms KAREN BUCK *in the Chair*]

Members focused on the need for a patient-centred approach, which the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Diana Johnson) emphasised in her intervention. In our approach to integrated care, we seek to build a healthcare solution around what is best for the patient and, in the words of the Chair of the Committee, why it matters to patients. That is very much the Government's intention.

As the Committee Chair said, financial pressure can both incentivise and impede integration. She will be aware that the up to £20 billion a year that will go into the NHS as part of the Prime Minister's commitment to funding the service will be front-loaded—there is more in the first two years in recognition of the importance of the double-running to which the Chair of the Committee referred. According to past National Audit Office reports, there have been a number of cross-party initiatives under successive Governments. As she and other Committee members set out, sustainability trumps transformation, which is one of the key challenges for the NHS family as it brings forward its 10-year plan. For the first two years, an extra £4.1 billion will go in, with front-loading of 3.6% compared with the average over the five years of 3.4%, which very much reflects the concerns she articulated.

The tone of the debate was one of broad consensus, and we will realise that first by asking the NHS itself to lead on the legislative changes required. The NHS will bring forward its proposals through the 10-year plan. We will not mandate, but let local areas decide what fits their locality best. That will be informed, for example, by health and wellbeing boards. I met the chair of the Lancashire health and wellbeing board yesterday—that speaks to the concern raised about the need for Health Ministers to take a wider approach rather than, as the hon. Member for Stockton South said, looking purely at the NHS element. We are looking much more widely and bringing in local authorities. Indeed, the Department's name has changed, and the work of the Care Minister reflects the wider integration in our approach.

Although we welcome the Committee's work on testing the NHS proposals as part of the long-term plan, we will wait for the NHS proposals before confirming the specific pre-legislative scrutiny arrangements. I hope the approach I have taken in discussions with members of the Committee underscores the importance I place on working in a cross-party way. The approach we have set out very much reflects that.

**Dr Whitford:** Can the Minister commit to looking at legislative change? It is fine for designs to come from the NHS, but if those designs are based on existing barriers, they will not reach their full potential.

**Stephen Barclay:** The Prime Minister has set out that it will be for the NHS itself to come forward, rather than for the Government to specify legislative change in a top-down way. As part of the long-term plan, the NHS will determine what can be done within the existing framework and whether change is needed. That will flow from the work that comes forward later in the autumn from Simon Stevens, Ian Dalton and others in the NHS, who are best placed to lead.

**Dr Paul Williams:** In the short time the Minister has left, will he will address the invitation he was given categorically to rule out integrated care providers being private sector organisations? Does he accept that the language he has used—he said the NHS will continue to be free at the point of use—increases concerns about private sector provision?

**Ms Karen Buck (in the Chair):** Order. Minister, in responding, will you be mindful of the time and the need to leave the Chair of the Select Committee a couple of minutes to respond?

**Stephen Barclay:** Indeed I will, Ms Buck.

I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the Committee report, which states:

"There is also little appetite from within the private sector itself to be the sole provider of...contracts...There are several reasons why the prospect of a private provider holding an ACO contract is unlikely...Integrated care partnerships between NHS bodies looking to use the contract to form a large integrated care provider would have an advantage over non-statutory providers that are less likely to have experience of managing the same scope of services".

The hon. Gentleman himself referred to the desire not to rule out GP-led organisations, which are independent. He also mentioned GP-led organisations becoming NHS bodies. I am happy to meet him to explore exactly what he means. It is not the Government's intention for private firms to run ICP contracts.

**Dr Whitford:** The Minister says that that is unlikely and that private firms do not want to run such contracts, but we are talking about a 10-year plan. Does he therefore recognise that it should be ruled out to give surety? We do not want another Hinchingsbrooke, where a private company takes a contract on and an entire area faces a private provider walking away from an integrated care partnership.

**Stephen Barclay:** These arguments were explored at the Committee, which addressed that question. The fear of privatisation has been overplayed.

[Stephen Barclay]

We are taking a people-centred approach and letting the NHS lead on shaping it. We have said we will respond to the points the NHS raises and act on them, but integration will enable services holistically to deliver better care for patients—as the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) said, that includes better data sharing—and put the needs of patients front and centre. That is reflected in the report and in the cross-party consensus on how we want to take integration forward.

2.58 pm

**Dr Wollaston:** I thank the Minister and other Members who contributed to the debate. They spoke passionately and reminded us why this matters, particularly to patients. Everything will be judged by whether integration delivers a better service for patients and those around them. I look forward to meeting the Minister and to his appearing again before our Committee—there are a number of areas in which we would like to press him a little further, but I welcome his comments.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered the Seventh Report of the Health and Social Care Committee, *Integrated care: organisations, partnerships and systems*, HC 650, and the Government Response, Cm 9695.

## BACKBENCH BUSINESS

### Children in Need: Adulthood

2.59 pm

**Steve McCabe** (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered supporting children in need into adulthood.

It is a great pleasure to see you in the Chair, Ms Buck. I am grateful to the Backbench Business Committee for granting this debate on a subject that should matter to us all and definitely needs more attention.

The discussions that resulted in the Staying Put initiative for those in foster care—a decision for which I commend the previous coalition Government—have inevitably opened up a much wider debate about our responsibilities for all children in need and their transition to adulthood. Are the existing obligations placed on local authorities, the NHS and other safeguarding bodies sufficient, or is it time for a rethink? That is the purpose of the debate.

I know that the Government are concerned about mental health and have announced additional resources for that area. Of course we should all be worried about the growing numbers of children and young people needing help with eating disorders, self-harm and a host of other problems. When we raise these matters, we tend to be talking about young people where a problem has been acknowledged and the real issue is waiting times or access to treatment. However, what about all those young people who are being missed? The Children's Society suggests that there may be as many as 240,000 vulnerable 16 and 17-year-olds in England and Wales, but only about 58,000 have been identified as needing support by local authorities. In fact, 46% of children referred to children's services are turned away without any form of intervention, and 30% do not even reach the threshold for an assessment.

Where young people are in receipt of support, that often changes on the day they reach 18 as there is no legal obligation to provide continuing assistance and no requirement to help with a transition to adult services. In many forces, even the police marker or flag used to identify youngsters at risk or vulnerable to exploitation automatically expires as soon as a young person reaches 18. Disabled children face particular challenges in moving into adulthood when responsibility for continuing support switches from children's to adult services.

**Andrew Selous** (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman shares my concern about a gap on the part of Ofsted, which I think is discriminatory. I understand from Bedfordshire police that there is no Ofsted inspection of children's homes for 16 and 17-year-olds. The schools of children in mainstream education are inspected by Ofsted. Does he agree that there is a gap, and that we need proper regulation in this area, particularly as bad things are happening?

**Steve McCabe:** I am sure the Minister heard the hon. Gentleman's point. I certainly agree that any provision of that nature should be subject to proper inspection.

Today there are more than 1 million disabled children in the UK, yet fewer than ever are getting the support they need. We also need to give some thought to healthcare

improvements and just how scary it can be for a young person to wake up after surgery on an adult ward for the first time. We have an acute shortage of community paediatricians and much more work is required in the health sector in planning the transition for young people from children's to adult services.

The Children Act 1989 requires every local authority to take reasonable steps to identify children in need in its area and to publish information on the services available. It places a particular stress on the health and development of children and the needs of the disabled, but cash-strapped local authorities are struggling to provide even the most basic services. The reality is that 15, 16 and 17-year-olds often have to be at crisis point before there is any intervention.

I acknowledge that there has been a big focus on, and in some cases a switch of resources to, child protection issues, yet while child exploitation scandals such as those in Rochdale and Rotherham serve to demonstrate that many teenage children suffer even greater risk outside the home than inside it, support is limited for the vast majority, even if their need involves neglect, abuse or exploitation. The Department for Education's figures for 2015-16 suggest that perhaps 13,500 16 and 17-year-olds are in need because of "going missing", and about 1,500 are in need because of trafficking.

It is estimated that each year some 12,000 16 and 17-year-olds approach local authorities because they are homeless, often as a result of a breakdown in relations with a parent or carer, violence in the home or other problems at home. Homelessness is not currently recognised as a risk factor in identifying children in need, and consequently there are no reliable statistics about the scale of the problem. However, most agencies working with teenagers identify it as a real risk factor, likely also to expose young people to a risk of drugs, alcohol problems, violence and sexual abuse.

**Stephen Lloyd** (Eastbourne) (LD): I thank the hon. Gentleman for securing this important debate. I know he received much support from the Children's Society and its "Crumbling Futures" report, which is essentially what the debate is all about. I and every other MP has had to deal with the harrowing reality of parents coming to us with teenage children who are aged 18 or 19, for whom there is no support at all. That is why I am so glad he has secured the debate. I look forward to the Minister's response.

Is the hon. Gentleman aware that one of the anomalies resulting from a change to the law a few years ago is that people have to be in education or training up to the age of 18, but—even if a person is disabled and cannot get to school or training on their own—there is no statutory obligation on a local authority to provide transport for 16 to 18-year-olds?

**Steve McCabe**: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. Quite a lot of problems result from both extending the school leaving age and creating notional rights for children with disabilities if we do not provide the resources to make it possible to deliver on those advances.

Thanks to some work undertaken by the DFE and other organisations, we know a bit about the common characteristics of children in need: around 13% of them achieve no GCSE passes; they are much more likely to

be NEETs—not in education, employment or training—and they are three times more likely than children from the care system to end up homeless. The time has come for a fundamental rethink on what is happening to these young people. We must move away from a model of rationing that allows us to deny help to those who do not reach some arbitrary risk threshold or simply to drop them on their 18th birthday. We must develop an approach that recognises the continuing needs of those vulnerable children and young people who are already in a very disadvantaged position. Of course, that will cost more, but we must not forget that funding for children's services has fallen by £2.4 billion in real terms since 2010, with an additional £1.5 billion gap for services needed for disabled children. The Chancellor will have to be pressed to address those issues in the 2019 spending review.

I believe there are things the Minister can do. He might look again at the assessment threshold, which many Departments use to thin out the number of young people who even make it to first base, and offer some guidance on the factors that must be considered before an assessment is ruled out. Ideally, every referral by any responsible agency should merit at least a first-stage assessment. I particularly urge him to look at the issue of homelessness among teenagers, to make sure that we do begin to collect reliable data and to instruct local authorities to identify it as a risk factor when assessing children in need. He might also bring wise heads together and demand that they establish proper transition procedures for all those turning 18, so that we put an end to the lottery of assistance and support for vulnerable young people that confronts them as they reach their 18th birthday.

I urge the Minister, in the existing education review, to advocate extending the existing higher-rate pupil premium to all children in need, not just those in care. That would be a real opportunity to help children at an earlier stage. I ask him to consider making it easier for the same children to qualify for discretionary bursaries to help them attend further education or other forms of training. Disabled children and young people would particularly benefit from improved provision of short breaks for them and their carers, and we should at least contemplate the suggestion by the Disabled Children's Partnership of an early intervention and family resilience fund. In time, such an approach might even be extended to all children in need.

I am not expecting miracles. I know that some things take time and everything costs money, but above all these children need a champion—someone who can lead a real cross-departmental effort to raise the quality of help and support to some of the most vulnerable and deprived young people in our society. I believe the Minister could be that person. We must raise interest in how much we are prepared to do before young people reach crisis point, rather than focusing on making claims about increased funding for services that only become available after youngsters have suffered a major crisis. It is both a moral and an economic issue.

3.13 pm

**Fiona Bruce** (Congleton) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Steve McCabe) on securing this debate. I come at it from a slightly

[*Fiona Bruce*]

different direction in some ways, although not all, but none the less I agree that this extremely important issue deserves more debate in this place.

The Children's Commissioner for England, Anne Longfield OBE, rightly says in her child vulnerability report published in June that 1.6 million children who are living in families with substantial complex needs "have no established recognised form of additional support."

She also says that if we expand

"the range of support we offer to vulnerable children and their families, we can support many more children in a more efficient and effective way. This is about an approach that works with children and their families, to develop resilience, confidence and independence".

In other words, we need to focus more on prevention, so that children who develop very extensive needs can be helped earlier. As the hon. Gentleman said, early intervention is key.

In supporting the next generation, which I believe we are now calling generation Z or the post-millennials, we need better to recognise that transition into adulthood today is so challenging that they need far greater support from their very earliest years than we did. That support must continue right into early adulthood. Even in the best circumstances, the stage of moving from teenage years into adulthood today—that transition into adult life with regard to relationships, money and employment, to name but a few issues—is challenging and stressful. Of course, as we have heard, for those children needing more support and protection, it can be a particularly vulnerable time.

As the Minister knows, for over a year now a large group of some 60 Conservative MPs have been working on and supporting a manifesto to strengthen families, which contains many practical policies. I believe many of those are important if we are to properly support this generation. This generation has experienced profound changes in family structure, which has had a real impact on young people's health. Changes in family life, and for some the absence of a father in particular, mean that many new parents have not had the role models that previous generations relied on to teach and guide them.

Beyond a good home life, young people need supportive communities, including the friendship of peers, the company of adults and cohesive neighbourhoods, which many now do not have—a place where people know their neighbours. Where that is the case, adolescent wellbeing and mental health is stronger. The environment in which adolescents grow up today has a major impact on their current and future wellbeing, and many need more support not only within their family and from their carers, but within their community and school environments. That is why strengthening family and community life is so important.

I am delighted that, following a meeting with the Prime Minister late last year regarding the manifesto, she commissioned a piece of work to see what more the Government could do to support children and families, which has resulted in her announcement this summer that she has asked the Leader of the House to chair a ministerial group looking at early years family support. Members of the supportive ministerial group include the Minister and the Under-Secretary of State for Work

and Pensions, my hon. Friend the Member for North Swindon (Justin Tomlinson), who has responsibility for family support. I am delighted that there is now a Cabinet-level Minister working on the family issue. I would be very interested to hear from the Minister how he proposes to take forward his work within that team. It is so important that we focus not just on the very earliest years of a child's life, but right into those later teenage years and beyond, which I hope he will highlight to the team.

One way families and carers can be provided with greater support—the kind of support that Anne Longfield talks about in local communities—is through locally based family hubs. The Children's Commissioner is very supportive of family hubs and the Minister and I have talked about them many times. They provide a wider range of support for the family, the carers of a child or teenager, and for the child themselves, and they provide that support from childhood right up into early adulthood and beyond. It is not just about those very early years, to which the old Sure Start children's centres used to be limited. Family hubs are springing up in local communities across the country.

I am delighted that, following the debate a short time ago on family hubs, the Minister indicated that he will continue to look at how the Department can ensure, as he wrote to me following the debate,

"that the local government programme understands fully how the family hub model works and where the most effective practice is taking place."

He has asked officials to look into that, and I would be grateful if he could give us an update on that work and on his timeframe for reporting on the work that he instituted following that debate.

As I have said, family hubs can provide a solution and early intervention support from a statutory authority, working together with local voluntary groups, charities and so forth, centred in a physical place within a community that families can turn to. They are essential because, as Dr Samantha Callan, an expert in this field, has pointed out:

"the lack of readily accessible family supports, along a spectrum of need, throughout the time children are dependent on their parents (0-19) means that life chances are often severely impaired and social care services are faced with unremittingly high numbers of children who are in need, on child protection plans and coming into care."

I can give examples. The early intervention provision on the Isle of Wight—family hubs there are well established—means that fewer children on the Isle of Wight are being put on child protection plans. At Middlewich High School in my constituency, when children have special educational needs or disability or mental health challenges, the whole family is supported. After just a few years, the evidence shows the positive impact of the family hub approach on the emotional health and wellbeing of students, with an improvement in GCSE results, which improves life chances.

Another example of a family hub is in the Chelmsford library, which is a one-stop shop for free family services. Everything is included from antenatal contact and school readiness to substance misuse and mental health support, as well as disability support for children up to the age of 25 and so forth. There is a strong base from which late teenage and early adult young people can build their own lives and seek help for themselves as well as through their families.

As I say, I thank the Minister for his follow-up letter in August on family hubs following our debate. I was very pleased to read that

“the family hub approach is one that we would encourage local authorities to adopt if they believe it would deliver improved outcomes for their area.”

I like his approach.

I thank the Secretary of State for Education for the draft guidance he produced this summer on relationships education, which will be a step forward in helping young people build the healthy relationships that are so important if they are to embark upon early adult life in a positive way. The draft guidance emphasises how important it is that children of every background learn that healthy relationships are important as a foundation for future life. As I have said, many of them do not have good role models, but they have an opportunity to learn in school about the importance of family life and bringing up children. The Secretary of State’s foreword, which is very encouraging, says that

“we want the subjects to put in place the key building blocks of healthy, respectful relationships, focusing on family and friendships, both on and offline... All of this content should support the wider work of schools in helping to foster pupil wellbeing and develop resilience and virtues that we know are fundamental to pupils being happy, successful and productive members of society... This should be complemented by development of virtues like kindness, generosity, self-sacrifice and honesty.”

I thank the Minister and his ministerial colleagues for the way in which they are addressing the young people’s challenges. They have genuinely listened to the group of colleagues who are concerned about strengthening family and community life in the ways I have discussed.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Ms Karen Buck (in the Chair):** Order. Before I call the next speaker, I need to say that we will go to the Front-Bench speakers at 4 pm. Several people have indicated an interest in speaking. I do not want an official time limit, but can people think about perhaps seven minutes maximum in order to accommodate everyone?

3.23 pm

**Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP):** It is a pleasure to speak in this debate. I congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Steve McCabe) on setting the scene so well. He often has debates on subjects in which I have an interest, and it is a pleasure to come along. It is also a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) and her contribution, which is similar to the one that we had before the summer break when we set the scene for family hubs and discussed their importance.

When I was looking at the number of children in care for another debate in the main Chamber this week, I was struck again by the fact that we need to do more for vulnerable children, as the hon. Members for Birmingham, Selly Oak and for Congleton have said. Others will undoubtedly say the same thing, but this is about the next step. We need to do more for those who are transitioning from having little or no power over any decision—where they sleep, what they eat, what school they attend. We then suddenly throw them into a world where they make every decision, where they alone are responsible, and it is not okay and it is not easy. That is

the thrust of what the hon. Lady and the hon. Gentleman have said. We need to help more, so I sincerely thank the hon. Gentleman for highlighting the issue and I support him in his aims.

I have a quick comment on the good work that the hon. Lady has done so far in the organisation that she works with in her party. Some 60 to 70 Members are working towards the family hub idea. I say very gently to all Members that we should remember there are many groups out there who can make valuable contributions to young people, such as the Church groups and the faith groups that have a genuine interest in how they can help and step into the gap. There are charitable groups as well, such as the Salvation Army, who are there to help vulnerable people.

When I looked at the NSPCC article relating to children under protection orders in Northern Ireland—I want to quickly give the figures for Northern Ireland—it shocked me to learn that the number of children who were emotionally abused, physically abused, sexually abused or neglected was 2,132 in 2017. If we remember that our population is 1.8 million, it puts the figures into perspective. Those are thousands of children pressing towards adulthood who need support because of emotional scarring, but are we providing that support? That is the question the debate asks.

Some 52% of children in care were from the Catholic religion compared to 40% who were Protestant, according to Department of Health statistics covering the period to the end of last September. The figures show that 2,983 children were looked after in Northern Ireland, representing 69 children per 10,000 of the child population. Of those, almost one fifth—18%—had experienced a placement change during the previous 12 months, the lowest number in recent years, but the overall total for the last year was the highest recorded number of children in care since the introduction of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. The number of children looked after in 2017 was 3% higher than in the previous year, but it was 28% higher than it was in 1999. During the past year, 37,618 children were referred to health and social care trusts in Northern Ireland, up 10% on the previous year, which shows a growing trend that worries me.

The Northern Health and Social Care Trust received the largest amount of referrals, and the trust in the area I represent had the lowest at 15%. Police were the source of the largest proportion of children in need referred—some 26%. Whenever the police are involved, it means we are probably at the very difficult stage where it is hard to pull back. Social services referred 21%. A total of 2,132 children were listed on the child protection register, representing 49 children per 10,000 under 18 years. The figures also showed that children in care generally did not perform as well as their peers in key stage assessments. Sometimes we neglect not only their health, security and protection, but their education. We need to address the issue of education and ensure that they get the opportunities they need.

Some 74% of looked-after children achieved at least five GCSEs in year 12, compared with 99% of the general year 12 school population. The equivalent figures for those achieving GCSE at grades A\* to C were 48% and 85% respectively. We have a massive shortfall for those who perhaps could and should do better. We have a duty of care to not simply get the children to their

[Jim Shannon]

18th birthday, but to get them into the community, into jobs and into a life in which they can fully participate and feel that they are contributing, a life in which they are confident in themselves and their abilities, regardless of their background. We need people around to encourage them. How do we reach that goal? How do we provide support?

The hon. Members for Birmingham, Selly Oak and for Congleton raised many interesting points that must be looked. I support having those points researched. The Minister has had two hard shots in the past two days, but I ask him to respond to the questions that we have put to him, and we look forward to his response. The Minister can be assured that Members attending the debate are concerned, which is why we are here contributing on a Thursday afternoon, which many refer to as the graveyard shift. We feel it is important. I ask the Minister to put his hand to the plough and look into it.

Life is tough for any child—tougher now than it was in my day when things were probably much simpler. Others would probably subscribe to that view. It is tougher than ever before. The ability to bully has moved from the playground to the former sanctity of a child's home and bedroom, through the power of a smartphone or laptop. School places are limited, jobs are scarce and pressure is immense for all children. To that may be added the instability of not knowing when they will get their next meal, or if they will be taken from their mum and dad and placed with strangers again, and whether they will be placed with their siblings or not. Suddenly they are no longer supported in even those small ways. They are set up in a social housing apartment and told to manage their money—and welcome to life. That is not life. I believe it is more pressure than is bearable for some of those who are trying to make do. Things are not good enough now. We must do more and I support the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak and his calls to do more and do it better.

3.30 pm

**Alex Burghart** (Brentwood and Ongar) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve with you in the Chair, Ms Buck. I congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Steve McCabe) on securing the debate. It is a pleasure to serve with him on the Work and Pensions Committee; I know he cares deeply about the matters it deals with. I am particularly delighted that we are discussing this subject.

A few years ago, having worked in child protection for a number of years, I became acutely aware of the needs and problems of children who were not in care but were on the edge of it—children who never quite reached the threshold to be taken away from their parents, but who nevertheless faced considerable problems in their lives. As more research was done on children whose needs were assessed under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, it became clear that a large proportion of those children faced the same terrible outcomes as children in care—indeed, some would suffer worse outcomes. That stands to reason: the children who were taken into care were taken out of the disruptive, abusive, neglectful family environment, and put into long-term, stable foster care, or adopted, so their lives were changed, whereas children who did not reach that threshold often

stayed under the observation of children's social services but did not receive services adequate to improve their condition.

I take my hat off to Social Finance UK, which in Newcastle a few years ago did a seminal piece of work ago that exposed just how poor the outcomes were. It identified that children in need or in care formed a small but substantial proportion of young people in Newcastle, but went on in the long term to form the majority of those not in education, employment or training in the city. That is why it is excellent that the Department, under the current Minister, took up that work and ran it on a national scale. The report published earlier this year showed that children who were in care or in need at some point during their childhood accounted for about 10% of the youth population, but went on to account for 51% of all long-term NEETs in young adulthood. Such disruption to family life has long-term consequences.

It is always a pleasure to speak after my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce), who spoke so eloquently about the need to mend broken families.

**Fiona Bruce:** I thank my hon. Friend for that comment. I saw a statistic yesterday that highlighted to me the need to focus much more on prevention than we do. Family breakdown costs about £50 billion per annum—various figures are quoted, but that has been quoted recently in many places. However, for every £100 spent on that, the Government spend only £1.50 on trying to prevent the breakdown of families. Something is wrong when it costs £50 billion to mend that brokenness.

**Alex Burghart:** Yes, my hon. Friend eloquently sets out the problem. We need to reconsider our approaches to prevention, early intervention and recovery. The problem faced by children in need is not, I believe, a marginal one, although it has been treated marginally for many years. There are about 380,000 children in need at any one time; the number of children in need at some point during any given year is considerably higher—many hundreds of thousands higher. So it was wonderful that the Children's Commissioner for England, for whom I used to work, and the Conservative party, took on the cause. I was pleased to see that in our 2017 manifesto we committed to the review of outcomes for children in need that the Minister is currently undertaking. I know everyone in the Chamber awaits the findings of that review with eager anticipation. We need to know exactly what is going on behind the scenes that leads to those young people having such poor educational and employment outcomes. I suspect that the findings will not necessarily come as any great surprise to us, but they will have the "kitemark" seal of the Department behind them.

For too long, we have looked at the symptoms, rather than the causes of the problems that these young people face. We talk about neglect, abuse and family dysfunction, and those are obviously important, but we do not always talk about why that neglect, abuse or family dysfunction occurs in the first place. The causes are painfully predictable: poor mental health, long-term unemployment, addiction, family breakdown and the rest. Only when we turn our attention to fixing those root-cause problems will we start preventing the next generation of problems and helping to rebuild the family lives of those children already in the system.



**Wera Hobhouse** (Bath) (LD): The hon. Gentleman and I are both on the all-party parliamentary group on adverse childhood experiences, which is very much about the issue we are debating. I fully agree that prevention is the way to go, but in my constituency councils are so cash-strapped that they can deal only with the absolute minimum statutory obligations; they do not have the money for prevention. Is not it time that we looked around to release money for councils to do the preventive work that is necessary?

**Alex Burghart:** As the hon. Lady says, we are both in the all-party parliamentary group on adverse childhood experiences, which I co-chair. There is no doubt that we need to work out how we can shift intervention to prevent problems from escalating. We know that there is limited money around, but I feel that there is a number of things we can do, and perhaps do better.

The Government have a major opportunity with the end of the current phase of the troubled families programme in 2020. I—like, I am sure, everyone in the Chamber—am keen to see those contracts reinvigorated for another phase, but the end of the current phase is the time to take stock of the considerable successes of the programme, as well as to consider whether we want to put a particular focus on that money in future. To my mind, the vast majority of children in need are by definition in troubled families. I know how many local authorities already spend the money, and data from the troubled families programme show that when it is spent well, it is excellent at tackling the root-cause problems and stabilising families so that they form a foundation on which young people can rest as they go into adult life. I rehearse all that because I think the best thing we can do to help children in need to move into adult life is to stabilise their childhoods. For some children, that will not be possible and they will need additional, ongoing support, but our first priority must be to make sure that young people do not need further help from us in the future because we have fixed the problems that they face.

An initiative I was glad to look at when I worked at the Centre for Social Justice works by giving children in need long-term mentoring at school. That gives them a stable adult in their lives who can give them the sort of advice that a parent might in a normal family. It is extremely successful in Tower Hamlets and in Hackney, and if we are to find the money for the sort of initiative proposed by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak—a form of pupil premium for children in need; perhaps any child who has been in need in the past six years—that is the sort of thing that schools should spend that money on. I am conscious of the time, so I will rest my remarks there.

3.40 pm

**Bambos Charalambous** (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Buck. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Steve McCabe) on securing this important debate.

The transition from childhood to adulthood is sometimes very difficult and confusing for some young people. It is hard enough when those changes occur in a typical, safe, loving family environment, but when they occur for children who are identified as in need of extra support, extra help is sometimes needed. The choices

made by young people aged 16 and 17 are very important and can have a profound effect on their lives. Even when they have extra support, it is still a challenging time for them. Children also reach maturity at different times, so it is of great concern that 16 and 17-year-olds who are referred to children's services and receive support see it disappear overnight when they reach 18. We know that vulnerable children left to fend for themselves become vulnerable adults who struggle to thrive.

The true scale of how many children require help into adulthood is not known. Research by the Children's Society suggests that, in adolescence, 31% of all young people experience vulnerabilities, which are defined as being in poverty, substance abuse, lack of support from their family or having feelings of failure or depression. The research also shows that one in 16 young people aged 16 and 17 experience complex issues in their lives that require their being referred to local authorities for help. It is staggering that one in three of those cases are referred to local authorities by the police.

It is rare for children's services to transfer cases into adulthood, but the evidence does not suggest that that is because those young people's problems go away. In fact, there is clear evidence that unmet need at 16 and 17, and limited transition support, leads to extremely poor outcomes for these young people. The Children's Society research found that children experiencing vulnerability at 16 and 17, including poor health, poverty, caring responsibilities and feelings of uselessness, are up to two and half times more likely to be not in education, employment or training at 18 or 19.

Homelessness seems to be much more prevalent among former children in need, with research suggesting that as high as 12% of former children in need become homeless. Those who were either in care or receiving support as children are also significantly over-represented in the prison population.

What can the Government do? First, I recommend that support should not stop as vulnerable children turn 18. Their needs do not disappear as they leave childhood. The Government's review into provision for children in care needs to be widened, encompassing the transition into adulthood. This needs urgent attention. The Government should use that review to address how the education, housing, health and employment needs of vulnerable young people's transitioning to adulthood will be met. Savage cuts to local authority budgets mean that local councils struggle to provide help in all but the most serious cases. That review must look at how funding can be provided to councils, so that they can give appropriate support to vulnerable young people.

Transition planning for children in need should be made a statutory requirement for vulnerable children moving into adulthood. Young people need clear information and co-ordinated support to deal with the vulnerabilities that they have been identified as having. Similarly, all children referred to children's services should not be dismissed without an assessment of their needs, including a focus on risks, mental health needs and risk of poverty.

It costs more than £30,000 to keep someone locked up in prison. I invite the Government to invest in children's support services now, to secure a prosperous future not only for children but for themselves.

3.44 pm

**Paul Farrelly** (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Lab): I also congratulate the Children's Society on its great work and my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Steve McCabe) on securing the debate so quickly after the summer recess. I will focus on an issue affecting young adults in need that crops up regularly in my area of north Staffordshire, where, shamefully, after years and years, no resolution is in sight.

For any family that has to go through them, anorexia, bulimia or other eating disorders are one of the most devastating illnesses that can affect the physical and mental health of children as they grow up. Often triggered by other traumatic life events or the stress of coping with adolescence, the suffering can be immense. Neither that suffering nor their vulnerability suddenly stops when children reach the magic age of 18, but in my immediate area—Newcastle-under-Lyme, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Moorlands—the commissioning of specialist support and treatment most certainly does.

North Staffordshire has an in-patient facility—the Darwin Centre in Penkull in Stoke—for children needing treatment for mental health issues, including acute eating disorders. It is run by the excellently led North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust. In total, the annual budget for the North Staffordshire and Stoke clinical commissioning groups to address children and young people's eating disorders is about £250,000, with more than £300,000 more spent in the rest of the county. For adults, however, the figure is precisely zero; no specialist adult eating disorder services are commissioned by the two CCGs. Instead, after children reach 18—teenagers still—they fall off a cliff and essentially have to rely on the good will of overstretched general adult mental health teams to respond to their needs. It is a scandalous situation that should not be allowed to continue. The CCGs, and their overlord, NHS England, need to act without delay.

Someone in my area needing specialist treatment as they leave school has to leave the area to obtain it, but not everyone is fortunate enough to go to a college or university in a place where the authorities treat such conditions with the seriousness that they deserve. It is especially sickening in my area because a few postcodes away, in other parts of Staffordshire, adults get treatment. There is an in-patient unit in Stafford, the Kinver Centre, run by the recently established Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. It can admit people from all over the country—not just the county—but not from North Staffordshire or Stoke, as our two CCGs provide no funding. However, the county's other four CCGs certainly do. Their budgets for treating adult eating disorders is more than £400,000 a year, compared with nothing for constituents and families in my area, and nothing for local children in need as they reach adulthood.

The situation is made even more anomalous as, since last year, the county's six CCGs have been run by the same accountable officer, Marcus Warnes, whom I am seeing tomorrow, so this is a timely debate. The latest information I cite comes from a response from those CCGs last month after I yet again raised the issue. I do not know how other hon. Members are served by their local health commissioners, but in Staffordshire all letters, including from MPs, are shipped off to a remote correspondence centre in Rugeley—the grandly titled Midlands and Lancashire Commissioning Support Unit—

which gives itself 40 days to reply. I must admit that the response on this issue, which particularly affects young adults, came a little quicker, but it was signed, illegibly, on behalf of Marcus Warnes, so I do not even know if he read it or not. After confirming the zero figures for the Stoke and North Staffordshire CCGs, in comparison with the bountiful parts of the county, the reply ended:

“I hope that we have addressed your concerns. However, if there are any outstanding issues, please do not hesitate to contact the Patient Services Team.”

That is how they deal with Members of Parliament, so I hate to think how patients and vulnerable members of the public are treated. Frankly, not only are these people not on the case, but I sometimes think that they are not really on the same planet as the rest of us.

I appreciate that the Minister may well consider health commissioning out of his jurisdiction, but it is also certainly very much to do with children and families. In the interests of joined-up care and provision for vulnerable young adults, he should be aware of anomalies like this, as indeed should everyone in my area who needs such vital specialist services. Pressure really needs to be put—from all directions—on our local health commissioners to correct this situation, not least by members of those groups themselves, so that they actually serve the people they are supposed to represent.

3.49 pm

**Mr George Howarth** (Knowsley) (Lab): I add my congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Steve McCabe) on a really useful survey of the information that is already known, and on the way in which he has introduced a very important subject and given us the opportunity to debate it.

As my hon. Friend and other hon. Members have provided so much information, I shall focus on just one aspect of the problem—low educational attainment, which is a particular challenge in Knowsley. We know that children considered to be in need are only one third as likely as other children to achieve A\* to C GCSE passes in English and maths at the end of key stage 4; the figure is 63% for pupils not so classified. That is a serious discrepancy. We also know that, although this finding is based on a quite small sample, about 13% of young people—16 and 17-year-olds—achieve no GCSE passes at all. However, that is not where the emphasis is. When all the results are published, we publish league tables and show everyone delightedly jumping up and down with their passes, and that is great; we should do that. But what everyone tends to overlook is that huge cohorts of young people are achieving nothing out of their education. I want to focus on that.

We need to take into account the vulnerabilities that the Children's Society and others have identified, because there is a connection between those vulnerabilities and educational attainment, which I will talk about shortly. A lot of these young people are in poor health. A lot have low satisfaction with life. Just think about being 16 or 17 and being able to identify that you have a low level of satisfaction with life. I suspect that many of these young people experience household poverty. Others feel “useless”. Again, imagine being 16 or 17 and thinking that you are useless. And of course there are those who have caring responsibilities, which is a growing problem among young people.

I do not want to enter into a discussion about sociological despair, because I know where that leads. I am not saying that we do not have to take that into account, but if we say that that is all there is, the consequence is that we do not do anything about the problems. We have to focus on the things that can be done to resolve those problems.

It is important to say that people cannot escape the environment in which they live. They cannot leave at the school gates all the problems in the household or the neighbourhood, which tend to follow people around. The problems that exist in the community also exist, in a slightly different form, in the school itself, but we cannot expect schools to be the only people who can compensate for the problems in people's lives. In my view, we already overload teachers far too much. We have to look at what other things can be done and who can do them in order to address the problems.

I shall just make three suggestions and then conclude. First, some young people, when they have got to 14 or 15 years of age, have got to the point in their school career where, frankly, the next few years are going to be a complete waste of time. They have fallen so far behind that they are likely to be in that cohort that does not achieve any GCSEs, and attendance at school is sporadic. Sometimes—not in Knowsley, but in other places—some schools overlook absenteeism, because it is better not to have some pupils in the school at all, given the disruption that they cause.

Some young people reach a point at which they need something else in their life. They need some other way of getting back on track to gain some relevant qualifications, some relevant skills. The Department for Education is looking at different options—I welcome this—for alternative provision. Some alternative provision is excellent and provides the sorts of opportunities that I am talking about, but it needs to be said that some of it, to be brutally honest, is no more than cut-price childminding. I hope that the Minister's Department will start to identify those projects and schemes that can do the work that is necessary with those young people and eliminate the cut-price childminding, which frankly is all too prevalent in some parts of the country.

The second thing that we need to do more of, as the hon. Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) mentioned, is to take a more holistic view by working not just with the young people, but with their families. These problems do not appear out of thin air. If there are—as sadly is the case in some families in my constituency—five generations of worklessness in a family, stretching back to the Thatcher Government years, when manufacturing in Knowsley was stripped out almost completely, there is a problem, because no one knows any longer what the relevance of school is. If the future is a life on benefits or of involvement in crime—or a combination of the two—what is the relevance of school? We have to intervene with those families to find ways of getting them to understand the importance of children's having the opportunities to develop the talent that they have—many of them do have talent. I very much support the idea of that kind of approach.

The final point that I want to highlight is this. There is tremendous scope for mentoring. I know that it became quite trendy in the 1990s to talk about mentoring. Some of it worked and some of it did not. I am not talking about professional mentoring, but there are people in every community—there are many of them in

Knowsley—who have successfully brought up their own families. Their children may have gone into useful, productive employment; they may have gone to university. Those people have a contribution to make. Many of them are retired but still fit and well, healthy, and lively in their minds. We have to find ways of linking those people up with families who are struggling, and we need to be very strategic about the way we do that. There is help and advice out there for those families; we just have to find ways of linking them with those people who can provide that help.

I shall conclude by simply saying this. There is a huge challenge that many of us avert our gaze from in our society. The huge challenge is that young people are not achieving what they ought to be at school, yet no one is providing the right alternatives, the right advice and the right framework of support that they need in order to do that. This is not rocket science. I hope that the Minister will take that heartfelt plea on my part seriously, because it is not that difficult to do it. We must have some resources, but more important is the will to do it.

3.59 pm

**Brendan O'Hara** (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): It is, as always, a pleasure to see you in the Chair, Ms Buck. I, too, pay tribute to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Steve McCabe) for his passionate, informed and heartfelt speech. He spoke for many of us when he highlighted the consequences of the UK Government's continued austerity for vulnerable young people and those who are trying to help them.

The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) and the right hon. Member for Knowsley (Mr Howarth) made their usual thoughtful contributions, detailing the real consequences for individual children of not getting this right—the social problems and the educational attainment problems.

The hon. Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) is absolutely right that early intervention is vital. Supporting families, where possible, is something I wholeheartedly agree with. The hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Alex Burghart) said that the issue of children in need was not a marginal issue, but had too often become so. He is right that far too often in the past we have looked at its symptoms rather than its causes. The hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Bambos Charalambous) said that vulnerable children become vulnerable adults. That is incredibly simple, but it is an incredible truth, which we have to accept. Their problems do not go away, but follow them through life. That is why early intervention is essential if we are going to address this issue.

**Giles Watling** (Clacton) (Con): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is good to take a holistic view of these issues and not just deal with the symptoms? We are looking at many generations of poor parenting, which we have to address. We cannot just deal with the symptoms of the children. If we improved the quality of the parenting, we would start to bring those children into a good place, where they could get a decent education and life.

**Brendan O'Hara:** That holistic approach is something that I will come on to. It is more than good parenting; it is a societal issue. We have to change the culture of how we address these issues, rather than focusing simply on improving parents.

[*Brendan O'Hara*]

The hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Paul Farrelly) gave a powerful testimony focusing on the serious gap in local provision in his area of north Staffordshire. I would like to be a fly on the wall in his meeting with the health officials tomorrow.

Much of what we have discussed is wholly devolved to the Scottish Government. I will share the experience of Scotland, so that we may learn from each other across these islands in this vital area of supporting children in need, vulnerable young people, children with disability and those in care, helping them in that transition to adulthood. We believe it is absolutely essential for the good of us all that children, regardless of their personal circumstances, receive all the support they require to ensure that they can make that transition into adulthood and flourish into the happy, well-adjusted adults that they deserve to be.

I was delighted, therefore, that Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland's First Minister, in her programme for Government on Tuesday, promised a further £33 million to local authorities to provide targeted initiatives, activities and resources that will help to improve educational outcomes, specifically for care-experienced young people. I wholeheartedly welcome her pledge that the Scottish Government will incorporate directly into domestic law the principles of the UN convention on the rights of the child.

One of the most important pieces of legislation in recent years in Scotland was the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, which gives all children in Scotland the right to be protected from abuse and neglect. It is the cornerstone of the Scottish Government's strategy for making Scotland the best place in the world for a child to grow up. The 2014 Act directs public services towards early years intervention. Early intervention and family support are critical. The legislation actively encourages prevention measures, rather than responding to crisis in later life.

The 2014 Act establishes a new legal framework within which services have to work together in support of children and their families. It is underpinned by the Scottish Government's early commitment to the UN convention on the rights of the child. It seeks to establish a more holistic understanding of child wellbeing and how we, as a society, support our most vulnerable children, helping them to become the happy, well-adjusted young adults we wish them to be.

One of the many initiatives in the Scottish Government's programme is "Getting it right for every child", which is a national approach to improving outcomes and the wellbeing of our young people by offering the right help at the right time from the right people. "Getting it right for every child" supports young people and their parents into working in partnerships with the services that can help them best. It is designed to empower children, young people and their parents by, first and foremost, recognising and promoting their rights. That means putting their needs at the heart of any service delivery. "Getting it right for every child" builds on what most families already know: children benefit from a wide network of support, to promote and enhance their wellbeing. It is absolutely right that that support network should start with the family, but then the family can call on social services, the health service and the education

services for support, as and when they need it. We all know how important it is to have a positive support network when transitioning into adult life.

The Scottish Transition Forum is another initiative from the Scottish Government. It encourages people to work collaboratively, share learning, identify gaps in current provision and generate solutions. Currently, it has 800 members. It is open to anybody who is committed to improving that transition experience for young people with additional support needs. Crucially, the Scottish Transition Forum involves those young people with additional support needs, their parents and carers in defining its policy.

The Scottish Government have also created the Care Experienced Employability Programme, which is helping hundreds of care-leaving youngsters between the ages of 16 and 29 to move into appropriate work, training and educational opportunities. It will deliver intensive support to young people who are often excluded from attaining their full potential because of their circumstances. It offers work experience, qualifications, practical skills, community projects and life coaching, all of which will be focused on the individual young person. The CEEP is a good example of the Government working with the third sector—in this case Barnardo's Scotland, Action for Children and the Prince's Trust, which have come together to form a young persons' consortium in order to deliver that programme. There is so much being done in this holistic approach in Scotland. I advise the Minister, if he has not already, to speak to his counterpart in Edinburgh to see how Scotland is developing this programme.

Time is pressing, so I will be brief. In Scotland, local authorities have a statutory duty to prepare young people for leaving care once they cease to be looked after. They must also provide assistance to young people who have ceased to be looked after on or after their 16th birthday, and are legally required to provide after-care support until that care leaver turns 19. It is vital that young people are not cast out of the care system and left to fend for themselves; that is a recipe for disaster, which we have seen so often. To ensure that the Scottish Government are doing all they should for children in care, they have recently set up an independent care review, which will look at the existing legislation and the current practices, culture and ethos of the care system in Scotland. It will listen to the voice of young people in care and those who have been through the care system.

When she launched the care review, the First Minister said:

"Every young person should have an equal opportunity to succeed in life, no matter their circumstances. We should celebrate the progress that has been made that has allowed many of our young people who grow up in care to do great things...this review is not about determining if this can be achieved, but how we create a system that puts love for the children it cares for at its heart."

Help and support for children is not an event, but a lifetime commitment by society. If we see it as an event, we are destined to fail. While in Scotland things may not be perfect, we put the needs of our young people at the heart of policy making and political thinking. That is the only way we can get this right. If we do not put young people at the heart, we will not get it right for them. As I said, we may not be there yet, but there is a firm commitment to make Scotland the best place in the world for children to grow up.

4.9 pm

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck** (South Shields) (Lab): It is a pleasure to see you in the Chair, Ms Buck. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Steve McCabe) for securing this important debate on supporting children in need in adulthood. His excellent speech showed us yet again the valuable knowledge and expertise he has regarding children in need.

Yesterday, I reminded the Minister of the dire state of children's social care thanks to his Government's lack of cohesive strategic direction and swingeing cuts to local authorities. Early intervention grants have been slashed by up to £600 million, there is a predicted £2 billion gap in local authorities' budgets for children's social care by 2020 and, according to the National Children's Bureau, more than one in three councillors are warning that those cuts have left them with insufficient resources to support children. It was recently revealed that 41% of children's services are unable to fulfil even their statutory duties. The troubled families programme, which saw the demise of dedicated child in need teams, has spent more than £1.3 billion and had no measurable impact on families. Wider support services, youth services, family support workers—the services that children in need relied on—have fallen prey to the Government's austerity programme and are disappearing.

In that environment, in any organisation, the roles and responsibilities that have the weight of legislation behind them—the things that absolutely must be done—are always the ones that take prominence. There is no legal requirement for local authorities to continue to support children in need when they turn 18, so it should come as no surprise that those children, on the cusp of adulthood, fall into the abyss. Looking at the current figures for 16 and 17-year-olds classed as children in need, that means that approximately 58,000 children are being cast adrift.

The referral rate to children's services for those aged 16 to 17 years old is the same as for children of other ages, but they are less likely to be accepted for services and help as children in need. If they are, they are less likely to be subject to future support under a child protection plan than younger children. I do not know about other hon. Members, but at 18 years old, I do not feel that I was ready to make important decisions or to make my own way in the world. I still needed support, and I was damn lucky that I had it, but these children in need often do not. They are grappling with multiple intersecting challenges that many adults would not be able to cope with—and many are grappling with those issues alone.

Department for Education figures show that such children are more likely to go missing or be victims of sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation. They are more likely to have mental health issues or substance misuse issues, and more likely to be homeless or not in education or training. Those serious issues are not fleeting; they can leave enduring and deeply painful physical and emotional scars that last throughout people's lives.

Similarly, children in need are not given prominence in terms of access to child and adolescent mental health support, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Paul Farrelly) mentioned. That is not surprising, because cuts to CAMHS have reached more than £50 million and some children are waiting 18 months

for treatment. Despite half of mental health problems being present by the age of 14, across England, only 8% of mental health funding goes to services for children and young people.

According to the Children's Society, 16 and 17-year-old children in need are three times more likely to cite child sexual exploitation as a factor in their assessment than 15-year-olds. Sexual exploitation is vastly underreported, and it is likely that even that is an underestimate. In a report that looked at 16 and 17-year-olds, the Children's Society found that 50% do not feel that it is worth reporting something to the police. That is for a good reason: 75% of reported cases of sexual offences against 16 and 17-year-olds result in no police action. Again, that is no surprise when up to 43 police forces have pleaded with the Government about cuts that are leading to impossible workloads and delays in investigating complex child sexual exploitation cases.

**Alex Burghart:** The hon. Lady is raising important points. How much money would a future Labour Government commit to children's services, and specifically to the issues that she has raised? How would that money be raised, given that it did not feature in "Funding Britain's Future", the document that Labour published in advance of last year's general election?

**Mrs Lewell-Buck:** I ask the hon. Gentleman to go and read our manifesto again, because threaded through our manifesto were things to help children, such as investment in mental health and in school counselling. Unlike his own party's manifesto, it was all fully costed. I would have another look if I were him.

As referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak, the Children's Society estimates that 12,000 children who approach local authorities at risk of homelessness are sent away without an assessment even taking place. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 does not address the vulnerability of 16 and 17-year-olds, who are often sent back to their families, which are the source of the issues that they face such as domestic violence or substance abuse. It is no wonder that those children in need are more likely to go missing, or that they become another statistic in the ever-burgeoning rough sleeping stats.

All those factors make it even more disappointing that the Government's long-awaited child in need review is narrow in focus, and will look only at the educational outcomes of children in need. Of course, I acknowledge that children in need have poorer educational outcomes than their peers, and I wholeheartedly echo the comments of my right hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley (Mr Howarth), but focusing only on educational outcomes—there are approximately 390,000 children in need—and ignoring the other difficulties they are suffering that we have discussed is a little short-sighted.

Respectfully, the Minister should take note of his Department's figures, because they show stable numbers of children in need, but a high rate of re-referrals. In short, people are not getting the service they need first time round, and things are reaching a crisis point. The Children's Society found that one in three 16 and 17-year-olds who were referred to children's services were re-referrals from within one or two years. The reasons for those re-referrals were that their needs did not previously meet the threshold but their situation had now escalated,

[Mrs Lewell-Buck]

or that their initial referral did not resolve the issues. Sadly, at that stage, there is no time available to address those now acute issues, because when they turn 18, their case will be closed.

This cohort of young people are in desperate need of a Government who care about their future. The Minister has an opportunity today to prove that they do. He could commit to exploring changes to legislation and/or guidance that would allow properly resourced transitional plans to be put in place for children in need who are approaching 18, similar to those for children who have been looked after—a suggestion that has been advocated by my hon. Friends. He could commit to letting us know what cross-departmental pressure he will put on his colleagues to address the gaping holes in mental health provision and policing, and, vitally, to properly fund children's social care.

It will simply not be enough, nor will it be acceptable, to say that those children's needs will be addressed by adult services, should they need them. We all know that that just will not happen. I cannot think of any other scenario where people are identified as being in desperate need of help but they are deemed no longer worthy of that support and their case is closed, purely because of their age. I sincerely hope the Minister will not let us down in his response and, more importantly, I hope he will not let these children down.

4.18 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Nadhim Zahawi):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Ms Buck.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Steve McCabe) on securing this important debate. He takes a keen interest in the subject in his valuable role as chair of the all-party parliamentary group for looked-after children and care leavers. I echo the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) in saying that this is such an important subject that we are here on a Thursday afternoon to debate it. I thank the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Bambos Charalambous), the right hon. Member for Knowsley (Mr Howarth), the hon. Members for Strangford and for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Paul Farrelly) and my hon. Friends the Members for Brentwood and Ongar (Alex Burghart) and for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) for their contributions, and many other hon. Members for their interventions.

The Government are committed to ensuring that all vulnerable children receive the support they need to fulfil their potential, which means getting the support right throughout childhood and as they make the transition to adulthood. I will discuss children in need and care leavers, because both groups have been mentioned today. There are important, indeed fundamental, differences between children who are looked after and other children in need, for whom their parents still retain responsibility. We know that care leavers can experience extra barriers when making the transition into adulthood, including financial hardship and the difficulty of living independently at a young age. That is why we have extended the support that we provide to the children for whom we—the state—have corporate parenting responsibilities, where

the baton of parenting has been passed on to us for all sorts of harrowing reasons. However, it is of course vital that we also support children in need to make a successful transition to adulthood. That requires the identification of needs and appropriate responses by a range of agencies working in partnership. Our key statutory guidance, "Working together to safeguard children", describes how agencies should jointly agree on and deliver joined-up support for children in need.

We know that children's needs may change as they get older and that older children are likely to have very different needs from younger children. The recent update to the "Working together" guidance is clear that local authorities should consider new approaches, such as contextual safeguarding for older children, if current approaches are not meeting their needs; some very good work on that has been done in the London borough of Hackney. The guidance also offers links to further advice regarding child sexual exploitation.

The update to "Working together" also makes it clear that known transition points for a child should be planned for in advance, including situations where children are likely to transition between child and adult services. The hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme challenged his two clinical commissioning groups on this issue, although I will not comment other than to say that I will ensure that his remarks are passed on to the relevant Minister in the Department of Health and Social Care. As I say, such work includes identifying the points where children are likely to transition between child and adult services. The local authority should hold a review around the time of the child's 18th birthday to consider whether support services are still required, and to discuss with the child and their family what might be needed, based on a reassessment of the child's needs.

For all children, getting the best possible education is a critical part of preparing for adulthood; the right hon. Member for Knowsley focused on that point. That is why this Government are delivering on our manifesto commitment to review the educational outcomes of children in need. We have already published significant new data and analysis on the educational achievement of children in need, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar for his remarks about the work we are doing. We have received submissions in response to our call for evidence from hundreds of professionals and organisations on what works in practice to improve outcomes. The review is now considering the responses to the call for evidence and conducting further analysis to understand what works in practice to improve educational outcomes for these children.

I want that review to be tightly defined, impactful and focused on evidence. These issues are complex ones, as I think has been demonstrated in the debate today, but if we open things out too widely and try to solve everything, we are in danger of solving nothing. Having said that, our data and analysis publication looks beyond education at NEETs' outcomes. As part of the data strand of the review, we are examining the possibility of linking with other datasets to understand more about employment outcomes.

The pupil premium was mentioned by a number of colleagues. Children in need have additional needs, which are catered for through the education system. Already the majority of children in need receive support in schools through pupil premium funding. We have provided

over £13 billion of additional funding since 2011, targeted at reducing the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. Since 2011, that gap has been reduced at both the age of 11 and the age of 16.

Of all children in need, 49% receive support due to a special educational need or disability. The SEND code of practice explicitly states that all children and young people, whether or not they have an education health and care plan, should be prepared for adulthood and that this preparation should start early. For the 23% of all children in need on an EHCP, there must be an explicit focus from year nine onwards on preparation for adulthood.

Data published in the “Review of Children in Need” document has shown that children in need are more likely than their peers not to be in education, employment or training. We are determined to ensure that disadvantaged students are properly supported in their post-16 education. The Government have invested significantly—£7 billion in the last academic year—to ensure that there is a place in training or education for every 16 to 19-year-old. That is for all young people, regardless of whether they have had involvement with children’s social care. Local authorities have a statutory duty to identify and support all young people who are not in education, employment or training. We are extremely proud—I am extremely proud—that young people are now participating in education, employment or training at the highest levels since consistent records began, although we rightly recognise that there is still much more to do for some young people.

Regarding the funding for 16 to 19-year-olds, we want to make sure that vulnerable children are accessing education beyond the age of 16. In 2017-18, about £520 million was allocated to providers through the national funding formula to attract and retain disadvantaged 16 to 19-year-olds and to support students with SEND. We have also provided around £130 million directly to the young people who need the most help, to cover costs such as transport, which was mentioned in one of the interventions, and course equipment, through the 16-to-19 bursary fund. This fund is available to children who have vulnerabilities such as disability, or who are living independently without the financial support of their family.

Regarding wider outcomes, mental health was mentioned. Although education is of course critical to the long-term outcomes of children in need, in some areas that affect these children disproportionately we are working as a Government to improve services—specifically mental health, child sexual exploitation and of course homelessness services. Poor mental health can have a profound impact on the entirety of a child’s life, which is why we are investing an additional £1.4 billion nationally to transform children and young people’s mental health services.

Time is short and I would like to leave a minute for the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak to respond to the debate. The only other thing I will say now is that I was very pleased to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar mention the troubled families programme, through which we are now spending £920 million to help 400,000 families. Given that a man with his experience is saying that that is the area we should focus on, I will certainly champion that programme and ensure that our voice is heard in the imminent strategic review.

I thank the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Brendan O’Hara) for his passionate articulation of what is happening in Scotland. In England, we are also supporting care leavers. We have extended the support that we provide to the children for whom we, the state, have corporate parenting responsibilities, and the offer of support from local authorities now extends to the age of 25. In addition, personal advisers can help care leavers to get support from mainstream providers as well as provide, or help to facilitate, access to practical and emotional support.

As time is short, I shall end there. Suffice it to say that a number of colleagues made some other important points, including about care leaver accommodation. Of course, my great friend and passionate advocate for family hubs, the hon. Member for Congleton, who I look forward to visiting—

**Mrs Lewell-Buck:** Will the Minister give way?

**Nadhim Zahawi:** I have no time left to give way, because I think we are ending at 4.30 pm and there is only a minute to go, which I want to give to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak to respond—

**Ms Karen Buck (in the Chair):** I think that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak is indicating that he may not wish to speak.

**Steve McCabe:** I am happy not to respond to the debate.

**Nadhim Zahawi:** If the hon. Gentleman is happy not to speak again, I am happy to give way to the hon. Member for South Shields.

**Mrs Lewell-Buck:** I thank the Minister for giving way. I am just a little confused about his response to the debate. Children in need are a distinct category from those requiring child protection, looked-after children and care leavers, but most of his comments in his response to the debate were about other distinct categories of children in need and not about the distinct category of children in need themselves. I am just a little baffled by his response. I appreciate that he does not have time now, but could he put in writing to me what the Department is doing about children in need—not looked-after children and not care leavers, but children in need?

**Nadhim Zahawi:** I am very grateful to you, Ms Buck, for allowing that intervention, but I suspect that the hon. Lady, the shadow Minister, may not have been listening to me, because I actually talked very specifically about our document, “Review of Children in Need”, to which we committed in our manifesto, unlike the hon. Lady herself, who could not answer my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar on the funding that she is asking for in order to spend more. I am happy to give her a copy of my speech, which was all about children in need.

4.30 pm

*Motion lapsed, and sitting adjourned without Question put (Standing Order No. 10(14)).*





# Written Statements

Thursday 6 September 2018

## BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

### Energy Consumers Support Update

**The Minister for Energy and Clean Growth (Claire Perry):** In line with the commitment we made in the clean growth strategy, the Department has been working alongside the implementation of the Each Home Counts review to develop a digitally led consumer energy efficiency advice service. I am committed to ensuring that all consumers are able to access trusted impartial energy efficiency advice in order to reduce their bills, make their homes warmer and cut their homes' carbon emissions. A key element of this will be a call centre to assist those unable to use the website.

The Department is procuring this call centre presently. The selected supplier, Sitel UK Ltd, has indicated that it requires an indemnity in respect of liabilities that it may incur if employees of a former subcontractor providing telephone-based services bring employment law claims against it in light of the alleged application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE).

In relation to this, I am writing to inform you of a departmental minute which will be presented to Parliament today, giving notice of the Department incurring this contingent liability in the form of indemnity protection provided to Sitel UK Ltd.

We believe it is appropriate to incur this contingent liability, to ensure that trusted impartial energy efficiency advice can be provided to all consumers without further delay. We consider the provision of this liability as the best value for money option to ensure the new service is available to all.

[HCWS937]

## TREASURY

### Informal ECOFIN

**The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr Philip Hammond):** An informal meeting of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) will be held in Vienna on 7 and 8 September 2018. The Council will discuss the following:

*Working lunch—The European Investment Bank: achievements and future challenges*

Based on a presidency issues note, the Council will discuss the achievements and future challenges of the European Investment Bank (EIB).

#### WORKING SESSION I

The Council will then be joined by central bank governors for the first working session.

*Financial stability implications of increasing interest rates*

Following a presentation from the Centre for European Policy Studies, the Council will discuss the financial stability implications of increasing interest rates.

*The economic potential and risk of crypto assets*

Following a presentation from Bruegel, the Council will discuss the economic potential and risks of crypto assets.

#### WORKING SESSION II

*MFF 2021-27: Deepening of the economic and monetary union*

The Council will discuss issues in the context of the multiannual financial framework (MFF) for the period 2021-27 and deepening of the economic and monetary union. Specifically, the Council will exchange views on proposals in relation to the InvestEU programme and the approach for strengthening structural reforms and macroeconomic stabilisation in the eurozone.

#### WORKING SESSION III

*Fair taxation of the digital economy*

The Council will exchange views in regards to fair taxation of the digital economy.

[HCWS942]

### National Insurance Contributions

**The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Robert Jenrick):** The Government are announcing today that they will not proceed with the abolition of class 2 national insurance contributions (NICs) during this Parliament.

This change was originally intended to simplify the tax system for the self-employed. We delayed the implementation of this policy in November to consider concerns relating to the impact on self-employed individuals with low profits. We have since engaged with interested parties to explore the issue, and further options for addressing any unintended consequences.

A significant number of self-employed individuals on the lowest profits would have seen the voluntary payment they make to maintain access to the state pension rise substantially. Having listened to those likely to be affected by this change we have concluded that it would not be right to proceed during this Parliament, given the negative impacts it could have on some of the lowest earning in our society.

Furthermore, it has become clear that, to the extent that the Government could address these concerns, the options identified introduce greater complexity to the tax system, undermining the original objective of the policy.

The Government remain committed to simplifying the tax system for the self-employed, and will keep this issue under review in the context of the wider tax system and the sustainability of the public finances.

The Government still intend to legislate for reforms to the NICs treatment of termination payments and income from sporting testimonials, which were set out in the draft NICs Bill published on 5 December 2016. These are important changes to ensure the NICs treatment is consistent with the treatment of income tax in previous Finance Acts. We will set out further details in due course.

[HCWS944]

### Public Service Pension Schemes: Quadrennial Valuations

**The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Elizabeth Truss):** We undertake valuations of the public service pension schemes every four years. This is the first time that a full assessment of the pension schemes has been undertaken since the Government introduced reformed schemes in 2015. The reform of the schemes addressed the rising cost of pensions, rebalancing taxpayer and member costs to ensure that public pensions were put on to an affordable and sustainable footing. The valuations are important as they ensure that the full costs of the schemes are understood and fully recognised by Government.

Today I am publishing a document that sets out how the valuations are to be conducted this year. The document sets a range of assumptions that Departments and the Scottish and Welsh Governments must use in finalising their valuations of public service pension schemes. Our initial results show that the protections in the new cost cap mechanism mean public sector workers will get improved pension benefits for employment over the period April 2019 to March 2023. This test, known as the cost control mechanism, was introduced to offer taxpayers and employees protection from unexpected changes in pension costs. Where the value of the pension scheme to employees has changed from the levels set when reformed pension schemes were introduced in 2015, steps must be taken to return costs to that level.

There are currently more than 5 million active members of the public service pensions schemes, which cover the NHS, teachers, the armed forces, the police, firefighters, local government workers, judiciary and civil servants. The outcome of the valuations and the cost control mechanism will be confirmed later this year. Secretaries of State, and Scottish and Welsh Ministers, will then consult the appropriate scheme advisory board, which consist of member and employer representatives for each of the pension schemes, to reach agreement on the steps to be taken to return costs to their target level. Where it is not possible to reach agreement, the legislation provides that remedy will be delivered by increasing the rate at which pension benefits accrue. Changes will be implemented with effect from April 2019. An additional process operates in the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) (England and Wales) run by the LGPS England and Wales Scheme Advisory Board. In accordance with stated policy, this will be allowed to complete before the HM Treasury cost control mechanism is tested.

We committed to keep the cost control mechanism under review. I will therefore be asking the Government Actuary to undertake a review of the mechanism to check whether it is working as intended and delivering the Government's objective to protect taxpayers and workers from unforeseen changes in pension costs. We are committed to fairly remunerating public sector workers and to implementing the results of the valuations, but it is right that we examine whether the mechanism is operating appropriately and in line with the original policy intentions. The scope of the review will be limited to the design of the cost cap mechanism. The review will conclude in time for the next four-yearly round of valuations.

In addition, early indications are that the amount employers pay towards the schemes will need to increase. This is because of proposed changes to the discount

rate, which is used to assess the current cost of future payments from the schemes, to reflect the Office for Budget Responsibility's long-term growth forecasts. Further details will be known later this year. Some increase in costs was anticipated at Budget 2016, which Departments and the devolved Administrations will need to meet in full. The Treasury will be supporting Departments with any unforeseen costs for 2019-20. Further discussions will be taken forward as part of the spending review.

The document is being published in draft form to allow employee representatives, public service employers and Departments time to comment. Decisions will be confirmed later in the autumn, following statutory consultation with the Government Actuary.

[HCWS945]

## DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### Appointments

**The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Jeremy Wright):** I am today laying two statements before Parliament to fulfil my statutory duty under paragraph 9 of schedule 1 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969 and paragraph 5(2) of the schedule to the British Library Act 1972.

I am the appointing authority for 23 current board members for the British Library Board, the British Tourism Authority Board (VisitBritain) and the English Tourist Board (VisitEngland). The legislation for these bodies determines that statements should be laid before Parliament for all board appointments and sums payable for these appointments as soon as possible after the first appointment is made.

As a consequence of an historic oversight this statutory duty has not been fulfilled for 16 of these appointments. These statements are now being laid to correct this error.

The Department accepts full responsibility and apologises to the House and I have taken action to ensure my Department fulfils the statutory duty for all future appointments to these boards.

Attachments can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2018-09-06/HCWS939/>.

[HCWS939]

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

### Hong Kong: Six-monthly Report

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr Jeremy Hunt):** The latest six-monthly report on the implementation of the Sino-British joint declaration on Hong Kong was published today, and is available online. It covers the period from 1 January to 30 June 2018. The report has been placed in the Library of the House. A copy is also available on the Foreign and

Commonwealth Office website ([www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office)). I commend the report to the House.

Attachments can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2018-09-06/HCWS943/>.

[HCWS943]

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Bill

**The Minister for Security and Economic Crime (Mr Ben Wallace):** I am today placing in the Libraries of both Houses the Department's analysis of the application of Standing Order 83L of the Standing Orders of the House in respect of the Government amendments tabled for Commons Report stage of the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Bill scheduled for 11 September 2018. The analysis should be read alongside annex C to the explanatory notes to the Bill.

[HCWS941]

### Migration Policy

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sajid Javid):** The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Surrey Heath (Michael Gove) and I are pleased to announce that our Departments will implement a nationwide pilot to bring non-EU migrant workers to UK farms, commencing in early 2019.

The pilot will mean fruit and vegetable farmers are able to employ migrant workers for seasonal work for up to six months. 2,500 workers from outside the EU will be able to come to the UK each year, alleviating labour shortages during peak production periods.

Soft fruit production in the UK has grown dramatically, by 130% in the last 20 years. To ensure that this growth continues and the UK is at the forefront of the next agriculture revolution, farmers must also look at ways that technology can reduce demands for labour.

However, automated harvesting solutions are not universally available and so in the short term this pilot will support farmers during peak production periods.

The seasonal workers pilot will be run by two scheme operators, who will oversee the placement of the workers. The arrangements for selecting these will be announced in due course.

The pilot will run until the end of December 2020 and will be monitored closely by the Home Office and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

[HCWS940]

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### Disability Update

**The Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work (Sarah Newton):** This Government's vision for disabled people is to create a society that works for everyone,

where all can participate fully, and be included. This vision aligns with the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (the convention), which protects and promotes the rights of disabled people.

In the UK everyone's rights are protected, including the rights of disabled people. The Government are always making improvements that reflect the intent of the convention. The UK has achieved a great deal and has been at the forefront of developments in equality and disability rights. But we are clear that more needs to be done. We are delivering improvements to ensure disabled people have the same opportunities for inclusion as people who are not disabled.

Our newly created inter-ministerial group on disability and society will drive forward co-ordinated action across Government to jointly tackle barriers to disabled people's full participation and inclusion in society, ensuring we drive through progress against the implementation of the convention. And we are strengthening our engagement with disabled people through constructive dialogue and collaboration.

Today I will place a copy of the report and letter that we have submitted to the UN outlining the UK's progress on protecting the rights of disabled people in a number of areas as set out under the convention in the Library of the House. Last year the UN reviewed the UK's implementation of the convention, and made a number of recommendations, asking us to respond to some of those within 12 months. This is a standard process for signatories. The recommendations covered independent living and being included in the community, work and employment and adequate standard of living and social protection, as well the UN's optional protocol inquiry that we responded to in 2016.

The response describes positive actions that we are taking in each of these areas, including:

We have made available a further £9.4 billion funding for social care in England between 2017-18 and 2018-19 to ensure that councils can increase the capacity of the social care system—an 8% real-terms increase over the current spending review period (2016-17 to 2019-20);

We are supporting more people whose health affects the way they do their job through Access to Work—over 25,000 people in 2016-17, an 8% increase on 2015-16, spending £104 million, up from £96 million. We also introduced a new tech fund under Access to Work to help disabled people to benefit from the latest advances in assistive technology; and

We will be spending an estimated £54 billion in 2018-19 on benefits to support disabled people and those with long-term health conditions, up from £44.7 billion in 2010-11—the highest ever.

We have made great progress, but there is always more we can do. Disabled people still face barriers to full inclusion, and we will continue to break these down, working with disabled people, the public, private and third sectors until everyone can participate in their community and achieve their aspirations.

[HCWS938]



# Petitions

*Thursday 6 September 2018*

## OBSERVATIONS

### HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

#### Travellers

*The Humble Petition of North East Hampshire and the wider United Kingdom,*

Sheweth,

That urgent action must be taken concerning unauthorised traveller encampments, which are a nuisance for local communities and a completely inappropriate use of open space—whether it is highway land, Ministry of Defence land, or otherwise; further that unauthorised encampments weaken community cohesion and cause local authority expenditure on eviction and the clearing up of illegal sites; further that we have discrimination in this country against the silent majority of hardworking, law-abiding residents of communities up and down the land; and further that more must be done to treat unauthorised traveller encampments as a criminal rather than civil matter by strengthening police powers to tackle illegal encampments and protecting them from legal challenge in the exercise of current powers.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House urges HM Government to take all possible steps to grant the police additional powers to remove illegal encampments where they are causing a public nuisance as determined by the decision of a principal local Council; further that the ability of travellers to play the planning system is removed by enshrining a presumption against illegal encampments whereby appellants cannot be resident while appealing; further that powers under

Section 62A of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 be extended to define caravan sites within 25 miles as relevant, in addition to those situated in the area of a local authority within whose area the land is situated; and further that Section 61 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 be amended to remove the conditions in subsection (1)—namely conditions (a) and (b) and the conditions of “two or more persons”, “reasonable steps have been by or on behalf of the occupier to ask them to leave”—in order to make it an offence for a trespasser to fail to comply with a direction by police to leave land and remove vehicles or property, as in Section 24 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002, an Act of the Parliament of the Republic of Ireland.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.—[Presented by Mr Ranil Jayawardena, *Official Report*, 13 June 2018; Vol. 642, c. 1045.]

[P002152]

*Observations from the Minister for Housing (Kit Malthouse):*

The Government are considering the responses received to the recently closed consultation on the effectiveness of the powers to deal with unauthorised developments and encampments.

The joint Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Home Office and Ministry of Justice consultation closed on 15 June, and sought views widely on the effectiveness of existing powers to address unauthorised sites.

The consultation touched on a broad range of issues, including the potential criminalisation of trespass, court processes, Government guidance, the provision of authorised sites, and the impact on settled and travelling communities.

The Government want to understand more about the issues around the effectiveness of existing powers before deciding what action to take in response to stakeholders' views.

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