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**HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY  
DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**Thursday 16 January 2020**

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# House of Commons

*Thursday 16 January 2020*

*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 Minister of State was asked—*

#### Full-fibre and Gigabit-capable Broadband

1. **Tracey Crouch** (Chatham and Aylesford) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to roll out full-fibre and gigabit-capable broadband to every home and business throughout the UK by 2025. [900200]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Matt Warman):** I begin by paying tribute to the former right hon. Member for Loughborough, who is now Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport from the Lords. She is still very much the Secretary of State, and following her elevation, she will shortly be watching us from the Public Gallery. She will take questions—[*Interruption.*] She will be here shortly. She will take questions in the Lords herself next week.

I also pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch). She asks about one of the few areas in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport for which she was not responsible, but she knows how vital gigabit broadband will be across the whole country. Finally, I pay tribute to the British people for rejecting Labour's economically and technologically illiterate broadband policy at the election.

**Tracey Crouch:** The Government's ambition for full fibre is to be applauded, but while coverage is generally good across the majority of my constituency, I still receive regular complaints from residents and businesses that are unable to access even superfast broadband, including in significant pockets of urban areas such as Chatham, Aylesford, Ditton and Snodland, as well as more rural villages, where residents are deeply frustrated at the lack of coverage. With so many people and businesses reliant on access to decent broadband, what assurances can the Minister give that the future roll-out of broadband infrastructure will address those more localised notspots and that they will not simply be left behind?

**Matt Warman:** My hon. Friend is right that notspots are by no means confined to rural areas. Through the Government's voucher scheme, we are covering all of the country, and the 2025 commitment to gigabit broadband

remains. The crucial issue is the universal service obligation, of which she will be aware. Fifteen per cent. of her constituents get less than the 10 megabit limit. They will benefit from that later this year.

**Chi Onwurah** (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): This is my first questions session shadowing the Digital Minister, who, as a former tech journalist, knows something of his subject—and as a former telecoms engineer, so do I. We both know that in towns, villages and cities, everyone is suffering the consequences of a wasted decade. Under Labour, we rolled out first-generation broadband to half of all homes within a decade. But today, full-fibre broadband only reaches a mere 10% of homes, and we languish at the bottom of all the international tables. The Prime Minister has promised full-fibre broadband for everybody in five years. Does the Minister have a plan for that? Who will be delivering it? How much will it cost? Will it really be fibre or just gigabit capability—or are Big Ben's bongos the only telecoms infrastructure that he can plan for?

**Matt Warman:** As an engineer, I think the hon. Lady will know that a bell is not telecoms infrastructure, but we will leave that to one side. The important issue that she raises is one on which there is some cross-party agreement. We are completely committed to rolling out gigabit-capable networks across this country. That means building on the work of the superfast programme to ensure that we deliver the infrastructure needed across the country. The plan for that will come forward. I hope she will welcome the news that, immediately after questions, we will be heading to No. 10 to meet the broadband providers, to ensure that the industry can come together to deliver the best possible infrastructure, which this country needs.

**Dr Dan Poulter** (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich) (Con): The universal service obligation is welcome to my constituents in Suffolk and to many rural residents, but for rural businesses, the basic service commitment may well not be enough. What more can the Minister do to support rural businesses that need a large amount of broadband capacity to support their staff and expand their businesses?

**Matt Warman:** My hon. Friend is right to welcome the universal service obligation. Schemes such as our gigabit broadband voucher scheme allow businesses to access the far faster speeds that they need, and there is provision in due course to review whether 10 megabits is sufficient for the USO. I would like to see it go up as soon as it can.

**Cat Smith** (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab): Will the Minister congratulate my constituents who are involved with Broadband for the Rural North—B4RN—which prides itself on delivering full-fibre gigabit broadband, not just gigabit-capable broadband, to thousands of properties in my constituency? Phil Hughes from B4RN tells me that it is much cheaper sometimes to deliver this broadband in very rural areas than in semi-urban areas, where “in pavement” build is needed. Can the Minister clarify that the Government's new gigabit voucher scheme will also work for smaller, community interest companies such as B4RN?

**Matt Warman:** The hon. Member is absolutely right that B4RN does really great work and has been doing so for a number of years. It has a huge amount of expertise that I hope we can learn from when it comes to working across the country. One of the issues that we will be raising at the summit that I mentioned, which we will be heading to shortly, is street works. It is very important that that does not hold up works unnecessarily. She is of course also right to say that the voucher scheme needs to apply equally across the country in a way that works wherever people live.

**David Duguid (Banff and Buchan) (Con):** My constituency of Banff and Buchan is among those with the lowest coverage of superfast broadband in the whole United Kingdom. Aberdeenshire Council applied to the UK Government for additional support. One of the reasons it was declined, it was told, was that it was assumed that that would be covered by the Scottish Government's R100 programme—the Reaching 100% programme. Now that the Scottish Government have admitted that this is going to be at least two years behind, can we revisit the coverage in places such as Banff and Buchan, with support from the UK Government, to make up for the shortfall left by the Scottish Government?

**Matt Warman:** My hon. Friend is right to highlight the deeply disappointing delays to the R100 scheme administered by the Scottish Government. I will shortly be meeting my Scottish counterpart, Paul Wheelhouse, again to see how the Government can help the Scottish Government to go further and faster, because they certainly need to.

### Free TV Licences

2. **Ruth Jones (Newport West) (Lab):** If she will make it her policy to maintain free TV licences for people over the age of 75. [900201]

15. **Dame Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab):** If she will make it her policy to maintain free TV licences for people over the age of 75. [900214]

**The Minister for Sport, Media and Creative Industries (Nigel Adams):** The Government are disappointed with the BBC's decision to restrict the over-75 licence fee concession to those in receipt of pension credit. As we said in our manifesto, we recognise the value of the free TV licence for over-75s, and they should be funded by the BBC. We know that taxpayers want to see the BBC using its substantial licence fee income in an appropriate way to ensure it delivers for UK audiences.

**Ruth Jones:** If the Tories break their promise to older people and scrap their free TV licences, about 4,000 households in Newport West will be affected. This loss of free TV licences would be a disgraceful blow to some of the most vulnerable people in our society. No Government should force people to choose between heating and eating, or engaging with the outside world, so will the Minister finally listen and rethink the decision to scrap free TV licences for the over-75s?

**Nigel Adams:** May I gently remind the hon. Lady that the Government agreed a deal with the BBC in 2015? The director-general at the time said that it was “a strong deal for the BBC”,

and that it provided “financial stability”. It saw BBC income boosted by requiring iPlayer users to have a licence. We have unfrozen the licence fee for the first time since 2010 and, in return for this, we agreed that responsibility for the over-75 concession would transfer to the BBC in June 2020. The BBC needs to honour this agreement.

**Dame Diana Johnson:** I am sure that when the Minister was, like me, knocking on doors in November, he was struck by the number of older people who were living on their own who were relying on the TV for company. I think four out of 10 older people nationally do that—rely on the TV for company during the day and evenings. I heard what he said about being disappointed about what the BBC has done, but disappointment does not butter any parsnips, so what is he actually going to do about this to make sure that older people can keep their free TV licences?

**Nigel Adams:** The hon. Lady makes a very good point. It is really important that people over 75 who are on their own are able to get their TV licences paid, but I remind her of the words of the former shadow Secretary of State, Tom Watson, who had the very good sense to leave this place before the election. He actually admitted that this was a decision for the BBC. In an interview with LBC in late 2018, he actually criticised the BBC for accepting this deal. I will say again that Lord Hall said that the overall deal provided “financial stability”, and the

“government's decision here to put the cost of the over-75s on us has been more than matched by the deal coming back for the BBC.”

### Tourism Industry

3. **Lee Rowley (North East Derbyshire) (Con):** What steps her Department is taking to support the tourism industry throughout the UK. [900202]

11. **Mark Menzies (Fylde) (Con):** What steps her Department is taking to support the tourism industry throughout the UK. [900210]

14. **Adam Afriyie (Windsor) (Con):** What steps her Department is taking to support the tourism industry throughout the UK. [900213]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Helen Whately):** Tourism contributes £60 billion to the UK economy each year and my Department is committed to encouraging visitors from across the world to visit the whole United Kingdom. Our strong and growing tourism industry is good news for the economy and local communities, supporting small businesses and jobs up and down our country. The tourism sector deal will help to solve some of the industry's challenges and establish tourism zones in areas with great tourism ambitions. The £45 million Discover England fund encourages visitors to travel beyond London, contributing to levelling up across the country.

**Lee Rowley:** I thank the Minister for her response. As she will know, in constituencies such as mine, the tourism industry is heavily based on our industrial heritage and

history. The Chesterfield Canal Trust is midway through a restoration to celebrate its 250th anniversary in 2027; it is restoring the final nine miles of the canal. May I invite my hon. Friend to visit the Chesterfield canal to see the fantastic tourist offer in North East Derbyshire?

**Helen Whately:** I know that my hon. Friend has been working hard and lobbying a range of Ministers to support the regeneration of the Chesterfield canal—rightly so, as it is a fabulously ambitious project to restore that historic and beautiful waterway in time for its 250th anniversary. I would be delighted to visit to find out more.

**Mark Menzies:** As you are well aware, Mr Speaker, Fylde is at the heart of the Lancashire riviera, with fabulous beaches and world-class golf courses. With inadequate transport infrastructure, however, people struggle to access it. What representation is the Minister making in Government to ensure that people can visit our seaside gems?

**Helen Whately:** My hon. Friend is correct that our wonderful coastline, including in his constituency, is one of the great things that our country has to offer visitors. We are supporting coastal tourism, including with the £45 Discover England fund. The Government have also invested £229 million in the Coastal Communities fund—including in his area—and there is the English coast path. I completely agree, however, that we could and should be doing more to support our seaside attractions. I would be delighted to meet him to discuss his constituency's infrastructure requirements and to arrange a meeting with the Secretary of State for Transport to lobby on his behalf.

**Adam Afriyie:** Putting rivieras to one side, the Windsor constituency enjoys 7 million visitors a year and I would say it is one of the most attractive constituencies in the entire country. Yes, we are known for military and monarchy, but we also have two race courses—Ascot and Windsor—and two barracks, with regular parades in Windsor town centre. We have magnificent buildings such as Windsor castle and Windsor Great Park, as well as Legoland, which all our children enjoy. Does the Minister agree that investment in public transport and links to places outside London would make a huge difference when we are drawing tourists into parts of the country that are not the capital?

**Helen Whately:** My hon. Friend is an excellent advocate for his constituency and all its wonderful places to visit, including Legoland, which is popular with my children. I completely agree that visitors to the UK must be able to get to destinations outside London by public transport. I welcome our Government's commitment to investment in public transport. I want to make that travel as easy as possible for tourists. I would be happy to talk further with my hon. Friend if he has any specific suggestions to help visitors get to his constituency.

**Derek Twigg (Halton) (Lab):** Many of our northern towns have great tourist attractions, such as Norton priory in Runcorn and the Catalyst Science Discovery Centre in Widnes. What is the Minister doing to ensure there is more focus on getting tourism into our northern towns, not just concentrating on cities?

**Helen Whately:** I completely agree with the hon. Member. I am very keen as a Minister to ensure that visitors to the UK go beyond London and the great cities, important though those are, and get to the towns and further afield. That is one of the things that the £45 million Discover England fund supports, including with bookable packages to enable international visitors to come and travel further afield. I want that to go further in the months ahead.

**Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD):** I do not need to tell everyone in this place how beautiful Edinburgh is and how important it is to the tourism industry in this country generally. However, with our departure from the European Union, it will face a problem, not just day-to-day in the hospitality industry but every August with the festival; there is the issue of visas for foreign nationals coming from other EU countries. What will the Government do to ensure that important events, such as the Edinburgh International Festival, are not damaged by Brexit?

**Helen Whately:** I thank the hon. Lady for her question. As she will know, once we have left the EU with the withdrawal agreement on 31 January, visitor arrangements will not change. The arrangements for the future, however, will be subject to the relationship negotiations with the European Union. We are shifting to an immigration system that will deliver on the needs of the United Kingdom, rather than being dependent on where people come from. We will continue to engage with the tourism sector and the creative industries to ensure that the system works as they need it to.

**Mr David Jones (Clwyd West) (Con):** My hon. Friend will know that north Wales is one of the pre-eminent tourist destinations in the country, with over 30 million visits per annum. Increasingly, the area is specialising in adventure tourism, with such attractions as Plas Menai and the world's only inland surfing lagoon. Is she willing to meet me and representatives of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board to discuss the possibility of creating an adventure tourism zone in north Wales?

**Helen Whately:** That sounds very exciting, particularly the inland surfing lagoon. I am not sure whether my right hon. Friend is asking me to visit the destination itself, but I would be delighted to meet him and colleagues to discuss the opportunities.

#### Yorkshire: Access to Arts and Culture

4. **Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab):** What recent steps she has taken to improve access to arts and culture in Yorkshire. [900203]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Helen Whately):** Through Arts Council England, we have invested over £190 million in Yorkshire for arts and culture programmes since 2017, including six projects in the hon. Member's constituency. Last year, we also announced £18.5 million for the National Railway Museum in York, which will support a £55 million transformation project to create new exhibition space and restore heritage buildings to their original glory.



**Paul Blomfield:** I thank the Minister for her answer. She is right to highlight the one-off and capital funding that has been available. That is welcome, but she will know that the key challenges our regional museums face are the fall in revenue funding; extra inflationary pressures in the year ahead; and the continuing imbalance in funding between London and the regions. Does she agree that the Arts Council should do more to rebalance revenue funding for arts and culture towards the regions? Will she agree to meet me and the chief executive of Museums Sheffield, ideally at one of our excellent museums, to discuss the challenges they face?

**Helen Whately:** I can see that my diary will get very busy, but I am keen in my role to get out and about as far as I possibly can and spend time in regional museums, not just those in London. I point the hon. Gentleman particularly to the £125 million investment as part of the cultural investment fund, which will go in particular to regional museums and libraries to support their repair and maintenance. I am very keen to ensure that our regional museums thrive.

#### UNESCO World Heritage Sites

5. **Carol Monaghan** (Glasgow North West) (SNP): What steps the Government are taking to protect UNESCO world heritage sites throughout the world. [900204]

16. **Gavin Newlands** (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): What steps the Government are taking to protect UNESCO world heritage sites throughout the world. [900215]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Helen Whately):** There are over 1,000 UNESCO world heritage sites globally. The UK is the proud home to 32, six of which are in Scotland. The Government take their responsibilities under the world heritage convention very seriously. In recent years, we have sadly seen some of the world's great cultural treasures destroyed by conflict or natural disasters. We are working around the world to help to protect world heritage sites.

**Carol Monaghan:** Of course we are concerned about the destruction of cultural sites due to conflict. Any attack on one of these sites is an attack on our shared global history, but when we have President Trump tweeting one thing and his advisers saying the opposite, can we really trust the assurances that these sites will not be targeted in conflict?

**Helen Whately:** The targeting of cultural sites contravenes several international conventions to which the United States is a party, including the world heritage convention and the 1954 Hague convention. The Foreign Secretary was very clear that we expect those conventions to be adhered to.

**Gavin Newlands:** The lack of direct condemnation of Donald Trump's threats by either the Prime Minister or the Foreign Secretary was actually pretty shameful. Putting to one side for just a moment the Government's desperate need for a US trade deal, will the Minister do what her colleagues have failed to do and unequivocally condemn the White House and President Trump for his reckless and provocative threats?

**Helen Whately:** I think that my previous answer was very clear. The Foreign Secretary made it clear that he expected the conventions on world heritage to be adhered to.

**John Nicolson** (Ochil and South Perthshire) (SNP): I am sure that we are all comforted to know that the Secretary of State is watching us from the Gallery. Further to the questions from my colleagues, the next time the Minister speaks with the Secretary of State, who has been elevated to the Lords and so is beyond the reach of elected Members down here, will she ask whether she has had a firm guarantee from President Trump that he has withdrawn his threat? It is not enough to condemn the threat; has he withdrawn it and given that assurance?

**Helen Whately:** This questioning from the SNP feels slightly repetitive. I think that the United States can speak for itself on its policy towards heritage sites. As I have said, and as the Foreign Secretary has been very clear, we expect the international conventions to be adhered to.

#### Commonwealth Games 2022: Benefits to West Midlands

6. **Julian Knight** (Solihull) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to ensure that the 2022 Commonwealth games deliver benefits throughout the west midlands. [900205]

13. **Marco Longhi** (Dudley North) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to ensure that the 2022 Commonwealth games deliver benefits throughout the west midlands. [900212]

**The Minister for Sport, Media and Creative Industries (Nigel Adams):** Birmingham '22 will be the biggest sporting event ever held in the west midlands, with the region set to benefit from £778 million of public investment, and with venues spanning the whole region, from Cannock Chase in the north to Coventry and Leamington Spa in the south. With a cultural programme running alongside the games, there will be an opportunity for everyone in the west midlands to get involved.

**Julian Knight:** The Minister has proven a doughty champion for the Birmingham Commonwealth games. Will he take up his not inconsiderable cudgels once again and ask the Chancellor to provide the money requested by our regional Mayor, Andy Street, to fund the trade, tourism and investment programme to herald the start of these magnificent games?

**Nigel Adams:** I certainly will, and may I say that no one has done more than my hon. Friend to ensure that women's T20 cricket is included in the roster of sports for the games, which is very important? Birmingham 2022 offers fantastic opportunities beyond sport, and the Government are particularly keen to maximise those opportunities. The evidence from previous games demonstrates the positive economic impact that such events can have. The Glasgow 2014 games, for example, contributed more than £740 million to the Scottish economy.

**Marco Longhi:** Birmingham 2022 provides a great opportunity not only to attract additional visitors to the west midlands, but to increase jobs and skills in the region, so what steps is my hon. Friend taking to achieve that for the people of Dudley—and beyond, of course—in conjunction with our great Mayor, Andy Street?

**Nigel Adams:** May I first welcome my hon. Friend to his place? I know that he has done an awful lot of work for his local area as a councillor, and that he will be a fantastic voice for Dudley North. We are working closely with Andy Street and Birmingham City Council, with which we engage regularly. We want to make the most of the opportunities that my hon. Friend has rightly highlighted. The organising committee is expected to recruit 45,000 staff, contractors and volunteers. There will be 400 new jobs in the athletes' village alone, including 50 new apprenticeships.

**Catherine West** (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): May I, on the occasion of my first outing as shadow Sports Minister, congratulate the outgoing shadow Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Dr Allin-Khan), on her work on fairness in sport? May I also mention—this is between you and me, Mr Speaker—today's important announcement about rugby league, with a royal flourish? I hope that rugby league will receive the coverage that it deserves.

May I ask the Minister what steps the Department is taking to ensure that the 2022 Commonwealth games are carbon neutral, and—importantly—what actions can be taken now to improve the air quality at the venue so that in two years' time the health of athletes, residents and visitors can be paramount?

**Nigel Adams:** The hon. Lady has made a good point I regularly meet the organising committee and I chair the strategic board, and I know that Birmingham City Council is keen to see the outcomes to which she has referred. At our next strategic board meeting, next month, I will certainly raise those issues on her behalf.

### Leaving the EU: Creative Industries

7. **Andrew Lewer** (Northampton South) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to support the UK's creative industries in future trade negotiations after the UK leaves the EU. [900206]

**The Minister for Sport, Media and Creative Industries (Nigel Adams):** The creative industries are one of the leading lights of our economy, outpacing growth by two to one and employment growth by three to one. All our sectors, including films, television, music, fashion, publishing, design and advertising, are globally renowned for their creative excellence. We are working closely with industry representatives on a range of issues to ensure their continued success in a post-Brexit world.

**Andrew Lewer:** The United Kingdom exports more books and journals than any other country in the world, and, according to the Publishers Association, the UK generates £3.6 billion in export revenue every year. Will the Minister assure the publishing industry that it will be remembered and championed as new free trade agreements are negotiated around the world?

**Nigel Adams:** I know that my hon. Friend chairs the all-party parliamentary group on publishing, and he brings valuable experience to the House because his career was in that field before he entered it. The publishing industry is a highly valued contributor to our creative economy, here and abroad. The Publishers Association is a key member of the Government's export trade advisory group, and we will continue to work closely with it as trade negotiations progress.

**Tracy Brabin** (Batley and Spen) (Lab/Co-op): For the last three decades I have served my time as an actor in the medical shows "Casualty", "Holby City" and "Doctors", but breaking my ankle the day before my first DCMS outing is a plot point too far—so nobody say "Break a leg", please!

The creative industries are set to lose more than £40 million per year in EU funding. Stakeholders have told me that they are holding off scheduling tours after 2020 because they fear costly delays and cancellations caused by the complicated visa system. What steps is the Department taking to ensure that our creative industries can flourish across Europe? Is it planning to introduce creative visas and passports that will recognise their unique situation?

**Nigel Adams:** I welcome the hon. Lady to her position, and congratulate her on her stoicism in making it into the Chamber today. She stole my line about breaking a leg. However, I am pleased to note that the administration of discipline by the Labour Whips Office has not broken down since the election.

I can assure the hon. Lady that the free movement of people will end when we leave the EU, as is set out in the White Paper published in December. We will instead have a new immigration system based on skills, not nationality. We have made it clear that we will protect the rights of EU citizens in the UK after we leave. We have commissioned advice from the Migration Advisory Committee on various issues including salary thresholds, and we will be on top of this process over the course of the year.

### Topical Questions

T1. [900218] **Damian Collins** (Folkestone and Hythe) (Con): If she will make a statement on her departmental responsibilities.

**The Minister for Sport, Media and Creative Industries (Nigel Adams):** May I take this opportunity to congratulate my right hon. Friend the former Member for Loughborough on her elevation to the other place? We continue to work very closely together. She is still the Secretary of State, and it is good to see her watching over us with a beady eye this morning.

This week it was announced that gambling with the use of credit cards is to be banned throughout Britain from April, with the exception of non-remote lotteries. This is an important step: we are acting decisively on our manifesto commitment to take whatever action is necessary to protect vulnerable people from gambling-related harm. I should also like to use this opportunity to congratulate our on-screen and off-screen talent on their incredible success at the Golden Globes, where 40% of the awards went to Brits or to shows and films with a predominantly British-led production team. This clearly shows the exceptional talent that Britain has.

**Damian Collins:** It is important that we act to ensure that big social media companies do more to protect people from harmful content online, and that this should be overseen by an independent regulator with statutory powers to ensure that they do so. This major issue was looked at in the last Parliament by the Government and by the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee. Can the Minister confirm the press reports that the Government will respond in the next few weeks to the online harms White Paper, and that we can expect to see a Government Bill in this Parliament as well? I would be happy to accept either an answer from the Minister at the Dispatch Box or a positive hand gesture from the Secretary of State in the Gallery.

**Nigel Adams:** My hon. Friend is going to have to settle for an answer from the Box. We are committed to making the UK the safest place to be online and the best digital economy in the world. As the Prime Minister said at Prime Minister's questions, we are developing legislative proposals at pace and we will bring forward a Bill as soon as possible.

**Kevin Brennan** (Cardiff West) (Lab): My father used to enjoy a weekly 10 bob yankee down the bookies, but he would have been appalled at the sheer volume of advertising and the dodgy practices that are going on in picking on vulnerable people in relation to gambling. The Government seem to be following rather than leading events in this regard, with today's intervention from the NHS leadership adding to that. When are the Government going to introduce the new gambling Bill that is so long overdue? Will the Minister tell us that right now?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Helen Whately):** I am slightly surprised by the tone of the hon. Gentleman's question. The Government have been taking steady steps to increase protections to ensure that people can gamble safely, unlike previous Labour Administrations, who oversaw a huge liberalisation of gambling. As we committed to doing in our manifesto, we will be launching a review of the Gambling Act 2005, and work is going on right now to identify the scope and timeframe of that review.

T2. [900219] **Marco Longhi** (Dudley North) (Con): Many people have had their lives ruined by a gambling addiction, so I commend my hon. Friend for her decision to ban people from gambling using credit cards and therefore using money that they often do not have. What other steps are the Government taking to deal with the scourge of problem gambling?

**Helen Whately:** I thank my hon. Friend for his question. He is absolutely right to raise this again, because there is a huge level of concern about gambling in this country. As he says, we announced this week that we were banning gambling on credit cards, because we know that that is particularly harmful. We are also going to review the Gambling Act to ensure that it is fit for the modern age. Also, in healthcare, there is increasing support for people who are struggling with gambling addiction, including 14 new clinics being opened to provide specialist support.

T3. [900220] **Brendan O'Hara** (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): It is six months to the day since the Government announced that the limits on charity lotteries would be raised, but to the frustration of charities and good causes, nothing has been done and they are losing millions of pounds of potential funding. Could the Minister perhaps text the Public Gallery and ask the Secretary of State when this will be done?

**Helen Whately:** As the hon. Gentleman said, we announced last year that we would be increasing society lottery sales and prize limits. These changes require affirmative secondary legislation, and our aim is to lay this in Parliament very soon.

T5. [900222] **James Wild** (North West Norfolk) (Con): While I warmly welcome the pledge to deliver gigabit broadband, many of my constituents in Grimston, Heacham, Brancaster and other places have yet to receive speeds of 10 megabits per second. Will the Minister confirm that the plans are ready to deliver minimum speeds from March, and that the Government will hold BT to account to do that?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Matt Warman):** My hon. Friend is right that we must ensure that the 10-megabit universal service obligation is delivered on the ground. We will of course continue to talk to the two providers—BT and KCOM—to ensure that it is there when it needs to be in March this year.

T4. [900221] **Patricia Gibson** (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP): The Scottish Government received just £21 million of UK Government funding for broadband—3.5% of the total funding in Scotland—with the other £580 million being paid by the Scottish Government. Despite the nonsense we often hear in this Chamber, broadband is a matter reserved to the UK Government. Will the Minister therefore explain why the UK Government are failing properly to fund broadband in Scotland?

**Matt Warman:** The hon. Lady is right that we hear a lot of nonsense in this Chamber—primarily from the SNP Benches. It is deeply disappointing that the Scottish Government's delivery of R100 has been delayed again. The UK Government have provided significant amounts of funding, and we will continue to work with the Scottish Government to provide the help they so clearly need.

T7. [900224] **Jonathan Gullis** (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Con): The Conservative-led Stoke-on-Trent City Council is working to roll out full fibre broadband across the Potteries with this Government's unique funding. Given that Staffordshire University is a pioneer in game design and video production and that this new Conservative Government will be rolling out full gigabit broadband across the country, does my hon. Friend agree that silicon Stoke is a real possibility?

**Matt Warman:** Silicon Stoke is certainly a real possibility, and my hon. Friend is right that that is in part due to this Government's £5 billion commitment. I welcome the council's work with certain companies, which shows



that if we look further than the usual suspects, we can get action on the ground that delivers huge economic growth.

T6. [900223] **Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): The EU copyright directive could be of real help to those who make perhaps a modest living in the creative industries. Actors who appeared in shows such as “Casualty” or “Holby City”, for example, would find it easier to get the repeat fees to which they are entitled. Will the Government assure us that the directive will be transposed into UK law as soon as possible?

**Nigel Adams:** We will of course consider whether to adopt the copyright directive. I agree that it contains many protections for our creative sector, but the decision will be taken over the coming year.

## ATTORNEY GENERAL

*The Attorney General was asked—*

### Domestic Violence: Prosecution of Cases

1. **Dame Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): What recent discussions he has had with the Director of Public Prosecutions on the effectiveness of the CPS in prosecuting cases involving domestic violence. [900226]

**The Solicitor General (Michael Ellis):** The Crown Prosecution Service takes domestic abuse cases extremely seriously and is determined to bring perpetrators to justice and to provide victims with the greatest possible protection from repeat offending. In 2019, the CPS led the implementation of a national domestic abuse best practice framework for magistrates court cases, which aims to ensure consistent good practice from investigation right through to court by criminal justice agencies involved in domestic abuse casework.

**Dame Diana Johnson:** I have previously mentioned the shocking statistic that Hull has enough domestic abuse perpetrators to fill our football stadium, which holds 25,000 people. Some 746,000 domestic abuse crimes have been recorded nationally, which is up 24% in a year. However, referrals from the police to the CPS have gone down by 11%. Will the Minister explain what he intends to do about that?

**The Solicitor General:** Before I answer, may I take this opportunity to congratulate the hon. Lady on her damehood? It is richly deserved. She asks an important question. National implementation in this area is overseen at a multi-agency level, and it is a priority for the Government and the CPS to work to improve the statistics. There has actually been a 21.6% rise in prosecutions for violence against women and girls, an increase in charging and prosecution of offences of stalking—80% of stalking cases happen in a domestic abuse context—and a rise in prosecutions for controlling and coercive behaviour. However, I accept that more needs to be done, and that is a priority for the Government and the CPS.

**Alex Chalk** (Cheltenham) (Con): The CPS’s ability to successfully prosecute offences of domestic violence, or indeed any offence, is being undermined by prisoners not being produced at court—a trial at the Old Bailey has sat idle for two days this week for that reason. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that more needs to be done to hold those responsible for such an important job to account so that courts are not lying idle, affecting victims and witnesses? Frankly, it is a crazy situation that is not fair on the taxpayer.

**The Solicitor General:** That is a very good point, and my hon. Friend has considerable experience of prosecutions and the court system. The reality is that we expect those who are responsible for delivering defendants to court to do so efficiently, and of course, in the vast majority of cases, they do that. If there are cases that he wishes to bring to my attention so that I can make direct inquiries, he should please do so.

## Leaving the EU: Human Rights

2. **Afzal Khan** (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the potential effect on the protection of human rights of the UK leaving the EU. [900227]

**The Attorney General (Mr Geoffrey Cox):** The United Kingdom has a long tradition of ensuring that rights and liberties are protected domestically and of fulfilling its international human rights obligations. Our departure from the European Union will not change that.

**Afzal Khan:** There are real concerns about whether the UK will remain a signatory to the European convention on human rights as we leave the European Union. The convention has led to changes in UK law that protect victims of trafficking, tackle workplace discrimination and ensure the rights of disabled people. Can the Attorney General guarantee that this Government will never withdraw from the convention in any circumstance?

**The Attorney General:** I am grateful for this opportunity to reassert the Government’s complete commitment to our membership of and subscription to the European convention on human rights.

**Sir Robert Neill** (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): I welcome what the Attorney General has just said. Will he take the opportunity to remind many people that the United Kingdom is one of the founding fathers of the convention that gave rise to the ECHR—not least in the person of Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, a distinguished Conservative lawyer-politician? I know my right hon. and learned Friend will want to continue in that tradition.

**The Attorney General:** I am most grateful to my hon. Friend and, if I may, I offer him a word of congratulation on his recent knighthood. I am delighted to welcome him in his new incarnation as Sir Bob.

My hon. Friend will know I agree with him that, as we leave the European Union, the country and the world should know that this nation stands for liberty, freedom and human rights. One mark of our standing for those values will be our continued vigorous participation in the Council of Europe and our subscription to the convention on human rights. That should not mean

that we do not turn a critical eye to elements of the human rights structures in our country, and we will look at those in the time to come.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds** (Torfaen) (Lab): Although I welcome most of what the Attorney General has just said, the Tory manifesto says:

“We will update the Human Rights Act and administrative law”.

Yesterday, at Prime Minister’s questions, the Prime Minister said that judicial review should not be

“abused to conduct politics by another means or to create needless delays.”—[*Official Report*, 15 January 2020; Vol. 669, c. 1019.]

Can the Attorney General tell us which recent court decisions have been about conducting politics or causing needless delays?

**The Attorney General:** It has been an enormous pleasure to appear opposite the hon. Gentleman. He is a distinguished historian, a distinguished politician and an experienced barrister.

**Valerie Vaz** (Walsall South) (Lab): Flattery won’t help you.

**The Attorney General:** Of course it will.

The hon. Member for Torfaen (Nick Thomas-Symonds) knows I will not be drawn into commenting on individual cases, but what I can say is that there are widespread concerns throughout our society and throughout this House as to whether judicial review is sometimes being used in a manner, often through frivolous applications, that needs better focus and care in its procedures and tests. We will have a look at that to see whether the elements of judicial review could be better designed to serve its purpose of holding the Government to account for their administrative decisions.

**Nick Thomas-Symonds:** I always welcome compliments, but I did not detect an answer to the question from the Attorney General. He often says that he is a lawyer first and a politician second. He knows that Governments are sometimes vindicated in the courts and that they also face decisions from the courts that are uncomfortable. The answer is never to attack the independence of our judiciary or our courts system. There is a real worry that the Prime Minister is seeking some sort of vengeance because he did not like the Supreme Court’s decision that his prorogation of Parliament was unlawful. Does the Attorney General agree that if we are to weaken judicial review, it will be not the Prime Minister who loses out, but all our constituents whose rights to hold public authorities to account are watered down?

**The Attorney General:** There is no question of weakening judicial review. The question is whether we can make it more efficient and streamlined, and more focused on the purpose: holding the Government to account for their administrative decisions. Even the hon. Gentleman will have to accept that some judicial review cases have been brought that should perhaps never have been started—often they are indeed thrown out by the courts—and we can prevent the courts being clogged up with those applications. So I say to him: let us wait and see. The Government are looking at this extremely carefully,

but I want him to understand one thing: there is no question of backsliding upon the fundamental principle of the independence of the judiciary.

**Stuart C. McDonald** (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): I welcome the Attorney General back to his place on the Government Bench, but it was from the Back Benches, in February 2017, that he made a superb speech on the human rights of unaccompanied asylum seeking children, calling on the Government not just to pay “lip service” to those rights, but to make them “practical and effective”. So if the Government are genuinely committed to making those Dublin rights effective post-Brexit, why do they not just unilaterally decide to continue to accept unaccompanied children with family members here? Why are the Government seeking to repeal even the modest obligations to negotiate their rights under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018?

**The Attorney General:** We are not seeking to repeal this; we are simply removing the statutory requirement to negotiate it. The Government wrote in October last year seeking commencement of negotiation on family reunification. The principle is fundamental and one to which the Government are committed: vulnerable, unaccompanied children must be able to reunite with their family members in this country.

#### Hate Crimes: Prosecution Rate

3. **Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): What steps the CPS is taking to improve the prosecution rate for hate crimes. [900228]

8. **Sally-Ann Hart** (Hastings and Rye) (Con): What steps the CPS is taking to improve the prosecution rate for hate crimes. [900235]

**The Solicitor General (Michael Ellis):** The CPS is committed to tackling hate crime, working closely with partners across government under the hate crime action plan. The CPS has trained its prosecutors, drawing on expertise and insight from key community groups, and has established national and local scrutiny panels to inform decision making. As a result, last year the number of convictions for hate crimes with a recorded sentence uplift increased to 73.6%, the highest rate yet.

**Bob Blackman:** I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that answer. Antisemitism and hate crimes are on the rise right across this country. What further action can he take to make sure that the perpetrators are brought to justice and we eliminate hate crime forever?

**The Solicitor General:** I thank my hon. Friend for that question. He is right to be concerned about this issue. The rise in antisemitism is significant. One thing that has been happening is that mandatory hate crime training for the CPS has been developed, with community involvement, including that of the Community Security Trust. That has been delivered, and the CPS has refreshed a guide for lawyers on antisemitism, with the assistance of that trust. The guide includes key aspects of the law and victim support. We must do everything we can to stamp out this scourge of antisemitism.

**Sally-Ann Hart:** I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for his response. The internet has hugely positive values, but it can allow the spread of hate crime behind a veil of anonymity. What steps is his Department taking to ensure that crime online attracts and is subject to the same penalties in law as offline crime?

**The Solicitor General:** The proportion of hate crime convictions with an announced and recorded sentence uplift has increased from just 12.1% in 2014 to 73.6% now. My hon. Friend is right about online instances of hate crime, and the hate crime conviction rate has also increased in the past decade significantly. It now stands at 84%, but we are continuing to work on dealing with the issue of hate crime online.

**Peter Kyle (Hove) (Lab):** Overall prosecutions have fallen from a quarter to only one in 10. Why is the CPS prosecuting so few people for hate crime? Why is the number of prosecutions falling, not rising? Is that not deterring people from reporting hate crime in the first place?

**The Solicitor General:** There is considerable evidence that people are particularly concerned about hate crime, and I do not think they are being put off making complaints to the police about that. We are constantly liaising at the Crown Prosecution Service with local police forces about their conduct, and we focus very much on getting results in instances of hate crime. As I have said, the number of convictions for hate crime has increased to its highest ever level.<sup>1</sup>

**Jim McMahon (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab/Co-op):** There is no doubt that the rise of Islamophobia is causing real concern and fear in the community, and particularly in the community that I represent in Oldham. The online platforms have been allowed to self-regulate for far too long. It would be easy for them to have a simple “report it once” button that automatically feeds through to the police. Will the Government do far more to make sure that victims are protected and that we raise the tone of the debate in our politics?

**The Solicitor General:** The hon. Gentleman is right to focus on this issue. The issue of Islamophobia is of particular concern, as are all forms of hate crime. We see examples of cases in this area being robustly prosecuted throughout the country, and likewise we see examples of courts recognising the seriousness of these offences with exemplary sentences. The sentencing tribunal has noted that such sentences have been increased because of the Islamophobic or antisemitic element, or because of elements relating to other areas of hate crime. That is right and should be a warning to all.

#### Unduly Lenient Sentence Scheme: Extension

4. **Michael Tomlinson (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (Con):** What progress he has made on the implementation of the extension of the unduly lenient sentence scheme. [900230]

9. **Eddie Hughes (Walsall North) (Con):** What progress he has made on the implementation of the extension of the unduly lenient sentence scheme. [900236]

**The Solicitor General (Michael Ellis):** The ULS scheme is an important avenue for victims, family members and the public to ensure that justice is delivered in the most serious cases, which is why the Government have extended the scheme to cover further child sexual abuse offences, as well as some domestic abuse offences, including controlling and coercive behaviour. The remit of the scheme remains under constant review.

**Michael Tomlinson:** I am grateful to the Solicitor General for his answer. It is absolutely right that the most serious sentences are reviewable, but will he also ensure that there is always a path towards rehabilitation, and even redemption?

**The Solicitor General:** My hon. Friend is quite right. It has always been recognised in our criminal justice system that punishment includes not only deterrence but rehabilitation. That is something we seek to do in our sentencing regime and in our criminal justice system generally. My hon. Friend is right to highlight that feature.

**Eddie Hughes:** I am glad to hear what the Solicitor General has to say, because the people of Willenhall and Bloxwich certainly do not want to see unduly lenient sentences for those convicted of rape, murder or terrorism. When there is a referral under the scheme, how often is the sentence increased?

**The Solicitor General:** The number of sentences considered by the Law Officers—the Attorney General and me—has trebled since 2010. There were approximately 1,000 referrals last year, of which 86 cases were referred to the Court of Appeal and 50 offenders had their sentences increased.

**Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op):** I often ask this question because it is a little campaign of mine. When people get unduly severe sentences, I write to the Solicitor General. It is usually women sentenced for a non-violent crime who get a long, disproportionate sentence. Does he welcome that kind of communication from Members? What does he do about that communication when he gets it?

**The Solicitor General:** I always welcome communication from the hon. Gentleman and, in fact, from any Member. The issue of manifestly excessive sentences is one for the defence in each case, and there are mechanisms by which, within a time limit, defence lawyers can appeal to the Court of Appeal against a sentence that they consider to be manifestly excessive. It is not a matter for the Law Officers; we deal with unduly lenient sentences.

**Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab):** Assaults on emergency workers continue to increase, particularly against ambulance workers and people working in the NHS and in the police. Surely that is a disgrace. I have yet to see a single sentence handed down in such cases that is not unduly lenient. One reason for that is that the Sentencing Council has still not introduced any guidelines in relation to assaults on emergency workers since the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Bill became an Act more than a year ago. Will the Solicitor General ring up the chaps or the women who run the Sentencing Council and ensure that we get proper sentences for people who attack our emergency workers?

1. [Official Report, 20 January 2020, Vol. 670, c. 2MC.]

**The Solicitor General:** I think I can provide some reassurance because I have seen some cases where sentences have clearly been imposed for the offence mentioned by the hon. Gentleman, who played a large part in bringing about the legislation. Assaults on emergency service

personnel are serious aggravating features in many cases and I know that they are already being prosecuted. The Sentencing Council is clearly looking at a number of offences, and I am sure that they will look at that one in due course.



## Business of the House

**Mr Speaker:** Members should know that there will be 45 minutes for business questions and 45 minutes for the ministerial statement.

10.30 am

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

**The Leader of the House of Commons (Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg):** The business for next week is as follows:

**MONDAY 20 JANUARY**—Conclusion of the debate on the Queen's Speech on the economy and jobs.

**TUESDAY 21 JANUARY**—Second Reading of the Direct Payments to Farmers (Legislative Continuity) Bill, followed by a general debate on the Grenfell Tower inquiry's phase 1 report.

**WEDNESDAY 22 JANUARY**—If necessary, consideration of Lords amendments, followed by Second Reading of the Telecommunications Infrastructure (Leasehold Property) Bill followed by, if necessary, consideration of Lords amendments.

**THURSDAY 23 JANUARY**—General debate on Holocaust Memorial Day.

**FRIDAY 24 JANUARY**—The House will not be sitting.

The provisional business for the following week will include:

**MONDAY 27 JANUARY**—Second Reading of the NHS Funding Bill.

**TUESDAY 28 JANUARY**—Committee and remaining stages of the Direct Payments to Farmers (Legislative Continuity) Bill.

**WEDNESDAY 29 JANUARY**—Opposition day (1st allotted day). There will be a debate on a motion in the name of the official Opposition.

**THURSDAY 30 JANUARY**—General debate. Subject to be confirmed.

**FRIDAY 31 JANUARY**—The House will not be sitting.

**Valerie Vaz:** I thank the Leader of the House for the business until 31 January and for the Opposition day. I know sitting Fridays are referred to on today's Order Paper. After the right hon. Gentleman's response to my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) last week, we had to do a quadratic equation to work out the length of the Session. The Leader of the House knows that there is a strong constitutional convention that Sessions usually last about a year.

Mr Speaker, it was helpful last week that you gave a time limit for the business, as you have done again today. However, I gently refer the Leader of the House to columns 630 and 634 of the *Official Report* on Thursday 9 January, where he simply repeats ministerial statements. That does not leave enough time for hon. Members to ask questions.

I know that the Leader of the House is keen on doing the right thing, whatever century we are in, and he knows that Ministers have to abide by the ministerial

code. I therefore point him to section 6, which is entitled, "Ministers' Constituency and Party Interests". The general principle states:

"Ministers are provided with facilities at Government expense to enable them to carry out their official duties. These facilities should not generally be used for Party or constituency activities."

I wonder whether the Leader of the House thinks that it is a breach of the ministerial code if a Minister uses ministerial facilities to go into another hon. Member's constituency—for example, to visit a hospital—does not invite the constituency Member but invites the Member for the neighbouring constituency, who is a member of the Minister's party. I have an example of that and I know that other hon. Members do, too. Will the Leader of the House say something about that?

Will the Leader of the House comment on a breach of public expenditure rules? The Commission's statement on Big Ben is helpful for hon. Members—some may not have seen it. It states:

"There has been a suggestion that the cost of striking the Bell could be covered by donations made by the public. This would be an unprecedented approach. The House of Commons has well established means of voting through the expenditure required to allow it to function, and to preserve its constitutional position in relation to Government. Any novel form of funding would need to be consistent with principles of propriety and proper oversight of public expenditure."

Will the Leader of House pass that on to the Prime Minister? I suppose that it was better to talk about that than the A&E figures, which are the worst ever. They are so bad that the targets are going to be scrapped. The Government cannot blame the last Government, because they were the last Government.

This seems to be a bung-a-bob Government. Bung a bob to Flybe and let it defer its tax payment—we would all like to do that. How can a Government bung a bob to a private company and not provide personal independence payments to my constituents and to those of other Members who are on palliative care and cannot access PIP? Can we have an urgent statement from the Work and Pensions Secretary as to why dying people are denied PIP?

I hope that there will be a full statement next week on exactly what the terms are for Flybe, because the accountability of Ministers and the Prime Minister coming to the House appears to be missing with this Government: bung a bob for Flybe; warm words and meetings for the steel industry.

Is the Leader of the House aware that the leader of Walsall Council said that families are suffering from food poverty because they are having more children than they can afford to raise? He was referring to families in Palfrey in my constituency, and saying that if someone is poor and from a black, Asian and minority ethnic background, they should not be having children, so it is okay for rich people to have children. There was nothing about the root causes of social and economic injustice. My constituents in that area are sometimes working two and three jobs. Does the Leader of the House agree with those words, or does he think that the leader of Walsall Council should apologise and resign? This is unacceptable.

Last week, I asked when the Prime Minister was going to update the House on his talks with the EU President. Can he please do that now? The Prime Minister may not want to come to Parliament, but at least the

[Valerie Vaz]

Iranian ambassador was interviewed by Jon Snow on Channel 4. The door seems to be opening for Nazanin and other dual nationals to return. Perhaps the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland could help out. He, along with my hon. Friend the Member for Rochdale (Tony Lloyd) and others in this House, has done a brilliant job of bringing accountability to Northern Ireland. I am sure that he has found that job easier than being Chief Whip.

The Holocaust memorial book is open next week in the Members' Cloakroom, and I urge hon. Members to sign it. Let us all try to bring forward that new world, which is based on tolerance and self-respect.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I am well aware of the constitutional convention regarding the length of a Session, and the Session, as with all Sessions, will depend on the progress of business, but as this one has only just started, it is perhaps a bit premature to see its ending.

With regard to the ministerial code and courtesy, the normal courtesy is that a Member informs another Member of a visit to a constituency, but not necessarily invites another Member to attend the event. It is a notification rather than an invitation, so I do not think one should extend the normal courtesies and expect there to be an invitation.

I note what the right hon. Lady says about Big Ben. However, it seems to me that, with regard to binging a bob for Big Ben bongs, one should not look gift horses in the mouth. If people wish to pay for things, that should be considered as part of their public spiritedness rather than that they should feel that everything should always fall on the hard-pressed taxpayer, but then, as a Conservative, I do not think that things should always fall on hard-pressed taxpayers if that can be avoided.

With regard to accident and emergency figures, there have been record numbers going through this year. The health service has coped extremely well with a difficult winter. The Government's proposals for funding the health service will be coming into law following a Second Reading debate on Monday 27 January, so the commitment of this Government to the health service is absolutely second to none. It is a very impressive record and one of which the Conservatives, and indeed the country, can be proud.

With regard to Flybe, there was an urgent question on that, and the House will continue to be updated. The role of this House is always to scrutinise how public funds are used, and I am sure the House will be diligent in doing that. There will be Transport questions on Thursday 30 January, where the matter can be raised further.

With regard to the number of children people have, I am not one to lecture anybody. I am all in favour of large families; I have six children of my own. I would always discourage people from being disobliging towards people who have large families, because I think they are absolutely splendid—the more children, the merrier.

The right hon. Lady quite rightly continues to raise every week in these sessions the case of Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe. The Prime Minister spoke to the Iranian President on 9 January; the Foreign Secretary did so on 6 January. The matter continues to be pursued, but the

right hon. Lady is right to continue to raise it, because putting pressure on the Government and holding them to account is part of what this House does.

I endorse the right hon. Lady's suggestion that Members sign the Holocaust memorial book. I am pleased that we are having the debate next Thursday, and that, prior to the establishment of the Backbench Business Committee, the Government have found time to ensure that it will take place.

**Sir Greg Knight** (East Yorkshire) (Con): Can we have a debate on my Parking (Code of Practice) Act 2019, which became law in March last year? Indeed, the Leader of the House supported the measure when he was a Back Bencher. The purpose of the debate would be to find out why the Government are still dragging their feet in introducing the code of practice mandated by that Act.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** When I was a Back Bencher, I thought it was the most brilliant private Member's Bill ever introduced. I am concerned that there is an allegation of foot dragging. Feet should not be dragged by Governments; Governments should be fleet of foot. I will therefore take up this matter on behalf of my right hon. Friend, although there will also be an opportunity to do so at Transport questions. It may also be something, Mr Speaker, that you would consider for an urgent question or an Adjournment debate, or—heaven forbid—a debate under Standing Order No. 24; we have not had one of those recently.

**Tommy Sheppard** (Edinburgh East) (SNP): I note that we are to begin Opposition day debates again, and ask the Leader of the House to recognise that the Scottish National party suffered something of a disadvantage in the last Parliament, in as much as there were about one and a half days of time that we ought to have been allocated, but were not. I hope, therefore, that the third party of the House will be granted an Opposition day in the short term.

I understand that NHS Funding Bill was in the Government's manifesto, and they made a big feature of the issue in their election campaign, but it really is a political stunt of the greatest order. Notwithstanding that, I understand that we are talking about large sums of money, and it is inconceivable that this would not have consequences for Scotland through the Barnett formula. Therefore may I ask whether this Bill is to be considered in Legislative Grand Committee, either instead of or as well as in Bill Committee? If it is, what opportunity would Scottish representatives have to put forward their views and vote on these matters? If the answer is that they will have none, is this not an unnecessary evil and is it not time, at the start of this Parliament, to reconsider these ill-advised measures that were brought in by David Cameron?

I did not receive a satisfactory response to this question last time, so I ask again: when will the Government bring forward proposals so that this House can consider the fact that it does not have a mandate in Scotland? For the first time in this Union Parliament, the two principal countries have a different political mandate on the question of the constitution. That is not something that this Government should ignore, and it is certainly not something that this Parliament can ignore. If Parliament

does ignore it, it will suffer consequences for its integrity. Are the Government going to ignore this, or will they do something about it?

Finally, it would help me to frame future questions if I could ask the Leader of the House personally: is he committed to the claim of right for Scotland, which says that the people of Scotland have the sovereign right to determine the form of government best suited to their needs?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** May I answer the last question first? Of course I believe in that sovereign right, but the hon. Gentleman's memory is a little short. The people of Scotland exercised their sovereign right in 2014, and they decided to remain part of the United Kingdom. SNP Members may not like the decision made by the people of Scotland in their wisdom, but that is the decision that was made, and that is why there is a mandate for this Government in Scotland, Wales, England and Northern Ireland—because they are all part of the United Kingdom. It would be like saying that when there is a socialist Government, but Conservative MPs in Somerset, there is no right to rule Somerset. It is not the way a democracy works and I am sorry to say that the point is fundamentally flawed.

Let me come to an area of greater consensus. I am very well aware of how well the Scottish National party did in terms of representation in the local elections—*[Interruption.]* Sorry, I mean in the general election. I therefore recognise the importance of ensuring that Opposition days are fairly given and that the third party is recognised. The balance between it and the Official Opposition has changed, and that right must be borne in mind in the allocation of Opposition days. On the one and a half days, I kept begging the SNP to take up one of those with a no confidence motion, but it was reluctant to do so in the end, so it was not entirely the Government's fault that the SNP did not get its full allocation.

On the NHS Funding Bill, I can reassure the hon. Gentleman that I have raised the question of Barnett consequential, and they apply to the Bill, so it will benefit Scotland. Certification under the EVEL Standing Orders is a matter for you, Mr Speaker, and will come at a later stage. If it were to be so certified, all Members would vote on Second Reading, Report and Third Reading, so opportunities would be available for Opposition Members from all parts of the country to vote on the Bill in its entirety.

**Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con):** Over the past year, train services from my constituency have significantly improved following previous industrial action and timetable problems, but in recent weeks train services have started to deteriorate significantly. May we have a statement from the Transport Secretary on the need to improve network functionality?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I am conscious that last week questions on rail services predominated and were the main issue of concern for Members. That has been taken up with the Department, which is cautious about making a statement at this stage because of issues of commercial confidentiality. However, the Minister of State, Department for Transport, my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Chris Heaton-Harris), will hold meetings for all Members

who wish to discuss specific rail issues in their constituencies. If Members do not receive an invitation, I ask them please to request one, and that applies to Members from all parties if they wish to discuss the issues that they have. It is a good way to deal with the many issues that Members have.

**Ian Mearns (Gateshead) (Lab):** I am not currently the Chair of the Backbench Business Committee as it has not been re-established, but I have been asked by Members on both sides of the House about the possibility of having debates in Government time in the Chamber or Westminster Hall. I have also been asked when the Committee will be re-established so that Members can submit bids for debates about their concerns. As the Order Paper includes a list of Select Committees today, what is the timetable for their re-establishment—I know that the Chairs have been allocated to the different parties—and will the Backbench Business Committee be on a similar timetable?

If there is any time available in the Chamber or Westminster Hall, I have written to the Leader of the House about several debates that Members keep reminding me to bring to the attention of the Government.

**Mr Speaker:** I will make a statement later and it will be my decision.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** Thank you for that very helpful point, Mr Speaker.

The establishment of Select Committees is set out in Standing Orders. The motions will be put down tonight and, assuming they pass, the elections will take place in 14 days' time for the Chairmen. After that, the Committees will be set up once the parties decide on their nominees for the positions. It will take place in the normal timeframe, but I am conscious of the need to get the Backbench Business Committee up and running. The Government are listening to requests for debates, hence the debate on Holocaust Memorial Day next week—although that was also desired by the Government.

**Mrs Flick Drummond (Meon Valley) (Con):** As the Leader of the House will have seen from questions today, poor broadband and lack of mobile coverage are major issues for many Members and their constituents, including mine in Meon Valley. Can he timetable a debate on the subject so that we can all put our concerns to the Government and the providers?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I congratulate my hon. Friend on her return to this place, which is particularly welcome. I represent a rural constituency, so I sympathise with the representations on broadband. The Prime Minister answered a question on it yesterday and £5 billion will be made ready. He promised broadband for the Cotswolds and I hope that that promise will extend to Somerset, Hampshire and other distinguished counties across the country. It is an issue that is raised constantly, and it may well be suitable for a Westminster Hall debate to continue the pressure.

**Thangam Debbonaire (Bristol West) (Lab):** My constituents—like, I am sure, the constituents of Members across the House—are concerned about reaching net carbon zero as quickly as possible. Could we have a



[Thangam Debbonaire]

debate in Government time about getting this place and all Government Departments to net carbon zero considerably sooner than 2050?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** The hon. Lady raises a very valid point, but there was a debate on all these issues yesterday as part of the Queen's Speech debate, and it would have been possible to incorporate it in that. Time is limited, so when we have just had time for something, I cannot promise it immediately afterwards.

**Sir John Hayes** (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con): A society's humanity is marked and gauged by how the fortunate protect and promote those who are less so, in which spirit the Prime Minister last week promised to tackle the issue of those with learning difficulties and mental health problems in care who have suffered inadequate, inappropriate and sometimes scandalous treatment. Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement to be brought so that we can know when, how and what will be done to tackle this issue? Our duty—our mission, indeed—is to care for those at risk.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I wonder whether my right hon. Friend is alluding to the very troubling reports from Manchester about the abuse of children in care and the apparent failure of the authorities to deal with it effectively. This is a matter that should concern us all greatly; it certainly concerns the Prime Minister. A crime prevention strategy is being developed by the Home Office that will cover these very, very important issues.

**Deidre Brock** (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): The UK Government have rejected a declaratory system, and that will inevitably mean that tens—perhaps hundreds—of thousands of EU citizens will lose rights overnight unless they have what the Home Office deems to be a reasonable excuse. We are still completely in the dark about how that will operate. When will the Government clarify this issue?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** The system, so far, has been stunningly successful—an absolute triumph, for once, of Government IT. Some 2.5 million people have already registered successfully. The system is more generous than required by the withdrawal agreement with the European Union. If anyone wants further details, there is a brilliant and inspired piece by the Minister responsible in *The Times's* "Red Box" this morning.

**Sir Mike Penning** (Hemel Hempstead) (Con): Can I ask the Leader of the House whether we can have a debate that we had in the last Parliament that got cross-party consensus, on the prescribed medical use of cannabis? This Government—the previous Government as well—changed the law so that medical use of cannabis could be prescribed by consultants. However, the situation today is that if someone can pay for it, they get it; if they rely on the NHS, they do not.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I know that this issue concerns many right hon. and hon. Members, and I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for raising it with me. There will

be an opportunity to raise it in Health questions on Tuesday 28th, although alternatively I may suggest that he ask for an Adjournment debate.

**Bridget Phillipson** (Houghton and Sunderland South) (Lab): After months of worry, just before Christmas Npower announced its intention to close the Rainton Bridge customer service centre in my constituency, and there will be 4,500 job losses nationally. This was terrible news for many people in my community and right across the north-east. While trade unions are doing all they can to support staff at this time, would the Leader of the House be able to arrange for me to meet a Minister to discuss what additional Government resources could be made available to support Npower workers at this time?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** May I thank the hon. Lady for bringing this to the House's attention and for seeking, in a traditional way, redress of grievance, which is absolutely what we are here to do? I will do whatever I can to facilitate a meeting with an appropriate Minister.

**Bim Afolami** (Hitchin and Harpenden) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend please grant a debate on the procurement of NHS orthodontic services in this country, and indeed in Hertfordshire? A dental clinic in my constituency called Orthoclinic, which is a brilliant clinic, has had its contract unnecessarily, and completely without reason, taken away by the NHS. I believe that this is a very important issue and it is happening in other places in the country as well.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** My hon. Friend raises a point that may or may not have wider resonance in the House; it is not an issue I have previously heard about. I would therefore suggest that he use the normal mechanisms for getting debates. If there turns out to be widespread concern, it is an issue that other Members will want to take up with the Health Secretary.

**Chris Elmore** (Ogmore) (Lab): The Leader of the House may be aware that yesterday the Internet Watch Foundation released alarming new data highlighting the rise in the number of sexual abuse images of children reported to the charity last year. He may also be aware that I chair the all-party parliamentary group on social media; I was pleased to be re-elected this week. I will be holding an inquiry into this issue, working with the charity. Can we have either a statement or time for a debate, to ensure that the Government are working with every organisation to protect children from these heinous crimes and that social media providers are tackling this issue head-on?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for the work he does in this incredibly difficult area and the people in the police force who work on it, because it must be some of the most distressing work that people have to do. The Government have a clear plan to ensure better enforcement in this area and continued rigour and are conscious of the responsibilities of media providers, be they online or offline. It is something that the Government will seek to take seriously. He is right to raise it in the Chamber. I cannot promise an immediate debate, but there were Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport questions previously, and I encourage him to continue raising it.



**Andrew Bridgen** (North West Leicestershire) (Con): At charter renewal, the BBC gained various concessions. It got an annual inflation-linked increase in the licence fee and an extension to the charter period, and it is no longer asked to fund the roll-out of superfast broadband. My proposals for the decriminalisation of non-payment of the licence fee were also dropped in return for the BBC agreeing to fund the universal over-75s licence fee concession.

Given that the BBC now seems intent on renegeing on that promise to our over-75s, and noting the comments of the Prime Minister a couple of weeks ago, does my right hon. Friend agree that it is time to revisit decriminalisation as a method of protecting the poor and vulnerable from this most regressive of taxes? When will the Government find time to debate that matter?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** It is worth pointing out that the criminalisation of non-payment of the licence fee falls particularly heavily on women, who are the ones most often found guilty of this offence. My hon. Friend's point is well made, but I think the Prime Minister has heard it, because he has made indications that this matter may be considered. My hon. Friend, in raising it and campaigning for it, is doing a public service.

**Gavin Robinson** (Belfast East) (DUP): We await a statement from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland momentarily. The Leader of the House will be acutely aware that the "New Decade, New Approach" agreement contains commitments to legislation that will need to go through this House, not least my private Member's Bill from the last Session, which introduces a UK-wide statutory duty to adhere to the armed forces covenant. That is great news. Has the Leader of the House had any discussions with either the Ministry of Defence or the Northern Ireland Secretary about when that legislation will be brought forward?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I cannot give a commitment on the date when that business will be brought forward, but the agreement is a cause for celebration, and therefore the Government will want to ensure that the implementation takes place in a reasonable timeframe.

**Robert Largan** (High Peak) (Con): Commuters in High Peak continue to experience train delays, cancellations and overcrowded carriages. A lot has been said, quite rightly, about the performance of Northern Rail, but franchising is only part of the problem. Can we have a debate on the Treasury rules, so that we can get the railway infrastructure investment that we need in the north, especially on the Hope Valley line between Manchester and Sheffield?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** My hon. Friend raises an important point, because the investment rules are at the heart of how these issues are determined. They are under discussion, to see whether business cases can be looked at in other ways, which will inform a final investment decision in his case by the autumn. I mentioned earlier the meetings that the Minister of State, Department for Transport, my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Chris Heaton-Harris), will hold with MPs, and it is well worth taking him up on that offer to discuss specific cases.

**Jessica Morden** (Newport East) (Lab): On behalf of constituents who are contractors hit by the IR35 changes, may I ask for a quick debate on that issue so that we can impress on Ministers the need to get on with the review? April is very fast approaching, and this is causing huge uncertainty for those affected.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** In my view, it is a basic principle of good government that people should know what taxes they are expected to pay, and that they should know them before the start of the financial year in which they may be expected to pay them. The review is taking place, and it will take place as quickly as it can be held. I think the hon. Lady is absolutely right to highlight the fundamental fairness that people should know their tax position.

**Andrew Jones** (Harrogate and Knaresborough) (Con): There are communities and even large towns up and down our country where bank closures have left thousands of people without easy access to a bank or businesses unable to deposit their takings easily. The post office network is a part of the solution in maintaining access, but more can be done to help people and businesses—and in a way that is efficient and profitable for sub-postmasters. Please may we have a debate about what can be done to maintain access to financial services and the post office?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** This is an issue of great concern to many communities, particularly rural communities where the provision of banking services and post office services has declined. It is important to ensure that the post office is able to help. Banking decisions are of course financial decisions for banking institutions, but banking institutions and all businesses do have a wider community responsibility as well. I suggest that an application for a Westminster Hall debate would be the right step in the first instance.

**Drew Hendry** (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP): Ironically, it is now more than six months since the right hon. Gentleman's Government promised to review the arbitrary six-month rule facing terminally ill people trying to access universal credit. During that time, the Motor Neurone Disease Association and Marie Curie estimate that more than 2,000 people have died while waiting to access their benefits. The Government have had all the evidence. The Scottish Government, with limited powers, have shown the way by removing the rule for the personal independence payment. When will we see an end to this injustice? Can we have a statement on when this will end?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** The hon. Gentleman raises a point that will be a concern to many, and it is one on which a review was promised. I will take this up with the relevant Minister immediately after this session.

**Lucy Allan** (Telford) (Con): It was announced last night that a review of avoidable maternity deaths at my local hospital trust is now increasing its scope from 23 cases to 900. This is deeply shocking news. Can we have a statement from the Secretary of State on this issue?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** My hon. Friend had an Adjournment debate on this issue last night, so it has been aired. It is a matter of the deepest concern that the number of cases has gone up so much, and it is important that exactly

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what happened is fully understood. The review will be carried out, and this House will no doubt have an opportunity to debate its findings once they come through.

**Lilian Greenwood** (Nottingham South) (Lab): Last year, the NG11 Clifton and Wilford volunteer clean champions collected 700 bags of litter in their local area. Will the Leader of the House congratulate Alma Davies and the team on their efforts? Does he agree that the Government should set out the action that they are taking to prevent and deter littering and fly-tipping and to ensure that public bodies, such as Highways England, play their part in improving the local environment so that those local volunteers feel properly supported?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I am speechless with admiration for those members in the hon. Lady's constituency—Members may be delighted that I am speechless, if only momentarily—and of course I congratulate them. It is so wonderful and inspiring to see people doing good in their communities. I see it in North East Somerset with people going out on Sunday mornings and picking up litter from the hedgerows. It is a reminder that we all have a duty not to drop litter in the first place; it starts with the individual. There is also a role for enforcement—one increasingly sees signs saying, “Don't drop litter: CCTV is in the area watching you”—and ensuring there is enforcement, perhaps most particularly of fly-tipping, where people who think they can get away with it fiddle the whole system and undercut honest businesses at the same time.

**Robert Halfon** (Harlow) (Con): Each week, 12 young people aged between 14 and 35 die in the UK due to undiagnosed heart conditions. A Harlow constituent of mine suffered a tragic unexpected loss when her daughter passed away aged just 25, and simple cardiac screening would have saved her life. Can we have an urgent debate on the need for mandatory cardiac screenings of all young people in the United Kingdom?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** There is always a deeper tragedy about a young death that was avoidable. The case raised by my right hon. Friend is one of great sadness, and where the Government can help, they ought to. He has the right to put his question directly to the Health Secretary during Health questions on 28 January, and I urge him to do so. It is not really my business, but if you are feeling so inclined, Mr Speaker, may I encourage you to notice my right hon. Friend when he bobs on that occasion to raise this important issue? Perhaps he would also like to seek an Adjournment debate.

**Jamie Stone** (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): The closure of rural bank branches is a massive issue in my constituency, and we now have only one bank branch in the vast county of Sutherland. I have met some of the UK's clearing banks, which have said they will consider developing banking hubs, and working together to provide one-stop shops. In order to do so, however, they would like to work with the Government. May I make a plea to the Leader of the House: will he ensure that I can meet the appropriate Ministers, to see how we can sort out this desperate situation?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I view it very much as part of my role to try to facilitate meetings of that kind wherever possible. The issue raised by the hon. Gentleman is of concern to many Members, and I will see what I can do to arrange a suitable meeting.

**Jason McCartney** (Colne Valley) (Con): May we have a statement on the Government's plans to relocate Departments and quangos to the north of England and the midlands? That is something I very much support—not least so that I can extol the virtues of St George's warehouse in Huddersfield, Globe Mills in Slaithwaite, and Crowther Mills in Marsden, all of which would be fantastic locations for those Departments. They would also be affordable, not least because they are ideally located on the TransPennine rail route.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** The Government are keen to level up across the whole country. That is an important ambition, and a demand of the British people, as we saw at the last general election. I will pass on my hon. Friend's request for more detailed information about the Government's plans. As levelling up is something we will be very proud of, I am sure the Government will endeavour to make everybody fully aware of it.

**Carolyn Harris** (Swansea East) (Lab): Having previously thanked the UK, Welsh and Scottish Governments for Martin's funeral fund, I wish to add my thanks to the Government of Northern Ireland, who introduced it after the reconvening of Stormont. The Children's Funeral Fund is now in every corner of the United Kingdom. Unfortunately, when I was burying my son, parents who had stillbirth babies did not have the opportunity to bury their children. Many parents have come to me asking whether we can help them to trace the graves of their children—nobody knows where they are—so that they may also commemorate their loss. May we have a debate in Government time about what we in Parliament can do to help those bereaved parents?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** The hon. Lady is very generous, because it is thanks to her that the fund is now available across the whole country. Without her having campaigned and got a lot of support from across the House that would not have happened, and the House ought to acknowledge her role, as well as that of my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), who agreed to it. It shows how effective the House can be in campaigning. [Interruption.] Without my right hon. Friend it would not have happened—the power of Prime Ministers when being lobbied is important. Ministers know that the hon. Lady is a formidable campaigner; when she raises an issue of this kind, there will be a natural sympathy across the House. I expect she will be successful.

**Dr Julian Lewis** (New Forest East) (Con): Near the start of the general election campaign, the Government made a statement that appeared to accept the recommendation in the Defence Committee's report of 22 July about a qualified statute of limitation for Northern Ireland veteran service personnel. When will there be a Government response to that report, as the conventional two months for such a response have long since elapsed?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** Things change at a Dissolution, and the responses are done on a different basis. There is consultation between the new Committee and the Government on its outstanding reports. Having thanked my right hon. Friend for his fantastic work as Chair of the Defence Committee, the Ministry of Defence is working on its responses. It cannot respond until there is a Committee to respond to, and the motion to select the Committee Chairs is set down on today's Order Paper.

**Owen Thompson** (Midlothian) (SNP): This year, 4 March marks the 50th anniversary of the successful Black Arrow satellite carrier rocket launch, which was the first and only UK rocket to reach orbit. Companies like Skyrora in my constituency are doing massive innovative work to develop new rocket technology. What plans do the Government have to mark this 50th anniversary to further encourage new developments?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** The Government, or at least this part of the Government, were unaware of this terrific anniversary until this moment, but I am all in favour of marking anniversaries. I will pass it on to the relevant ministry and see if we can have something exciting like Big Ben bonging to celebrate it.

**Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): Last August, on Indian Independence Day, and then again on 2 October last year, violent protests were held outside the Indian high commission by pro-Pakistani groups. Following the intervention of the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister, policing was put in place to prevent those groups getting anywhere near the Indian high commission. A week on Sunday, we have India Republic Day and the self-same groups are threatening violent demonstrations outside the Indian high commission. May we therefore have a statement from the Home Secretary on what action can be taken to ensure we not only safeguard the Indian high commission, but all embassies and commissions against violent demonstrators?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I think this is primarily an operational matter for the Metropolitan police. There is always a balance to be struck between allowing non-violent protest, which is a legitimate activity in a democracy, and preventing violence from taking place, but I will ensure that my hon. Friend's question is passed on to the Home Secretary so that she is aware of his concern.

**Justin Madders** (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): From next week, the number 22 bus service will no longer travel through Willaston, which is a rural community with a lot of elderly residents who will be more isolated as a result. It seems that every couple of months we have to go into battle with bus companies who change their routes or stop them altogether at a moment's notice without any thought for the impact on my constituents. May we have a statement from a Transport Minister about when we can take back control of our buses?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I think the Government have proposed an extra £220 million for bus services, so there will be a significant financial commitment. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman raises this issue at Transport questions on 30 January.

**Mrs Natalie Elphicke** (Dover) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend make time available for a debate on the roads infrastructure of east Kent? It is welcome news that the Operation Brock contraflow on the M20 is being dismantled, as we are getting Brexit done. However, the dualling of the A2 needs to be completed and the Whitfield roundabout is so overloaded that villagers are up in arms. The lorries travelling through our port are the beating heart of our national economy, yet the lorry parks that were promised long ago have yet to be delivered. Does he not agree that making time for such a debate is a matter of concern not simply for the people of east Kent, but for the beating economic heart of the nation as a whole?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** May I congratulate my hon. Friend on her election? Her question shows that she is going to be as tough a campaigner for Dover as the previous Member of that distinguished constituency. The points she raises are important and the fact that Brexit is being delivered on 31 January is a relevant consideration. I would suggest that, as it is a specific constituency matter, it is worth applying for an Adjournment debate or a Westminster Hall debate at this stage.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): May we have an early debate on the excellent plastic bag tax, which raises huge amounts of money? We all thought that the money would flow into good environmental work in the community, but nobody seems to know what happens to it. As it is likely to double, it is a treasure trove for changing the environment locally.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** The plastic bag tax has led to a 90% reduction in the use of plastic bags. The cause and effect has been quite striking. The hon. Gentleman is right to raise the question of where the money goes and what charities benefit. I am sure he can raise the issue in Treasury questions in due course.

**Damian Collins** (Folkestone and Hythe) (Con): At Digital, Culture, Media and Sport questions earlier this morning we were pleased to see the Secretary of State watching proceedings from the Gallery. However, I am sure that the Leader of the House will agree that it is not common at departmental questions for a Secretary of State to be in a position from which they can be seen but not heard. Although the Select Committee will be able to question the Secretary of State, I wonder whether the office of the Leader of the House has given any previous consideration to what to do in such a situation. For example, might we from time to time have a special session in Westminster Hall, during which Members could question Secretaries of State who sit in the House of Lords? Will he allow time for a debate to see whether this House could support such an innovation?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** The Procedure Committee produced a report on this matter a few years ago. It is perfectly normal to have departmental Ministers in the House of Lords—it is something that both Houses have coped with over many centuries. With regard to reforming our procedures, it is for the Procedure Committee to look into that again, but there are many means by which Ministers and the Government can be held to account. [*Interruption.*] Yes, absolutely in this House. As my hon. Friend said, the Secretary of State will appear



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before his Select Committee, which will be one way of doing it, and a full Bench of Ministers were here to respond to oral questions earlier.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I am sorry, but that is the end of business questions. Names have been taken for next time. [Interruption.] Yes, they were. I do not need further comments.

## Point of Order

11.15 am

**Dr Caroline Johnson** (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Last Friday a constituent of mine was convicted of harassment of me at Lincoln magistrates court, following a number of episodes of correspondence by email and social media, some of which were frightening or threatening. I am enormously grateful to Lincolnshire police, and particularly to the special branch officer—I will not name them—who has been a great support to me.

Following this man's conviction, the court put in place a restraining order to prevent him having any further contact with me, directly or indirectly or via a third party. However, when the order was drafted, the court said that it had to have a way for him to continue to contact me, which has been put in place through Royal Mail to the House of Commons. That was only on Friday, and he has already contacted me through that mechanism to my association and called me a liar on social media.

I appreciate that you have long been concerned with the safety of Members of Parliament, which is why I am asking for your advice now. Given that there is no legal requirement for Members to respond to constituents' correspondence, other than our own public service and common decency, I am not sure why the court felt that it was unable completely to restrict this man's ability to correspond with me. Given that the number of people convicted in this way is thankfully very small, I wonder whether you could consider making available an alternative point of contact in the House for those convicted of harassing their MP, so that they can request assistance with those matters that only an MP can deal with, such as a referral to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, so that Members subject to such harassment do not need to have further contact with those who have harassed them.

**Mr Speaker:** I will not be taking further points of order, but I took this one because it is exceptional and relates to a security matter. What I will say is that Members should not have to put up with intimidation or bullying. The fact that the hon. Lady has had to go through the courts shows just how bad and how serious the issue is. Members have the right not to have to see or respond to someone who has been bullying or intimidating them. I think these are very exceptional circumstances. I do not want other Members to suffer in the same way, but there are legal implications, so I will take the matter away and get back to the hon. Lady. However, nobody in this Chamber should have to suffer harassment or threats of violence, so there is a wider significance. The hon. Lady has asked me a question, and I ask her please to give me time and I will get back to her. It is very important, and I am fully supportive of all Members, but I want to make sure that we get this right. I obviously cannot comment on the court's decision at this stage.



## Northern Ireland Executive Formation

11.18 am

**The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Julian Smith):** Prior to Christmas, the UK Government initiated a period of political talks to get Stormont up and running again. Following nine months of negotiations, and nearly four weeks of intensive discussions over the Christmas period, last week the Tánaiste and I tabled a draft text to all parties and made it available to the public. The document, entitled “New Decade, New Approach”, set out what we assessed to be a fair and balanced deal, based on all the discussions between ourselves and the parties, and on what the parties told us would represent the right deal for Northern Ireland.

I am delighted to tell the House that all five of Northern Ireland’s main political parties accepted the deal as a basis for re-entering devolved government. Ministers have been appointed, an Executive has been formed, and the Assembly is open for business. Devolution is restored in Northern Ireland. The Prime Minister visited the Assembly and met the Executive on Monday to mark the positive moment of restored devolved government. I know that the whole House will join me in welcoming and celebrating the return of devolved government, and in congratulating party leaders on their confident decision to make this happen.

I thank my team in the UK civil service, the Northern Ireland Office and No. 10 Downing Street for their months of work to make the deal happen. I also thank the Northern Ireland political parties, the Westminster parties and the hon. Member for Rochdale (Tony Lloyd). I want to put on record the debt that I owe my two predecessors, my right hon. Friends the Members for Staffordshire Moorlands (Karen Bradley) and for Old Bexley and Sidcup (James Brokenshire). I also thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May) for all the work that she put into this issue during her time as Prime Minister. Finally, on a personal level, I thank Jonathan Stephens, the retiring permanent secretary of the Northern Ireland Office, Ross Easton and, above all, Lilah Howson-Smith.

The Good Friday agreement, which was signed more than 20 years ago, brought with it an unprecedented period of peace, prosperity and growth for Northern Ireland. That progress, however, always was and always will be underpinned by the institutions that it created. Now that those institutions have been restored to full working order, we can carry on with the important business of moving Northern Ireland forward and bringing its people together. The institutions for north-south and east-west co-operation can work again as intended.

The “New Decade, New Approach” deal sets out a range of commitments for the Executive, the UK Government and the Irish Government. It commits a new Executive to addressing the immediate challenges facing the health service, reforming the education and justice systems, growing the economy, promoting opportunity and tackling deprivation. The deal does not seek to restore the Executive for its own sake, but offers real reforms aimed at making it more sustainable and transparent so that the institutions can begin to rebuild trust and confidence with the public. The deal also gives the Executive a seat at the table when we discuss the Northern Ireland Protocol with the European

Union. It solves outstanding cases which have been causing real concern to families, so that all the people of Northern Ireland are treated in the same way when bringing family members to this country.

Yesterday the Government announced that we would provide the restored Executive with a £2 billion financial package that would deliver for the people of Northern Ireland and support the deal. That financial commitment represents the biggest injection of new money in a Northern Ireland talks deal for well over a decade. It has already allowed the Executive, this morning, to pledge to deliver pay parity for nurses in Northern Ireland, the first such intervention in a devolved area and one that has now ended the nurses’ strike, and it will continue to support the Executive’s delivery of the priorities for the people of Northern Ireland.

Provided over five years, the deal will include a guarantee of at least £1 billion of Barnett-based funding to turbocharge infrastructure investment, along with £1 billion of new resources and capital spending. That will include significant new funding of about £245 million to transform public services, including health, education and justice, and a rapid injection of £550 million to put the Executive’s finances on a sustainable footing, including £200 million over three years to help to resolve the nurses’ pay dispute immediately and deliver pay parity.

The UK Government will ring-fence £45 million of capital, and will provide resource funding to deliver a Northern Ireland graduate-entry medical school in Derry/Londonderry, subject to Executive approval. They will also provide £50 million over two years to support the roll-out of ultra low emission public transport. Moreover, the agreement will provide £140 million to address Northern Ireland’s unique circumstances. That money will help to strengthen our Union, and will support the four key areas set out in “New Decade, New Approach”. I hope that the whole House will join me in welcoming the announcement.

These funds will come with stringent conditions attached. In particular, through this agreement I will convene a UK Government-Northern Ireland Executive joint board. This will provide a clear role for the UK Government in overseeing the implementation of this financial package. More broadly, it is right, as we have heard in recent days, that the Executive should focus on ensuring that public services and finances can be delivered more sustainably. Northern Ireland taxpayers deserve to know that their money is being used efficiently and effectively.

The past few days have given us much cause for celebration, but this is not job done. Three years without an Executive was completely unacceptable, and it is now down to all of us to ensure that this never happens again. We need an Executive that will go forward on the basis of trust and mutual respect and, above all else, focus on delivering for the people of Northern Ireland. For my part, I will ensure that the UK Government fully implement their commitments under this deal, but I will also be working with the Executive to ensure that the letter and the spirit of this agreement are being delivered. I commend the statement to the House.

11.25 am

**Tony Lloyd (Rochdale) (Lab):** I thank the Secretary of State for giving me early sight of his statement. I also want to thank him for the work that he has personally

[Tony Lloyd]

put in to ensure that we now have the restoration of Stormont. His place in the history books will be assured on that basis. I join him in acknowledging the role of the many others that he has name-checked this morning, and on behalf of the Opposition I thank all those involved. We now have an opportunity to examine what the deal offers. Undoubtedly, the major gain is that we now have a functioning Executive and Assembly once again in Northern Ireland. That matters enormously to the people of Northern Ireland, the people of the United Kingdom and the whole of the island of Ireland. I should also place on record our acknowledgement of the important role played by the Tánaiste, Simon Coveney, the Irish Foreign Minister.

I shall turn now to the details of the Secretary of State's statement and more generally to the restoration of the Executive and the work he has in front of him. Will he give us absolute clarity on the case of Emma De Souza and her husband Jake DeSouza, who have campaigned hard for the right to be able to live together in this country of ours? She is an Irish citizen living in Northern Ireland. I think that the words in the documents are clear, but it would be unremittingly good news if the Secretary of State could clarify that that situation will be resolved. I think that that is what he said, but it would be helpful if he could place on record the names of those two individuals and how this will affect them.

The document rightly makes reference to the Stormont House agreement. The Secretary of State will know that, 21 years on from the Good Friday agreement, many of the victims and their families are still looking for justice and knowledge of what happened to their loved ones, whether they were murdered by terrorists or even, in some cases, by the forces of the Crown, because that possibility does exist. The Stormont House agreement ensured that there would be a historical investigations unit, and that was an important commitment, but will the Secretary of State put it beyond doubt that he has confidence in the capacity of our police to investigate this, and in the independence of our prosecution services and our judiciary, to ensure that the Stormont House process can be completed in a way that will give satisfaction, as far as we ever can do, to the families and victims of the tragedy that took place in Northern Ireland all those years ago?

I shall now turn to the contentious issue of finance. I applaud the Secretary of State and the Tánaiste for standing in front of Stormont with this document. As the Secretary of State has told us this morning, the two of them tabled a draft text to all parties. There is no doubt that the document is now owned by the Executive and the Assembly, but it is also owned by the UK Government, and the Secretary of State and this Government—the Prime Minister and the Chancellor in particular—must accept the important but challenging programme of work within it. The Prime Minister, who rightly went to Belfast to celebrate the return of the Executive, is party to the ambitions of the document, but he is also party to the need to make proper finances available.

My first question for the Secretary of State relates to the hopefully soon-to-be-concluded nurses' pay parity dispute. While he said that £200 million will be made available—a lot of money in a health context—the

reality is that the cost of providing pay parity and the cost for equivalent awards for other professions in the Northern Ireland health and social care sector is likely to be £200 million on an annual basis, not as a one-off. The package must be properly funded if we are to ensure that we can begin to see a narrowing of the disparity in pay in healthcare between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

More generally, there is a real issue about the funding of the whole package. The moneys that the Government have made available so far will simply not be adequate for this ambitious document which, I repeat, is owned by the United Kingdom Government just as much as it is by the Northern Ireland Executive. The First Minister and the Deputy First Minister have written a joint letter to the Prime Minister making the point that the money is not adequate. Finance Minister Conor Murphy also told me that he is working things through to discover the real financial consequences of the document, and they will be significantly more than the moneys the Government have made available.

This is a really important moment in the history of our two islands. The Secretary of State deserves enormous credit for the restoration of the Executive, but the process cannot now be frustrated by a penny-pinching attitude from a Chancellor and a Prime Minister who will not accept the consequences. I say directly to the Secretary of State that he has to do better. He must go back to other Ministers and say, "We now need to see the resources made available."

**Julian Smith:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his remarks and for his personal comments about me and my team. To confirm the situation on the DeSouza case, we are fully committed to the Belfast/Good Friday agreement, and there should never be an incentive to renounce British citizenship. That is why we have provided the same family reunification rights to all the people of Northern Ireland.

As for the hon. Gentleman's question about broader issues for victims and those seeking justice, I point him to the Prime Minister's comments. He and the Government are clear that we cannot accept the unfair or vexatious pursuit of our veterans when there is no new evidence. However, that must obviously be balanced against the need for truth for victims, and the Government will be addressing that in due course.

On the finances, at £2 billion, this is the best financial deal of any Northern Ireland talks settlement. The hon. Gentleman referred to a letter from the two First Ministers. I have seen the letter and the reply, which points out that this is an injection of money for this talks process: £1 billion of new money and a guaranteed £1 billion of Barnett-based funding up front. We then have the UK Budget in March, and we have a deal for Brexit. The key task for the Executive is to focus on their priorities. The hon. Gentleman referred to the programme for Government in appendix 2, which clearly states that the

"parties agree to publish, within two weeks of the restoration of the institutions, the fuller details of an agreed Programme for Government."

This Government stand ready to work with the Executive over the coming months and years, and we really want to support them. This £2 billion is an extremely good start, and I am confident it is the basis for a strong future for Northern Ireland.

**Mrs Theresa May** (Maidenhead) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his achievement in ensuring that the Executive can be reformed. It has been tantalisingly close on a number of occasions over the past couple of years, but he has brought it to fruition.

I also commend the Northern Ireland parties for coming together in the interest of the people of Northern Ireland, and I welcome the representatives from the Social Democratic and Labour party and the Alliance party to the House, alongside the representatives from the Democratic Unionist party.

I congratulate my right hon. Friends the Members for Old Bexley and Sidcup (James Brokenshire) and for Staffordshire Moorlands (Karen Bradley) on their commendable work over the years.

The Government are committed to having no hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and the annex to this plan says that the UK Government will

“legislate to guarantee unfettered access for Northern Ireland’s businesses to the whole of the UK internal market”.

It does so on the assumption that that unfettered access is as unfettered as it is today. What are the implications of these commitments for the future trade deal between the UK and the European Union?

**Julian Smith:** I thank my right hon. Friend for her remarks and comments. This deal, above all, guarantees the Executive a seat at the table as we implement our Brexit deal. It also underscores our commitment to ensuring, in law, unfettered access for goods from NI to GB, and it reconfirms that all the arrangements for Northern Ireland in our Brexit deal are subject to the consent of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

**Kirsten Oswald** (East Renfrewshire) (SNP): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement. The SNP warmly welcomes the re-establishment of devolved government in Northern Ireland. I am sure we all recognise the importance of the restoration of devolved government to Stormont and, in particular, the positive impact that could have on the everyday lives of people all over Northern Ireland.

The people of Northern Ireland have been left without local government for three years amid Brexit and amid a crisis in their public services. There is no doubt that this absence of government has had a profound impact on their daily lives. All the work that the parties have put into enabling the restoration of devolved government must be applauded, and their efforts must be warmly welcomed, as the Secretary of State said. There is no doubt that the new Government have a huge task ahead of them, but the spirit in which the agreement was reached provides them with great opportunities.

I heard what the Secretary of State says about funding. Last night the Government committed to an additional £1 billion in support of this agreement. To be clear, we believe that that is a necessary and welcome investment, but can the Secretary of State confirm today that those moneys will be subject to the Barnett formula?

In the agreement and in the Secretary of State’s statement, the UK Government commit to a new deal for Northern Ireland in the context of it being dragged out of the EU against its will. Is he able today to detail

more fully to the House what this new deal will involve, and to identify some of the specific measures that are planned?

**Julian Smith:** Going back to the financial package, there will be £2 billion up front and then, obviously, the usual Budget arrangements in March. It is not for me to comment on those Budget arrangements—I think I would get into huge trouble with the Treasury if I did—but all of us in this House and across Government realise that, when the Executive come forward with their programme for government and as they work through the coming months, we need to stand ready to assist them.

The Executive need to take a different approach from the one they have historically taken. They need to reform. We are setting up a board, and we are looking at how to encourage greater productivity. I was slightly disappointed to hear this week that water rates have been ruled out. The Executive need to look at their own revenue-raising measures, as well as coming to the UK Exchequer for cash.

**Karen Bradley** (Staffordshire Moorlands) (Con): I join others in paying tribute to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the Tánaiste, Simon Coveney, for the work they have done. I know too well the hours and hours that have been put in to get to this point, and my right hon. Friend deserves great credit for being able to stand here today to deliver this statement. The new deal includes the setting up of an office for identity and cultural protection. I would be interested to hear from him how he sees that office being used to bring the community together, rather than driving a wedge between.

**Julian Smith:** I thank my right hon. Friend for that and I again pay tribute to her work; there were many, many references to specific meetings and engagements, and to a specific bottle of wine, when she hosted party leaders, and she made a big difference to the overall process. I thank her for her efforts.

On the office of diversity, these now are devolved matters, but I absolutely concur with the direction of my right hon. Friend’s question: let us not make this deal add to the division. Everything needs to focus on bringing the community in Northern Ireland together.

**Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson** (Lagan Valley) (DUP): May I add our voice of appreciation to the Secretary of State and his team for their efforts to help the political parties in Northern Ireland to secure agreement, to the former Secretaries of State, the right hon. Members for Staffordshire Moorlands (Karen Bradley) and for Old Bexley and Sidcup (James Brokenshire), for the work they have done, and to our former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), for her efforts and for the particular attention she paid to Northern Ireland during her term of office? We welcome the deal as being fair and balanced. Of course, as for all parties, elements of the deal will be difficult and challenging for us going forward.

We welcome the measures for veterans in Northern Ireland, the appointment of a new Northern Ireland veterans commissioner and the full implementation of the armed forces covenant in Northern Ireland. These are welcome developments for the men and women who



[Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson]

served our country. We also welcome the establishment of an Ulster British commissioner to promote the culture, heritage, arts, literature and so on of the Ulster British people of Northern Ireland. We believe that that is an important step forward in promoting and supporting the identity of all of us who regard ourselves as Unionists and having our place in the United Kingdom. On the commitments made on Brexit, I echo the question asked by the former Prime Minister. The current Prime Minister has talked about Northern Ireland having full access to new trade deals, so it will be interesting to see how that works out in practice.

The funding issue has already been raised by the Opposition Front Bencher. We are concerned that, if this deal is to work and devolution is to be effective in Northern Ireland, the resources need to be there in order to ensure sustainability. Can the Secretary of State assure us that the remaining balance of the confidence and supply agreement moneys previously committed by the Government will be included and will come to the Northern Ireland Executive in full?

**Julian Smith:** I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his victory in the Democratic Unionist party leadership election and I look forward to working with him. I echo his comments on the commitment of this deal to veterans and to the armed forces covenant, things that he and his party have campaigned so long for. I also pay tribute to Nigel Dodds and Emma Little Pengelly, who have left following the election, for their work. On the issue of funding, I can confirm that the confidence and supply funding will be dealt with in the estimates process in the usual way.

**Mr Owen Paterson** (North Shropshire) (Con): I heartily congratulate my right hon. Friend on his tenacity and skill in getting us to this point, and getting the institutions up and running. He touched on the issue of health. Sadly, health outcomes in Northern Ireland are now shockingly bad. In December 2018, all five trusts in Northern Ireland failed to meet their targets and recently we have been getting reports that people in real pain are having to wait three years to see a specialist. A clear signal of where to go was given by Professor Bengoa's report right in 2016. It is not just a question of saving money; clinical efficiencies are to be gained from the proposals in that report. Can the Secretary of State guarantee that, in putting this very generous injection of money into Northern Ireland, money will be directed to programmes such as Bengoa, which will deliver much more efficient outcomes?

**Julian Smith:** My right hon. Friend is correct that the Bengoa report, which is in the process of being implemented, is key to the transformation of health services in Northern Ireland. By the way, as part of the financial deal, £245 million is dedicated to the transformation of public services. We have outlined in the deal that, as well as the project board, we are looking for reform initiatives in health. Robin Swann, the new Health Minister in Northern Ireland, has got off to an extremely good start in sorting out the nurses' pay dispute.

**Conor McGinn** (St Helens North) (Lab): May I acknowledge that on the Opposition Benches today we miss the voices of David Hanson and Vernon Coaker,

who were passionately committed to Northern Ireland, and of course we miss Nigel Dodds and Emma Little Pengelly, who were held in high regard right across the House?

I congratulate the Secretary of State and the Tánaiste on their efforts in securing the agreement, along with the ministerial and civil service team who helped to deliver it, but may I press him on the finances? The new Finance Minister said yesterday that the settlement that the Secretary of State imposed on the Executive was an act of "bad faith" and that he cannot and will not accept that. How does the Secretary of State intend to mend the gap between the expectations of devolved Ministers and the pay and financial settlement that he has imposed on the new Executive?

**Julian Smith:** First, I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman for his work on the same-sex marriage regulations that came into force on 13 January, giving same-sex women and men in Northern Ireland the opportunity to marry by Valentine's day this year.

On the concern about the level of finances, we all represent our own constituencies, and Northern Ireland has around 20% more funding than any other part of the UK. I have outlined the package and confirmed that there will be a UK Budget by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. I look forward to working with the Finance Minister, as does the Treasury, as he develops well-costed plans based on good value for money for UK taxpayers.

**James Brokenshire** (Old Bexley and Sidcup) (Con): I warmly welcome the restoration of the Executive and devolved government in Northern Ireland, in the best interests of the people of Northern Ireland. I join others in commending my right hon. Friend and his team and, indeed, the work of the Tánaiste, Simon Coveney. We know just how challenging this has been, but it is a very positive development to see all five parties now within the Executive.

May I touch on the issue of sustainability? Now that the Executive have been re-established, it is important that they remain there—that they continue to serve the people of Northern Ireland and that we have that local decision making. Will my right hon. Friend comment on the steps that are being taken and will be taken to ensure that the devolved Government in Northern Ireland remain, and remain serving its people?

**Julian Smith:** I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend for the work that he personally did on the talks process before he had a spell of very bad illness, for his continued commitment to Northern Ireland and for his assistance, advice and counsel to me since I took on this job.

On sustainability, my right hon. Friend is absolutely right. In the chapter on sustainability that was developed, as were all parts of the party-led agreement, by working groups earlier last year, there are many initiatives on supporting and funding Opposition parties and on looking at how things would work should the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister resign.

**Colum Eastwood** (Foyle) (SDLP): I thank the Secretary of State, the Tánaiste and all their officials for the enormous effort that was put in to make sure that the institutions of the Good Friday agreement were restored. In particular, I welcome the commitment to the Graduate



Entry Medical School at Magee in my constituency of Foyle. As the Secretary of State will know, and as has already been said, there are lots of commitments in the deal, and there is a gap between the commitments and the financial package offered. One of the commitments in the deal is to extend and expand the Magee university campus to 10,000 students. We have been waiting since 1965 to see that achieved. Will the Secretary of State continue to work with the Irish Government and our newly established Executive to finally, once and for all, see a full-sized university in Derry?

**Julian Smith:** I am glad that the hon. Gentleman is pleased with the work for which he campaigned so hard. The £45 million ring-fenced capital for Derry medical school is a great news story for Derry. Clearly, there is a decision for the Executive to make on whether to fund more student places or take action in other areas, but I stand ready to support the Derry medical school in any way I can.

On the commitment to the financial package more generally, as I have said before, we stand ready to support the Executive as they develop their priorities.

**Sir Mike Penning** (Hemel Hempstead) (Con): It is welcome that the military covenant will be in full force in Northern Ireland—something that we struggled to do when I was a Minister of State. Will the Secretary of State come out a little more forcefully and let us know exactly what will happen with our veterans—the people, like me, who had no choice whether they served on Operation Banner—and how we will protect them from vexatious claims against them, which are destroying their lives?

**Julian Smith:** First, I pay tribute to the UK service women and men who took part in Operation Banner for the work they did, the dedication they showed, and the commitment—they and their families. Yesterday, the Prime Minister was absolutely clear that we cannot accept the unfair or vexatious pursuit of our veterans when there is no new evidence. We will bring forward legislation, but that will be this Government's focus as we develop legislation for this agreement and for the armed forces more generally.

**Mike Amesbury** (Weaver Vale) (Lab): I, too, welcome the re-establishment of the Executive and the decision to ring-fence £45 million for the medical school in Derry. However, given the failure of Ulster University to deliver successive promises over the decades, surely an independent university would be a better vehicle.

**Julian Smith:** The hon. Gentleman is right to question some of Ulster University's ongoing projects, but on the other hand, Northern Ireland universities are among the best in the country. We need to support Ulster University and ensure that we deliver the project of getting the medical school up and running. That will be in the best interests of people in the north-west and more generally.

**Simon Hoare** (North Dorset) (Con): May I add my congratulations to my right hon. Friend and all those on both sides of the Irish sea, who have worked so hard to get us to this joyful place? My right hon. Friend knows that there is a huge pent-up demand among the

people of Northern Ireland for change and reform in many areas that have lain stagnant for the last three years. How confident is he that there is the resilience among the official corps to deliver in a speedy way the changes for which the people of Northern Ireland have been waiting far too long?

**Julian Smith:** My hon. Friend is right about the need for reform and change. I pay tribute to David Sterling and his team at the Northern Ireland civil service who for three years have had to step in in the absence of political decision making from the devolved Assembly and Executive. I also remind all those supporting the new Executive that, as well as funds, we must focus on reform, change and transformation.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Secretary of State for his commitment, dedication and strength of character in getting the deal over the line. On nurses, the extra £109 million to maintain an equal pay standard for this year and next year is welcome, but will he outline the steps he has taken to enhance the block grant, which will enable our staff to provide bursaries to keep training, increase the numbers of frontline, highly trained staff and reduce and keep waiting lists at an acceptable level?

**Julian Smith:** As I said earlier, about £245 million is going into the transformation of public services and £550 million into resource support, of which £200 million will resolve the nurses' pay dispute. It is up to the Executive and the Assembly to work out how they want to spend that money and to address any other opportunities that they may find coming from the Budget in March.

**Greg Clark** (Tunbridge Wells) (Con): I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend on his personal achievement, which involved reserves of patience, diplomacy tenacity, and, I dare say, menace—qualities that, clearly, the Conservative Whips Office in the previous Parliament was the ideal breeding ground for. One of the frustrations of the past few years is that the absence of an economy Minister in Northern Ireland meant that the development of the industrial strategy did not have that Executive leadership. Opposition Members there contributed magnificently in certain particular cases, but will he emphasise to the new economy Minister that Northern Ireland should take advantage of the big opportunities that are available to the whole of the UK, particularly the opportunities that exist for the manufacturing and industrial traditions of Northern Ireland?

**Julian Smith:** I thank my right hon. Friend for his compliment. I was Chief Whip, but cannot remember people making those types of kind remarks. I would also like to point to the work that he did as Business Minister on Bombardier and other issues in Northern Ireland and on making sure that those businesses were retained. On the role of the economy Minister, I was very heartened when I met the Prime Minister and the Executive. Nichola Mallon from the SDLP has taken over that important brief. I can think of no better person to move that issue forward. She talked about turbo-charging the Northern Ireland economy, which matches very well with the priorities of this Government.

**Stephen Farry** (North Down) (Alliance): I join in praising the Secretary of State and the Tánaiste and their teams for this deal and also stress my understanding of the importance of linking any new cash for Northern Ireland with reform and transformation. May I ask him about the petition of concern and share the view that many people are sceptical and feel that the reforms do not go far enough, but are, none the less, prepared to give it a go. Will he give us a reassurance that, if things do not work out correctly, the Government will look at this again? Will he also recognise that, as society in Northern Ireland transforms, more and more people no longer identify as either unionist or nationalist, and that that must be recognised in the institutions?

**Julian Smith:** The hon. Gentleman is right. His party led the way during the talks process on analysing and reforming the petition of concern. There have been very positive reforms of the petition of concern, but, as a UK Government, we have said that we will review it every six months and that, at the end of this Assembly term, we will stand by to take action and intervene if it is being abused.

**Mr Laurence Robertson** (Tewkesbury) (Con): By way of analogy, if parties do not turn up to this House, or if people resign, or if there is disagreement, we do not collapse Parliament. Will the Secretary of State look at how changes might be introduced in Northern Ireland, working with the local parties, to ensure that, regardless of what disagreements there may be, we do not see the institutions collapse again?

**Julian Smith:** There are a series of commitments in this deal, which have been agreed to by the parties, that will require certain bits of legislation in the Assembly. In my view, they will ensure that we never again have to see—as we have had to in the past three years—the loss of the Assembly and the Executive.

**Layla Moran** (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD): May I add my voice to the collective delight at this announcement, and to highlight my delight at reading the words about educating children and young people of different backgrounds together in the same classroom? I ask the Secretary of State to commend the work of the Integrated Education Fund and the Northern Ireland Council for integrated education, and to seek assurance that the moneys in the transforming education programme could be used to further this purpose.

**Julian Smith:** I pay tribute to those organisations, and can reconfirm that there is a focus on education reform in the agreement. I would expect the Executive to be looking very closely at how education is being operated. It is a very high-performing sector of education in the UK, but there is a lot of transformation to be done.

**Jack Lopresti** (Filton and Bradley Stoke) (Con): Can the Secretary of State assure the House that the frequently stated commitment of the Government to end the witch hunt of our ex-service people—the “vexatious” prosecutions that he and the Minister for Defence People and Veterans, my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Plymouth, Moor View (Johnny Mercer) have referred to—will not be sacrificed on the altar of Stormont political expediency?

**Julian Smith:** I thank my hon. Friend for that question and pay tribute to his service for our country during his period in the armed forces. Let me say again that there is nothing in the agreement that takes away what the Prime Minister said yesterday; we cannot accept the unfair or vexatious pursuit of our veterans when there is no new evidence.

**Mr Gregory Campbell** (East Londonderry) (DUP): I, too, welcome the statement. I acknowledge what the Secretary of State has said—that this is a good start in financial terms. But given that he has said it is a good start, it means that we are not finished yet, so perhaps he could elaborate a little bit on that. I recognise and welcome the fact that he is now talking in corporate terms, mentioning all the parties, rather than the singular approach he used before Christmas, when he singled out my party for some criticism. On the issue of singularity, will he join me in welcoming the fact that the leader of Sinn Féin, Michelle O’Neill, said 10 days ago that the “negative attitude and disrespect...is consigned to the past”.

We all recognise that. Hopefully Sinn Féin will do the same and will not misuse the case of the Irish language and be confronted about it, as I and others have had to do in the past.

**Julian Smith:** I think the hon. Gentleman knows that I am a friend of the DUP, as I work with all parties in Northern Ireland. I welcome Michelle O’Neill’s comments. We need to ensure that this is a new chapter in how we deal with each other when it comes to respect for each other’s backgrounds and priorities. The atmosphere in that Executive meeting with our Prime Minister was extremely positive, with five political parties from all parts of the political spectrum working together in the best interests of Northern Ireland.

**Vicky Ford** (Chelmsford) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend and all involved in finally reaching this most important agreement. As someone who spent quite a lot of her teenage years waiting for hospital appointments in Derry/Londonderry, I particularly warmly welcome the announcement of a new medical school. We opened a new medical school in Chelmsford a couple of years ago, and it has had a massive impact on our city. I am sure that anyone from Derry/Londonderry who wants to come and see it would be hugely welcome there.

I often get asked this question by my constituents, so would my right hon. Friend confirm for the record that the funding available for Northern Ireland is available to all parts of the community?

**Julian Smith:** I thank my hon. Friend for her text messages, WhatsApp messages and all her support during this period. I can reconfirm that the funding package that the UK Government are providing will be provided to the Executive, and should be distributed across communities in Northern Ireland.

**Martin Docherty-Hughes** (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP): Coming from good Ulster stock myself, I am delighted to congratulate the Secretary of State, along with his counterpart in Ireland, Simon Coveney, for the work that they and all Members, both here and in Northern Ireland, have done to bring about the Assembly resitting.

An essential element of the Good Friday agreement, which is the foundation of that Assembly, is the notion—whether Members in this House agree with it or not—of a referendum on the unity of the Irish nation. Now, I am sure that would also mean that the Secretary of State agrees with me that the Union is consensual.

**Julian Smith:** I think the Prime Minister was very clear about his views on those issues yesterday. I have no further comments to make.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** Order. Mr Speaker said that this statement should only go on until 12 o'clock; we have now gone past that. A substantial number of people wish to speak in the debate this afternoon, so I am afraid that we are going to move on.

## Points of Order

12.4 pm

**Dame Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I have been contacted by a number of constituents who have raised the issue of the places that the Government have announced will benefit from additional funding as part of their towns fund announcement. Oddly, the list seems to include places that are not towns but cities, such as Lincoln and Wolverhampton. I think it is in the Government's interests to allay any fears there might be about pork-barrel politics that a statement is made to the House about the criteria used for allocating funds through the towns fund because cities such as my own city of Hull have not been allowed to apply for the funding, yet other cities seem to have got in there anyway.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** I thank the hon. Lady for her point of order, but she knows that it is not a matter for the Chair. I have been given no notification that a statement will be made, but I am absolutely certain that the Whips will feed back the point that she has made.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. Earlier today, three occupants of the Treasury Bench referred to the presence of a Secretary of State in the Gallery, contrary to Standing Orders. I do not blame them for doing so: the previous Speaker made an art form of it. Indeed, you may recall the nadir when three ageing members of the Osmond family—minor members—took a bow having received his approbation. It is within the gift of the House to change its Standing Orders if it wishes, but for the moment are we to abide by Standing Orders or are we not? Or can we simply choose which Standing Orders apply?

**Mr Deputy Speaker:** I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his point of order. I remember the Osmonds being up in the Gallery, and I was thrilled to see them. But the Standing Orders are the Standing Orders. They are there for a reason, and it is good to remind everybody in the House that the norm is that Members do not refer to people in the Gallery. He is also right that if the House wishes to change its Standing Orders, it is within its rights to do so.

## BILL PRESENTED

### AGRICULTURE BILL

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

Secretary Villiers, supported by the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Secretary Barclay, Secretary Truss, Secretary Simon Hart, Secretary Julian Smith, George Eustice and Rishi Sunak, presented a Bill to authorise expenditure for certain agricultural and other purposes; to make provision about direct payments following the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union and about payments in response to exceptional market conditions affecting agricultural markets; to confer power to modify retained direct EU legislation relating to a storage aid; to make provision

about reports on food security; to make provision about the acquisition and use of information connected with food supply chains; to confer powers to make regulations about the imposition of obligations on business purchasers of agricultural products, marketing standards, organic products and the classification of carcasses; to make provision for the recognition of associations of agricultural producers which may benefit from certain exemptions from competition law; to make provision about fertilisers; to make provision about the identification and traceability of animals; to make provision about red meat levy in Great Britain; to make provision about agricultural tenancies; to confer power to make regulations about securing compliance with the WTO Agreement on Agriculture; and for connected purposes.

*Bill read the First time: to be read a Second time on Monday 20 January, and to be printed (Bill 7) with explanatory notes (Bill 7-EN).*

## Debate on the Address

[5<sup>TH</sup> DAY]

*Debate resumed (Order, 15 January).*

*Question again proposed,*

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

Most Gracious Sovereign,

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

## Health and Social Care

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** I wish to inform the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

12.6 pm

**Jonathan Ashworth (Leicester South) (Lab/Co-op):** I beg to move an amendment, at the end of the Question to add:

“but respectfully regrets that the Gracious Speech fails to ensure that the National Health Service and social care will be properly funded; and calls for the Government to bring forward a plan and additional funding to end the crisis in social care and provide for at least a 4 per cent per year real terms increase in health spending.”

Before I move on to the substance of my remarks, may I congratulate you, Mr Deputy Speaker? It is a pleasure to see you back in your place overseeing these proceedings. I will endeavour to be as brief as I can in my remarks, because I am aware that many Members hope to catch your eye to offer their maiden contributions. I am sure that every one of them will do their constituencies proud.

At the outset, I also wish to thank our hard-working NHS and social care staff who every day go beyond the call of duty and go the extra mile, especially over the Christmas period. We are forever in their debt. Our amendment, which we will put to the vote today, is essentially about backing up those hard-working NHS and social care staff, and sending a message to the Government that they should be given the resources that they need.

This is a motion about the 4.5 million people on waiting lists. This is a motion about the pregnant woman who waited so long for her glaucoma operation at a hospital in Southampton that she nearly lost her sight and has never seen the face of her child. This is a motion about the 34,000 people who wait more than two months for cancer treatment. This is a motion about those constituents, such as mine in Leicester, who had their bladder cancer operations cancelled twice. This is a motion about the 79,000 cancelled operations last year, and the 18,000 children's cancelled operations. This is a motion about the 110,000 children denied mental health care, even though they are in the most desperate of circumstances. This is a motion about the 98,000 patients who waited on trolleys last month—a 65% increase on the previous year—many of them elderly, many of them in their 80s and 90s, languishing for hours and hours on trolleys in hospital corridors.



This is a motion about those hospitals that have been pushed to rack and ruin after years of cuts to capital budgets, including Hillingdon hospital in the Prime Minister's own backyard, where children's wards had to be closed because of subsidence. This is a motion about the Royal Cornwall hospital that is discharging patients early because it is so overwhelmed. This is a motion about the 1.5 million people, many of them with dementia, denied the social care support they need after years and years of swingeing cuts.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Jonathan Ashworth:** Let me make a little bit of progress. I think Members on both sides would agree that I am usually generous in taking interventions, but I am aware that many colleagues want to make their maiden speeches today. I will take some interventions, but let me make a little bit of progress. I hope the right hon. Gentleman will give me a bit of leeway.

This motion is about giving the NHS the funding it needs. It is a motion that will test every newly elected Conservative Member of Parliament on their commitment to the NHS.

The Government are correct to signal in the Queen's Speech, as they did indeed in the pre-election Queen's Speech, that health and social care should be the priority. On that, at least, they have my agreement. Yesterday the Prime Minister promised to

"get those waiting lists down."—[*Official Report*, 15 January 2020; Vol. 669, c. 1015.]

So the test that must be applied to the NHS and social care announcements in the Gracious Address is whether they add up to a strategy to drive waiting lists down and A&E performance up. The answer on that front is surely no. We have promises of 40 new hospitals, 50,000 new extra nurses, and 50 million more GP appointments, with 6,000 extra GPs. On each and every one of these commitments, we will keep track of progress and test Ministers on whether they deliver.

But we will also test Ministers on social—

**Sir Desmond Swayne** *rose*—

**Mr Mark Harper** (Forest of Dean) (Con) *rose*—

**Jonathan Ashworth:** I give way first to the right hon. Member for New Forest West (Sir Desmond Swayne) and then I will make some progress because I know that many Members want to speak.

**Sir Desmond Swayne:** The hon. Gentleman will recall that the Government accepted the Dilnot proposals and even put in place certain legislative provisions for them to be implemented in the next financial year. I never understood why, during the 2017 election campaign, they departed from that position—but what is the Opposition's position on Dilnot?

**Jonathan Ashworth:** We have long argued for a cap on care costs, but of course the Government, as the right hon. Gentleman says, dropped their support for this policy.

On the issue of social care, the Prime Minister said at the Dispatch Box yesterday that he wanted cross-party talks, although in his BBC interview the day before he

said that he had a plan that he would bring forward in the next 12 months. The Government want a consensus. I say to the Government that the Labour party has proposed free personal care. We have a version of free personal care in Scotland. There is a similar version of it in Northern Ireland. There is a version of it in Wales. The House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee, which includes Thatcherites such as Michael Forsyth and Norman Lamont, alongside the former Labour Chancellor, Alistair Darling, has proposed free personal social care. There already is a political consensus. It is the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister who stand outside that consensus. If the Secretary of State wants to engage with us on that basis, then my hon. Friend the Member for Worsley and Eccles South (Barbara Keeley) is happy to do so. I will now take the intervention from the former Chief Whip.

**Mr Harper:** Given that the hon. Gentleman's party is undergoing a leadership election and that will clearly mean—[*Interruption.*] No, I am trying to say this helpfully. If the Secretary of State has made a commitment to start the process of cross-party talks within the next 100 days, that will obviously be before that leadership election is concluded. So my serious point is that if we wish to engage on a cross-party basis on whether to implement the Dilnot proposals, as my right hon. Friend the Member for New Forest West (Sir Desmond Swayne) mentioned, or on the basis that the hon. Gentleman just said, is he in a position to start that engagement with the support of his current party leader so that we can make progress urgently? The social care problems in the country are not going to wait, frankly, for another Leader of the Opposition to be elected. That is meant as a really serious and cross-party point.

**Jonathan Ashworth:** It is a serious point, and I am grateful for the way in which the right hon. Gentleman has put it. Of course, we are very happy to engage. My hon. Friend the Member for Worsley and Eccles South, who sits in the shadow Cabinet and leads on social care, is happy to sit down with Ministers at any point.

I am suggesting to the Secretary of State, rather gently, that there is a degree of political consensus on free adult personal social care. The House of Lords Committee, which includes Michael Forsyth and Norman Lamont, not socialists red in tooth and claw by any means, alongside Alistair Darling, has proposed it. We, as a Front-Bench team, have proposed it. There are forms of it in some of the devolved nations. It is the Secretary of State who is standing outside that consensus. If he wants to engage with us on those terms, and on the point about a cap as proposed by Dilnot, then of course we are prepared to have those levels of engagement.

There is also a degree of consensus around the need for better integration between health and social care, and better co-ordination of health and social care. That is why we are intrigued by the Secretary of State's proposal to consult on the NHS Funding Bill.

**James Cartlidge** (South Suffolk) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Jonathan Ashworth:** For the last time, because a lot of Members want to speak.

**James Cartledge:** This is directly relevant. The hon. Gentleman made a point about the House of Lords Committee, but he will be aware that the House of Commons Committee recommended a social insurance system—perhaps along the lines of Germany’s, for example. Is he, in principle, supportive of that solution?

**Jonathan Ashworth:** No, because we do not think it would work—it is not feasible. It is not just the Committee in the Lords that says that—plenty of think-tanks have said it is not feasible as well.

There is broad consensus about the principle of better integration between health and social care. We have long argued for it, and now the Government have come round to arguing for it as well. The Government are proposing an NHS Bill along the lines of what Simon Stevens of NHS England has proposed. We long warned that the Health and Social Care Act 2012, which was introduced by Andrew Lansley and supported by sitting many of the Ministers on the Front Bench, would not lead to the levels of integration and co-ordination of care that was needed but to a fragmented mess.

We also long warned that the compulsory competitive tendering provisions of the Act would lead to more contracts being handed to the private sector. About £9 billion-worth of contracts were handed to the private sector, despite the Secretary of State telling us that there would be no privatisation on his watch. If his Bill gets rid of those compulsory competitive tendering provisions—the so-called section 75 regulations—we would welcome that, but we want competitive tendering to be abolished completely. We do not want clinical services privatised. We do not want clinical services outsourced, such as pathology labs in London, as is happening on the Secretary of State’s watch. We do not want tinkering in the Bill: we want the Health and Social Care Act binned so that we can restore a universal public national health service. *[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State says that it is universal. He is clearly not aware of the rationing that is going on across the country because of austerity and the privatisation of the NHS that is his policy.

As I indicated in the debate on the Gracious Address before the election, we will work constructively with Ministers to ensure the speedy passage of the health service safety investigations Bill. We will look to strengthen the independence of medical examiners. We call on the Government to do more to roll out medical examiners across NHS trusts. It is disappointing that so far only about 50% of trusts have medical examiners. These are absolutely vital to improving patient safety, because we know that things do go wrong in the delivery of care. We have all been shocked by the revelations at Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust. This is the worst ever maternity scandal, with clinical malpractice apparently allowed to continue unchecked since the ’70s. It is absolutely horrific and astonishing. I cannot imagine the grief that the families affected must have had to endure. Will the Secretary of State update the House on what is happening at Shrewsbury and Telford? I appreciate that there was an Adjournment debate on that matter last night, but I think the House would appreciate his offering us some reflections on what is happening at Shrewsbury and Telford. Will he also commit to reinstating the maternity training fund to help to improve maternity safety in our hospitals?

I am sure that the Secretary of State will agree, more broadly, that the delivery of safe care depends on adequate staffing levels as well, so would he support enshrining safe staffing levels in legislation? We are short of 44,000 nurses in England. Community nurses have been cut by 6,000 since 2010. Learning disability nurses are being cut. Mental health nurses have been cut by 10%. Health visitor numbers are down. School nurses have been cut. We have been warning for years about the detrimental impact on safe care of these staffing shortages. That is why, for example, we fought the Government on the abolition of the training bursary. We welcome the fact that Ministers are now bringing back a partial version of the bursary in the form of a maintenance grant, but why not bring back the whole bursary? Without bringing back the whole bursary, many are sceptical that the Secretary of State will deliver on his commitment for 50,000 new nurses, because as quickly as—*[Interruption.]* Well, he is rather stretching the definition of the word “new”. He gave the impression in the general election campaign that there were going to be 50,000 new nurses, but that soon unravelled, because when he went on the media it turned out that he was including in his figures 19,000 nurses who already work in the national health service. I of course have some sympathy—

**Dr Caroline Johnson** (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Jonathan Ashworth:** I am afraid that on this occasion I will not, because many Members want to make maiden speeches. There is nothing worse for a Member waiting to make a maiden speech than seeing the time ticking down because Front Benchers are taking lots of interventions.

**The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care** (Matt Hancock): You know you’re talking rubbish.

**Jonathan Ashworth:** I will tell you who was talking rubbish, Mr Deputy Speaker: the Secretary of State when he said at the general election that he was delivering 50,000 extra nurses. That is why he avoided Piers Morgan during the election campaign. I do not know why the Secretary of State avoided Piers Morgan—he is a pussycat. I went on Piers Morgan’s show every week; why did the Secretary of State not go on?

I will give way once more, and then if Members will indulge me, I will not give way again, because a lot of Members want to make their maiden speeches in the debate.

**Dr Caroline Johnson:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He is using a lot of statistics and figures, and he talked about the definition of “more” and “new”. I want to ask him about the 44,000 vacancies that he talked about. Is it not right that when the Health Committee looked at that, it found that 38,000 of those places were actually occupied by nurses who work on the bank because they choose that working model?

**Jonathan Ashworth:** As the hon. Lady knows from her work on the frontline in the NHS, the problem is that bank and agency staffing have contributed to many of the deficits that our trusts are dealing with. That is one of the problems with the way in which the workforce have been managed by the Government.

The Secretary of State says that his figures include 19,000 existing nurses. I have some sympathy for him, because we have been raising the issue of retention in the NHS for some time. That is why we were so vigorous in opposing the public sector pay cap, of which he was a great champion for many years as a Tory Minister, and it is why we were pleased that the Government got rid of it, following pressure from those on the Labour Front Bench. It is a laudable aim to improve retention in the NHS, but it is not the same as recruiting new nurses.

The Secretary of State expects to recruit 12,500 nurses internationally, while at the same time imposing a tax on those nurses through the immigration health surcharge, increasing it to more than £600 per family member per year of a nurse's working visa. Does he really expect to recruit 12,500 nurses internationally while imposing this nurses' tax on them?

The Secretary of State will also know that we are desperately short of nurses in the field of mental health services. We welcome the commitment to reform the Mental Health Act 1983, and we will work constructively with him on that, but we have had enough warm words and rhetoric on mental health services. It is now time to deliver the parity of esteem that patients deserve. We have a shortage of mental health beds, which means that too many people are sent hundreds of miles across the country to receive care, away from their family and friends, often in poor-quality private providers.

The Secretary of State likes to boast of hospital upgrades, but anyone who has been in a mental health trust, works in one or has visited one, as I have, knows that the mental health estate is, frankly, some of the worst estate in the NHS. It is unsafe. Mental health patients deserve so much better, yet there is still no credible plan in anything he has said to modernise and replace the 1,000 beds in old-style dormitory wards in mental health trusts across the country. Children are being particularly let down, with increasing rationing of mental health services and more than 130,000 referrals to specialist services turned down despite children showing signs of eating disorders, self-harm and abuse. Matters have become so desperate that there are even reports of GPs advising children to exaggerate problems, because otherwise they will not get any help. This is the chaos of the underfunded system, and it leads to an increasing number of children and young people presenting at A&E in mental health crisis. A&E is no place for someone in mental health crisis. This is a disgrace, and our mental health services now need investment.

That brings me to A&E more generally. The Secretary of State will say that there is increased demand on our A&E, and that is true. There is increased demand on our A&E because mental health services have been pushed to the brink; because years of cuts to social care are pushing more and more people to A&E; because public health prevention budgets have been hammered by years of cuts under this Conservative Government; because GP numbers in our communities have been cut and people cannot get appointments; because walk-in centres have closed under the Tories; and because pharmacies were cut back. More broadly, it is because decisions by this Government—whether it is their decisions on housing and universal credit or their cuts to children's services, with Sure Start centres closing—and rising

levels of poverty mean that health inequalities are widening. It all adds up to more people presenting at A&E because of 10 years of Tory austerity.

What is the Tories' answer to the worst A&E performance figures on record? It is to scrap the four-hour A&E target. Abolishing the target will not magic away the problems in A&E. It will not suddenly fix a system that saw 100,000 people waiting on trolleys last December. That is why the president of the Royal College of Emergency Medicine said yesterday:

“Rather than focus on ways around the target, we need to get back to the business of delivering on it”.

But Ministers cannot get back to the business of delivering the target, because they will soon ask the House to approve legislation that will legally bake in the underfunding of our NHS. The NHS underfunding Bill effectively caps NHS spending way below the level that experts say our NHS will need. The last Labour Government did not need legislation to signal their support of and commitment to the NHS. The last Labour Government got on and delivered record investment in our NHS. They delivered a 6% increase in investment into the NHS, and they delivered the lowest waiting lists and the highest satisfaction ratings on record—and we did not need the gimmick of a Bill to do it. We got on and delivered it.

The Secretary of State is proposing a Bill that fails to reverse the £850 million of cuts to public health prevention services. This is at a time of rising drug deaths, rising presentations at A&E for alcohol abuse, rising STI infections and rising obesity among children. He is asking us to approve a Bill that does not reverse the raids on capital budgets or deal with the £6.5 billion backlog of repairs facing our hospitals, which has left hospitals with sewage pipes bursting, ceilings falling in and lifts not working. He is proposing a Bill that does not give the NHS the 4% uplift annually that many experts say it needs. That is why Labour has tabled an amendment today to give the NHS a 4% uplift, and every Tory MP who believes in the NHS should support it. The Secretary of State is enshrining in law four more years of underfunding of our national health service and four more years of capped expenditure in our national health service, but it does not have to be that way.

I congratulate the Government on securing election. I congratulate the Secretary of State and all the Ministers who have been reappointed to the Front Bench, and I pay tribute to my former shadow Ministers who lost their seat, Paula Sherriff and Julie Cooper. We will hold the Secretary of State to account. We will test him on whether he delivers 40 new hospitals, 50,000 new nurses and 6,000 new GPs. We will test him on whether he drives waiting lists down, as the Prime Minister promised yesterday. Where the Secretary of State is right, we will work constructively with him. Where he is wrong, we will argue our case forcefully.

The Secretary of State was elected on a promise to fix the NHS. With 4.5 million people on the waiting lists, 2.5 million people waiting beyond four hours in A&E and 34,000 people waiting beyond two months for cancer treatment, our constituents now expect him to fix the NHS. He could start by giving the NHS the level of investment it needs, which is a 4% uplift. He could start by voting for our amendment in the Division Lobby tonight.



12.28 pm

**The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Matt Hancock):** This Queen's Speech has health and social care at its heart. For the first time in the history of the NHS, we will enshrine in law our long-term funding settlement. Yesterday we brought forward the NHS Funding Bill, which makes a record financial commitment of £33.9 billion more each year—the largest cash injection since the NHS was founded. It will enable us to go further and faster in delivering better health and social care in this country over the next decade. We are already delivering on this Queen's Speech. We are already delivering on our manifesto, and this Queen's Speech sets out how we will deliver on the rest of our manifesto. How many new hospitals will there be over the next decade? Forty! That was even mentioned by the hon. Member for Leicester South (Jonathan Ashworth).

**Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con):** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Matt Hancock:** I give way immediately.

**Robert Halfon:** I am delighted that my right hon. Friend has mentioned new hospitals because we have a new hospital coming in the Harlow constituency. Does he not agree that that shows the level of investment that this Government are putting into our national health service? Will he set out the plans for our new hospital—not a rebuild, not a reconfiguration, but a new hospital for Harlow?

**Matt Hancock:** That is right, and of those 40 new hospitals over the next decade, one of the very first will be in Harlow. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend, who has been a champion of Harlow for the last decade and has championed the need for a new hospital in Harlow. I am working very closely with the Harlow trust to make sure that that new hospital delivers what is needed for the people of Harlow. I very much look forward to working with him, and perhaps even being invited to cut a ribbon in due course.

**Mike Amesbury (Weaver Vale) (Lab):** The reality on the ground in the Halton part of my Weaver Vale constituency is somewhat different. Twice the Halton hospital campus has been turned down for capital investment. If the Secretary of State is true to his word on delivery for northern constituencies such as mine, will he please meet me? Let us have some progress there.

**Matt Hancock:** I am very happy to meet the hon. Gentleman. As well as the new hospitals, we also have upgrades going on that are very important. Some hospitals need to be completely rebuilt, we need some that are completely new and we also need to upgrade some. I am very happy to take that forward.

**Steve Brine (Winchester) (Con):** On the subject of the Secretary of State being true to his word—I welcome him back to his place—he will remember being robustly challenged on the NHS pensions issue when he came to Winchester hospital during the campaign. Can I thank him for what appears to be a very positive response to that conundrum, as reported this morning, and can I urge doctors' leaders to recognise a compromise when they see one? However, does he recognise that there is a

big job to be done now in rebuilding rotas? That could really have an impact on patient care in Winchester and across England.

**Matt Hancock:** It is good to see that the hon. Member for Weaver Vale (Mike Amesbury), having got the commitment to a meeting, is off—he's done! That was quick. My right hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon) is still here, but that is because there is so much more good news to come, and I am sure he wants to hear it.

The point about doctors' pensions is very important. We have already delivered on the commitment in the manifesto to start a process to end the problems caused by the interaction of tax laws passed in the last Parliament but one and the NHS pension scheme. My hon. Friend the Minister for Health met Treasury Ministers, the royal colleges, the British Medical Association, NHS Employers and others to kick off this process, and we are working on it very urgently.

I absolutely take the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Steve Brine) that, as we resolve the tax issue, we also need to rebuild the rotas that have been reduced because of the high marginal rates of tax. I urge each and every NHS hospital to play its part in putting that right.

**Mr Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con):** I was a bit disappointed that the Secretary of State does not plan to build a new hospital in Wycombe, but I am glad to say that there is an opportunity to invest in a transformational digital project, bringing together healthcare, social care and council services. Does he agree with me that transforming the NHS, social care and council services for the 21st century is about more than buildings, and that we do need to put such resource into digital?

**Matt Hancock:** I was going to come on to that later in my speech, but my hon. Friend is absolutely right. I had an excellent visit to Wycombe during the general election campaign. He has a brilliantly led local hospital that is working incredibly hard. The use of modern technology is a critical part of the agenda for bringing forward the NHS. To make sure that we can address patients' concerns and do more work more effectively, the technology has to work for the clinicians so that they can do their jobs better.

**Several hon. Members rose—**

**Matt Hancock:** I will continue to take some interventions, if the House will allow me, and then make some progress.

**Ben Everitt (Milton Keynes North) (Con):** The Secretary of State is being very generous in giving way a number of times. I would like to thank him for his visit to Milton Keynes, and for his commitment to investing not only in extra capacity but in infrastructure improvements in our hospitals. Is he aware of the radiology and radiotherapy treatment situation in Milton Keynes, with patients having to travel to Oxford, temporarily, to receive their treatment? That is not the best situation for those patients. Is he aware of the situation?

**Matt Hancock:** I am, because Milton Keynes's new MP has already been working with me to bring this concern to light. I can inform him that the new cancer



unit will be handed over to Milton Keynes hospital at the end of next week. That problem is indeed temporary and it is being resolved, very much thanks to the hard work of the new MP for Milton Keynes.

**Sir Mike Penning** (Hemel Hempstead) (Con): I thank the Secretary of State for his meeting the other evening. I am sure my right hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon) is thrilled that he is one of the six to get a brand-new hospital.

In south-west Hertfordshire, as the Secretary of State knows, we are not happy about having a hospital in the middle of Watford, next to a football stadium. It is not right for my constituents or for many constituents of Members in the Chamber today. The Secretary of State has committed to me privately to look at whether we can have a new hospital elsewhere, and I know there is a review going on about the funding and how much that would cost. Would he like to reiterate that at the Dispatch Box?

**Matt Hancock:** Yes, we are doing that work to make sure that, as we pump hundreds of millions of pounds into Hertfordshire to improve its healthcare, we get the exact locations right. I look forward to working with my right hon. Friend on that.

**Sir John Hayes** (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con): I am extremely grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way, and I know he will move seamlessly from new hospitals to new treatments. I have rushed here from a reception being held today in the House on the subject of tinnitus. Tinnitus affects numerous constituents of his and mine and people across this country, and it is urgent that we do more research and put more funding into the subject.

Will the Secretary of State give me news that I can rush back to the reception with—I am hosting it, while simultaneously being here—thereby giving good news to hundreds of thousands of our constituents?

**Matt Hancock:** I think that is an early warning that my right hon. Friend is going to leave immediately after his intervention. He is quite right to raise the subject. We are increasing the research budget, and I very much look forward to working with him on making sure that that research goes where it is needed. I am very happy to look specifically at the case for increased research funding for tinnitus and to work with him on it. If he were to meet the Lords Minister, who is responsible for the research budget, that would be the most productive way to take this forward.

**Sir Oliver Heald** (North East Hertfordshire) (Con): Does the Secretary of State agree with me that, in Hertfordshire, we have been fortunate to have extensive funding for new facilities at the hospital in Stevenage? Of course, my constituents further south also benefit from the improvements at the Princess Alexandra in Harlow. However, one thing that would help to relieve the hospitals of some of their burden would be to have more NHS hubs for social care and health together—that is, of course, for primary care. Does he agree with that, and is he able to say any more about Royston, which I have discussed with him in the past?

**Matt Hancock:** Yes, I hope that we can make some progress on Royston, because Royston is an example of how the NHS needs to be formulated more in the future. The NHS needs to be both more specific and more local—more specialist and more local—with the high-quality, specialist, cutting-edge technologies in the most specialist of centres, such as the tertiary hospitals of this country. At the same time, it needs to get those services that can be as close to home as possible as close to home as possible, using the best of modern technology to be able to do it. That means that hubs that are somewhere between primary and secondary care are the future, because so often someone can go and have a scan at a hub and the scan can then be interpreted off-site in one of the specialist centres, which means that the patient does not have to travel as far. For instance, especially for an elderly patient, it can be incredibly helpful to be able to go just to the local health hub or walk-in centre to have such a diagnosis.

That is the future of the NHS: more local and more specialist at the same time. It is one of the reasons why I am such a fan of community hospitals, for instance. This is about making sure that we support the NHS where people live, and that we end the generation of putting more and more services into the really big hospitals and sucking them out of local community services. I will end that sucking out of local services, and in fact I will put more into local communities. I have talked about the technology agenda; one thing technology can do is empower the movement of the NHS to local communities. It is incredibly important that we do that.

Let me make some progress, Mr Deputy Speaker, in case you are unhappy with the amount of time I am taking. I mentioned that we will be having 40 new hospitals over the decade, and we will also have—how many more nurses? Fifty thousand more nurses! We will have 6,000 more doctors in primary care, and 50 million more GP appointments. In response to a point raised by the shadow Secretary of State, this Government will deliver on their promises. Given our ageing population, there is record demand on the NHS. I want to thank each and every one of the 1.4 million colleagues who work in the NHS, and the more than 1 million people who work in social care. We must support those people so that our health and care systems are always there for each and every one of us. With this Queen's Speech, we will do that.

The Queen's Speech commits us to six major legislative reforms that will help us to ensure the NHS is set fair for the future and underpin our priorities across health and social care. The top priority is people. The NHS is nothing without the people who work in it, and as demand increases, we need more people—more GPs, more nurses, more mental health staff, and others—all better trained and better supported by the best technology. They must be better cared for by their employers, and work to the top of their capabilities—that is incredibly important, and we must get the most out of people. For instance, pharmacists can do so much more than the current contract allows, and I want them to do much, much more.

**Bim Afolami** (Hitchin and Harpenden) (Con): Does the Secretary of State agree that this is not just about having more GPs, although we do need that, but about the way GP practices work, with managers using technology

[*Bim Afolami*]

and other things to manage the demand for GP services? Will the Secretary of State further set out his plans in that regard?

**Matt Hancock:** My hon. Friend is dead right. Pharmacies should be doing more to keep the pressure off GPs, because they are in the community and more accessible, and within a GP surgery not everything needs to be done by the GP. We are expanding the number of GPs by 6,000 over this Parliament, and increasing by 26,000 the number of other clinicians who work in primary care, supporting GPs. When someone goes to their primary care practice, they might see the GP, a practice nurse, a pharmacist, a physio or a geriatrician. The boundary that has existed since Lloyd George between primary and secondary care, where someone either sees a GP or goes to hospital, needs to become more porous so that we can have that care where it is right for patients.

My next point is that prevention is better than cure. Expanding primary care, allowing pharmacies to do more, growing our community teams—that is about driving prevention. My third priority is technology. That is not just because we stand at the cusp of a health tech revolution that has the potential to transform healthcare for the better, but because the first task is to drag the NHS out of the 20th century and into the 21st.

The next priority is infrastructure, much of which we have already started to discuss. Buildings have to be expanded and improved, and while we do that expansion, with upgrades to the 40 new hospitals, we will also repair the damage done by those terrible private finance initiative deals that have hamstrung hospitals—deals struck by the hon. Member for Leicester South and his friends: Mr PFI himself. When we hear from him about the challenges that the NHS faces, everyone should remember with every word he says that he was at the heart of the Treasury that was driving PFI, which has caused so many problems across our national health service. Our plan is for a more integrated NHS, with a culture that gives patients more control over their healthcare, and colleagues more control over their work.

**Jonathan Ashworth:** The Secretary of State is so pleased with himself and that attack line, he really is.

**Eddie Hughes** (Walsall North) (Con): He's got good reason to be!

**Jonathan Ashworth:** The hon. Gentleman says that he has good reason to be. I was at the Treasury as a young man in my twenties, signing off paper, when the Secretary of State was at the Bank of England, so by his logic, he would have been putting up interest rates for hardworking families. I was at the Treasury, but I was not responsible for any PFI contract. If he is going to say that I was responsible for every decision made by the Treasury when I was there in my mid-twenties, I will take responsibility for giving the NHS the biggest cash boost in its history, which meant the shortest waiting lists. That is a record I am proud of; that is a record he has not been able to match.

**Matt Hancock:** The cash boost that we are giving now is bigger. I think today is the anniversary of Prime Minister Tony Blair sitting on the couch of a TV show,

talking about increasing funding for the NHS, which was opposed by Gordon Brown, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer at the time. We will not take any lectures.

I am thrilled that the public comprehensively rejected the Labour party's baseless scaremongering, which was repeated through the election campaign and worried some of the most vulnerable people who rely on our NHS. I lost count of the number of times I had to debunk some politicised nonsense put about by the Opposition across the country because they had nothing positive to say. The hon. Member for Leicester South was at it again yesterday and in his speech. He said that the settlement in the NHS Funding Bill is a cap, although clause 1 states that it is a minimum. Clause 1(1) states:

"In making an allotment to the health service in England for each financial year...the Secretary of State must allot an amount that is at least the amount specified".

Did the hon. Gentleman even read the Bill? Did he get to clause 1? I am not sure he bothered reading it.

Let us look specifically at the amendment. It calls for reform of social care and for the Government to bring forward a plan, and that is precisely what the Queen's Speech provides for. It also calls for additional funding for the NHS, which is what we are legislating for. The long-term plan is fully funded by the largest cash injection in the history of the NHS, and I urge Members across the House to support it fully. We can only fund the NHS with a strong economy, and that is exactly what we will do.

**Mr Harper:** The Secretary of State will have heard my earlier exchanges with the shadow Secretary of State, which I hope were helpful. He will be aware that more than half the budget for adult social care in England is spent not on older people but on those of working age, as we try to enable people to be more independent and to work. Will he confirm that the social care plan that he plans to discuss with other parties, and which he will bring forward this year as the Prime Minister committed to do, will cover older people and those of working age, and will probably entail different solutions for those two groups?

**Matt Hancock:** The proposals that we are working on include solutions for the provision of social care for older and retired people as they decline in the later years of their lives, and for people of working age. Part of the point about consensus building is that we must be open to options and look right across the piece. It was a disappointment that the Labour party proposals that came out in the autumn only covered older people and not working-age adults, and that point must be addressed. I hope we can do that in a spirit of cross-party discussion, and that those on the Opposition Front Bench will engage positively with that. We will engage right across the House when trying to bring forward a solution.

**Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): A few moments ago the Secretary of State spoke about scaremongering. Has he had a chance to look at early-day motion 56, which highlights one group of patients who are scared? Pregnant migrant women face charges for their maternity care, and it is believed that two or three women might even have died as a result of their fear of going for treatment, because they did not know how to

pay for it. Will the Secretary of State consider suspending those charges and conduct a proper review of the public health impact of that charging regime?

**Matt Hancock:** I will have a look at that early-day motion. This is an incredibly important subject that we must get right. Of course it is fair for those who use the NHS to make a contribution to it, and we have made changes to ensure that those who give birth get the support they need. The point I think the hon. Lady is making is not only about the exact details of the rules, but ensuring that people are not put off because of a concern about what the rules may be. I am very happy to take up that point. On social care, I hope we can reach a broad consensus.

**Barbara Keeley** (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab): I want to give the Secretary of State a chance to be clear, following on from the question from the right hon. Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper), about what he intends to do. The Secretary of State will know that I raised with him, on the day of the previous Queen's Speech in October, that we would be willing to sit down and talk about this issue. Three months have been lost with nothing happening. All we hear from the Prime Minister is that something will happen in this Parliament. Why does he not use this chance at the Dispatch Box to say where the plan is. We have proposals. Where is his plan? When is he going to produce it?

**Matt Hancock:** The Minister for Care, my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Caroline Dinenage), wrote to the hon. Lady after the election and has not had a reply. We are up for this conversation. The Prime Minister has been absolutely clear. We hope we can do it in a spirit of cross-party consensus. I hope we can have an approach to the health service that has some consensus. The truth is that I like the shadow Secretary of State. His politics are quite close to mine, although I do not agree with his approach on PFI. There has been good news for both of us recently. Both of us got the election result we wanted. *[Laughter.]* I did not want Jeremy Corbyn to be Prime Minister and we discovered from the hon. Gentleman's friends that neither did he. So let us go forward in a spirit of as much co-operation as possible.

Let me, if I may, go through each of the six measures in the Queen's Speech in turn. In addition to the NHS Funding Bill we announced yesterday, there will be our long-term plan Bill. The plan, created in consultation with NHS colleagues, sets out how the NHS will improve the prevention, detection, treatment of and recovery from major diseases including cancer, heart attack and stroke.

**Henry Smith** (Crawley) (Con): Blood cancer is this country's fifth-most common cancer and the third-biggest cancer killer. May I have assurances from my right hon. Friend that that will also be a focus in the long-term plan on the cancer strategy?

**Matt Hancock:** Yes. My hon. Friend has been an assiduous campaigner to make sure that blood cancers are right at the top of the agenda. It is an incredibly important subject and it is very much in the long-term plan. We have managed to increase the survival rate faster than most countries in Europe for most cancers. We need to keep that drive going forward.

**Dr Dan Poulter** (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich) (Con): I want to bring the Secretary of State back to social care. We have a duty in this Parliament to resolve this issue, which for many decades has been kicked into the long grass. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is not just about funding, but what service we want to deliver for people? The discussion about the future of social care should also be about service delivery, putting together not just a sustainable funding model but a model of delivery that is driven by integration of the health and social care services. We often talk about that, but it has not been delivered for patients and people on the ground.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** Before the Secretary of State answers that, may I just gently remind him that 40 people are trying to get in? It would be generous if he could at least keep that in mind as he takes interventions.

**Matt Hancock:** I will rattle through as fast as I can, Mr Deputy Speaker, but I also want to take as many interventions as I can, if that is okay. *[Interruption.]* No, okay, no interventions. That is an unusual request from the House, if I may say so. *[Laughter.]*

Putting social care on a sustainable footing, where everybody is treated with dignity and respect, is one of the biggest challenges we face as a society. The Prime Minister has said that we will bring forward a plan for social care this year. These are complex questions and the point my hon. Friend raises is very important.

The draft legislation on the long-term plan Bill aims to help us to: speed up the delivery of the long-term plan; reduce bureaucracy; and help to harness the potential of genomics and other new technologies. I hope the House will support it.

The third piece of proposed legislation is the medicines and medical devices Bill. We are at an important moment in the life sciences. This country can and will be at the forefront as the NHS gets access to new medicines and new treatments earlier, so patients can benefit from scientific breakthroughs sooner.

**Liz Twist** (Blaydon) (Lab): During the election campaign the Prime Minister promised a member of the public that the Government would look into the availability of Kuvan. Kuvan has been available for the treatment of PKU for 11 years. Will the Secretary of State commit to ensuring that that drug becomes available?

**Matt Hancock:** I can tell the hon. Lady that since the election I have been working on precisely that. I am very happy to meet her to see whether we can make a breakthrough.

**Mike Wood** (Dudley South) (Con): Increasing microbial resistance could have a devastating effect on the survival of people with sepsis. How will the medicines and medical devices Bill help to support new treatments to reduce antimicrobial resistance and support alternative ways of tackling infection?

**Matt Hancock:** The medicines and medical devices Bill is designed to make it easier for hospitals to take part in trials of cutting edge medicines, including personalised medicines, and allow us to be a part of an



[*Matt Hancock*]

internationally competitive licensing and regulatory regime. This is all to improve patient safety right across the board. It is not condition-specific; it is right across the board.

Fourth is patient safety reform. Here, I want to pay tribute to my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt), for his work on patient safety. The Health Service Safety Investigations Bill was introduced in the House of Lords in the previous Parliament to improve patient safety and create a learning culture across the NHS. We will bring forward those proposals.

**Duncan Baker** (North Norfolk) (Con): I thank the Secretary of State for giving way and for visiting me on my campaign to become the newly elected Member for North Norfolk. On patient safety, the wonderful constituency of North Norfolk has the oldest constituency demographic in the entire country and the worst ambulance response times in the beautiful picturesque town of Wells. We recently learned that the nearest hospital, the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, has the worst accident and emergency unit. I think these matters are linked. Will my right hon. Friend commit to meeting me urgently to discuss these really serious matters?

**Matt Hancock:** Yes. I would be very happy to do that. I was struck by my hon. Friend's enthusiasm for solving this problem when I visited during the election campaign. The problem is absolutely linked. The inability of ambulances to get off the ramps, so to speak, at the Norfolk and Norwich, is causing problems for ambulance response times. Many other hospitals have cracked this problem. I look forward to working with him and the Norfolk and Norwich, along with other local MPs whose constituents are affected, to try to solve that problem.

**Sammy Wilson** (East Antrim) (DUP): May I first welcome the announcements the Secretary of State is making today? One of the benefits of being a part of the Union is that Northern Ireland, through the Barnett consequential, will benefit from the huge influx of money into the health service. Northern Ireland has one of the longest waiting lists and we need many reforms to our health service. What work will he do with the newly appointed Minister in the Northern Ireland Assembly to ensure that the money is used effectively when it comes to the Northern Ireland Executive?

**Matt Hancock:** I look forward very much to speaking to and working with the new Health Minister in Northern Ireland. I am delighted that there is a ministerial team in Northern Ireland and I pay tribute to everybody who has worked so hard to make sure that that can happen. The right hon. Gentleman is right that the funding will increase. There are significant challenges in Northern Ireland, about which he knows all too well, and I look forward to trying to resolve them. The truth is that in Northern Ireland the number of people waiting more than a year for an operation is 10 times higher than in England, despite the much smaller population. It is four times higher in Wales, despite the fact that the Welsh

population is smaller. We have to solve those problems and I look forward very much to working collaboratively across the Union to make sure that they are resolved.

**Sarah Atherton** (Wrexham) (Con): Many patients from north-east Wales attend hospitals over the border in Oswestry, Chester and Liverpool for general and specialist care. Last year there was a disagreement between the Welsh Labour Government and the Countess of Chester Hospital over paying for that care, and subsequently care treatment was delayed or cancelled as a result. Can the Secretary of State reassure the House that he will speak to the Welsh Labour Government to avoid a recurrence of that situation?

**Matt Hancock:** Absolutely. I am glad that we resolved the problems with the Countess of Chester Hospital serving patients who live in north Wales. I know that part of the world well, not least because I was born in the Countess of Chester Hospital and, for the first 18 years of my life, lived but a mile from my hon. Friend's beautiful Wrexham constituency—I travelled through it every day on my way to school—so I know these cross-border issues intimately. It is ridiculous that we reached a position where the Countess of Chester Hospital was unable to take patients from north Wales because the Welsh NHS was unwilling to pay the relevant costs. We reached a good compromise, and we must ensure that it keeps working so that the problem does not happen again.

I will turn briefly to the fifth and sixth measures, Mr Deputy Speaker, which are very important. The fifth measure is mental health reform. Throughout the entire history of healthcare, mental health has been seen, treated and organised on a different basis from physical health. That is wrong. Over my generation the attitude that society takes towards mental health has fundamentally shifted. We are not there yet, but our mental health and physical health must be seen on an equal footing, and mental health must be treated as seriously as physical health.

As Health Secretary, I have made mental health a priority. Within the £33.9 billion of additional funding, mental health funding is increasing the fastest. We have a plan to improve mental health services across the nation. Just this week we opened a new gambling addiction clinic in Sunderland, and we will have 13 more across the country, in recognition of the unmet demand in our society. I fully support Claire Murdoch, the NHS mental health director, in her call today for gambling firms to act responsibly and prevent the loss of life.

We are making progress in how we treat all forms of mental ill health, but the legislation for mental health was written for a previous generation and we must bring it into the 21st century. The Mental Health Act 1983 is nearly 40 years old, and some of our legislation is still shaped by 19th-century views of mental illness. It is badly in need of modernisation. It is paramount that we ensure that people have greater control over their treatment, and that everyone receives the dignity and respect they deserve. We must get the legislation right. I pay tribute to Sir Simon Wessely for the work that he has done to set the parameters. We will publish a White Paper within months and then bring forward a new mental health Bill.



I want to say a word about the law governing the care of people with autism and learning disabilities, which concerns some of the most vulnerable people in our society. Again, parts of the law are antiquated. We are looking at this alongside the work on the Mental Health Act to ensure that the systems are appropriate and co-ordinated.

These are the six health and social care measures in the Queen's Speech. It is central to this Government's priorities that we meet the public's expectations and deliver on our commitments. This Conservative Government made clear and solemn commitments in our manifesto. People in their millions placed their trust in us, many for the first time. People have entrusted us with the future of the NHS, and we will deliver on that trust.

**Sir Charles Walker (Broxbourne) (Con):** Will my right hon. Friend give way just before he finishes his speech, because he is such a good egg?

**Matt Hancock:** I do not know how my hon. Friend knew that I was about to finish.

**Sir Charles Walker:** I thank my right hon. Friend for giving way, and I am sorry for arriving late in the Chamber, Mr Deputy Speaker. First, I thank my right hon. Friend for his action on mental health, which is fantastic news. Secondly, can we look at smoking cessation and public health? Smoking is simply an appalling thing to do. There are many products now on the market and we need to look at their efficacy, to see whether we can move people from smoking lit tobacco to a pathway to zero tobacco.

**Matt Hancock:** I want to see a pathway to zero tobacco too. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for the work that he has done to draw attention to mental health and to change the national conversation about it, and indeed the global conversation.

We must meet each and every one of the commitments we made in our manifesto, because we are the party of the NHS, and that is the way it is going to stay.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** Order. A substantial number of Members wish to speak in this debate, and we have a dozen maiden speeches. I am not imposing a controlled time limit, but Members should please take no longer than six minutes, to give those Members making their maiden speeches a fair crack of the whip.

1.5 pm

**Dr Philippa Whitford (Central Ayrshire) (SNP):** As the Secretary of State has said, health and social care is delivered by people, and I would like to pay tribute to all my former colleagues across the UK who, regardless of system, are working their best to help patients.

All four UK national health services face the same challenges of increasing demand, workforce shortages and tight finances, but the NHS in England has faced almost 10 years of unprecedented austerity, with annual uplifts of about 1% for quite a significant part of the past decade.

The NHS Funding Bill will enshrine in law the Government's plan to give £33 billion extra per year by 2023-24. Although that is a bit of a stunt, as the Government do not have to force themselves to act by law, I am sure that it will be very welcome after such a long drought. Of course, in real terms it represents £20 billion, and is therefore not additional new money but the extra funding already promised by the former Chancellor in 2018. It is claimed that it represents the biggest uplift ever for the NHS, but it amounts to 3.4% per year, which is actually still less than the average annual uplift across the NHS's history. It should allow stabilisation of the NHS in England, but it is unlikely to provide enough money for major transformation projects.

The extra funding is again to be funnelled largely into the NHS itself, to make it sound like a bigger number, but it ignores the other responsibilities of what is actually called the Department of Health and Social Care. Public health funding has been cut by £850 million, with the 10 most deprived areas in England losing over a third of their central public health funding, while the least deprived areas lost only 20%. Prevention services, such as smoking cessation, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Broxbourne (Sir Charles Walker), have been cut. That does not make sense, as £1 spent on helping someone to quit smoking saves £10 in treatment for lung and heart diseases later.

Similarly, although the plan includes an extra £1 billion for social care, the funding gap is currently estimated to be £6 billion. With cuts of up to 60% to their central budgets, councils simply cannot make up the difference. There is little point in pouring extra money into the NHS without also tackling social care—it is like trying to fill a bath without putting in the plug.

Although it was Labour that introduced private healthcare companies into the NHS and saddled all four UK health services with financially crippling private finance initiatives, it was the coalition Government's Health and Social Care Act 2012 that created the full-blown healthcare "market" in NHS England. The NHS long-term plan proposes to unpick some of that, with legislation to remove the barriers to integration, such as by repealing section 75, which forces commissioning groups to put contracts out to tender, and getting rid of tariffs, which can act as a perverse incentive and encourage hospital admissions.

It was the competitive market that drove NHS trusts in England into debts totalling £2.5 billion within two years. That led to the closure of beds and to the downgrading and closure of A&E departments, and it has caused a marked decline in emergency care services, which have been consistently lagging about 10% behind NHS Scotland's A&E performance since March 2015. It is important to focus on the data from type 1 emergency departments, as that is the most relevant definition—hospital-based A&E units that are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Diluting that with data from minor injury units and walk-in centres just masks the real situation.

Performance has deteriorated in all four nations this winter, but while one in six patients in Scotland are waiting longer, a third of those in England and Wales are waiting more than four hours in A&E. Unlike the three devolved nations, NHS England does not publish the total time spent in A&E by a patient. It restarts the clock to measure trolley waits for those needing beds.

[Dr Philippa Whitford]

As was mentioned by the shadow Secretary of State, in December, nearly 100,000 patients waited over four hours, and often up to 12, for a bed. That time is on top of the original wait in A&E.

The Government's plan seems to be to change the measure rather than dealing with the issue, but the four-hour target is the canary in the coalmine, warning of stress on the whole system—not just A&E, not just the flow through hospitals, but the assessment of what is happening in the community. Poor disease prevention rates and struggling primary care services lead to more patients going to A&E, while a lack of social care provision means that they can get stuck in hospital, which causes a lack of beds for emergencies. The Government list social care reform in their legislative programme, but the previously promised Green Paper is still nowhere to be seen, and no solution has been proposed.

The Scottish Government choose to invest £276 more per head in health and social care, because in a comprehensive health system a pre-emptive approach is more cost-effective. That provides significantly more GPs, nurses and beds per head of population. Free prescriptions ensure that people take their medication and control chronic conditions, while the fact that joint replacements and cataract surgery are not rationed helps older people to remain active and independent rather than needing more and more social care. Free personal care allows the elderly to stay in their own homes, rather than ending up in care homes or even hospital.

The workforce is the biggest single challenge facing health and social care services. That problem has been aggravated by Brexit, with a 90% drop in the number of EU nurses coming to the UK and a one-third increase in the number leaving it. As was mentioned earlier, the shortage of doctors has been acutely exacerbated by the Government's changes in the annual pension tax allowance; some doctors are receiving tax bills for tens of thousands of pounds after working overtime. Many senior clinicians have been refusing to do extra shifts, for which they are financially punished. That is likely to have been a major contributor to this winter's poor performance, as we have not experienced either a flu epidemic or severe weather. I wish the Government and the medical bodies well in sorting out an acute problem that will only make life for our patients worse.

We have been promised 50,000 extra nurses, but as only 31,500 will be new staff, that will not cover the 44,000 nursing vacancies in England, and as recruitment is spread over five years, the gap is unlikely to close. I am sure that the profession welcomes the Government's U-turn on the nursing bursary—yet another disastrous Tory policy is having to be unpicked—but the promise is for only £5,000 a year, compared with £10,000 in Scotland, and nursing students here will still face tuition fees. The removal of the bursary led to a one-third drop in the number of nursing applications, and a 5% drop in the number of students starting each year. In contrast, 21% more nursing students have been starting each year in Scotland since 2016.

We have been promised 6,000 extra GPs to deliver 5 million extra appointments over the next five years, but we are still waiting for the 5,000 extra who were

promised in the 2015 general election. There are actually 1,000 fewer GPs in England, so I will not hold my breath.

I welcome reform of the Mental Health Act—which is quite different from the legislation in Scotland—and, in particular, the focus on compulsory detention, but we need investment in mental health support and early intervention. It is good that we are talking much more openly about mental health issues, including those of Members in this place, but we are still some way from achieving parity of esteem.

Having been a member of the pre-legislative Committee a year and a half ago, I welcome the Health Service Safety Investigations Bill. The aim is to copy the principles of air accident investigation, with a focus on learning lessons to prevent reoccurrence rather than apportioning blame to one person, particularly as “system failure” is nearly always a contributor and the chance to “design in” safety is then missed. While that will hopefully improve the learning from major incidents, it would be good to see more being done to prevent them from happening in the first place.

I was working as a surgeon in 2008, when the Scottish patient safety programme was set up. The first step was the introduction of a team approach to “pre-flight checks” in operating theatres to prevent surgical errors. As was reported in the *British Journal of Surgery*, that resulted in a 37% drop in the number of post-surgical deaths over approximately two years—among the largest reductions in surgical deaths ever documented. I was therefore surprised to hear from one of our Committee witnesses that the World Health Organisation pre-operative checklist was not standard practice in all surgical services in England.

The internationally acclaimed Scottish programme now extends to every aspect of healthcare and, despite dealing with increasing numbers of older and more complex patients, it has dramatically reduced hospital mortality by a quarter over the last 10 years. Reducing complications saves money, as well as being better for patients. For example, a one-third drop in bed sores since 2012 is estimated to be saving between £2 million and £5 million a year in Scotland.

The Government must accept that they got it wrong in 2012 with the Health and Social Care Act, and again in 2016 with the removal of the nursing bursary. They need to get rid of tuition fees, restore the bursary, and genuinely work to repair the fragmentation and damage done to the NHS in England by their “market” approach. The Prime Minister likes to attack the Scottish NHS. I gently suggest that he take the plank out of his own eye, read some statistics, and focus on sorting out the mess that his party has made of the health and social care system for which he is actually responsible.

1.17 pm

**Jeremy Hunt** (South West Surrey) (Con): Let me start by saying that it is wonderful to see you in the Chair, Mr Deputy Speaker, and that your presence there is a signal to every new Member that it is possible to undergo the ups and downs of politics and come through on the other side.

I thank the Health Secretary for his personal commitment to patient safety in including the Health Service Safety Investigations Bill in the Queen's Speech, and I thank

the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Bedfordshire (Ms Dorries), for her personal commitment in ensuring that it featured in both last year's Queen's Speech and the current one, despite many competing pressures. It is about patient safety that I wish to talk in my brief six minutes. When I became Health Secretary in 2012, I had not heard the phrase.

The first crisis with which I had to deal was the one at Mid Staffs. I remember the then chief executive of the NHS, Sir David Nicholson, taking me aside and saying, "You just need to understand, Jeremy, that in healthcare we harm 10% of patients. That is what happens all over the world." I then asked the awkward question about how many people actually died because of mistakes in healthcare.

It is important to point out that this is not about the NHS; it is about how healthcare is practised everywhere. However, being the good old NHS, we have carried out endless academic studies on this. The Hogan and Black analysis shows that, at that time, 4% of hospital deaths had had a 50% or more chance of being preventable. If we do the maths, that works out at about 150 preventable deaths every single week—the equivalent of an aircraft falling out of the sky every single week.

Then I met a group of people who persuaded me that this issue should be my main focus as Health Secretary. I met Scott and Sue Morrish, a young couple from Devon who lost their son Sam to sepsis when he was three because it was not picked up early enough; James Titcombe, who lost his son Joshua at Morecambe Bay when he was nine days old; Deb Hazeldine, who lost her mother in a horrible death at Mid Staffs; Martin Bromiley, who lost his wife Elaine because of a surgery error at a hospital in Milton Keynes; and Melissa Mead, who lost her son William when he was just 12 months old—in December 2014, when I was Health Secretary—again because sepsis was not picked up.

Those people all did something that most of us would never do. Most of us, when we have a tragedy in our lives, want to close the chapter and move on, but they chose to relive their tragedy every single day because they wanted to tell their story and make the NHS change so that other families did not go through what they had been through. They paid a terrible price for doing that. James Titcombe had to write more than 400 emails over several years before we were prepared to admit why Joshua died. Martin Bromiley sacrifices 40% of his salary as an airline pilot so that he can go round the NHS talking in hospitals free of charge about what happened to Elaine. Melissa Mead carries William's teddy everywhere. She goes into TV studios to try to alert people to the dangers of sepsis, and she brought it to her first meeting with me. Inside that teddy were William's ashes. That is a meeting I will never forget as a Minister.

We must not let this blind us to the fact that the vast majority of NHS care is absolutely brilliant. I have three beautiful healthy children, thanks to the NHS. About a year before I was Health Secretary, I was in the Cabinet and I had a basal cell carcinoma removed from my head. A local anaesthetic was administered, and the surgeon had his scalpel out. The head nurse looked at me and said, "By the way, Mr Hunt, what is it you do for a living?" This was a time of austerity and cuts, and I froze before giving the answer to that question. But

thanks to substantial additional funding by the last Labour Government and by this Government, the NHS has improved dramatically, and we now have record survival rates for every major disease category.

**Yasmin Qureshi** (Bolton South East) (Lab): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. Three years ago my mother died of sepsis, and sepsis is still a big problem that needs to be addressed in hospitals.

**Jeremy Hunt:** I thank the hon. Lady for raising that. We have made huge progress in sepsis care, and the vast majority of people who go to A&E now are checked for sepsis, but mistakes still happen, and I am sure that it affected her as it affected the families of the people I have talked about.

We must not be complacent about the things that go wrong. In the NHS, we talk about "never events"—the things that should never happen. Even now, after all the progress on patient safety, we operate on the wrong part of someone's body four times a day. It is called wrong site surgery. When I was Health Secretary, we amputated someone's wrong toe, and a lady had her ovary removed instead of her appendix.

**Dr Whitford:** I know that the right hon. Gentleman visited the Scottish patient safety programme to see in action the WHO checklist, which is designed precisely to prevent such events, so can he explain why the checklist was never introduced during his time as Secretary of State?

**Jeremy Hunt:** Actually, we do have WHO checklists throughout the NHS in England—I think they were introduced under Lord Darzi in the last Labour Government—but the truth is that even with those checklists, which are an important innovation, mistakes are still made because sometimes people read through lists and automatically give the answer they think people want to hear. This is why we have to be continually vigilant.

What is the solution? It is to ask ourselves honestly, when a mistake happens and when there is a tragedy, whether we really learn from that mistake or whether we brush it under the carpet. To understand how difficult an issue that is, we have to put ourselves in the shoes of the doctor or nurse when something terrible happens, such as a baby dying. It is incredibly traumatic for them, just as it is for the family. They want to do nothing more than to be completely open and transparent about what happened and to learn the lessons, but we make that practically impossible. People are terrified about being struck off by the Nursing and Midwifery Council or the General Medical Council. They are worried about the Care Quality Commission and about their professional reputation. They are worried about being fired. In order for a family whose child is disabled at birth to get compensation, they have to prove that the doctor was negligent, but any doctor is going to fight that.

The truth is that many of the mistakes that are made are not negligence, but we make it so difficult to be open about the ordinary human errors that any of us make in all our jobs. As we are not doctors and nurses, people do not generally die when we make mistakes. That shows the courage of entering that profession, and if we make it difficult for people to be open, we will not learn



[Jeremy Hunt]

from those mistakes. That is why we need to change from a blame culture to a learning culture. That is also why, as we reflect on the devastating news that the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Bedfordshire (Ms Dorries), gave the House last night that the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust is now examining 900 cases dating back 40 years, we realise that the journey that the NHS has started on patient safety must continue. We should take pride in the fact that we are the only healthcare system in the world that is talking about this issue as much as we are, and if we get this right, we can be a beacon for safe healthcare across the world and really turn the NHS into the safest and highest-quality healthcare system anywhere.

1.26 pm

**Siobhain McDonagh** (Mitcham and Morden) (Lab): This is my first contribution in the House in this new Parliament, and it is a pleasure to see you in the Chair, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Given that the subject of today's debate is health and social care, I would like to start by expressing my sincere admiration for the selfless and dedicated staff who have kept our NHS operating this winter under the most testing of circumstances. It has been a period that has pushed A&E waiting times to their worst on record, but despite 10 years of austerity leaving our treasured NHS desperately short of staff, services and supplies, the biggest threat to my constituents is to be found far closer to home. Yes, it is back. From now until April fool's day, of all days, my constituents are once again being consulted on the future of St Helier Hospital.

Under countless brands and titles, this consultation has been run time and again at a staggering cost of over £50 million. This latest consultation has been triggered thanks to the Government pledge of £500 million to Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust. This time it is branded as "Improving Healthcare Together", and it builds on the unscrupulous foundation of its predecessors to determine how those funds will be used and where the acute hospitals in south-west London should be based: in St Helier or Belmont.

Of course I welcome any investment in our treasured NHS, but as ever, the devil is in the detail. These latest proposals push for both St Helier and Epsom hospitals to lose their key acute services, moving them south to Belmont. The reality is that St Helier would lose its major A&E, consultant-led maternity, acute medicine, critical care, emergency surgery, in-patient paediatric and children's beds. That represents 62% of St Helier's beds, and the move would leave a shell of a hospital that could more accurately be described as a walk-in centre. The consultation assumes that my constituents will travel to the new site regardless of where it is, but they will not. If St Helier is downgraded, my constituents will turn to either St George's, where the A&E is already in the bottom quartile for space standards, or Croydon University Hospital, where bed occupancy is already at 99%. How can it possibly be a sensible idea to force even more people to rely on such overstretched services? The impact would be devastating.

I have pointed this out time and again to those running the consultation. Meanwhile, they have spent millions of pounds of taxpayers' money on misleading impact reports with utterly astounding gaps in their analysis. Let us take Pollards Hill in my constituency. It would be considered deprived by comparison with much of Sutton or Epsom, but it was deemed by the consultation to be outside St Helier Hospital's catchment area. However, the largest GP surgery in Pollards Hill directs 34% of its patients to the hospital. That matters, because areas that rely on St Helier were not even considered in the analysis, so how can the potential impact of moving acute services from the hospital be adequately assessed? I have pointed out such gaps, but they have not been rectified, and the health and deprivation figures in my constituency have been disguised by including the neighbouring constituency of Wimbledon and calculating the deprivation for Merton as a borough. This is not a political tool; it is a hospital, and it should be based where it is needed.

The situation gets even more unbelievable, because the deficient evidence was then assessed in behind-closed-doors workshops, with all those attending forced to sign a non-disclosure agreement before being allowed in. That brings us to the present day, with the latest consultation launched last week. The flawed analysis has been used to decide on Belmont as the preferred site for acute services in south-west London, and that preference is clearly stated on the consultation document itself. How can that possibly be acceptable?

Maybe I should just be grateful that these documents were actually delivered to all households this time around, rather than to the preferred target areas like last time. It is time for some accountability and for the Government to step in before St Helier Hospital's future is thrown into jeopardy. I challenge every foundation that this programme has been built upon, and I appeal to Ministers to step in before another penny of taxpayers' money is wasted on this bogus consultation. It is time for the madness to end. Leave these vital services where they are most needed: at Saint Helier hospital on its current site.

1.31 pm

**James Brokenshire** (Old Bexley and Sidcup) (Con): It is good to see you restored your place, Mr Deputy Speaker, and a particular privilege to take part in today's debate on the Gracious Speech, with a particular focus on our precious NHS. It is also good to see the emphasis in the Government's programme on funding, innovative medicines, safety and mental health, so that we can improve the services that our NHS delivers and improve the lives of those who need its care.

The timing of today's debate has some particular poignancy for me. I was struck by the comments of my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt) about the ups and downs of politics. It is almost exactly two years to the day that I had surgery to remove the top part of my right lung and the cancerous tumour contained within it, but I am pleased to say that, in the immortal lyrics of Sir Elton John, "I'm still standing." [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I count my blessings each day, and today provides me with a further opportunity to pay tribute to the incredible people in our NHS who saved my life and continue to save the lives of countless people up and down the country every single day.

I have learned so much over the past two years, and I am determined to use my experiences to act as an advocate for change, especially for less survivable cancers such as lung cancer. I have been heartened by the encouragement of colleagues across the House—even the colleague who upon my return to the Members' Tea Room after surgery said, “Didn't expect to see you back.” To this day, I am quite sure that the omission of the words “so speedily” was simply an unconscious oversight.

Over half of us will get cancer at some stage in our lives. That is why we need to be more open about and change the nature of the conversation around the disease. For many people, cancer is becoming the treatment of a chronic condition, and more and more people are living well with or beyond cancer.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. I was pleased to see him back after his operation, and he is making a clear case on cancer-related issues. Just this week, I met representatives from the Teenage Cancer Trust who indicated that, for young people and teenagers, cancer is not just about the operation and other physical activities, but mental anxiety, too. The Government have set aside money to ensure that that anxiety is addressed, but only 61% of such services are taken up in hospitals and just 40% of the available assistance and help is taken up afterwards. I am sure that the Government response will be positive, but does he agree that now is the time to address those shortcomings for those who experience mental health anxiety due to cancer?

**James Brokenshire**: I commend the hon. Gentleman for his point about mental health issues and some of the stresses and strains, and there is a need for greater focus and attention on teenage cancer patients. That leads me on to my next point, which is about the need to overcome the fear that a diagnosis can bring. I know what that can feel like. Early diagnosis and speedier treatment are key, not least to reduce the worry and sleepless nights that result from knowing something is wrong by getting something done about it. It is great that the NHS long-term plan recognises that. By 2028, the plan commits to improving cancer survival dramatically, increasing the proportion of cancers diagnosed early from a half to three quarters. That is why the NHS Funding Bill, with its commitment to an extra £33.9 billion a year for the NHS, is especially important.

There is, however, a question around how we turn the increased investment and that intent into the reality of improved outcomes. That is why we need to focus on what I term the “SAS”: better screening for the disease, greater awareness of the disease, and a breaking of the stigma attached to the disease. By doing that, we can make a real step change. I welcome the introduction of the targeted lung cancer screening programme, which I championed, and which is being rolled out as we speak. I commend the charities and the regular campaign events to highlight the symptoms and, yes, the importance of getting things checked out—especially for us blokes, who can be pretty rubbish at actually going to the doctors and doing something about it. The stigmas are linked to that, and we need to talk about the big C, because it is the disease that dare not speak its name. False judgments can be made, especially with something

like lung cancer, because people may make wrongful assumptions that it must be perhaps the sufferer's fault as they must have smoked. However, as one leading clinician said so effectively and succinctly at a recent conference I attended, “If you have got lungs, you can get lung cancer.”

All this needs to be looked at in context. We need the right workforce in place with the right equipment and the right systems and processes to back it all up. I welcome the Government's commitment to increased investment in CT scanners and to increasing the overall number of nurses, but we need to recognise the particular role of specialist nurses and the incredible difference that they make. I look forward to the publication of Baroness Harding's workforce planning review, and I hope that it sees this special group of nurses strengthened and supported and that their numbers will be increased.

There can be no doubt about the pressures that exist within the system and the increasing demands that our NHS has to meet, but the overwhelming experience of most people who use and rely on our NHS is positive, with a real appreciation of just how special it is. We need to continue to stand up for it, to champion it and to be positive about what more it can achieve. I have every confidence that we will and, in doing so, that we will help improve the lives of the people it serves and the people we are privileged to serve as Members of this House.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans)**: Order. I ask for the usual courtesies during maiden speeches, please. I call Sarah Owen.

1.39 pm

**Sarah Owen** (Luton North) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (James Brokenshire), and I am pleased to see that the NHS has got him back on his feet.

I am grateful for this opportunity to speak on health and social care, as the issue is very close to my heart. I start by paying tribute to the wonderful, dedicated staff at the Luton and Dunstable Hospital in my constituency. We should all be grateful to every single person who works there, from porters to paramedics, from healthcare assistants to operating department practitioners, and from doctors to nurses. They are dedicated but often overstretched.

I declare my interest as a proud member, and former employee, of the GMB union. I support the ongoing campaign against the outsourcing of housekeeping and domestic services at the L&D.

I know the devastating impact of outsourcing. As a carer working for an outsourced care company, I witnessed at first hand a business that put profit before patients. It was then, standing in front of a patient who desperately needed more than the 15 minutes I had allotted for her, that I knew our social care system was broken—and it is still broken today. All parties in this House must have the political will to mend it, because the frustration of health workers should not be underestimated.

My mother came to this country from Malaysia 46 years ago, and she is still an NHS nurse today. She is just like many people who come to this country from across the world to work in our fantastic NHS, and we should never forget the debt we owe them.

[Sarah Owen]

Mum came to see me swear in just before Christmas, and we took pictures by the Christmas tree in Westminster Hall. Her face went from smiley to thunderous in a matter of seconds. Usually that look is reserved for when I have done something truly awful, but it turns out she was not scowling at me; she was looking at the person behind me, which happened to be none other than the Secretary of State for Health. Joking aside, when we see the latest proposal to scrap four-hour A&E targets, who, frankly, could blame my mum?

The NHS goes to the very heart of my party's principles. My predecessor, Kelvin Hopkins, embodies those socialist Labour principles. He represented Luton North for 22 years and is beloved by many in the town. But for all his and his wife Pat's dedication to the area, what I am most grateful to them for is their daughter, my amazing hon. Friend the Member for Luton South (Rachel Hopkins).

Together we will represent the people of Luton with equal energy, commitment and dedication to the town, because we will need to. Every cut to local government and every cut to every service has an impact on an individual we represent. Early-years providers like the fantastic Gill Blowers nursery, which I visited last week, are facing a cut of a quarter of their budget. Firefighter numbers in Bedfordshire have been cut by 9%. Each child in Luton North is £576 a year worse off. There are fewer police on our streets. All that comes against the backdrop of a hostile environment.

Even in these challenging times, Luton has always punched above its weight. Together, the people of Luton make the town the fantastic place it is. The mosques, churches, businesses and wider community have come together to support Luton's food bank, making sure the most vulnerable in our community are looked after.

The entire community came together to make the dream of the new Power Court stadium a reality and to deliver the regeneration Luton wants. The Labour council led by Hazel Simmons works with communities to continue building much-needed council housing while facing over £100 million-worth of cuts. Time and time again, Luton comes together to say no to the hatred and division of the far right.

I learned through the trade union movement that we are stronger together and that we should not let people divide us. That is sound advice for any workplace, but it is a lesson for our communities and our country, too. The people of Luton North know this to be true. Luton's diversity is its strength, and I am proud to be bringing up this little one in a multicultural town that comes together.

Yes, in case Members have not noticed, I am pregnant—it is not just a good Christmas. She is, in every way, a little mix. A mix of east Asian, Irish and British. She is essentially Luton in a baby. And, yes, she will be donning a Luton Town shirt and going to games in a brand-new stadium that will be fit for her generation and future Lutonians. Judging by how she is kicking me right now, she might even try out for the team.

In the face of the hatred we saw in the past, we on these Benches will have to be staunch defenders of the equality and diversity I know run to our country's core. Just over the road, in the Cabinet war rooms, my grandma

worked under Churchill during the second world war, while my grandad fought overseas with the Royal Engineers. They fought against vile fascism then, just as we must all renew our fierce opposition to those who discriminate against or dehumanise others in every corner of the world, from Luton to Kashmir to Hong Kong.

It was not racism or hatred but the need for change that drove people to Brexit, and we must all hear that call for change. Luton has a proud manufacturing history, from Vauxhall to Electrolux, and it needs a future to be proud of, too—one that provides the decent housing, good schools, affordable transport and well-paid jobs that every Lutonian not only wants but richly deserves. As their MP, that is exactly what I will fight for in Luton North.

1.45 pm

**Fiona Bruce** (Congleton) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Member for Luton North (Sarah Owen) on her speech. It was a pleasure to listen to such a clearly articulated speech by a new Member, with humour thrown in. I am sure she will be a very caring and committed Member of Parliament for her constituency.

I am delighted that this one-nation Conservative Government want to level up opportunity across our country, particularly in areas like Burnley, where I grew up and where we now celebrate a new Conservative Member of Parliament. I welcome the words of Her Majesty in the Gracious Speech:

“A White Paper will be published to set out my Government's ambitions for unleashing regional potential in England”.

In order to truly release the potential of all our communities—to promote healthy, caring and resilient communities—we need to strengthen families. Colleagues may not be surprised to hear me say that.

The Conservative manifesto said on page 14:

“A strong society needs strong families. We will improve the Troubled Families programme...to serve vulnerable families with the intensive...support they need to care for children—from the early years and throughout their lives.”

I believe we need to do much more than support troubled families, not that the news two weeks ago of a £165 million boost to extend the troubled families programme is unwelcome—it is welcome. We now need to build on the good work of the previous Conservative-led Government and broaden our commitment to help strengthen families. Indeed, why not rename the troubled families programme the wider “strengthening families programme” that it should be? Every family goes through challenges, and every family needs support at some time.

I also welcome the Prime Minister's commitment at last week's PMQs to champion and support family hubs, which every Member of Parliament could similarly promote and champion locally. Family hubs are a practical way to help strengthen families, with a place in every local community offering help to families as and when they need it. More of that shortly.

Building a stronger, healthier society surely starts with the family, the basic building block of society. When we fall on hard times or become seriously ill, our family is often the first port of call. Our family, at best, teach us our values, shape our identity and nurture our sense of responsibility to society.



Weakness in our family units—when they are dysfunctional, when they disintegrate or when our closest relationships do not work and we become distressed about them—has repercussions in so many ways. It can increase children’s mental ill health and insecurity, preventing them from attaining their best education and employment potential. It puts pressure on GP surgeries through increased rates of depression, addiction and other ailments. It puts a strain on housing provision when families split up, and it increases work absenteeism, exacerbates loneliness in old age and makes state provision for elderly care completely unsustainable. In other words, it makes not just our families but our wider communities less cohesive, less healthy, less productive and less resilient to the inevitable shocks that life throws at us all.

If we really mean what we say about levelling up those parts of our country that feel they have been neglected, we must realise that we will never achieve that simply by repairing neglected physical infrastructure, such as roads and bridges, good though that is. If we are really to make a local-lasting, generational difference in the lives of people who feel left behind, it must surely also mean helping them to strengthen local communities where relationships have fractured. That should mean, as a priority, strengthening families, so that they can not only flourish but contribute positively to those local communities going forward.

Family breakdown is serious, socially, culturally and economically, and this country has one of the highest rates of it among 30 OECD countries, yet successive Governments have shied away from accepting and addressing this. Let this Government be bold and different. Why? Because the young, the poorest and the most vulnerable pay the highest price when family life fractures, with children from fractured families being twice as likely to develop behavioural problems and being more likely to suffer depression, turn to drugs or alcohol, or perform worse at school and not achieve their job or life potential. There is an increased chance of their living in income poverty in the future and of their own relationships being less stable in adulthood.

It is not just children who suffer from family collapse. Divorce and separation have led to increasing estrangement between elderly parents and older children in later life, with growing loneliness among older people. More than a quarter of a million people over 75 in this country spent this Christmas day alone. This epidemic is causing widespread misery and impeding the life chances, health and wellbeing of millions of people. It is a national emergency that should warrant the same level of concern and attention as climate change. It should warrant the Government reshaping their Departments, for it affects almost all of them. It requires a Cobra-style committee to pull together across Government to champion families and not condemn another generation to the destructive effects of dysfunctional family relationships. At its worst, we see that in people’s involvement in county lines; reportedly, it involves as many as 10,000 young people, with many seeking the comfort of a gang to replace that of a family.

It is a tragedy that more than a million children in this country today have no meaningful contact with their father. The poorest and working-class families are bearing the brunt of family breakdown most. Such families are more prone to break up and they are less resilient when it happens. Greater financial security

inevitably allows for insulation from some of the pressures that often drive poorer people apart or result from their splitting up.

What should be done? First, we need to champion the strengthening of families right across Government and as individual Members of Parliament. The public want us to do that. Recent polling by the Centre for Social Justice shows that 72% of adults believe that family breakdown is a serious problem in Britain and 81% think that strengthening families is important in order to address our current social problems. That should start with focusing on communities that feel they have been left behind and that feel dislocated, with a loss of belonging, where there has been a rise in poverty and street crime.

We should focus on places where people feel unequal and where there are high levels of children in care and a large proportion of isolated adults. Government must champion the family—that must be central to the way that every Department thinks, because family policy does not fit neatly into a single Department. There should be a Cabinet lead and an office for family policy, and every Department should develop a family strategy. The family impact assessment—also known as the “family test”—should be put on a statutory footing. We could do worse than to have one of the Members successful in last week’s ballot pick up the oven-ready Bill that I introduced on this issue in the last Parliament.

However, I am delighted that the Government are committed to championing family hubs, as those are one way in which we can all help to strengthen our local communities and family life within them. What are family hubs? I will not take much longer, Mr Deputy Speaker, but let me say that they are one-stop shops offering a range of support and specialist help to parents, couples and children, aged nought to 19 and beyond. That can include relationships counselling and mental health services, childcare, early-years healthcare and employment support. They provide help with a troubled teen or a carer, and much more. They are backed by the local authority but they work in conjunction with charities and local businesses. They bring together statutory and voluntary approaches and are currently developing in half a dozen towns across the country.

The hubs are proving that they can have significant outcomes, with children and young people feeling safer; families being helped to improve parenting and children’s behaviour; mothers and children having better emotional wellbeing; good lifestyle choices being made; and families being more resilient when shocks occur. We need more of these hubs. Let us avoid the trap of previous Governments, where families remained everyone’s concern but nobody’s responsibility. Let us take up our responsibility as a one-nation Government to fulfil our manifesto commitment to strengthen families and strengthen society.

1.56 pm

**James Murray** (Ealing North) (Lab/Co-op): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for calling me to give my maiden speech. I will begin by giving my heartfelt thanks to the people of Ealing North for putting their trust in me, and I would like to thank one resident of Ealing North in particular: Mr Steve Pound.

Every morning in the run-up to the election, Steve and I would drive to a primary school to speak to parents outside the school gates. Those car journeys

[James Murray]

were filled with stories about Ealing North and jokes that were as funny as they were often unrepeatable. The warmth and affection the parents showed toward Steve was awesome and inspiring, and it was typical of people across Ealing North and beyond. It could be a little intimidating too, as he leaves very large boots to fill, but I drew some comfort on that front from Steve's own maiden speech. Using characteristically direct language, he said of one his predecessors:

"I am somewhat tired of constantly being told how I compare to the right hon. Gentleman."—[*Official Report*, 10 November 1997; Vol. 300, c. 606.]

During the election Steve was unfailingly kind and generous when introducing me to people. He would tell them that I would be just as diligent an MP as he had been, but with more hair. I cannot guarantee my hairline after a few years in this place, but I know that nothing will recede about my determination to work tirelessly for the people of Ealing North.

It is the honour of my life to represent the place where I grew up. Before Christmas, I visited Perivale Brewery, on Horsenden Farm, just down from Horsenden Hill, where I used to fly my kite when I was a boy. Last year, I ran the Ealing half marathon, on behalf of the Ealing Churches Winter Night Shelter, through Pitshanger Park, where I used to collect conkers with my grandmother 30 years ago. Those places, and others along the River Brent, Northala Fields and many more besides make up Ealing North's wonderful greenery. They offer a calmness to balance the pace of life in part of the greatest city in the world and, let us be honest, the stress of traffic on the A40. But Ealing North is defined not just by its physical highlights; it can also be described by the strength of its many overlapping communities.

Our part of London is home to communities from India, Pakistan, Poland, Ireland, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Armenia, Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran, and many more besides. It is home to LGBT+ people building their lives and their families. It is home to people of all faiths who have invited me in, at St Mary's, St Barnabas, St Stephen's, Ealing Gurdwara, Shree Jalaram Mandir, the Greenford Central and Bilal Masjid mosques, the Ealing Liberal Synagogue, All Hallows, Holy Cross and many more besides. Our community organisations also bring people together, whether at the Royal British Legion Club or at the Wood End Residents' Association's legendary Christmas party. Members of the community look out for each other. Just last Saturday, volunteers were busy running the Ealing Foodbank next to my surgery at Greenford Methodist Church. Those volunteers deserve our deepest thanks and, as their MP, I will do everything I can to end the injustice in our society that makes their work vital.

I will work day in, day out, for the people of Ealing North. We need investment in public services so that our young people are safe from getting involved with or becoming the victims of crime. We need investment in new, high-quality council homes to make sure that everyone has a decent and secure place that they can afford.

I will stand up for a foreign policy that always avoids the rush to war. At my surgery on Saturday, a woman spoke to me through tears about her parents' desperate

situation as Iraqi refugees in Jordan. It was heartbreaking, and those in power should never forget that our country's mistakes around the world cast a very long shadow.

I will fight for the health and social care system that we need, which is something that the people I represent so clearly and dearly want. It is also very personal for me. In the late 2000s, I was diagnosed with a rare, long-term neurological condition called myasthenia gravis. It causes muscle weakness, which made it difficult, or sometimes impossible, for me to do things like go running, speak at length or smile. But the NHS came to my rescue. My wonderful consultant and all his colleagues got me through a major operation and on to a painstakingly calibrated set of medications. I have been symptom-free since the early 2010s, and I will fight every day for our NHS with the strength that it has given me back. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"]

As the MP for Ealing North, I draw strength from local campaigners and their enormous determination to protect our NHS, and particularly local services that have been under threat. In 2015, the maternity unit at Ealing Hospital was closed. Since then, no babies have been born in hospital in Ealing. In 2016, the children's A&E closed, too. Plans to close the main A&E were, in a triumph of public pressure, finally dropped after a seven-year fight, but across the London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust, waiting times in A&E last month were over four hours for 39% of patients.

Across the country, our beloved NHS is creaking, yet the promises made by the Government are, as the Health Foundation has said, "simply not enough to address the fundamental challenges facing the NHS".

The Government have also failed to offer the plan or funding needed to fix the crisis in social care.

We must win the battle for the NHS and the social care system that we need. That is what I will fight for on behalf of the people I represent, and I thank them again for the honour of allowing me to do so. They must know that I will never flinch from my determination to fight for a fairer future for Ealing North, for our country and for our world.

2.2 pm

**Dr Dan Poulter** (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich) (Con): First, may I draw your attention, Mr Deputy Speaker, and that of all Members to my declaration in the Register of Members' Financial Interests as a practising NHS psychiatrist?

Before I address the motion and speak in support of the Queen's Speech and its focus on health and social care, I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Ealing North (James Murray). I have no doubt that he will have the eloquence of his predecessor—somebody we in the House knew for his many jovial speeches. I also have no doubt that he will match the diligence that his predecessor showed as a constituency MP in fighting for the needs of his local residents, not least by standing up for his local NHS and maintaining a health service locally that meets the needs of people in Ealing. I wish the hon. Gentleman very well in all that he does in this place.

Many commendable and positive things can be recognised in the contribution by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. He rightly talked about the need for increased investment in the health service and about

the need to support the staff who work on the frontline. He rightly identified the need to improve mental health provision and talked about the need to find political consensus on social care.

I intend to talk briefly about a couple of those issues, but before I do so it is worth observing that we now have a new Prime Minister and the Government have a strong mandate. That is an opportunity to reflect on what we could do as a Government to improve the legislation that we ourselves have passed and that has perhaps had unintended consequences. There is a particular concern among patients and people who work in the NHS about the fragmentation of services, which has been the result of the sometimes market-driven approach to the delivery of healthcare and the encroachment of the private sector on the delivery of traditional NHS services.

As a clinician, what matters most to me is that we deliver the right services for patients. We need to recognise that the involvement of private sector provision has sometimes led to greater fragmentation and a lack of joined-up care for patients. In particular, if we look at how addiction services are commissioned, we see the impacts of that on increasing homelessness and people not getting treatment in a timely manner, or on the joined-up care with the NHS afterwards. If we look at how some sexual health services are now commissioned, we see that it is done in a fragmented way that often lets patients fall through the cracks. With a fresh mandate and a new Prime Minister, I hope we have an opportunity to look at that and be honest that the answer is not always in the market—that the answer is in well-funded, properly delivered public services that are free at the point of need and often run by the state. We have to be honest about that and recognise where we could do things better in future.

The second point I wish to make is on the need to value our staff. NHS staff have had a difficult period, with wage restraint and morale issues—for example, as a result of the junior doctor dispute. We also need to recognise the challenges relating to the NHS workforce which Brexit has brought into focus. We are very reliant, and have been historically, on the contributions made by members of the NHS who come from all over the world, from within the EU and from throughout the country, and frankly our NHS could not work without them. We are very grateful for those contributions and it is right that we support those people in our NHS.

Of course we need to focus on improving the number of British-trained graduates across the health service, but we also need to recognise that the staffing crisis is the biggest issue that we now face. If we want to realise the ambition to increase nursing numbers and GP appointments, we have to recognise that across the piece there is a need to take staff training, recruitment and retention seriously. We need to look at the fact that in different parts of the United Kingdom—for example, the north-west or the north-east—there are fundamental staffing challenges and a difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff that is much more acute than it may well be in the south of England. I know the Government want to look at that, but we need to come up with meaningful answers.

We need to look overseas at examples in Australia, where they have to cover a very large land mass. They have had challenges attracting staff to work in parts of

rural Queensland and the Northern Territory; we need to take lessons from those healthcare systems and apply them here so that we can address workforce shortages on the frontline. Without the staff, we cannot deliver the care. It is all very well to talk about improvements in patient safety and other things, but unless we have the staff to do it, we cannot deliver it. I hope that there is now an opportunity for the Government to grip these issues. Staff planning takes more than just one parliamentary cycle until the next general election; it is a five or 10-year mission, but it is one that we need to grip now if we do not want to have lasting workforce shortages in many regions of this country.

In particular, I draw the attention of those on the Treasury Bench to the challenges that we face in mental health. It is absolutely right and commendable that we have focused on destigmatising mental health and on the importance of mental health liaison services. Professor Simon Wessely did a welcome review of the Mental Health Act 1983 that was long overdue. I am sure we will address those issues.

We have to recognise that community mental health services have been substantially the Cinderella of mental health services for far too long. If we want to improve care and prevent people with mental ill health from getting so unwell that they need to turn up at hospital, we need to recognise that the primary focus of investment in mental health services—indeed, one of the issues we face is a staffing crisis in mental health, with falling numbers of frontline mental health nurses in the community—must be in community services. They have been hollowed out for too long and now need investment.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** Order. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but he has now spoken for seven minutes and we are on a six-minute time limit, so I know that he will finish soon.

**Dr Poulter:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am sure that Members on the Treasury Bench will take away and look at the issue I just outlined.

The Government are rightly looking for political consensus on social care and on finding a sustainable funding formula. However, as part of that, they should also consider how social care services need to look. It is no good bringing in money when the mode of delivery is wrong. I hope that, as part of the consensual approach, there will be a renewed focus on delivering care in the community in an integrated way, thus joining up the health and social care systems. I hope that that will be part of the important review and the approach to political consensus that the Government are trying to deliver.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** Order. The reason why we do not have a formal time limit is to try to help people who are making maiden speeches. It is difficult to make your maiden speech against the clock. It should not be difficult for people who have spoken in the Chamber many times to speak for six minutes, so when we get to six minutes, I will call “Order.” I call Julie Elliott.



2.10 pm

**Julie Elliott** (Sunderland Central) (Lab): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I will take that amount of time.

I want to speak today on eating disorders, an issue that is important to me and many of my constituents and friends who have approached me about the subject. Awareness of mental health issues has been on the rise, with recent examples such as the Football Association's Heads Up campaign encouraging people to take a minute out of their lives to think about their mental health. The ongoing work of organisations such as Mind and Beat has meant good progress on combating the stigma of mental health issues and informing the public about the importance of taking care of mental health.

There is undoubtedly still a lot of work to do on eating disorders. It is such an incredibly important and pressing issue, and at the same time so preventable with proper support, funding and attention, that I am disappointed that it was not named in the Gracious Speech as a subject on its own. The only mention of mental health is:

“My Ministers will continue work to reform the Mental Health Act.”

I very much hope that eating disorders will be part of the reform.

There is a major problem with the way eating disorders are dealt with in this country. From poor staffing levels to the way disorders are diagnosed and the wait to be treated, too many people who need treatment urgently do not get it. More than 1 million people in the UK suffer from an eating disorder and it is about time they got the services they deserve.

As Hope Virgo has shown in her excellent Dump The Scales campaign about the diagnosis of eating disorders, multitudes of people around the country are being turned away by their GPs as a result of their body mass index not being low enough. They are being refused treatment, not because of any psychological assessment, but because their weight is not low enough. Although National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines advise against the use of single measures such as BMI to determine whether to offer treatment, that does not mean it does not happen. As much as I would like to present case study after case study of young people being turned away from treatment because they were not considered ill enough, only to go on to do more damage to their bodies in the hope of actually receiving treatment, time does not allow it. But it happens, and that has to change. It is shocking that it has happened once, but we are talking about hundreds of people being turned away from services they desperately need.

Those first connections with medical professionals are so important, not least because of the bravery shown by sufferers in seeking help and talking about their illness, but also because the earlier the treatment is administered, the more effective it can be. Identifying problems as early as possible does not just allow people to be treated quickly and more efficiently, but can mitigate the long-term effects of illness and decrease the chances of relapse. Early intervention is the key to proper treatment for those suffering from eating disorders. It might mean that the person seeking help no longer needs a hospital stay, or that they recover quicker, or

that they feel stronger fighting their illness knowing they have the support behind them that they need. That is why the Government need to do a full review of treatment and care pathways for people who suffer from eating disorders and ensure that there are services that people can approach, and that they can be treated quickly and effectively.

However, there is also a big variety in quality and speed of treatment depending on where people live in the country. We need to see the end of the postcode lottery, which means that the quality and speed of care is based on where people live and what age they are, and sometimes ends in those lucky enough to be referred being sent to hospitals more than 200 miles from where they live. Only yesterday, I saw a letter to a young woman who, after an urgent referral, has been told she should expect an 18-month wait to be seen by a psychological therapist. That is truly shocking. I therefore fully agree with the calls on the Government by leading eating disorder charity Beat to hold the NHS to account for comprehensive implementation of the access and waiting time standard for children and young people in every region and community.

There is desperate need for direct investment in a fully supported NHS that does not need to divert the funds assigned to mental health to other areas to plug massive funding deficits in an attempt to continue to provide basic care.

We also need to ensure that our medical professionals understand the signs of eating disorders and the pathways available. Trainee doctors can receive as little as two hours' training on eating disorders throughout their several years of training. We need to invest in services to get parity of esteem for mental and physical health, and there are simply not enough beds to deal with the growing demand from those suffering from eating disorders and those who need mental health treatment more generally.

We need more staff. Those who work for the NHS are stretched as it is, and we need more staff in frontline services to help ease the pressure and ensure that treatment is effective and quick. We need more and proper support in our schools. I implore the Government to act on those measures.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** I am delighted to call Laura Trott to make her maiden speech.

2.16 pm

**Laura Trott** (Sevenoaks) (Con): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Politics has become something of a dirty word in recent years, but during the election campaign, thousands of activists from all parties throughout the country went out in the cold, the dark and the rain because they truly believe that their political viewpoint can make people's lives better. Across the House we may disagree, often vigorously, on how to do that, but I truly believe that public service is why we are all here.

A true example of that public service was my predecessor, Sir Michael Fallon. I know Sir Michael was a friend to many in this place. He served my constituents in Sevenoaks and Swanley for 22 years, and those in Darlington before that. He served as a Minister under four Prime Ministers, first under Margaret Thatcher as schools Minister, a role he also played under John Major. He

was responsible for setting up school league tables and Ofsted—huge leaps forward for the accountability and performance of schools in this country. Sir Michael also served under David Cameron and my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May). Despite his unofficial title as Minister for the “Today” programme, he was in fact a Minister in the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and in the Department of Energy and Climate Change. He was latterly Secretary of State for Defence—a role that he both excelled at and relished, although I must say, as the person responsible for running the No. 10 grid at the time, it is possible that he did not always manage to run his announcements past No. 10.

Sir Michael was, above all, a strong voice for Sevenoaks and Swanley constituents, an example I am determined to follow. Sevenoaks is a wonderful constituency, with a vibrant community and excellent schools, and it is over 90% green belt—something we must maintain. It is an honour to represent the constituency that houses Chartwell—Winston Churchill’s former home—as well as Chevening, the Foreign Secretary’s residence. I am very much looking forward to an invitation to visit.

Although the constituency is known for both its greenery and transporting much of its population to work in London, there is significant entrepreneurship, with 7,000 businesses in Sevenoaks. We are also developing some fantastic expertise in wine and beer. Squerrys, Westerham Brewery and the Mount Vineyard are creating world-class produce and deserve to become international brands.

I also pay tribute to my brilliant local district council, led by Peter Fleming, who has won numerous awards for his stewardship, and at a time of great fiscal strain made Sevenoaks District Council financially independent. Equally, Roger Gough, the talented leader of Kent County Council, has done so much to deliver the excellent standard of schools throughout the constituency.

I should move on to the health service, which is the main topic of debate today. All of us here will have stories of how the NHS has helped us, and we have heard some incredibly moving ones from my hon. Friends today. My now thriving one-year-old twins were born six weeks early and needed help to breathe and to eat when they were born. I owe the neonatal teams in our NHS everything and I will be forever grateful.

I worked on maternity care and choice policy when I was a special adviser, and it is something that I will continue to speak up for in this place. We must, and I know that we will, ensure better care for women in maternity, ensure that pain relief is freely and readily available, give women a full choice of options on how and where they want to give birth, continue to improve outcomes for multiple births and deliver on our brilliant promise to extend maternity leave for mothers of premature babies.

It has been striking this week that the focus of maiden speeches has been on the importance of social mobility and education. In speeches by my hon. Friends the Members for Wantage (David Johnston), for Eastleigh (Paul Holmes), for East Surrey (Claire Coutinho) and for Stoke-on-Trent North (Jonathan Gullis), among others, it is truly heartening to witness the breadth of expertise, diversity and interest that our intake takes in these issues. I will add my own name to the list of those speaking out on this topic.

I went to a comprehensive and was the first in my family to go to university. My grandfather on one side was a milkman and, on the other, a doorman at *The Sun*. My grandmother was one of the smartest people I have met. She got a scholarship to a good school, but was not allowed to go as they could not afford the uniform. The thing that changed the fortunes of my family was the great education that my mum and dad received. That is why I am incredibly proud of the Conservative party’s legacy in delivering higher school standards, not just by putting money in with that reform, but by being fearless in demanding better for our children, calling out the soft bigotry of low expectations that my right hon. Friend the Member for Surrey Heath (Michael Gove) so rightly addressed and that my right hon. Friend the Member for South Staffordshire (Gavin Williamson) is continuing to work on.

The levelling up in funding that we have promised is the key next step, but equally important, as with all public services, will be the inspection regime making sure that this leads to higher standards being delivered. The true test of our system is whether we can improve the outcomes for those who need it the most. There are more than 2,000 children in care in Kent. We have taken huge steps forward in addressing their complex needs and improving their educational attainment, but we must do more, and I know that this is a Government who will do so.

I thank the House for listening. Politics done well is making people’s lives better and I am delighted to be part of this one nation Conservative Government, who I am certain will give so much to my constituency and to the country.

2.22 pm

**Liz Twist** (Blaydon) (Lab): May I start by congratulating the hon. Member for Sevenoaks (Laura Trott) on an accomplished and thought-provoking speech? I am sure that she will represent her constituents well.

I am very pleased to be able to take part in this important debate on health and social care. Earlier this week, I chaired a breakfast roundtable organised by the Industry and Parliament Trust, bringing together industry representatives, third-sector organisations and parliamentarians to discuss the issue of suicide in the construction industry. As chair of the all-party group on suicide and self-harm prevention in the last Parliament, I am familiar with the statistics on the number of lives lost to suicide and the statistics that show that middle-aged men are particularly at risk. However, even I was shocked to hear that two construction workers each day die by suicide and that twice as many die by suicide as die falling from heights.

A huge amount of work has rightly been done on reducing the physical risks in the construction industry. I am glad that there are now moves by some employers and charities such as Mates in Mind to put the same focus on tackling mental health issues and preventing suicide in the construction workforce. There are issues and problems caused by job and financial insecurity, physical stress, working away from home and loneliness.

I want to speak about the wider issue of suicide prevention. I am glad that the Minister is in her place to hear this. Last year, the number of deaths by suicide in the UK rose significantly—an increase of more than 600 on the previous year. There were 6,507 deaths

[Liz Twist]

by suicide in 2018. The statistics show that middle-aged men remain the highest risk group, though rates among young people, too, are rising. This is at a time when there is increased talk of improving mental health services in the NHS plan and a focus on suicide prevention. Clearly, the Government need to be doing more for individual people and at policy and practice level to reduce those figures.

Suicide is a public health issue. It is startling to know, from work done by the University of Manchester in 2018, that two thirds of people who take their own lives are not in touch with mental health services in the year before they die. A way needs to be found of reaching out to these people. We know from work by the Samaritans and others that socioeconomic factors are often at the root of the desperation which many people feel. Low incomes, job insecurity, unemployment, housing problems and benefits issues all play their part. Although there is a cross-Government suicide prevention work plan, what needs to happen is for each Department to take clear actions to make a real difference. I understand that the Department for Work and Pensions, for example, has no concrete actions from the plan, but those of us dealing with constituents on a day-to-day basis will know that that Department has a real impact on people, especially when they are struggling.

Most local authorities do now have suicide prevention plans, but the Government must do more to make sure that those that do not develop them as a matter of urgency, and that those that do, follow up the written plans with action and share experience and best practice. I have to say that reducing public health funding is tying the hands of those local authorities that are translating those plans into actions and real interventions.

Some £57 million has been made available for suicide prevention, but those of us who have tried to track it with our local health services have found it difficult to identify what specific actions that translates into when it is spread so thinly that it is almost invisible in the budget. Local NHS services need to make sure that the gaps in services, which too many people can fall through, are filled in. For example, there must be a way for people who are considered “too suicidal” for talking therapies to be able to access secondary mental healthcare more quickly, and non-clinical services need to be available, too.

I have already mentioned the fact that middle-aged men on low incomes have been the highest risk group for many years. Much more needs to be done to understand what really works to support this group when they are struggling. Research, again by the Samaritans, shows that the poorest men living in the most deprived areas are 10 times more likely to take their own lives than the wealthiest living in more affluent areas. We really need some concrete action to address that.

I wish to speak briefly about self-harm. Levels of self-harm among young people are rising. There is a real stigma around self-harm that stops people seeking help. Most people who self-harm do not go on to take their own life, but there is evidence that many people who do have self-harmed in the past. It is a sign of deep emotional distress and people who self-harm must have access to support to identify why they are feeling so distressed. Plans are needed in that area, too.

In summary, suicide prevention is a public health issue and should be tackled as such. Low-income middle-aged men are at the highest risk of suicide and we need to tackle and identify the causes of that and develop accessible services. Levels of self-harm are increasing and need to be tackled now. The Government need to do much more to address this issue and they need to put more resources into both the NHS and the local authorities to reduce the number of people dying by suicide.

2.28 pm

**Damian Green** (Ashford) (Con): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Blaydon (Liz Twist). As somebody who is in the early weeks of their seventh Parliament, I can say that I have therefore sat through many waves of maiden speeches over the years. The quality of the speeches that we have heard not just today—we have just heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Laura Trott) and from several Members from the Labour Benches—but throughout this debate over the past few days has been breathtakingly high. As somebody who has been round the block a few times, I can say that that is not only very welcome, but slightly alarming.

What I want to do is concentrate specifically on the social care element of today's debate. It is a hugely important part of the wider health agenda and also obviously vital in its own right. I welcome a number of elements in the Government's approach. The first is the recognition of the urgency of the need to solve the issue of social care, which has been left on the backburner for far too long. The second is the desire to work on a cross-party basis. I appreciate that that is going to be challenging for the Opposition Front Benches over the next three months, because they will have other things on their mind, but for the past 18 months I have been working from the Back Benches with both Labour and Lib Dem Members. Although none of them is here at the moment, there are Lib Dem Members who are interested in this issue. I think that that cross-party approach is the best one. The third element is the Government's recognition that the system today is incredibly fragile and needs extra money to tide it over. I am glad that the Government are helping local authorities with £1 billion in the coming year, but although it may be the world's most expensive sticking plaster, it is still a sticking plaster, and we all know that we need a much more wholesale approach.

Many aspects of the problem need solving. There is the question of where the workforce are going to come from. Home adaptations will be needed so that more people can live in their own homes for longer. We will need the provision of extra places in care homes, where a shortage is developing. There are also problems when it comes to dementia patients. I think the Alzheimer's Society has sent many Members a briefing for this debate, and everything it says is very sensible, but beneath all these questions is the issue of money. Where is the extra money going to come from? If there were a simple solution, a Government would have adopted it a long time ago.

I warn Ministers against reaching for the simplest and easiest solution, because the easy solution is to say, “We'll make it free and we'll fund it out of general taxation.” That is easy and seductive, because many people think social care is free anyway, but that would



be wrong and unfair. It would be wrong not just because of the public spending implications, but for intergenerational fairness. If we fund the solution from the taxation paid by working-age people, we would be telling 20, 30 or 40-somethings not only that we are going to tax them to pay for their own social care if they need it in the future, which would be fair enough, but that we are also taxing them to pay for the social care of their parents' generation, which would not be fair. That would be particularly unfair in this country, where there is a preponderance of wealth among the baby boomer generation. So much of the wealth in this country is tied up in housing, and that generation are far more likely to own their own homes than their children's generation.

**James Cartlidge:** My right hon. Friend is making a brilliant speech, with great passion. Surely the definition of "sustainable" here is someone in their 20s who is entering the workforce and being asked to pay into a new system believing that the same quality of care will be available when they reach their 70s or 80s. That will not be the case if the model is unsustainable.

**Damian Green:** My hon. Friend is exactly right, and I wanted to talk briefly about the various ways in which we can achieve a sustainable system. We could have a compulsory social care payment that is made by everyone of working age and, indeed, beyond working age. That has been recommended by Select Committees of this House. Alternatively, I would suggest that we could have not a tax, but a hugely desirable saving, based on the model of the pension system, whereby the vast majority of people are encouraged to—and do—subscribe to auto enrolment pensions, but it is not compulsory.

In that pensions model, we would have the equivalent of a state pension—a universal care entitlement—which would have to be better than the current provision of care. On top of that, we would urge millions of people voluntarily to save for a care supplement, as they do for a private pension. That would guarantee them the quality of care that they would want in their old age. Of course, not everyone will be able to make those savings, and the system needs to be better for those who cannot contribute towards their own care if they need it in old age, but it is essential that we use this massive wealth, particularly among those who are 60 and above; a small sliver could help us to achieve these aims.

At the moment, the equity in housing of those over the age of 65 is £1.7 trillion. Just a small sliver of that would provide a much greater sum of money and therefore a much more sustainable system. The Prime Minister is absolutely right when he says that nobody should be forced to sell their own home to pay for care. People have worked for that, and will want to give some of it to future generations, but a small sliver saved into the sort of insurance system that I am suggesting would make a huge difference and would put the social care system on a sustainable level.

I have a final thought, which puts these ideas in the wider context of today's debate. If we do not sort this issue out, the long-term plan for the NHS will not work. The 2020s need to be a decade of hope for the NHS, and every one nation Conservative will want that to happen, but to make that real we need to solve the social care crisis. I wish Ministers well in achieving this, and urge the House to reject the Opposition amendment.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** I am pleased to call Feryal Clark to make her maiden speech.

2.35 pm

**Feryal Clark (Enfield North) (Lab):** I am grateful for the opportunity to make my maiden speech in this important debate, and deeply honoured and humbled to stand in this great Chamber. As a child refugee who arrived in Britain with her family 30 years ago, I could never have dreamed that I would have the privilege and responsibility to serve my adopted country as a Member of Parliament. I would like again to express my thanks to the people of Enfield North for putting their trust in me. I am steadfastly committed to being their voice and their champion.

I pay tribute to my predecessor Joan Ryan, who served Enfield North diligently from 1997, with only a brief gap. Joan was a dedicated public servant, committed to representing local issues, and a brave and outspoken advocate for causes close to her heart. We share a passion for local government, having both served as councillors and then as deputy leaders. We both have concerns over the cuts to our health service, and a determination to reduce the harmful impact on constituents in Enfield North. I am sure that the whole House will join me in wishing Joan well in her future endeavours.

I am the first MP of Turkish Kurdish heritage to be elected to Parliament. I am also the first MP of the Alevi religion; although there are between 300,000 and half a million believers in the UK, they are underrepresented in public office. I also thought I might be arriving as the shortest MP but I am assured that, at 5 feet, I am a whole half inch taller than my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Kilburn (Tulip Siddiq). I hope that we can be an inspiration to vertically challenged women everywhere.

My constituency is varied in every sense of the word. It is diverse in culture and privilege, and has contrasting landscapes. Enfield is a bustling market town with rural spots of natural beauty, and a place where people from across the world have found their home. We are proudly home to Forty Hall vineyard, which produces delicious, organic English wine, which I can wholeheartedly recommend to my colleagues who are so inclined. We host Enfield Town football club, which is fan-owned and an example to local football clubs across the UK. I am personally delighted to boast about having the Tottenham Hotspur academy in my constituency; it truly trains the cream of the football crop, as I am sure the whole House will agree.

I am extremely proud of the diverse population of Enfield North. Our diversity is our strength. I am committed to representing all the communities who live alongside each other in support and solidarity. Some 6.8% of my constituents hail from other parts of the EU, and they can be assured that I will stand up for them during every step of the Brexit process, fighting for their rights to be protected and for promises made to them to be kept.

There seems to be a tradition in the House of emphasising the contrasts in our constituencies, but Enfield North really is a tale of two cities. On the west side, we have the beautiful greenbelt land, numerous golf courses and the prosperous town centre. On the east of the borough, however, it is a different story. The A10 is the dividing

[Feryal Clark]

line of wealth in my constituency. We all know that poverty has a knock-on effect on health, and when you cross the A10, you sadly find that the life expectancy there is significantly reduced. The rates of child poverty in the east of the borough are among the highest in the country, as are the levels of homelessness. The east is crying out for more investment, but Enfield Council's budget has been cut by more than £100 million since 2010, leaving vital services wanting.

My constituency also faces significant challenges from crime. Cuts to youth service budgets and the loss of 240 police officers over the past 10 years have culminated in far too many tragedies of young lives being lost or ruined, to the extent that groups of parents are now taking it upon themselves to patrol the streets in the hope of keeping their children safe. How has it come to that? The Government have made much of their pledge to restore 20,000 police officers, and I will campaign for my borough to get its fair share.

By far the biggest issue for my constituents is the topic of this debate. Already my constituency has seen a steep decline in healthcare over the past 10 years, and the forecast is no brighter for the next. Some 10% of GP practices have been recorded as closing since 2013. GPs are desperately overworked, with the number of patients having risen by 23,000 since 2015, but with no rise in the number of GPs to treat them. Parts of my constituency, such as Enfield Chase ward, do not have a single GP surgery.

In 2010, Chase Farm Hospital was downgraded, leading to the loss of its A&E facility, maternity unit and other specialist departments. My constituents now have to go elsewhere for medical emergencies, leading to pressure on neighbouring hospitals in Barnet and on North Middlesex Hospital. Spending per head on healthcare in Enfield has reduced by 16% since 2015, which puts the symptoms of dereliction in our health service into context.

The last bastion of support locally is the urgent care centre in Chase Farm Hospital, but its survival is not certain. I hope the Minister can assure me that the urgent care centre in Chase Farm Hospital will not have its hours reduced, and that my constituents will not experience any further decline in healthcare.

I hope that I have managed to shed a small amount of light on my constituency in all of its glory and challenge. I am ambitious for Enfield, and I believe it has great things to come, but we need the support of our Government to see our young people flourish, our businesses thrive and our healthcare system repaired. I pledge to my constituents to be their persistent champion, and what I lack in height, I will make up for in voice.

2.42 pm

**Jackie Doyle-Price (Thurrock) (Con):** It is a pleasure to follow the maiden speech of the hon. Member for Enfield North (Feryal Clark). She has just proved that what she lacks in height she makes up for in her energetic performance, and I have no doubt that she will give the Treasury Bench considerable challenge in the future. So many firsts, but I must congratulate her specifically on being the first refugee Member of Parliament. Does that not show that this country is open and liberal, and

welcomes those from all parts of the world, whatever their circumstances, who want to make a contribution and do the right thing? I congratulate the hon. Lady. When I go around schools, I give the message to everyone that if they work hard and take advantage of every opportunity that comes to them, they will get on in life. I now have a new poster girl, and I look forward to hearing more contributions from her.

I was struck by the opening speeches, because it is getting a bit boring that all we hear is, "We're spending this much money" and "Well, it's not enough and we would spend more than you." That will not get the best for our NHS. The truth is that whichever side of the House we sit on, we all want our NHS to be the best it can be. Every Government, of whatever colour, will always make the NHS a priority when it comes to the Budget. Let us not make this debate all about money. When we do, we let those areas in which we are not doing as well as we should off the hook. Getting the best out of the NHS is not just about money; it is about leadership and about behaviour—on the part not just of medical professionals, but of patients too. We need to make sure that we have honest discussions about outcomes, what we need to do better, what we expect from everyone and what patients can legitimately expect from the NHS.

That was very much part of the discussion during the general election. I remember knocking on doors and being asked, "But can we trust you on the NHS?" I would reply, "Conservatives are not aliens from the planet Zog who never get ill. We depend on the NHS as much as anyone else. Why would we ever engage in an act of self-harm by not doing our best for it?" We can be clear that under this Government the NHS will have the investment that the country can best afford, and we will focus on making sure that it delivers the best service possible.

The biggest challenge facing the NHS is not money. The workforce remains a considerable challenge. While we carry on talking about imports and the need for more doctors and nurses, we will continue to feed perverse behaviours and make the labour market in the NHS dysfunctional. Medical staff know that they can earn more as locums, so we have a massive vacancy rate and sky-rocketing salary bills, because of the choices people make. We need to do more to address that issue.

Much healthcare can be delivered by those who are not medical professionals. We need to look at where the NHS can commission services from the voluntary sector and how that could work. It is not just about doctors and nurses: it is about a more holistic approach to wellbeing. I would really welcome it if we could move the political debate away from pounds towards patients.

My right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt) spoke passionately about patient safety. Again, we need to focus on outcomes, and no one did more than he did to meet that challenge. When he became Secretary of State for Health, my constituency had a failing hospital, but thanks to the measures that he put in to improve performance, we now have a hospital that provides the service that we deserve. We should not be shy about challenging poor performance. The excellent doctors, nurses and others delivering medical services know when things are failing and would welcome the challenge to the leadership of their institutions to make them better.

We need to do more to help more vulnerable patients. The public services do very well for the pointy-elbowed middle classes who are able to fight for what they want, but the test of a society is how we treat the most vulnerable. In that regard, I welcome the commitment to reform the Mental Health Act 1983. That Act was a product of an era in which people with mental ill-health were an inconvenience to be managed. I am pleased to say that we have moved on very far from that, and we will introduce reforms that will empower patients to look after their own recovery. We should be grateful to people who have been through detention and shared their distressing experiences to make things better.

I can see that you are rightly looking at the clock, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I want to mention one final challenge in an area where, as a Minister, I was disappointed not to be able to do more—the issue of people with autism and learning disabilities being detained in institutions that, frankly, are doing them harm. I was horrified to see a report on “Sky News” only this week that showed that we have lost 10 people in the past year in those institutions. That is a mark of failure of the state: families entrusted their loved ones to that care and then lost them. I hope very much that we will redouble our efforts to make sure that we are not putting people into inappropriate care settings and are giving them the tools to be able to live outside those institutions.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** I am delighted to call Florence Eshalomi to make her maiden speech.

2.48 pm

**Florence Eshalomi (Vauxhall) (Lab/Co-op):** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am pleased to stand here, and feel humbled, to make my maiden speech as the new Member of Parliament for the area that I have called home all my life. I want to thank the constituents in Vauxhall for voting for me and placing their trust in me.

My predecessor represented Vauxhall for 30 years. As many right hon. and hon. Members in this House will know, she was one of the most vocal supporters of Brexit. But Kate was much more than just a vocal Brexiteer—she was a diligent, hard-working constituency MP who fought very hard for her constituents. I hope to build on her work locally and I pledge to represent the residents of Vauxhall to the best of my ability.

My constituency is home to a diverse community. Across our schools in Vauxhall, including my old primary school of St Helen's in Brixton, there are over 50 languages spoken by children of migrants from all parts of the world who have made this area their home. We have vibrant Portuguese, Jamaican, Ghanaian, Ecuadorian and Italian communities who run a number of small businesses and restaurants in the area. Vauxhall also has a proud history of an active LGBTQ community. I would like to place on the record my thanks for the contribution of the Royal Vauxhall Tavern in supporting and providing a safe space for our friends there. I am also proud to highlight the work of the 1997 Labour Government, who broke the Thatcherite legacy that hurt so many men and women in Vauxhall so badly through section 28. My constituency also has many famous national landmarks and buildings, including

the London Eye, the National Theatre, the Young Vic, the Southbank Centre, the Kia Oval cricket ground, and the home of MI6.

I am pleased to be making my maiden speech today in this part of the debate on the Queen's Speech because, like many hon. Members in this House, health and social care is very close to my heart. My late mother suffered from a disease called sickle cell anaemia, and in later life she developed renal failure and had to attend dialysis three times a week. The average life expectancy for sickle patients is between 42 and 47 years old, and many experience complications with childbirth. My mother was a fighter and she instilled in my sisters and me the values of standing up for what you believe in.

My mother also taught me how to make jollof rice. For any of you who have not tasted that, I want to put on the record now that Nigerian jollof rice is the best. As a young girl, I would watch my mother in pain going through a sickle crisis, but somehow she would still find the strength to help my sisters and me get ready for school and support us with our homework. I know the real value of the NHS. Without the amazing care of the haematology and renal team at King's College Hospital, and my mother's faith in God, she would not have lived to the age of 60.

St Thomas's Hospital in my constituency is also close to my heart. I never imagined that almost five years to the day, as I was literally pacing up and down the maternity ward, looking over the river, trying to coerce my daughter to come out, I would now be sitting in this Parliament fighting for funding for our hard-working doctors and nurses.

The NHS is struggling to cope with the increase in demand for health and social care. The A&E department at St Thomas's is treating more patients than ever before. Attendance has risen by two thirds since 2018. The staff are now seeing 600 patients on their busiest days compared with an average of 420 when the new emergency department opened in 2018. So what is driving this increase? A significant number of patients are presenting with serious mental health problems, there is a high number of homeless people with complex health needs, and the number of children attending the Evelina Hospital A&E continues to rise. In November and December, it had a record attendance, with 130 children seen in one single day—more than double the number seen in four years. With an ageing population and more complex needs adding so many cost pressures to the budgets, I hope that this Government will make sure that increasing funding to the NHS is a top priority. That is why I will be voting to support Labour's amendment later this afternoon.

I got involved in politics to give a voice to people who feel that politics is not for them or that politics does not matter. I have spent a large part of my career working with young people, including the young people who society is quick to demonise and stereotype. Last Tuesday, I was one of the first people on the scene following a stabbing incident that took place just over the border of my constituency. I made the frantic phone call to the emergency services, as I and two other members of the public tried to stem the flow of blood from the young boy who had been stabbed. I later found out that that young boy was 15 years old. I was scared. I was sad, because some members of the public walked past. We cannot allow ourselves to become desensitised to the



[*Florence Eshalomi*]

issue of knife crime. Young people in my constituency are being groomed for violence, and there has been an increase in fatal stabbings over recent years.

I firmly believe that, to tackle this issue, we need to understand the root causes of the problem. Evidence from various commissions, including the recent work led by my hon. Friends the Members for Croydon Central (Sarah Jones) and for Lewisham, Deptford (Vicky Foxcroft), shows that the vast majority of young people involved in knife crime have suffered childhood trauma. Mental health services for our young people have not been adequately funded, and I hope that the Government will make a commitment to reverse the cuts and support our young people at risk.

In this Parliament, I will continue to speak up for investment in youth services and creating positive opportunities for our young people, so that they do not see selling drugs as a way to make money. I will continue to speak up and challenge the Home Office to invest in our police service, so that it has the resources to catch the people who continue to exploit our vulnerable young people. And I will continue to champion and speak up for the young women and girls who are facing sexual exploitation. The people of Vauxhall have placed their trust in me, and I pledge to represent their interests and concerns to the best of my ability for as long as I am in this House.

2.56 pm

**Anne Marie Morris** (Newton Abbot) (Con): That was a very thought-provoking, emotional and personal contribution from the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Florence Eshalomi), who I very much welcome to this place. She made some very important points about the NHS and knife crime, and I look forward to her working with all of us in this House to deliver exactly what she rightly says we must. I congratulate her.

It is right that health and care are a substantial part of this Gracious Speech, but it must be about action, not just words and promises. Across the House, whichever party we represent, we must deliver on what our constituents need and want and what we have promised them. I welcome the inquiry into social care. My concern is that this has been promised by Governments for years, and it seems to be taking forever and a day. This is urgent—it cannot wait. We must talk cross-party and look at the work that has been done, rather than do it all over again. Let us look at what works and does not work, take the good and move forward. I would like to see a Bill on social care in this Parliament.

Integration is another key issue. Members across the House have pushed for integration, and we need to make it happen. NHS England has proposed legislation to unblock the things preventing this from working. I am pleased to see the Bill to implement the NHS long-term plan, but I would like it to be more ambitious. It is right to address the commissioning challenge, but the Bill does not address the overlapping regulatory system, the conflicting accountability between health and social care or any of the legal relationships. Where are we with sustainability and transformation partnerships and integrated care systems? They have no legal status, yet we look to them to deliver a solution on integration. More must be done, and we must be bold.

Across the Chamber, we agree that mental health is a priority, but again, where is the ambition? Dealing with detention is crucial, but we must also look at parity of esteem. It is not defined. We talk about mental health representing something like 23% of the burden on the NHS, but how is that measured? Is that really the totality of the issue? We need to define parity of esteem, be clear how we will measure the need and address that need as a matter of urgency. We talk about achieving parity of esteem over the next 10 years, but that seems an incredibly long time. I would like to see a proper plan, and I would like to see parity considerably sooner than 10 years from now.

There was an extremely well-made speech a little earlier about wellbeing. For so long, we have talked about the NHS and health, but actually we talk about illness, not about wellness. When we talk about Public Health England, that is not the only part of trying to ensure wellbeing. Professor Dame Sally Davies, the former chief medical officer, has said that wellness is as important as dealing with illness. I would like to see that fully addressed, and I very much hope that those on the Front Bench are listening and will take that seriously.

The assets that we have to address our problems are not infinite. We have some wonderful people, we have some wonderful infrastructure—buildings and hospitals—and we have some wonderful technology.

**Neil Parish** (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con): My hon. Friend is making a really strong speech. Talking of assets, in my constituency we have community hospitals in Honiton, Axminster and Seaton, which could be used to much greater effect to take some of the pressures off the acute hospitals. Honiton does good work with Ottery St Mary and others in the neighbouring seat of East Devon. Can we actually get these assets working better for us? I welcome what the Secretary of State said in his speech earlier.

**Anne Marie Morris**: My hon. Friend makes a very good point, and I was very pleased to hear the Secretary of State say that community hospitals were valuable. We must have a fundamental rethink of the infrastructure and look at what we really need. In rural areas, where we cannot get to the best stroke centre, say, we must think seriously about how we use or reuse such facilities.

**Dr Whitford**: Talking about assets, do we not also need to sweat the assets that are in the community? In Scotland, we have had community pharmacies with minor ailment services since 2005, and we now have the same for optometrists, to the point that only a tiny percentage of people ever need to go to A&E if they have an eye injury, a red eye or another problem.

**Anne Marie Morris**: The hon. Lady—I almost said my hon. Friend because we share some common issues, and she is a great spokesman from the SNP Benches—is absolutely right. I think we would actually all agree that we need to look at the people who deliver these services and at the breadth we have, and involve them all appropriately.

We must also look at the new professions with the new associate levels. Physician associates take a huge part of the burden, and have a great career across the whole of primary and secondary care. Let us be innovative

and creative, and provide the training, the financial support and the respect that I think many people working in our health system feel they do not necessarily receive from this place, although clearly they feel they have it from their patients. IT has always been the call of the Secretary of State, but again, let us be more imaginative. It is not just about communication; it is also about diagnosis and the delivery of care. There is much that can be done.

The Queen's Speech refers to a medicines and medical devices Bill, which it is absolutely critical to get right. I am very keen to look at the speed of getting medicines to patients, but we need to do more than deal with clinical trials. There is much that has to be done with regard to the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency and NICE and their systems. I would like to see the approach to access to medicines be more ambitious.

Finally—I am getting the evil eye, I think, Madam Deputy Speaker—I am very pleased that in the NHS Funding Bill we are now committing to enshrine increased spending in law. My concern is: do we have the right level of spending, how will we be measuring need and is that spending matching the increase in demand? That is a good promise, but it needs considerably more work.

This Government have done a good job in setting out some of the key issues and priorities that we as a House need to address, but we must look at the detail, we must implement this and we must deliver.

3.3 pm

**Emma Hardy** (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab): I think all of us here have had those moments when the injustice of what we see continues to haunt us ever afterwards. Last October, I had such an experience when I visited the vascular service at Hull Royal Infirmary and spoke to NHS staff as well as amputee patients with vascular disease and their families. Hon. Members may not know much about vascular disease, so forgive me while I explain briefly. This disease results from the build-up of fatty deposits in people's arteries, which interrupts the flow of blood around the body. Vascular disease in the legs causes pain and muscle wastage, and the dead leg tissue can leave unhealable wounds that become ulcerous. My horror at learning about the pain suffered by patients of vascular disease, as the tissue in their legs slowly dies through lack of oxygenated blood, cannot be understated. When I was younger, someone very close to me suffered from the same disease and an amputation, and I grew up seeing not only their suffering, but that of their loved ones and family around them.

During my visit to the hospital I was shown images of foot ulcers, and the surgeon explained, in a phrase that has stayed in my mind ever since, that "time is tissue", and that the development of a foot ulcer from something so small into something that requires amputation can be as short as 48 hours. My horror only increased when I learned of the north-south divide, with major amputation rates being 30% higher in the north of England than the south. The situation in Hull is even worse. Overall, people in Hull are 46% more likely to need a major amputation, and 16% more likely to need a partial amputation, compared with the all-England average.

Staff at Hull Royal Infirmary are incredible. They are hardworking and dedicated, and I am in awe of their work. I particularly wish to mention Dr Dan Carradice

and the work done by his department on this disease. They are fighting vascular disease with their hands tied behind their backs. They are battling staffing shortages, increased demand for services and funding restraints, and all without the updated critical equipment and facilities that they need. It cannot be right that vascular disease patients who live in Scotland have access to more advanced equipment than people who live in England. We are at a critical juncture, and the Government need to take action quickly.

I therefore have two simple asks, the first of which goes to every Member of this Parliament. I am proud to be taking over from the hon. Member for St Ives (Derek Thomas) as chair of the all-party group on vascular and venous disease. I invite Members from across the House to join that all-party group, and to find out about the disease and how it impacts on their constituents. Together we can make the strongest possible case to the Government for more funding, and a better staffing plan to deal with this crisis.

Secondly, will the Minister meet me and Dr Dan Carradice to discuss the particular challenges at Hull Royal Infirmary, and the workforce requirements, equipment and funding that are needed to prevent the crisis in vascular disease from becoming even deeper? The Government must make this an urgent priority because as the doctor said, time is tissue, and we must act before it is too late.

3.7 pm

**Sir Mike Penning** (Hemel Hempstead) (Con): When I sat in the Chamber earlier, I was not certain that I was in the right place. As you will know, Madam Deputy Speaker, we are not used to so many people listening to speeches—and what brilliant speeches they have been, particularly from the new entrants in the House. I say to newly elected Members of Parliament: this will not last. As we get further into the Session, trust me, it will not last.

I thought back to my maiden speech in 2005, when I made a promise to my constituents that I would go on and on and on about the acute problems at the hospital in my constituency. There was a bit of politics. I am not making a maiden speech, so I can be a little more controversial than some of my colleagues here today. The Labour party made the decision—in those days it was the Minister's decision—to close the acute facilities at Hemel Hempstead Hospital. Acute facilities at St Albans had already been closed, and promises were made that those facilities would always be looked after at Hemel Hempstead Hospital, which was fairly new. We are a new town, so this was not about dilapidation. It was a fairly new hospital, but the decision was made to move those facilities to the centre of Watford, next to Watford football club.

I have nothing against Watford football club. As you may have heard, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am an ardent Spurs supporter, so this weekend will be very difficult for me as the Spurs play Watford. I want every success for the local clubs, but we have a Victorian hospital next to that football club, in a very difficult traffic area of Watford, and it is well over 100 years old. In the modern world we live in, would we dream of building a hospital in the middle of a town, next to a football club? Of course we would not. So I was simply

[Sir Mike Penning]

thrilled—this is where I am going to get controversial on my own Treasury Front Bench—when it was announced that in south-west Hertfordshire, in my part of the world, we would get one the first six new hospitals—six new hospitals were announced; five new hospitals and one refurbishment—guess where, Madam Deputy Speaker: next to Watford Hospital.

We can moan and moan at Ministers, but the difficulty these days is that we have devolved so much power to local health authorities. That sounds good on the tin, but having oversight from local, democratically elected people is really very difficult. The clinical commissioning groups should listen and in our community they are not particularly listening. West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust is absolutely determined that this is where they want to build £400 million of new facilities: in the middle of Watford, nowhere near the community it should be serving—apart from the people of Watford, to be fair.

We continue to campaign. We have not given up. We do not want to reopen the facilities at Hemel Hempstead Hospital and we do not really have the land available in St Albans. What we have said is this: let us build a new hospital for south-west Hertfordshire. That is what we would do today; that is what the money in the new hospitals plan would do. To be fair, the Secretary of State has seen me and he has asked his officials to look into what the cost-evaluation would be. We have had costings of £1 billion for a greenfield site put out on local radio, interestingly by the Mayor of Watford, and we have had costings from other parts of the country as low as £375 million. So something is seriously going wrong between the costings.

We have got into a situation where the only way we can fight this, believe it or not, is to take the trust to court. There is a lack of accountability—I have called for debates in this House on that for years now. The only way we can fight the fact that the trust has only put in a bid for refurbishment of the Watford site is to take it to court and challenge it under judicial review. I have a fantastic community. We have raised the money. We will go to court. But is it not crazy that here I am praising, and I will be voting for, the Queen's Speech and against Labour's amendment, when I am saying that the £400 million being offered by the Government is going to the wrong place?

I listened deeply to the former Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt), when he said that we have to admit it sometimes when we make mistakes in the NHS, whether they are clinical mistakes, mistakes on Primodos—another thing I like going on about in the Chamber, although I do not have the time to do so this evening—or the fact that we do not have prescribed medical cannabis free at the point of delivery to our children when a consultant says it should be prescribed. The only way we can fight this at the moment is to go to the courts. I am pleased with the Secretary of State on this, and I know that this will all be fed back. There was supposed to be a letter to me in the last couple of days from the people looking at the funding. That has not arrived yet, so—hint, hint, Front Bench—let us get the letter to me.

I do not want to go to court and the community do not want to go to court, but I was sent here to fight for something. The biggest issue in my constituency is the

future of my hospital and the future provision of care in my constituency. We want a new hospital on a greenfield site. This Government, I believe, could fund that.

3.13 pm

**Marion Fellows** (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): It will come as no surprise to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I intend to dwell on health and social care issues as they relate to my constituents in my own country of Scotland.

Before I do so, however, I should like to remind the House that just because edicts and statements are issued from the Government Benches, it does not mean that they are factually correct. Indeed, I must say that the pejorative language used by Conservative Members, including those representing Scottish seats, when discussing Scotland and its SNP Government, is unjust, mostly fallacious and paints a picture of healthcare in Scotland that neither I, my family nor my constituents recognise. In Scotland, the SNP Government are carrying on with the day job and have abolished prescription charges, which helps many folk in Scotland. To know that they can have the medication they need without worry is a fine thing, and it can save precious NHS resources further down the line.

Satisfaction with the NHS in Scotland remains high. In 2018, 95% of patients rated their overall experience of cancer care positively. [Interruption.] The hon. Member on the Government Front Bench may shake his head, but I can vouch for that, as my husband had cancer treatment in Scotland. Some 86% of patients rated their full in-patient experience positively, and 83% rated the overall care provided by their GP surgery as good or excellent. Scotland's patient safety record is among the best in the world. Over the past five years there has been a decreasing year-on-year trend in the rate of MRSA and C. diff infection.

Scotland led the UK by introducing a mental health waiting times target. In the Scottish Government's 2019-20 programme, the budget for mental health increased by £15.3 million, up by nearly 22%. This is the first Government in Scotland to have a ministerial post dedicated to mental health. The SNP is always looking to improve services for all Scots, which is why the Government are undertaking a review of mental health legislation in Scotland. The review aims to improve the rights and protections of persons who may be subject to existing legislation, and to remove barriers to those caring for their health and welfare.

This Tory Government aim to emulate Scotland by abolishing parking charges at hospitals. Since 2008, when the SNP Government abolished charges in NHS car parks, patients, visitors and staff have saved over £39 million.

The Nuffield Trust, an independent health think-tank, has said that although the 3.2% increase in NHS England's budget is welcome, it must not detract from the reality that the English health service cannot adequately function or improve without significant investment in NHS capital and the workforce. Perhaps NHS England, through adequate Government funding, could emulate NHS Scotland and offer the same bursary to student nurses as we do in Scotland, where from next September nursing students will benefit from a £10,000 bursary, which is double the proposal for nurses training in England.



Of course, nursing students receive free tuition in Scotland. The benefits of this policy are easy to see, with nursing student numbers in Scotland increasing for seven years in a row. Compare that with a 30% drop in applications in England. How difficult will it be for this Government to achieve their promise of 50,000 extra nurses, or is it actually 19,000 fewer nurses? I am not sure; I am a bit confused about that figure. Perhaps I am not the only one.

On the question of social care, in 2011 the Scottish Government became the first in the UK to pay the real living wage to staff, including all NHS workers. In 2002, free personal care for the elderly was introduced by the Labour-Lib Dem Executive, and I give them credit for that, but that was against the wishes of the Westminster parties, which used it to cut social security funding for older people in Scotland—as ever, Westminster never misses an opportunity to cut Scotland’s budget. *[Interruption.]* Now the SNP, in government, has extended free personal care to all those under 65 who need it, and from the next Parliament the Scottish Government will work to abolish social care charges. *[Interruption.]*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** Order. The hon. Lady must be heard. There are indeed a lot of Members here this afternoon, but we will have no noise.

**Marion Fellows:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Westminster Government would do well to look at and emulate many of the forward-looking, fair, equitable and progressive policies that originate in Scotland. One example is that, through the Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013, everyone who uses social care services can now control their individual care budget.

The Prime Minister promised to

“fix the crisis in social care once and for all ... with a clear plan we have prepared”.

The UK Government have failed to propose a Bill, a clear timetable or costings in their manifesto to address the social care crisis in England. The Tories have been in government for a decade and overseen the social care crisis. According to Age UK, there has been a £160 million cut in public spending on older people’s care in the last five years, despite rapidly rising demand. About 1.2 million people over the age of 65 did not receive the care support that they needed, and cuts have increased the pressure on unpaid carers.

I encourage the Secretary of State to look to and adopt the innovative measures that the Scottish Government have introduced in Scotland, to benefit those who live in England and use its NHS and social care provision.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** I am delighted to call Dehenna Davison to make her maiden speech.

3.20 pm

**Dehenna Davison** (Bishop Auckland) (Con): Let me start by paying tribute to my incredible new colleagues, who have made some inspiring speeches and have set the bar so incredibly high. No pressure there, then!

There is only one word that sums up how I feel about being on these green Benches, and that word is “chuffed”. I am chuffed to be here, and to have been granted the opportunity to be the Bishop Auckland constituency’s

champion. My predecessor served the constituency well for 14 years, and I thank her particularly for her good work on maintenance fees for new build estates.

All 650 MPs in this place are convinced that they represent the best, most beautiful constituency, and I am incredibly happy to be the one who is right. The home of the Prince Bishops, with over 70 communities across 365 square miles, we have a proud history of railways, mining, farming, and football. I hope to add to the latter by joining my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) on the parliamentary women’s football team. With 10 amateur cup wins, Bishop Auckland football club also stepped in to help Manchester United to fulfil its fixtures following the heartbreaking Munich air disaster in 1958, proving that when we work together, we work best. West Auckland, just down the hill from where I live, even represented Great Britain at the inaugural world cup in 1909—and in 1909, the Sir Thomas Lipton trophy was indeed coming home. As we will prove on the 31st of this month, that was not the last time we went to Europe and got the result that we wanted.

As in football, the Bishop Auckland constituency is a tale of two halves: the beautiful rolling landscapes of rural life to the west in Teesdale, and the grafting industrial towns and villages to the east. The diversity in landscape is matched by the diversity in the challenges faced by the different communities. In Teesdale we need to protect our rural communities, with an emphasis on the farming heroes who help to feed our nation and preserve our environment. I will work even more closely with Upper Teesdale Agricultural Support Services to be a true champion for our farmers and to create a thriving rural economy.

I will also be campaigning to improve our rural broadband and 4G coverage, and I am delighted that the Government have committed themselves to eradicating notspots. Connectivity, in every sense, is at the centre of my local plan, and at the centre of Government.

In the east of the constituency, in an all too familiar story, our high streets are under pressure, but the Government are listening, and I am chuffed once more that Bishop Auckland will benefit from both the towns fund and the future high streets fund. Local transport is also an issue, and I have been nagging my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport incessantly about the long-awaited Toft Hill bypass. We must also secure the repair work that is needed on Whorlton Bridge, not least because the community faces a dramatic detour which has forced the closure of the local pub, but also because of its cultural value in being the oldest suspension bridge in Britain that still relies on its original chainwork.

One issue that unites the whole constituency is our local healthcare provision. My local priority is fighting for improved health services at Bishop Auckland Hospital, with the ultimate goal of restoring our A&E. I have been banging that drum here in Parliament non-stop since I was elected, and I have no plans to let up just yet. So I say to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care: I am sorry, but he will be seeing an awful lot more of me. Despite the rhetoric from many Opposition Members, the NHS is at the very heart of the Conservative party, and I welcome the record NHS funding from this Government and the bold step to enshrine that funding in law.

[Dehenna Davison]

The NHS has a special place in my heart, although unfortunately my best experiences of it were in times of great sadness. It was the incredible NHS staff who helped to bring smiles to my nan's face during the last days of her battle with cancer, and it was NHS paramedics and doctors who fought valiantly to save my dad's life. If any of those staff are watching today, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. I was 13 years old when a man who later admitted to being high on drink and drugs walked across a pub and ended my dad's life in seconds with one single punch. As a result, I spent my early teenage years in and out of court cases, tribunals, and meetings with lawyers and the police. While I was insistent that I would not let a dark event in my past negatively determine what happened to my future, that is a life that I would not want other young people to have. Here in this place, I want to champion policy that helps to reduce violence by educating disadvantaged young people, rehabilitating offenders and giving our police the resources they need to do their job. The police officers that I encountered as a young teenager were exemplary, particularly Karen Cocker, our family liaison officer, who I am proud to say I am still in touch with today.

Losing my dad had a profound impact on me. He was an incredible source of inspiration. In many ways, he was the very embodiment of blue collar Conservative values. He was a grafter, a self-employed stonemason who taught me the value of small enterprise as a force for good. He was incredibly aspirational, often jokingly citing Del Boy's great line:

"This time next year, Rodney, we'll be millionaires!"

He believed that, above all else, a person's duty was to leave a better world for future generations, delivering that through nothing short of hard work. Growing up with my dad's values, I became the first in my family to go to university and, weirdly enough, the first in my family to take a seat in this place as well. I was one of the lucky ones, but a child's opportunities should not be determined by luck or by their postcode.

I am proud to be a member of this Conservative party, which has levelling up and spreading opportunity at the very core of its ethos. Improving social mobility is not only a passion of mine; it feels to me that it is my very duty to my constituents and to my country. That is why one of my key local priorities is improving job opportunities by setting up a youth employment champions scheme. A wise man called Dumbledore said:

"It matters not what someone is born, but what they grow to be."

Grafting as hard as I can to help my constituents to grow to their full potential is not just a priority; it is my duty.

3.28 pm

**Catherine McKinnell** (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): I congratulate the hon. Member for Bishop Auckland (Dehenna Davison) on her excellent and powerful maiden speech. As a fellow MP representing the north-east and as an advocate of the One Punch Can Kill campaign, I am sure there are many challenges that we will face together.

I rise to talk about the NHS and social care, but I will also talk about other aspects of this Gracious Speech that will either affect, or not affect enough, the

community that I represent in Newcastle. Any additional funding that is to be enshrined in law as part of the multi-year funding settlement is of course welcome. However, I worry that the gesture might be more about politics than about dealing with the real challenges that our NHS faces. Many of us agree that one area in which we need substantial answers is social care. NHS leaders warn us that hospitals are being overwhelmed by people who have nowhere else to go, and any additional funding risks being wasted because of this issue.

The Conservative manifesto has pledged to build cross-party consensus on a long-term solution, and if the Government are serious about doing that, I absolutely welcome it because I believe that that is where the solution lies. There are good reasons to be optimistic. There is already broad agreement on what a deal would look like, and we all know how important social care is to our constituents. Indeed, if we cannot put adult social care on a sustainable financial footing, then the frail, the elderly, and the most vulnerable and their families will pay the price, and the public will not forgive us. Let us make a start on building that consensus to fix social care now.

Moving on to education, the idea of levelling up school funding by increasing minimum per-pupil funding will in fact disproportionately benefit schools with less challenging intakes. Because they benefit less from the disadvantage elements in the funding formula, most disadvantaged schools are already over the new threshold. Some beneficiaries no doubt need extra funding, but there must be a better way of ensuring that it reaches them than the regressive method designed by the Government. I note that the Education Policy Institute said that the north-east will benefit the least of any region outside London despite the fact that we have consistently had the lowest performance in England on the Department for Education's attainment 8 and progress 8 outcome measures. Our children's potential is being wasted, and we cannot let that happen.

The north of England, the north-east in particular, also suffers from a persistent and growing productivity gap with the rest of the UK. I have long made my concerns known that leaving the EU will make the gap more difficult to close, given that the evidence indicates that the north-east will be hardest hit by any form of Brexit. However, an important part of the answer for tackling the north-south productivity gap while also tackling the climate crisis lies in having the best transport connectivity. The inclusion of HS2 phase 2a in the Queens Speech is therefore good news, and I hope we can now make progress on getting HS2's benefits to the north.

I take a special interest in the east coast main line, which I travel up and down every week, but my interest is not purely self-motivated. Upgrading it is essential for the north-east, not least to ensure that it also benefits from HS2, which is why I established the all-party parliamentary group on the east coast main line. The group will be re-established, and I encourage new Members to join it. We urgently need to improve capacity, so we need HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail, and I completely reject any suggestion that this is an either/or choice. I call on HS2 Ltd, the Government, Network Rail and Transport for the North to work together to produce credible, timely and properly funded plans to upgrade the east coast main line so that the north-east can fully

benefit from the introduction of high-speed rail. After decades of under-investment, we have an opportunity to transform rail capacity and connectivity in the north-east and attract investment, boost skills and opportunity, level up communities across the north, and create sustainable transport infrastructure. We need to take it.

Overall, the Gracious Speech was light on detail, but there are some causes for celebration. I welcome the domestic abuse Bill, which is an opportunity to drive cultural change, and, as the TUC said, transform

“domestic abuse from a criminal justice issue to one that is ‘everyone’s business’, tackled by health and social care, housing, education and employers”.

I also welcome the inclusion of the animal welfare and sentencing Bill and pay tribute to the work of Anna Turley, the former Member for Redcar, who campaigned tirelessly on the issue after a particularly horrific case in her constituency came to light. There are some great opportunities for the north east if the Government make good on their promises, and I for one will be watching closely to see that they follow through.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** Order. It gives me great pleasure to call Dean Russell to make his maiden speech.

3.33 pm

**Dean Russell (Watford) (Con):** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is wonderful to see you in the Chair. I am incredibly humbled to be here. As a working-class lad, to be sitting on these Benches is an enormous honour, but to be sitting among so many other working-class Conservatives is just as fabulous. I must thank the people of Watford for putting me in this wonderful place and for giving me the honour and the opportunity to hopefully make a change in this country.

First, however, I want to pay tribute to my predecessor. Everyone who knows him will know that he works tirelessly and is a true gentleman: Mr Richard Harrington. When I first became a candidate, people would say to me, “Dean, you’ve got big shoes to fill.” At first I thought it was a dig at my height, but I soon found it was because of Richard’s amazing legacy and the work he has done for the people of Watford. Today’s debate focuses on health, and there are so many things I could talk about—from his jobs fairs to the work he has done on social housing and tenancies—but I will specifically pay tribute to his work to ensure that Watford General Hospital and the local NHS got additional funding. I am proud that Watford will get one of the six new hospitals in the coming months and years, as was alluded to in a previous speech. Richard was a true champion for Watford, and I hope I can fill his shoes in the coming years. I will work tirelessly to do so, although my height may not change.

As you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, Watford General is on Vicarage Road, right next to the legendary, most fabulous Watford football club, which famously once had Elton John as its chairman. I would like to steal one of his song titles and say that I would like to be the first rocket man of Watford as we soar to the stars.

Sadly, to be totally honest, Elton John was not actually born in Watford—I cannot do anything about that—but we do have an incredible wealth of world-famous Watfordians. We have our very own Spice Girl in Geri

Halliwell. [HON. MEMBERS: “Hear, hear!”] You have to give a whoop for that. We have our own boxing heavyweight champion of the world in Anthony Joshua. We have our own political heavyweight, too, in the dearly departed Mo Mowlam. And we have the England football manager with the best waistcoats in the world, Mr Gareth Southgate.

As a science fiction fan myself, it is particularly exciting that we have our very own member of Doctor Who’s time-travelling Tardis team in Mr Bradley Walsh. Many Members will know that Bradley Walsh hosts a famous game show called “The Chase”, in which he battles with “The Beast” Mark Labbett. As a Conservative, I feel that in this election we battled our own “Chase” and our own beast—the beast of socialism—and we won. We defeated that beast.

One of the most world-famous parts of Watford is a magical place, and it was mentioned earlier in a brilliant maiden speech: Warner Brothers studio and the Harry Potter tour. Given his love of buses, I would like to invite the Prime Minister to visit the studio, because we have neither a boring single-decker bus nor a boring double-decker bus; we have the world-famous Harry Potter triple-decker “Knight Bus.” Who can beat that?

Watford is not just a hub for entertainment. We are also a massive magnet for investment and business. We have several UK headquarters. We have Hilton hotels, so people have somewhere to sleep. We have TJX, the home of TK Maxx—looking around the Chamber, I am sure everyone has recently bought their clothes from there. We have a place to drink in JD Wetherspoon, and we have a place to win millions and to help millions more in Camelot and the lottery. We also have our very own pharmacy, a fabulous business called Sigma Pharma. Of course, every Member will want to visit our incredible market, our high street and the Intu centre for a most delectable day out.

Madam Speaker—sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker; I promoted you—at heart I am really just a family man, and it is my family who inspire me. My working-class roots may have defined who I am, but my family are the ones who drive me forward. I give credit to my parents and my sister for all the work they have done over the years and for the support they have given me. I am sure it is the same for many Members. Our families make such a difference to our lives and keep us grounded. In that sense, my wife and my daughter truly are my beating heart and soul.

However, not everyone in society has a family or even friends to support them, and, through no fault of their own, they may feel that they are on their own. That is where community comes into play. Let us all be role models to support people who feel as though they have no one. That is the role of a Member of Parliament: not just to make laws, but to help those around us. We must let everyone know that opportunity has no gender. Opportunity should have no race and it should have no age. Whoever someone is, wherever they are, they should be able to be the best version of themselves. I believe that my party is helping to represent that.

Community is very important to me, which is why I worry about modern times. Mental health has been a big issue today, but so, too, is loneliness. We used to talk about being lonely in a crowd, but today there are so many who are lonely in the cloud. The digital world, modern life and social media mean that probably more



[*Dean Russell*]

people are aware of the names of the Kardashian family than they are of those of the neighbours on their own street.

For many years, I have felt that we need to bring the world back together, to be less divisive and to try to tie those threads together. I have had a daily philosophy for many years, and it goes like this: HOPE is an acronym and it stands for Help One Person Everyday. If we all do that in our own lives, in a way that changes people's lives, we will have a better world. I feel honoured to be in this place as a Conservative, to enable that on a much bigger scale. We may be able to effect laws and change legislation, but changing people's lives is surely why we are here.

In the past few years, we have seen lots of divisiveness, but let us have an age of decisiveness. Let's not just get Brexit done—let's get stuff done, to make people's lives better. I believe that our manifesto and the Queen's Speech have shown that that is our goal. As we enter 2020, let us lead the world in relentless positivity, optimism and can-do-ism, and turn this into the soaring 20s. As I complete my speech—I may be going over time; I apologise—I just want to thank people for electing me to be on this Bench and tell them that I will work tirelessly for the people of Watford, and with all Members here, to make the world a better place.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** I thank everyone who is speaking today but not making a maiden speech for their kindness towards the maiden speech makers, who are being given a lot more leeway. That means that we will now have to impose a time limit of four minutes on people who are not making maiden speeches and still one of six minutes or so for maiden speeches. There is no point in people looking shocked; there are only so many hours in a day and that is where we are.

3.43 pm

**Helen Hayes (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab):** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. May I congratulate all the Members who have made their excellent maiden speeches in the House today?

Across the country there is a clear and urgent need to reform the social care system. A vast unsustainable gap exists between the current funding levels and the reality on the ground. Local authorities, including Tory-run councils such as Somerset, are stretched to breaking point, facing impossible daily decisions to cut care packages or raise the threshold for qualification for support. The Local Government Association estimates that the shortfall between funding and need in social care is £1.5 billion in the current financial year, with that set to grow to £3.5 billion by 2024-25.

The Government funding announcement on social care is playing a very disingenuous game with the public across the country who rely on social care. An announcement that falls far short of meeting the current funding gap is simply not remotely close to a solution to the long-problems of social care. The failures of this Government on social care can be seen in the inbox of every Member of this House. I see it in the case of my constituent who is being made ill by the anxiety provoked

by the care home bills she has received for her mother's care, in the distress of dementia patients forced to sell their homes and in the anguish of the sibling of an autistic man who is living in supported accommodation where the staff are too busy, poorly paid and undertrained to safely manage the behaviour of other residents. When we talk about social care, we are talking about individual lives—about my constituents, and millions like them, whose present day-to-day is intolerable.

The Tories offer nothing but prevarication and delay. During the previous Parliament, the Government delayed publishing the social care Green Paper eight times, and they went into the general election offering only a vague commitment to cross-party talks. Yet extensive cross-party work has already been done by Andrew Dilnot and Select Committees in both Houses. The menu of options available to deliver a social care system in which everyone who needs support can live with dignity is clear: there is a broad consensus that care should be free at the point of need and there is a clear understanding that additional taxation must be raised to fund it. There is simply no excuse for the disgraceful delay in bringing forward detailed proposals. The message it sends is that the Tories just do not care about the daily misery that so many people are experiencing right now because social care is broken.

Finally, the Government must address the scandal of their utter failure to deliver the transforming care programme. Winterbourne View should never have happened, but once that disgraceful scandal had come to light, it should never, ever have happened again. Yet, on this Secretary of State's watch, horrific abuses took place at Whorlton Hall and the NHS continues to pay for patients to be placed in the private hospital at St Andrew's in Northampton, which was recently failed again by the Care Quality Commission. Autistic people and people with learning disabilities should be able to live with dignity in homes, not hospitals—in regulated community provision, supported by well-trained, properly paid staff.

The Government have a decade of failure on social care under their belt. They simply cannot be trusted. We will hold them to account on behalf of our most vulnerable constituents, who desperately need a radically different approach.

3.46 pm

**Sir Paul Beresford (Mole Valley) (Con):** I thought, Madam Deputy Speaker, that immediately I stood up you would announce that the time limit was down to three minutes.

The number of medically trained professionals who have come into the House has apparently risen dramatically. I am one of them, but I have been here a wee while. I warn the new ones that their profession will lean on them to put the case until they are driven to it, as I am today.

I wish to pick on child dental health in particular. For decades, the statistics have been absolutely appalling. Deciduous teeth—baby teeth—are particularly susceptible to decay: their enamel is much thinner than that of permanent teeth. Before SNP Members stand up to tell me about it, I should say that action has been taken on care and education, particularly in schools, and to some degree it is working, but those children for whom it does

not work, or works only partially, will require extractions. I can remember looking at little kids in east London with appalling mouths—broken-down teeth, abscesses—who were crying and having sleepless nights, and having to refer them to hospital for a general anaesthetic.

The statistics today are terrible. Last year, more than 45,000 children and young people aged up to 19 were admitted to hospital because of tooth decay. They included 26,000 five to nine-year-olds, making tooth decay the leading cause of hospital admissions for that age group. Last year, there were more than 40,000 hospital operations and extractions for children and young people. That is 160 a day. It is a complete waste of money, it is completely preventable and it is occupying space in our national health service.

Education is starting to make a difference, but far and away the best-proven method to reduce tooth decay among children, and even more so among adults, is fluoridation of the water supply. In the United Kingdom, approximately 330,000 people have naturally occurring fluoride in their water supply. In addition, another 5.8 million in different parts of the country are supplied with fluoridated water. But that covers only 10% of the total population. The percentage covered in the United States is 74% and rising; in Canada it is 44% and rising; in Australia it is 80% and rising; and even little New Zealand has managed 70%. We have fluoridation legislation, but it is left for local authorities to instigate and compel companies to fluoridate their water supplies. There is no financial advantage for the local authorities, but the savings to the NHS would be considerable.

The second problem with the current legislation is that few local authority boundaries are coterminous with the boundaries of the water companies. That makes direction and implementation complex. The sensible answer is for legislation to apply nationwide. That is not in the Queen's Speech. It could be put into a Queen's Speech, but it will take a brave Government, I hope supported by the Opposition, to include and implement that. I warn that whenever I speak about fluoridation, the green ink letters fly and broomsticks whizz around my house as people complain. However, it works for child dental health care, which is deplorable in this country.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** It is a great pleasure to call Amy Callaghan to make her maiden speech.

3.50 pm

**Amy Callaghan (East Dunbartonshire) (SNP):** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to make my first speech in this place on such an important topic. It is my honour to stand before you all as the new SNP representative for East Dunbartonshire. I cannot begin to describe how grateful I am to all those who have put their faith in me. To my family who are here today, to my outstanding campaign team, and to every single person who showed up at the ballot box on 12 December and entrusted me with their vote—and those who did not—together we have made history.

It is my promise that I shall fight tooth and nail at every turn to ensure that the people of East Dunbartonshire, and indeed the people of Scotland, never feel left behind or ignored by their representative again. I can only hope

that by the time my tenure in this seat draws to a close—sooner rather than later in a progressive, independent Scotland—I will have repaid the faith that voters showed in me.

I also stand here with the unenviable task of following the maiden speeches of my predecessors, not least my good friend and now colleague, my hon. Friend the Member for Ochil and South Perthshire (John Nicolson). I am sure he remembers fondly the eloquent and articulate way in which the history and beauty of my constituency has been described in this House. Not only is East Dunbartonshire one of the most prosperous places to live in the country, given its array of excellent state schools and the unshakeable community spirit in areas like Bishopbriggs, Kirkintilloch, Bearsden and Milngavie, but it is a constituency that is steeped in history in more ways than one.

First, if people visited today, they would find the remains of the Antonine wall—the northernmost point of the Roman empire—still running through the area. As any history buff would tell them—I am sure there are many in this House—it is thought that this UNESCO world heritage site was built by the Romans to defend their mighty armies from the tenacity of the locals. Others say the case could equally be made that the Romans became so enamoured of the sheer beauty of the countryside and the Campsies that they simply decided to stop and take in the view. They certainly would not have been the last. Regardless of the reason for the wall's construction, I find it rather fitting, given the political climate we find ourselves in, that such a vast and seemingly unstoppable empire was halted in my Scottish constituency after said empire had conquered Europe. Perhaps there is a lesson to be learned there about ignoring the will of the people of East Dunbartonshire, let alone the people of Scotland.

As per tradition, I pay tribute to my predecessor, Jo Swinson, both as the former MP for East Dunbartonshire and the former leader of the Liberal Democrats. In her time as the MP for East Dunbartonshire, Jo achieved a great deal in encouraging young women into politics and indeed to reach their potential in all walks of life. I think what both Jo and I can bring to the table is showing young women right across the United Kingdom that although there are still barriers in place, we can smash them. We should show people that there are no limitations to our worth.

That brings me nicely to my next point about the unique history of my constituency—one that Jo Swinson rightfully highlighted in her maiden speech in 2005. East Dunbartonshire has a history of electing strong and ambitious women in their 20s. In particular, I would like to pay homage to the late but inspirational Margaret Ewing. She won this “unwinnable” seat in 1974 at the age of 29 with a majority of just 22 votes. Ms Ewing entered the Commons under the name of Margaret Bain with a tenacious desire to get the very best for the people of Scotland and to defend the rights of those less fortunate than ourselves. It is a damning indictment of the state of this Parliament that that is exactly what I plan to do with the platform I have been given. Nevertheless, these women have paved the way for young female politicians like me, and it is my hope that I too can serve as an example to young women in East Dunbartonshire, and indeed across the country,

[Amy Callaghan]

and show them that they can make a difference, and that no door is—or should be—closed to them regardless of their circumstances.

I am delighted to be making my maiden speech on the topic of health and social care. I was not shy during my campaign in highlighting the profound impact the NHS has had on my life. I certainly would not be standing here as the newly elected MP for East Dunbartonshire, just shy of being six years cancer free, had it not been for our NHS in Scotland. To the surgeon, Mr John Scott, who saved my life not just once, but twice, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. To organisations such as the Teenage Cancer Trust, which guided me throughout my cancer journey and are an immeasurable support to young people facing a cancer diagnosis across the UK, I thank them for the unparalleled support that they gave to me and to so many other young people.

The issue that I should like to highlight most in respect of teenage and young adult cancer is its mental health impact—an area on which I have done considerable personal work. As a society, there is an ingrained assumption that once someone has the all clear from a cancer diagnosis, they should return to normal. I could not be clearer that normal does not exist after a cancer diagnosis—much less for a young person whose world has been turned upside down. They have had the harsh realisation that they are not invincible and they could also be facing fertility issues and the loss of a family that they never yet knew they wanted to have.

I considered myself unlucky for a long time for having to face this diagnosis so young, but I am now at the point in my journey where I can put this behind me and use the platform that I have to achieve great things for young cancer patients across the United Kingdom. My journey resonated with the good people of East Dunbartonshire who put their trust in me to come down to this place and best represent them. I can tell them that that is exactly what I will do. My clear message to those on the Government Benches is to keep their hands off Scotland's NHS.

I have watched many of my colleagues' maiden speeches and have noticed that they like to quote Rabbin Burns. In the same spirit, I thought it only fitting to quote a newer generation of Scots poet whose writing could not be more apt to the situation in which the people of Scotland find themselves. Gerry Cinnamon wrote:

“Are you happy that nuclear weapons are dumped on the Clyde?

Fighting wars for the wealth of the few, how many have died?

You can bury my bones but the truth of it can't be denied.

Will you stand and be counted coz I'll be there stood by your side.

Hope over fear; don't be afraid.

Tell Westminster Tories that Scotland's no longer your slave.”

That brings me to why I am here and why my colleagues were elected and re-elected as SNP MPs by voters across Scotland. After 60 years of not voting for the UK Governments that we end up with, it is hardly a surprise that support for independence is at an all-time high. It has nothing to do with the so-called wave of nationalism that those outwith my party claim is sweeping Scotland, and instead everything to do with the fact

that we offer hope. Hope in the face of adversity. Hope in the face of soaring food bank use. Hope in the face of nuclear weapons on our waters. And hope for the people of Scotland that this is not the best that is out there.

3.57 pm

**Dr James Davies** (Vale of Clwyd) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the new hon. Member for East Dunbartonshire (Amy Callaghan). Indeed, I congratulate her on her maiden speech. She spoke with striking personal elements as well as a very clear affection for her constituency. She clearly has strong views, and in that respect she evidently follows on in the long line of strong women representing her area, so I congratulate her wholeheartedly.

It is a privilege to be back here again representing my home constituency of the Vale of Clwyd following an unwelcome and enforced couple of years away. I am, of course, generously termed a retreat.

I must start by placing on record my true thanks to all my constituents who voted for me, many of whom voted for my party for the first time ever. It is my ambition to live up to their hopes and aspirations, as well as to the hopes and aspirations of everybody else who did not vote for me. As I did in 2015, I pay tribute to my predecessor, Chris Ruane, who was well respected and represented the constituency very ably for more than 20 years in total.

On the doorsteps in November and December, there was no bigger domestic issue than health. I must declare an interest, as I am an NHS doctor and I am also married to an NHS nurse. Between 2017 and 2019, I worked full-time as a GP in my constituency in Rhyl and in other parts of north-east Wales and west Cheshire. This has given me a unique insight into the state of the NHS in north Wales and further afield. Health matters were transferred to Cardiff, almost in their entirety, 20 years ago. That includes the organisation, structure and basic terms of functioning of the NHS. The reality, though, is that there is still much confusion among the electorate about where powers lie, and my inbox has been inundated with NHS issues since my re-election.

The north Wales health board—the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board—has been in special measures for more than four and a half years, which my constituents and I find totally unacceptable. As yet, there is still no evidence of a turnaround, and my constituents are being let down by a systemic failure in the north Wales NHS. I am extremely limited for time today due to the number of speakers, but in future debates I hope to expand in detail on the issues that I have come across over the last two years in particular. Let me just emphasise that comparable and meaningful data to highlight the extent of this state of affairs is often lacking—if I am honest, I think that may be deliberate—especially given that one of the benefits of devolution was meant to be that we could compare performance of different policies across different parts of the UK. I will expand on the causes behind the problems that I have come across on another occasion, but let me say now that workforce is a key issue, including poor recruitment and retention of staff.

To conclude—in the 40 seconds or so I have left—I have outlined not only interesting statistics, but sadly an indication of unnecessary loss of life and of harm to



real patients. At the very least, there is a need for UK-wide patient safety mechanisms and rigorous inspection regimes, underpinned by comparable statistical data on performance and outcomes. I urge the Secretary of State seriously to consider that when progressing the initiatives outlined in the Queen's Speech.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** It is a great pleasure to call Munira Wilson to make her maiden speech.

4.1 pm

**Munira Wilson (Twickenham) (LD):** It is a pleasure—and slightly daunting—to follow so many powerful and emotive maiden speeches. I thought that the hon. Members for Luton North (Sarah Owen), for Vauxhall (Florence Eshalomi) and for Bishop Auckland (Dehenna Davison) made particularly moving speeches. It is an honour to give my maiden speech, and I am especially proud that my five-year-old daughter is in the Gallery to witness this moment. With a record number of female and BAME MPs elected in this Parliament, I hope that I and others will be an inspiration to girls like her and other young women as we strive towards a more diverse Parliament that truly reflects British society.

As the new Member of Parliament for Twickenham, I follow in the illustrious footsteps—or should I say dancing shoes—of the right hon. Sir Vincent Cable. After all, he did get a 10 from Len on “Strictly”! Vince earned the respect of Members of all parties in this House, not just for his economic prowess, but for his dry sense of humour. Who can forget his infamous “from Stalin to Mr Bean” put-down of Prime Minister Gordon Brown?

Vince served Twickenham assiduously for 20 years. I have always been struck by how many people have told me that they or someone close to them have been helped by Vince when they have had a problem, and this is the work of which I know he is rightly most proud. Among his many local achievements, I thought it apt today—while we are debating health and social care—to highlight his work with a local vicar in establishing Homelink in Whitton, which is a day respite care centre for dementia patients. He has also been a patron and champion, since its inception, of Shooting Star Children's Hospice in Hampton and its work in palliative care. The National Physical Laboratory in Teddington employs some 1,000 scientists, engineers and skilled professionals. Vince was particularly proud of supporting the NPL to secure long-term funding and become a global leader in metrology. Both Vince and his Conservative predecessor, the late Toby Jessell, campaigned hard locally to try to protect the Royal Military School of Music. Kneller Hall, which was founded in 1857, is sadly being sold by the Ministry of Defence and is set to close later this year. It is a huge loss to the local community.

All my predecessors, including the former Conservative Member Tania Mathias, were united in opposing the expansion of Heathrow airport, and I will continue that fight. As Heathrow is the biggest single source of greenhouse gas emissions in this country, regularly breaching statutory air pollution limits, building a third runway would be an immensely regressive step in tackling the climate emergency, and would have a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of tens of thousands of local residents. I invite the Prime Minister to keep his promise to lie down in front of the bulldozers.

As well as planes, trains are a constant source of frustration for my constituents. The Hampton and Shepperton line via Strawberry Hill was built in 1864, and local residents may be forgiven for questioning whether the service has seen any improvement since then. It is the first service to be cut when there is any disruption. The South Western Railway franchise has been disastrous from the start, with constant cancellations and delays—my constituents suffered 27 days of strikes in December. With big question marks over its future viability, the Transport Secretary must urgently review the franchise.

We are extremely proud to have Teddington Memorial Hospital, which was opened in 1875, with just four beds, and which now provides important community services. The amazing League of Friends has raised tens of thousands of pounds to modernise parts of the hospital, and that jewel of a facility is rightly jealously guarded by local residents.

We have a moral obligation to ensure that every child and young person has the opportunity to flourish, but many have shared with me their frustration in accessing child and adolescent mental health services when they most need that support. Just last week, the mother of a 10-year-old with tier 3 needs in my constituency wrote to tell me how her child had been waiting four months for an appointment and would be waiting months more for treatment. My local mental health trust has seen demand explode fifty-fold in the space of four years for tier 3 treatment. Off the Record is an outstanding charity in my constituency working tirelessly with children and young people in this area. It provides a vital service under immense pressure, and I look forward to supporting its work.

My constituents are known for being an active bunch, and while Twickenham is the home of English rugby and Harlequins, it is also the home of Parkrun, founded in the stunning Bushy Park. I look forward to welcoming the officers and members of the Parkrun all-party parliamentary group to join me in Bushy Park one Saturday morning for a run.

I came into politics driven by a desire to tackle inequality, protect our environment and promote internationalist values. It is an immense privilege to have been granted the opportunity to serve both my local community and my country as a Member of Parliament, in order to champion those values. Twickenham, Teddington, Whitton, St Margarets and the Hamptons form a very special constituency, and I look forward, as Whitton's woman in Westminster, to championing their interests first and foremost in this place.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** It is a great pleasure to call Paul Bristow to make his maiden speech.

4.8 pm

**Paul Bristow (Peterborough) (Con):** Thank you for the opportunity to give my maiden speech, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is an honour to follow the hon. Member for Twickenham (Munira Wilson), who mentioned that her five-year-old daughter is in the Gallery. I would like to give a shout out to my four-week-old daughter who is also in the Gallery today—[HON. MEMBERS: “Hear, hear.”]

[Paul Bristow]

It seems right to make my maiden speech in the debate on health and social care. Those services—both our care and NHS services—have been part of my life and part of my career, and they are now part of how I intend to serve the people of Peterborough as their Member of Parliament. That is partly because Peterborough is a growing city. It is my city, and we need more resources for our local NHS. Now we finally have a majority Government, I am confident we will get them.

If someone had to pick one constituency to illustrate the political chaos before the general election, they might well choose mine. I am the fourth MP for Peterborough in less than three years. Local people were crying out for the same political stability that our country needed and, now they have elected me, I would like to modestly suggest that they can achieve this by returning the same MP for a considerable period of time—20 or 30 years perhaps.

Each of my three immediate predecessors left their mark, and each, to be fair, cared about our local NHS services. Although Fiona Onasanya will inevitably be remembered for the manner of her departure, our city should be proud that we elected our first black MP in 2017—as should she.

I stood in last year's by-election with Lisa Forbes, so we have a shared experience. Lisa was gracious in victory and gracious in defeat. She did not have much time in this House, but I respect the way she conducted herself during that campaign, and I know that her commitment to Peterborough was sincere. She should also be congratulated on her campaign on affordable school uniforms.

Finally, but not least, I would like to pay tribute to Stewart Jackson. I have known Stewart since I was a teenager; I am increasingly aware that was some time ago. As many here will know, he was a great champion for Peterborough. He has been a great friend to me, and served my constituents with distinction for 12 years. If I can begin to match his dedication, I will not have gone far wrong.

Peterborough deserves that, because it is a special city—an ancient city with a proud history. We have one of finest Norman cathedrals in Europe, where Mary, Queen of Scots lay after her death, and where Catherine of Aragon is buried. The cathedral holds the Hedda stone—just one part of our Anglo-Saxon heritage—and its wooden ceiling dates back to 1250. Yet that was a relatively late part of our past, because recent excavations at Must farm mean that Peterborough museum now hosts a stupendous display of bronze age artefacts. The area has even been dubbed Britain's answer to Pompeii. The former residents of Pompeii spent centuries huddled together in small groups, covered in ash. Having known Peterborough's nightclubs before the smoking ban, I can confirm that our nightlife felt no different.

Although Peterborough's history is special, our potential is yet more exciting. We can build on our status as a working city. We have world-class manufacturers at Perkins Engines and Peter Brotherhood. We can seize on our new trading opportunities to become a national centre of excellence in engineering and agritech. The plans for a specialist university are crucial, and I will be lobbying for the investment that this university needs.

Far too many people think negatively about my city, not helped by bogus surveys naming Peterborough as the worst place to live in the UK. Fake polling does not harm us, but a negative mindset does. I am unashamed to continually say that I am proud of Peterborough. We are a great city. We have fantastic transport links. The east coast mainline puts us just 45 minutes from London, while the A1 puts us on one of the north-south road arteries. The A47 connects us east to west, which it will do far better when the Government finally agree to dual it through my constituency. As a long-suffering York City football club fan, I can confidently claim that Peterborough has a successful football team.

We have a talented and hard-working population from across the world. Many Italians arrived after the second world war, and eastern Europeans more recently, joined in between by large parts of the Indian and Pakistani diaspora. Striving for peace and respect for the rights of my constituents' families in Kashmir is one of my priorities in this House.

The future should be ours in Peterborough; it just takes a bit of help. I will be reminding Ministers that the characteristics of northern towns and cities are shared by my constituency. Like the north and like the midlands, Peterborough expects.

On the subject of this debate, care and the NHS, we must deliver. For me, this is personal, because it was the NHS that brought me to Peterborough as a five-year-old. My parents moved to the area to work in the city's national health service. I should also declare another interest, and have literally done so in the Register of Members' Financial Interests, because until recently I owned a communications business specialising in health and social care. It is from this background that I intend to approach our NHS and social care system.

We need a service that focuses relentlessly on patient outcomes. There is an opportunity for the UK to lead the world in healthcare outcomes, healthcare research and jobs in the life sciences and health technology industry. I want to mention just three things that we should perhaps do about that: the first is to deliver on NHS capacity, the second is to maintain our ambition on life sciences research and manufacturing, and the third is to do what works—what the evidence shows makes a difference to patients. I understand that that is not always easy, and new technology is often expensive, but simple compliance with the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence guidelines on medicines and technology would make an enormous difference. With the £33 billion-a-year determination shown by this Government in the NHS long-term funding plan, I am confident for the future.

4.14 pm

**Mohammad Yasin** (Bedford) (Lab): It is an honour to follow the hon. Member for Peterborough (Paul Bristow), who made important points about the need in our health and social care system. I look forward to working together to make this Government realise how important health and social care are for the people of this country.

The NHS is in crisis. Trusts across the country are under considerable strain as they seek to absorb additional demands for care, caused largely by the cuts that this Government have made since 2010 and the more than 100,000 vacancies in the NHS workforce. In December,

we learned that A&E performance had dropped to 79.8% against the four-hour standard—the worst figures since records began. The Government’s response was not to fix the problem but to scrap the target, which could lead to a near-catastrophic impact on patient safety.

Health and social care provision have been decimated by this Government. We hear the Prime Minister and the Health Secretary crowing about making the “biggest ever cash investment” in the NHS in England. It is too little, too late—and I do not believe that it is true. The Prime Minister announced that 40 new hospitals would be built, and then we found out that there would be only six. It is nowhere near the biggest funding injection in the NHS in real terms when inflation is taken into account. The truth is that, prior to 2010, the long-term funding increases in the NHS were 4% per year. The Tories’ commitment is an increase of just 3.1%, and there have been huge cuts to social care.

We were promised a new plan for social care in December 2016, but still we have nothing. The Prime Minister previously said that he had prepared a “clear plan” to fix the social care crisis. Now we know that there is no plan, let alone a clear one. Last year, 34,860 people died while waiting for a decision on their application for social care. To think that social care could be fobbed off for up to another five years is a disaster for the 1.5 million people who cannot get the care they need today, a disaster for those in my constituency who must travel tens of miles to access in-patient mental health care, and a disaster for patients in my constituency who struggle to access GP services.

The NHS is seeing the first sustained fall in GP numbers in the UK for 50 years. Large workloads and feelings of demoralisation are behind a surge in the number of GPs wanting to quit. It is clear that the Government must be more ambitious in their GP training plans, because right now, eight out of 10 GPs feel unable to deliver safe care. Patients are waiting weeks to get an appointment and are being put at risk.

The investment promised by this Government may well keep our health service on life support, but the service needs real investment to meet the needs of the future and deliver the improvements we want to see to keep our patients safe.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** It is a great pleasure to call James Wild to make his maiden speech.

4.18 pm

**James Wild** (North West Norfolk) (Con): It is a huge privilege, as someone born and bred in Norfolk, to stand here having been elected to represent the people of North West Norfolk. I thank them for putting their trust in me, which I will do my very best to repay.

I have many auspicious predecessors, including Sir Robert Walpole, our first Prime Minister. However, I want to pay particular tribute to my immediate predecessor, Sir Henry Bellingham. Henry was a great constituency MP who represented the area for over 30 years. He is rightly recognised locally as an assiduous champion for his constituents, regardless of how they voted. Indeed,

such is his commitment that I was delighted to speak alongside him at a planning inquiry on Tuesday this week. I am sure the House will agree that, as a Member of Parliament and a Minister, he more than met the aim that he expressed in his maiden speech: to remove some of the “blemish” of a family member who assassinated a British Prime Minister. Echoing my hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Dean Russell), I know that I have big shoes to fill.

King’s Lynn is at the centre of my constituency, and its rich heritage dates from the 13th century, when it was one of the country’s main ports. Today, it continues to make a significant contribution to our local economy. This month saw the 575th anniversary of the first play performed at St George’s Guildhall, the oldest working theatre in the UK and the only one that can claim that Shakespeare performed there. The guild was founded, incidentally, by another of my predecessors, John Brandon, known as Britain’s greatest pirate. Channelling his spirit, I want to secure some of the treasure of the towns fund, the future high streets fund and the other investment coming from this Government for North West Norfolk.

Beyond King’s Lynn, my constituency is blessed with a beautiful coastline from Hunstanton to Holme and Brancaster to the Burnhams. To the west are the villages in the marshland—from Clenchwarton to Walpole St Peter. It is an area with a diverse economy, with much to offer, but it needs the infrastructure investment to help it thrive and take full advantage of the opportunities of Brexit. We also have a wealth of excellent pubs in the constituency: the Dabbling Duck in Great Massingham, the Rose & Crown in Snettisham and the Black Horse Inn in Castle Rising. As you can tell, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have been working hard to find the best, and I hope that the Budget will have good news for beer drinkers in all of them.

The Love West Norfolk campaign is doing a great job to promote all the good things about the constituency, but there are challenges—rural bus services, broadband, flood risk, educational outcomes—that I will want to help tackle in my time in this House. Healthcare is at the top of my constituents’ list of concerns, so I strongly support putting into legislation this record investment in the NHS. Similarly, our manifesto pledge to have 15 million more GP appointments has been widely welcomed, as has the excellent Pharmacy First initiative. During the election, I saw where that investment was going when I visited the site of the new surgery coming to Burnham Market, which will serve surrounding villages and also, importantly in my constituency, will have a dementia suite. Tomorrow, I will be meeting constituents who are concerned, as am I, about plans to close the GP surgery in Fairstead.

More than one constituent looking to find an NHS dentist has commented to me on the absurdity of the advice on the NHS website, recommending that they go to Skegness as the nearest practice. Flying across the Wash may be practical for the migrating pink-footed geese that are a great sight in the big skies of Norfolk, but it is not very practical advice for my constituents, so dental provision is an issue that I will be working on in this Parliament.

As well as the need to improve mental health services and social care, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital—the QEH—in King’s Lynn is extremely important to my constituents. Although it is in special measures, there is



[James Wild]

new leadership there, and on Friday I went to see for myself the improvements that are taking place, so the opportunity to speak in this debate is very timely. My visit came after an intense period in A&E, with a tenfold increase in the number of flu cases. Pam, the matron of A&E, was a great ambassador for the hospital—committed to delivering for patients and, despite all the challenges, she was still smiling. I met a dedicated maternity team, improving the service for new parents and supporting those who, sadly, suffer bereavements. I was glad to speak to the porters, cleaners, infection teams and security guards—the people who do not get the recognition they deserve, for they are the ones who can tell you what is really going on in the hospital. What came across to me was the passion of the staff: people proud of the improvements they have delivered for their patients, but who want to continue that journey and take the hospital out of special measures. As their MP, I pledge my support for them.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. However, it was built with a life expectancy of 30 years, and its age is showing. The design does not lend itself to current clinical practices, care pathways or patient flows. A&E is too cramped to meet demand, and the roof has major structural issues. So, in this decade of renewal—with the infrastructure plan and the biggest cash investment in the NHS—I spy an opportunity not just to fix the roof, but to do more. I have spoken to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State during the election campaign and since about the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. I know he will consider carefully proposals from the trust for capital investment—proposals that also harness digital technology. The QEH currently languishes near the bottom of the digital league, when it aspires to be like King's Lynn FC, which is riding high at the top of the Vanarama National League North. The QEH is up for change, and it is up for innovation. My right hon. Friend has previously accepted an invitation to come to the hospital, and I would be delighted if he will join me in the near future to come and see how we can make the real improvements that the people of North West Norfolk deserve.

4.24 pm

**Preet Kaur Gill** (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab/Co-op): It is an honour to follow the hon. Member for North West Norfolk (James Wild) who, along with many hon. Members this afternoon, made an excellent maiden speech. I wish him well and look forward to working with him and all new Members.

Two months ago, I stood in this Chamber and spoke of my disappointment that the Queen's Speech included only one reference to mental health, and even that was a reference to the Mental Health Act 1983, rather than a systematic programme to tackle mental health across all demographics. According to research by the Children's Society, of the 22,365 children in Birmingham, Edgbaston, an estimated 2,733 five to 19-year-olds are struggling with mental ill-health. That is more than 10%. At the same time, the money available for local services for children and young people has fallen by 38%. Is it any wonder that just last week, research by the Education Policy Institute revealed that more than a quarter of child referrals for children and young people's mental

health services in England last year were rejected? Even when a referral was accepted, many children had to wait for an average of two months to begin treatment in 2019—double the Government's four-week target. Birmingham Women's and Children's Hospital has a median wait time of 112 days. That is almost four months.

A decade of neglect in early intervention care, and an under-resourced mental health services sector, has meant that many more young people are turning up to A&E. I had hoped that the Government would have listened when I raised the issue in the debate on the previous Queen's Speech, but given a second chance, the Prime Minister has failed once again to show that he is serious about tackling mental ill health. Yes, reform of the Mental Health Act 1983 is important and desperately needed, but the Government also need properly to fund vital preventive services.

For the many new Members of Parliament, I will repeat the shocking statistic that failed to elicit any action last time: for the whole of Birmingham there is only one early intervention counselling service for young people. The most recent waiting list has 400 young people and their families who are waiting desperately for treatment and support. The only conclusion I can draw is that the Conservative Government are knowingly and willingly failing our children and young people.

We know what we need. We need genuine parity of esteem. We must use the standards that we expect for physical health treatment as a template, and apply them to mental health patients. We need mental health services that are truly responsive to the complex conditions with which our young people frequently present. We must listen to young people when making decisions about the mental health services they use. I will ask the Minister once again: will he listen to those of us who are calling for the Government to do more for young people with mental ill-health, and deliver on the promises that his party has been making—promises that it has so far been breaking?

As a former social worker, I was surprised that the Queen's Speech failed to commit to a review of children's social care—the vital system that is designed to protect some of the most vulnerable in our society. That total and utter dereliction of duty follows cuts of almost a third in services for children and young people since the Conservatives came to power. Children's social care is coming apart, despite the best efforts of hardworking councils around the country.

It should not be just about this; it should not just be firefighting. Social care should be about providing a system to support every child. We must give children the opportunity for the best start in life, whether that is in the form of late intervention such as safeguarding teams that step in in instances of abuse or neglect, or whether it is early intervention such as children's centres and programmes that support parents and youth services. Children's services are not only about looking after children in care; they provide effective family support services that help more children to stay in their homes if it is safe to do so. The Conservative party manifesto recognises the underfunding of children's social care. Does the Minister agree that local authorities still do not have sufficient resources to address rising demand, even if his Government deliver on their manifesto commitment?

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** It is a pleasure to call Elliot Colburn to make his maiden speech.

4.28 pm

**Elliot Colburn** (Carshalton and Wallington) (Con): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is a pleasure to make my maiden speech as the new Member of Parliament for Carshalton and Wallington. First, I wish to thank the people in my constituency who sent me to this, the mother of all Parliaments. I also thank all hon. Members who have made their maiden speeches today and throughout the week. They have set the bar incredibly high, but I will do my best.

Before I go on, I must pay tribute to the man who came before me and who represented Carshalton and Wallington for 22 years: Tom Brake. He had served in the House since 1997, holding many positions in his party and the coalition Government. Although we did not agree on everything, as an LGBT+ person I will always be grateful to him for voting in favour of same-sex marriage in 2012.

To many people, Carshalton and Wallington seems nothing more than a suburban commuter town with not much history. However, hon. Members who like their history will be delighted to know that there is a tale to tell, and like all good TV dramas it involves power, intrigue, and even a royal fall-out. Carshalton itself was rumoured to have been called Ceashorton, or Caesar's Town, in ancient times, because of the belief that the Roman Emperor once pitched up camp there. However, during an excavation of what is now the Beddington sewerage farm, it was discovered that instead of a hoard from Roman legions it was, rather, a Roman bath house that occupied the site.

If we fast-forward to the Tudor period—I know my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will be very excited to hear this section—we find that Carshalton and Wallington was home to the Carew family. Carew Manor, the only grade 1 listed building in my constituency, remains on the site today. It was home to Sir Nicholas Carew, who was a favourite of Henry VIII until he was executed for treason in 1539. It was here that the then king spent time with Ann Boleyn while awaiting his first divorce. Their daughter walked the same trail—Sir Walter Raleigh is rumoured to have walked there with Queen Elizabeth. Unfortunately, he was beheaded by James I in 1618. It is rumoured that his severed head was kept by his wife and, to this day, is buried somewhere under Beddington Park. However, hon. Members will be pleased to know that my favourite memory of our fabulously beautiful local park is when my other half, Jed, who is in the Public Gallery, asked me to marry him. I was reliably informed that I may have met the same fate as Sir Walter had I said anything but yes.

Turning back to the subject of today's debate, I am delighted, as a former NHS worker, to be talking about health and social care. It is incredibly important to me and my constituents. Hon. Members were lucky to hear about our local hospital, St Helier, from a very early contribution in this debate, so they should know all about it. After decades of warnings about potential downgrading and even the threat of total closure, now, thanks to the Conservatives in government, we have the go-ahead for over £500 million of investment in St Helier and Epsom hospitals. That is half a billion pounds to

shore up both hospitals, bring all usable parts back into use, and, most excitingly, build a third brand-new hospital in our area to provide acute services. That is incredible news for local patients and something for which my hon. Friends the Members for Sutton and Cheam (Paul Scully), for Reigate (Crispin Blunt) and for Wimbledon (Stephen Hammond), and my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Chris Grayling), have been campaigning for a very long time.

However, the funding is not certain. The consultation on the site of the new hospital has just been launched, but unfortunately there is still a group locally who seem to think that the hospitals do not need any funding; that for some reason £500 million means the hospital will be closed and that actually all those services are going to go in the next couple of months. Madam Deputy Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth, and nothing puts our hospitals more at risk than irresponsible scaremongering about our health service. I make the pledge to my constituents, and every constituency covered by our local NHS trust, that I will work with constituency neighbours, when they are willing, to ensure that the investment gets delivered and that we fight off the scaremongers to finally put to bed a political football that has been raging for over 50 years.

Health is about much more than just hospital buildings. As a former NHS worker, I know, and those of us in this Chamber who have backgrounds in the health service will know, that a person's overall health and wellbeing is down to so much more than the quality of, and access to, an A&E hospital. It also depends on your housing, where you went to school, the work you have and the local environment. I am glad to see that, in the Queen's Speech, the Government have recognised those factors. In other words, every single part of our lives affects our overall health and wellbeing in some way. Every single Government Department, I hope, will bear that in mind when they make decisions. Investing in the NHS is not just the right thing to do; it underpins the very ability of our country to reach its full potential. By looking after the health of our people, we are looking after the health of our nation and giving all of us the chance to prosper in the modern world.

St Helier is just one of many campaign issues on which I was elected to serve as the Member of Parliament for Carshalton and Wallington a few short weeks ago. Other issues include local train services, opposition to the council's poor decision on parking, providing first-rate education and protecting air quality. I will get to work immediately to deliver on those promises to move our country forward. Madam Deputy Speaker, it is time to get to work.

4.34 pm

**Yasmin Qureshi** (Bolton South East) (Lab): When Labour came to power in 1997, there were 1.3 million people on a waiting list—the highest number since the NHS was created in 1948. The Labour Government used targeted and sufficient funding to bring all those figures down, to the point where A&E waiting times were down to four hours and waiting lists were down to 18 weeks. It is regrettable that the Government now want to abolish the A&E waiting time target. Is that simply to spare Ministers' blushes? Since last October, 320,034 people waited more than four hours at A&E, whereas in 2010 the figure was just 41,231.

[Yasmin Qureshi]

My constituents have to wait three weeks to see a GP, and many cannot find an NHS dentist at all. In relation to targets, one of the things that helped, of course, was treating cancer patients. In my constituency, 60% of patients received treatment within 62 days of their GP referral, but 40% did not get the treatment they wanted in time.

One of the main problems is the abolition of nursing bursaries, which has led to difficulties recruiting and training nurses. As we have heard, there are 100,000-odd nursing vacancies still to be filled. In relation to the doctors contract, the abolition of the golden pension meant that many doctors took retirement at age 60, which led to an acute shortage. I therefore ask the Government please to return the 6,000 GP contracts that they abolished, so that my constituents can see a GP when they need to, rather than having to wait three weeks.

Many hon. Members have spoken today about social care provision, but there is one further aspect that I would like Ministers to consider. Many care workers provide home visits of 30 or 45 minutes throughout the day. Their paid work might be for only four hours in total, but often they spend six or seven hours travelling between visits. They have to pay for their transport and are on low incomes, so often they travel by public transport. They might do only four hours of paid work each day, but they will have spent six hours travelling. I know that Ministers are looking into the whole issue of financing care for elderly and vulnerable people, but this is an immediate problem that needs to be resolved. I hope that the Minister, when he responds, will set out what he plans to do about that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Preet Kaur Gill) referred to the provision of mental health facilities for young people. Young people in my constituency are having to wait around 10 weeks to be seen by child and adolescent mental health services, which help young people in schools who have mental health and psychological issues. The services are much needed but very underfunded. This is important, because at the moment we are hearing not just about loneliness, but about serious issues such as bullying, and the fact that many young people are very distressed, and some are taking their own lives. Proper funding for the provision of mental health services for young people is really important.

Finally, may we please have more provision within the funding for dentists? It really is appalling that across the country, but especially in the north, it takes people months to find an NHS dentist.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** Order. The final two speakers have three minutes each.

4.38 pm

**Dr Caroline Johnson** (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): It is an honour to speak on a Queen's Speech that has set out such a fantastic programme for government, and from a Conservative majority Government. As a consultant paediatrician, it is particularly special for me to be able to speak in a debate on health.

I want to talk about the importance of engineers. My daddy is very fond of telling me that engineers have saved more people's lives than doctors have; it will perhaps not surprise Members to know that daddy is an engineer. To some extent he is right, because improvements in water, sanitation, investigatory tools such as CT and MRI, and ventilating machines have saved many lives. That is why I am really pleased that the Government are bringing forward the medicines and medical devices Bill: it is by investing in research and increasing the number of people in clinical trials, and investing in research and development generally—the Government are committed to increasing investment in R and D to 2.4% of GDP—that we will be able to improve people's lives. This is not all about increasing the NHS budget, although I am also pleased to see that we are giving the NHS its biggest ever cash injection, at £33 billion by 2023.

In my last minute, I want to talk about diagnostic centres. Grantham Hospital is very important to me and to my constituents, and to the constituents of my new neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham and Stamford (Gareth Davies). I was pleased that earlier this week we were able to meet the Health Secretary to talk about the hospital's future—a positive and excellent future, in a growing town.

As a doctor, I have seen a progressive move towards greater centralisation, with services becoming increasingly remote from the people whom they serve. That makes sense for low-volume, high-complexity work, because it improves outcomes for the patients who need such treatment, but it does not make sense for high-volume, low-complexity work, which should be delivered closer to home. I was pleased to hear the Health Secretary say essentially just that in his speech earlier today, when he suggested that diagnostics and investigations would move closer to home, which would mean a positive future for Grantham Hospital and the people there.

However, my first priority—and, no doubt, that of my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham and Stamford—is to ensure that the hospital's A&E department reopens as a 24-hour, round-the-clock service. That is no more than my constituents deserve.

4.41 pm

**Richard Graham** (Gloucester) (Con): It is a huge pleasure to be the tail-end Charlie of this massive debate on the Queen's Speech. Every single Member who made a maiden speech today—and they were all outstanding—referred to health in considerable detail, which only goes to show that the Health Secretary already knows that we are all probably more concerned about our hospitals, nurses and GPs than about anything else. In these last few minutes, I want to focus on two issues. I will speak first about the workforce and people, because ultimately our great health service depends on people. Secondly, if I have the time, I will speak very briefly about national insurance.

As the Prime Minister has announced, we will have to recruit a great many more nurses from abroad, but there are issues there. First, the NHS visa is very welcome, but the mooted earnings threshold of £30,000 needs considerable thought, as does the application of the immigration health surcharge to those who are being



recruited to work specifically for the NHS. There are also anecdotal issues about family visas. My own suggestion to the Health Secretary is that we could look at whether long-term partnerships between British universities and universities abroad in countries such as the Philippines might generate highly qualified nurses with British nursing qualifications and a good standard of English, ready to be recruited by the NHS and to come and work here. That would help to resolve some of our problems.

Even more important than our foreign nurses, however, is the regrowth of our home-grown nurses. That has been helped by this Government's creation of nursing associates through a higher apprenticeship scheme. The "but" is that although work in, for example, Gloucestershire Royal Hospital is valid for the purposes of the higher apprenticeship scheme, the Nursing and Midwifery Council does not consider those employees to be eligible for the BSc course. I urge Ministers to think about how the apprenticeship levy could be used creatively to resolve the issue between NHS employers and the NMC. That would provide a clear pathway for healthcare assistants to go all the way to the status of a full nurse, which would help us to realise the goal of 50,000 more nurses.

As for national insurance—which does not insure anyone, let alone the nation—may I encourage the Health Secretary to look again at how we might use it as a ring-fenced source of funds for both health and social care, thus turning it into national health insurance, as a King's Fund study recommended so strongly earlier this year? I believe that, sooner or later, that could be used for an even more precious cause: helping to fund our future health and social care needs.

4.44 pm

**Barbara Keeley** (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab): Today's debate has shown how important the NHS and social care are to Members on both sides of the House, and has been wide-ranging. It has been great to listen to contributions from, I think, 32 Back Benchers, but, because we are short of time, I will focus on paying a special tribute to the 12 who spoke for the first time.

I congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Luton North (Sarah Owen), for Ealing North (James Murray), for Enfield North (Feryal Clark) and for Vauxhall (Florence Eshalomi), as well as the hon. Members for Sevenoaks (Laura Trott), for Bishop Auckland (Dehenna Davison), for Watford (Dean Russell), for East Dunbartonshire (Amy Callaghan), for Peterborough (Paul Bristow), for Twickenham (Munira Wilson), for North West Norfolk (James Wild) and for Carshalton and Wallington (Elliot Colburn). As the right hon. Member for Ashford (Damian Green) said earlier, the standard of maiden speeches we have been hearing is breathtakingly high. Those new Member all made excellent speeches, and reminded us of the qualities and commitment to public service of their predecessors. They also highlighted their own commitment to health and social care, and we heard of much personal experience of the wonderful job being done by our staff in the NHS and social care. Earlier, my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester South (Jonathan Ashworth), the shadow Health and Social Care Secretary, mentioned the loss of our colleagues Paula Sherriff and Julie Cooper, whom we miss. It was

also good to hear kind words about our former Labour colleagues Helen Goodman, Lisa Forbes and Stephen Pound, whom we also miss.

Last month's performance figures show the NHS struggling to cope with demand, unable to provide beds for patients and leaving them languishing on trolleys in A&E departments. More than 1,400 patients were left stranded in hospital each day last November. They were patients who were well enough to leave but unable to do so because of a lack of social care. The Government's failure to address the crisis in social care is having a profound impact on the lives of people who need care, and on our struggling NHS. The Health Foundation said last week:

"No plan for the NHS will work while social care remains the Cinderella service. Long overdue action on social care is needed to...reduce the pressures on the NHS."

Proposing a solution to the crisis in care should be the Government's top priority, as we have heard in many of the speeches this afternoon. However, despite the Prime Minister's earlier pledge to

"fix the crisis in social care once and for all, and with a clear plan we have prepared",

he now says only that he will do something "in this Parliament". After 10 years of inaction, is that the best the Prime Minister can say, alongside a vague offer of cross-party talks?

There are four key areas where action is needed to ensure that people have access to a functioning social care service that meets their needs. Labour has plans for a national care service, and we have made it clear how we would have addressed these four key areas. The first is funding. The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services tells us that, since 2010, £7.7 billion has been cut from budgets for adult social care. Councils just do not have the funding required to deliver the care that people need. The second area is access to publicly funded care. Age UK estimates that 1.5 million older people are going without the social care and support they need every day, and that number is increasing year after year while the Government fail to act.

The third area is capping care costs. Too many people are faced with catastrophic costs for their care. In 2014, the Government proposed to introduce a cap to limit the amount people must pay for their care, but they dropped that in 2017. In the past three years, 9,000 people who have been paying for their own care have completely depleted their savings or assets and approached their local authority for help with their care. The people who face the highest costs are those with dementia. So just how will the Government deliver on their promise that no one will be forced to sell their home to pay for care? Will they introduce a cap on care costs, as Labour would do?

The final area is the care workforce. Skills for Care tells us that there are 122,000 vacant care jobs. Care staff do not get the pay, working conditions or access to training that they deserve, meaning that many of them leave working in care for better-paying jobs in retail or hospitality. We need to pay care staff the real living wage, provide them with training to develop their careers and end the use of zero-hours contracts.

But it is not just in social care that there is a workforce crisis, as we have just heard from the hon. Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham). More than half of mental

[Barbara Keeley]

health professionals have said that they are too busy to provide the level of care they would like to give to their patients. We need more mental health nurses and more psychiatrists to meet demand. Three out of four children with a mental health condition do not get the support they need, and others wait months to be seen. Mental health patients continue to be sent hundreds of miles from home because their local NHS does not have the beds or the staff to provide the care they need. Placements are sometimes in private hospitals that provide inadequate care, and that includes the 2,200 autistic people and people with learning disabilities trapped in inappropriate institutions. Last week, the Prime Minister stated that that number was falling rapidly, but the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, who is now sitting here with us, knows that that is not the case.

Eight years after a Conservative Prime Minister promised to end the use of such institutions, the speed of change has been glacial. It took the Health and Social Care Secretary 14 months to resolve the case of Bethany, a young woman with autism held in a series of inappropriate placements, and I remind him—I notice that he is not listening—that there are 2,200 more Bethanys who are too often subject to inappropriate seclusion and restraint, as she was. I was glad to hear the hon. Member for Thurrock (Jackie Doyle-Price) raise the matter of early deaths at in-patient units and to hear from my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich and West Norwood (Helen Hayes) on the need for homes, not hospitals.

From older people left without the care they need to children waiting months to see a mental health professional, we have seen people across the NHS and social care let down by this Government. Disappointingly, the Queen's Speech did not set out measures to fund the NHS and social care properly. The Government must provide the necessary funding for both services and, importantly, must now put forward plans to fix the crisis in social care once and for all, as has been promised. I urge right hon. and hon. Members to support our amendment to guarantee that both the NHS and social care get the resources they need.

4.51 pm

**The Minister for Health (Edward Argar):** It is a pleasure to wind up a debate on such an important issue as our NHS and social care, and it was marked by the many well-informed contributions from hon. Members on both sides of the House. Those contributions reflect the pride we all feel in our NHS and how important it is to our constituents.

Before moving on to the maiden speeches, I want to highlight the powerful contributions from my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (James Brokenshire) the former Secretary of the State, my right hon. Friend and for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt), and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle (Emma Hardy). I can tell the hon. Lady that I believe we already have a date in the diary for February, so I look forward to meeting her and discussing the issues she raised.

Given the short time remaining, I intend to focus on today's maiden speeches, so I hope the House will forgive me if I do not take interventions on this one occasion. All the maiden speeches we heard today were

of an incredibly high quality, and all those who have spoken will play a full role in keeping both Front-Bench teams on their mettle in the months and years ahead.

I will start with my hon. Friend the Member for Bishop Auckland (Dehenna Davison). She spoke deeply movingly about her father and what drives her politics. I congratulate her on already bringing the same passion and determination to ensure that her constituents' views are heard that she demonstrated in her fantastically successful election campaign. I suspect that we shall all hear a lot more from her in the months ahead.

My hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Dean Russell) mentioned that he had never really thought he would be here, but having heard him I can see exactly why he is here and why the people of Watford put their trust in him. In response to one of his comments, I say that one's height—I look at you Madam Deputy Speaker, and I think of the Lord Chancellor and my old friend the former Member for Rutland and Melton—does not directly correlate to the influence that one can have in this place.

The hon. Member for East Dunbartonshire (Amy Callaghan) made an eloquent speech setting out passionately the principles that govern her politics and that she brings to representing her constituents. Her dedication to her constituency and to Scotland was clear in her remarks.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Florence Eshalomi) showed that she will be as strong a voice for her constituents as her predecessor. She spoke very movingly about her mother, and I hope she will let me say that I suspect her mother would have been deeply and rightly proud if she could have seen and heard her speech in the House today.

My hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Elliot Colburn) spoke powerfully on behalf of his constituents. He fought an excellent campaign, and he spoke charmingly and well about his predecessor. He spoke up for his hospital, and I know he will continue to do so, but he was also clear in informing his constituents of why they should ignore the scaremongering they may have heard over many years. In him, they have a strong local champion.

The hon. Member for Twickenham (Munira Wilson) steps into big shoes—indeed, big dancing shoes—and, judging by her speech today, I think she will have no trouble filling them. I hope her contribution today will be the first of many from her on health-related matters.

There may be something about Members for Ealing North, but the hon. Member for Ealing North (James Murray) demonstrated that they all display a good sense of humour in this place, and he is continuing that tradition. He was active as a deputy Mayor of London, and I am sure he will bring that experience, expertise and commitment to his new role. I welcome him to the House.

The hon. Member for Enfield North (Feryal Clark) spoke movingly and powerfully about the diversity of her seat. She spoke about the importance of that diversity, and of how we should all protect, encourage and champion such diversity. I am sure she will be a diligent and determined champion not only for that but for all her constituents.

The hon. Member for Luton North (Sarah Owen) spoke powerfully of the importance of social care and getting it right. Again, she demonstrated a sense of

humour in her remarks, which I am sure will mark her future contributions. We look forward to hearing more from her.

Finally, I have known my hon. Friends the Members for Sevenoaks (Laura Trott), for North West Norfolk (James Wild) and for Peterborough (Paul Bristow) as friends over many years, and they have served at the heart of Government and in this place in previous roles. They bring that same dedication and talent to serving their constituents. They spoke incredibly well, demonstrating their experience and passion, and I suspect we will be hearing a lot more from all three of them in this House and in national politics.

The election has broken the deadlock in this House, giving our country a majority Government who are not just getting Brexit done but repaying the trust placed in us by the public to deliver the people's priorities. The Opposition Front Bench may speak about their commitment to the NHS, but this Government and this Secretary of State for Health and Social Care are actually delivering on our commitments. They are ambitious commitments, but they are the right commitments.

We are delivering the longest and largest cash settlement in the history of the NHS, and we are providing the investment that the NHS itself said it needed. We are delivering the biggest and boldest hospital building programme in a generation. We are delivering new treatments and new technologies to deliver world-class, world-leading and safer care. We are working to find consensus to address the injustices in social care and the inequalities in mental health. For too long, Governments of all shades have not given those issues the priority that this Government will now give them.

It is clear that the Conservative party is the party of the NHS. We have protected and prioritised the NHS for 44 years of its 71-year history when we have been in government. Under this Conservative one nation Government, under this Conservative one nation Prime Minister and with this Queen's Speech, we will continue to do so. These legislative reforms will strengthen our NHS and put it on a secure and stable footing for the future.

We will ensure a publicly funded NHS, free at the point of use and accessible according to need not ability to pay, and an NHS that is not for sale and never will be; an NHS true to its founding principles but, crucially, an NHS that is ready for the challenges of the future. It is there not only for our generation but for future generations. The NHS belongs to all of us; it is the people's NHS and this Government are there for it. I commend this Queen's Speech to the House.

*Question put, That the amendment be made.*

*The House divided: Ayes 222, Noes 313.*

**Division No. 15]**

**[4.59 pm**

**AYES**

Abbott, rh Ms Diane	Benn, rh Hilary
Abrahams, Debbie	Betts, Mr Clive
Ali, Rushanara	Black, Mhairi
Ali, Tahir	Blackman, Kirsty
Amesbury, Mike	Blake, Olivia
Ashworth, Jonathan	Blomfield, Paul
Bardell, Hannah	Bonnar, Steven
Barker, Paula	Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Begum, Apsana	Brennan, Kevin

Brock, Deidre	Haigh, Louise
Brown, Alan	Hamilton, Fabian
Brown, Ms Lyn	Harvey, Neale
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Hardy, Emma
Buck, Ms Karen	Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Burgon, Richard	Harris, Carolyn
Byrne, Ian	Hayes, Helen
Byrne, rh Liam	Hendrick, Sir Mark
Callaghan, Amy	Hendry, Drew
Cameron, Dr Lisa	Hill, Mike
Campbell, rh Sir Alan	Hillier, Meg
Carden, Dan	Hobhouse, Wera
Champion, Sarah	Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Chapman, Douglas	Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Charalambous, Bambos	Hollern, Kate
Cherry, Joanna	Hopkins, Rachel
Clark, Feryal	Hosie, Stewart
Cooper, Daisy	Huq, Dr Rupa
Cooper, rh Yvette	Hussain, Imran
Corbyn, rh Jeremy	Jarvis, Dan
Cowan, Ronnie	Johnson, Dame Diana
Coyle, Neil	Johnson, Kim
Crawley, Angela	Jones, Darren
Creasy, Stella ( <i>Proxy vote cast by Pat McFadden</i> )	Jones, Gerald
Cruddas, Jon	Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Cryer, John ( <i>Proxy vote cast by Mark Tami</i> )	Jones, Ruth
Cummins, Judith	Jones, Sarah
Cunningham, Alex	Kane, Mike
Daby, Janet	Keeley, Barbara
Davey, rh Sir Edward	Khan, Afzal
David, Wayne	Kinnock, Stephen
Davies, Geraint	Lake, Ben
Davies-Jones, Alex	Lammy, rh Mr David
Day, Martyn	Lavery, Ian
De Cordova, Marsha	Law, Chris
Docherty-Hughes, Martin	Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Dodds, Anneliese	Lewis, Clive
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.	Linden, David
Doogan, Dave	Lloyd, Tony
Doughty, Stephen	Lynch, Holly
Dowd, Peter	MacAskill, Kenny
Duffield, Rosie	MacNeil, Angus Brendan
Eagle, Ms Angela	Madders, Justin
Eagle, Maria	Mahmood, Shabana
Edwards, Jonathan	Malhotra, Seema
Efford, Clive	Maskell, Rachael
Elliott, Julie	Matheson, Christian
Elmore, Chris	McCabe, Steve
Eshalomi, Florence	McDonagh, Siobhain
Fellows, Marion	McDonald, Stuart C.
Ferrier, Margaret	McDonnell, rh John
Fletcher, Colleen	McFadden, rh Mr Pat
Flynn, Stephen ( <i>Proxy vote cast by Patrick Grady</i> )	McGinn, Conor
Foxcroft, Vicky	McKinnell, Catherine
Foy, Mary Kelly	McLaughlin, Anne
Furniss, Gill	McMahon, Jim
Gardiner, Barry	McMorris, Anna
Gibson, Patricia	Mearns, Ian
Gill, Preet Kaur	Miliband, rh Edward
Girvan, Paul	Mishra, Navendu
Glindon, Mary	Monaghan, Carol
Grady, Patrick	Moran, Layla
Grant, Peter	Morgan, Mr Stephen
Gray, Neil	Morris, Grahame
Green, Kate	Murray, James
Greenwood, Lilian	Nandy, Lisa
Greenwood, Margaret	Newlands, Gavin
Griffith, Nia	Nichols, Charlotte
Gwynne, Andrew	Nicolson, John
	Norris, Alex
	O'Hara, Brendan
	Olney, Sarah



Onwurah, Chi  
 Oppong-Asare, Abena  
 Osamor, Kate  
 Osborne, Kate  
 Oswald, Kirsten  
 Owatemi, Taiwo  
 Owen, Sarah  
 Paisley, Ian  
 Peacock, Stephanie  
 Pennycook, Matthew  
 Perkins, Mr Toby  
 Phillipson, Bridget  
 Pollard, Luke  
 Qureshi, Yasmin  
 Rayner, Angela  
 Reed, Steve  
 Rees, Christina  
 Reeves, Ellie (*Proxy vote cast by Bambos Charalambous*)  
 Reynolds, Jonathan  
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell  
 Rimmer, Ms Marie  
 Rodda, Matt  
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd  
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz  
 Shannon, Jim  
 Sharma, Mr Virendra  
 Sheerman, Mr Barry  
 Sheppard, Tommy  
 Siddiq, Tulip  
 Slaughter, Andy  
 Smith, Cat  
 Smith, Nick  
 Smyth, Karin

Sobel, Alex  
 Spellar, rh John  
 Starmer, rh Keir  
 Stephens, Chris  
 Streeting, Wes  
 Sultana, Zarah  
 Tami, rh Mark  
 Tarry, Sam  
 Thomas, Gareth  
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick  
 Thompson, Owen  
 Thomson, Richard  
 Thornberry, rh Emily  
 Timms, rh Stephen  
 Twigg, Derek  
 Twist, Liz  
 Vaz, rh Valerie  
 Webbe, Claudia  
 West, Catherine  
 Western, Matt  
 Whitehead, Dr Alan  
 Whitford, Dr Philippa  
 Whitley, Mick  
 Williams, Hywel  
 Wilson, Munira  
 Wilson, rh Sammy  
 Winter, Beth  
 Wishart, Pete  
 Yasin, Mohammad  
 Zeichner, Daniel

#### Tellers for the Ayes:

**Jeff Smith and  
 Jessica Morden**

#### NOES

Adams, Nigel  
 Afolami, Bim  
 Afriyie, Adam  
 Aiken, Nickie  
 Aldous, Peter  
 Allan, Lucy  
 Amess, Sir David  
 Anderson, Lee  
 Anderson, Stuart  
 Andrew, Stuart  
 Ansell, Caroline  
 Argar, Edward  
 Atherton, Sarah  
 Atkins, Victoria  
 Bacon, Mr Gareth  
 Badenoch, Kemi (*Proxy vote cast by Leo Docherty*)  
 Bailey, Shaun  
 Baillie, Siobhan  
 Baker, Duncan  
 Baker, Mr Steve  
 Baldwin, Harriett  
 Baron, Mr John  
 Baynes, Simon  
 Bell, Aaron  
 Benton, Scott  
 Beresford, Sir Paul  
 Berry, rh Jake  
 Bhatti, Saqib  
 Blackman, Bob  
 Blunt, Crispin  
 Bone, Mr Peter  
 Bottomley, Sir Peter  
 Bowie, Andrew  
 Bradley, Ben

Bradley, rh Karen  
 Brady, Sir Graham  
 Brereton, Jack  
 Bridgen, Andrew  
 Bristow, Paul  
 Brokenshire, rh James  
 Browne, Anthony  
 Bruce, Fiona  
 Buchan, Felicity  
 Burghart, Alex  
 Burns, rh Conor  
 Butler, Rob  
 Cairns, rh Alun  
 Carter, Andy  
 Cartledge, James  
 Cash, Sir William  
 Caulfield, Maria  
 Chalk, Alex  
 Chishti, Rehman  
 Chope, Sir Christopher  
 Churchill, Jo  
 Clark, rh Greg  
 Clarke, Mr Simon  
 Clarke, Theo  
 Clarke-Smith, Brendan  
 Clarkson, Chris  
 Cleverly, rh James  
 Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse  
 Colburn, Elliot  
 Collins, Damian  
 Costa, Alberto  
 Courts, Robert  
 Coutinho, Claire  
 Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey  
 Crabb, rh Stephen

Crosbie, Virginia  
 Crouch, Tracey  
 Daly, James  
 Davies, David T. C.  
 Davies, Gareth  
 Davies, Dr James  
 Davies, Mims  
 Davies, Philip  
 Davis, rh Mr David  
 Davison, Dehenna  
 Dinenage, Caroline  
 Dines, Miss Sarah  
 Docherty, Leo  
 Donelan, Michelle  
 Dorries, Ms Nadine  
 Double, Steve  
 Dowden, rh Oliver  
 Doyle-Price, Jackie  
 Drax, Richard  
 Drummond, Mrs Flick  
 Duddridge, James  
 Duguid, David  
 Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain  
 Dunne, rh Philip  
 Eastwood, Mark  
 Edwards, Ruth  
 Ellis, rh Michael  
 Elphicke, Mrs Natalie  
 Eustice, George  
 Evans, Dr Luke  
 Evennett, rh Sir David  
 Everitt, Ben  
 Fabricant, Michael  
 Farris, Laura  
 Fell, Simon  
 Fletcher, Katherine  
 Fletcher, Mark  
 Fletcher, Nick  
 Ford, Vicky  
 Fox, rh Dr Liam  
 Francois, rh Mr Mark  
 Freeman, George  
 Freer, Mike  
 Fuller, Richard  
 Fysh, Mr Marcus  
 Garnier, Mark  
 Gibson, Peter  
 Gideon, Jo  
 Glen, John  
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert  
 Gove, rh Michael  
 Graham, Richard  
 Gray, James  
 Grayling, rh Chris  
 Green, Chris  
 Green, rh Damian  
 Griffith, Andrew  
 Griffiths, Kate  
 Grundy, James  
 Gullis, Jonathan  
 Halfon, rh Robert  
 Hall, Luke  
 Hammond, Stephen  
 Hancock, rh Matt  
 Harper, rh Mr Mark  
 Hart, Sally-Ann  
 Hart, rh Simon  
 Hayes, rh Sir John  
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver  
 Heappey, James  
 Heaton-Harris, Chris  
 Henderson, Gordon

Henry, Darren  
 Higginbotham, Antony  
 Hinds, rh Damian  
 Hoare, Simon  
 Hollinrake, Kevin  
 Hollobone, Mr Philip  
 Holloway, Adam  
 Holmes, Paul  
 Howell, Paul  
 Hudson, Dr Neil  
 Hughes, Eddie  
 Hunt, Jane  
 Hunt, rh Jeremy  
 Hunt, Tom  
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil  
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard  
 Jenkinson, Mark  
 Jenkyns, Mrs Andrea  
 Johnson, rh Boris  
 Johnson, Dr Caroline  
 Johnson, Gareth  
 Johnston, David  
 Jones, Andrew  
 Jones, rh Mr David  
 Jones, Fay  
 Jones, Mr Marcus  
 Jupp, Simon  
 Kawczynski, Daniel  
 Kearns, Alicia  
 Keegan, Gillian  
 Knight, rh Sir Greg  
 Knight, Julian  
 Kruger, Danny  
 Lamont, John  
 Langan, Robert  
 Leadsom, rh Andrea  
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward  
 Lewer, Andrew  
 Lewis, rh Brandon  
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian  
 Loder, Chris  
 Logan, Mark  
 Longhi, Marco  
 Lopez, Julia (*Proxy vote cast by Lee Rowley*)  
 Lopresti, Jack  
 Lord, Mr Jonathan  
 Loughton, Tim  
 Mackinlay, Craig  
 Mackrory, Cherilyn  
 Maclean, Rachel  
 Mak, Alan  
 Malthouse, Kit  
 Mann, Scott  
 Marson, Julie  
 May, rh Mrs Theresa  
 Mayhew, Jerome  
 Maynard, Paul  
 McCartney, Jason  
 McCartney, Karl  
 McPartland, Stephen  
 Menzies, Mark  
 Merriman, Huw  
 Metcalfe, Stephen  
 Millar, Robin  
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria  
 Milling, Amanda  
 Mills, Nigel  
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew  
 Mohindra, Gagan  
 Moore, Damien  
 Moore, Robbie

Mordaunt, rh Penny  
 Morris, Anne Marie  
 Morris, James  
 Morrissey, Joy  
 Morton, Wendy  
 Mullan, Dr Kieran  
 Mumby-Croft, Holly  
 Mundell, rh David  
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll  
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew  
 Neill, Sir Robert  
 Nici, Lia  
 Nokes, rh Caroline  
 Norman, rh Jesse  
 O'Brien, Neil  
 Offord, Dr Matthew  
 Opperman, Guy  
 Parish, Neil  
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen  
 Pawsey, Mark  
 Penning, rh Sir Mike  
 Penrose, John  
 Philp, Chris  
 Pincher, rh Christopher  
 Poulter, Dr Dan  
 Pow, Rebecca  
 Prentis, Victoria  
 Pursglove, Tom  
 Quin, Jeremy  
 Randall, Tom  
 Redwood, rh John  
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob  
 Richards, Nicola  
 Richardson, Angela  
 Roberts, Rob  
 Robertson, Mr Laurence  
 Robinson, Mary  
 Rosindell, Andrew  
 Rowley, Lee  
 Russell, Dean  
 Rutley, David  
 Sambrook, Gary  
 Saxby, Selaine  
 Scully, Paul  
 Seely, Bob  
 Selous, Andrew  
 Shapps, rh Grant  
 Sharma, rh Alok  
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec  
 Smith, Chloe  
 Smith, Greg (*Proxy vote cast  
 by John Whittingdale*)  
 Smith, Henry

Smith, rh Julian  
 Solloway, Amanda  
 Spencer, Dr Ben  
 Spencer, rh Mark  
 Stafford, Alexander  
 Stephenson, Andrew  
 Stevenson, Jane  
 Stevenson, John  
 Stewart, Bob  
 Stride, rh Mel  
 Stuart, Graham  
 Sturdy, Julian  
 Sunak, rh Rishi  
 Sunderland, James  
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond  
 Syms, Sir Robert  
 Thomas, Derek  
 Throup, Maggie  
 Timpson, Edward  
 Tolhurst, Kelly  
 Tomlinson, Justin  
 Tomlinson, Michael  
 Tracey, Craig  
 Trevelyan, Anne-Marie  
 Trott, Laura  
 Truss, rh Elizabeth  
 Tugendhat, Tom  
 Vara, Mr Shailesh  
 Vickers, Martin  
 Vickers, Matt  
 Villiers, rh Theresa  
 Wakeford, Christian  
 Walker, Sir Charles  
 Walker, Mr Robin  
 Wallis, Dr Jamie  
 Warburton, David  
 Warman, Matt  
 Webb, Suzanne  
 Whittaker, Craig  
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John  
 Wiggin, Bill  
 Wild, James  
 Williams, Craig  
 Williamson, rh Gavin  
 Wood, Mike  
 Wragg, Mr William  
 Wright, rh Jeremy  
 Young, Jacob  
 Zahawi, Nadhim

**Tellers for the Noes:**  
 Iain Stewart and  
 Nigel Huddleston

*Question accordingly negated.*

5.16 pm

*The debate stood adjourned (Standing Order No. 9(3)).*

*Ordered, That the debate be resumed Monday 20 January.*

## Business without Debate

### TERM LIMITS

*Motion made,*

That, for the remainder of the present Parliament, the provisions of Standing Order No. 122A (Term limits for chairs of select committees) shall not have effect.—(*Mr Marcus Jones.*)

**Hon. Members:** Object.

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE (PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS)

*Resolved,*

That Private Members' Bills shall have precedence over Government business on 13 March 2020, 27 March 2020, 24 April 2020, 15 May 2020, 12 June 2020, 26 June 2020, 10 July 2020, 11 September 2020, 16 October 2020, 30 October 2020, 27 November 2020, 15 January 2021 and 29 January 2021.—(*Mr Marcus Jones.*)

## PROXY VOTING

*Resolved,*

That the Resolution of 28 January 2019 (Proxy Voting (Implementation)) shall apply as if, for the words "12 months" in paragraphs (4) and (6), there were substituted "18 months".—(*Mr Marcus Jones.*)

## ADJOURNMENT (FEBRUARY, EASTER, MAY DAY, WHITSUN, SUMMER AND CONFERENCE RECESS)

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 25),*

That this House, at its rising on Thursday 13 February 2020, do adjourn until Monday 24 February 2020; at its rising on Tuesday 31 March 2020, do adjourn until Tuesday 21 April 2020; at its rising on Wednesday 6 May 2020, do adjourn until Monday 11 May 2020; at its rising on Thursday 21 May 2020, do adjourn until Tuesday 2 June 2020; at its rising on Tuesday 21 July 2020, do adjourn until Tuesday 8 September 2020; and at its rising on Thursday 17 September 2020, do adjourn until Tuesday 13 October 2020.—(*Mr Marcus Jones.*)

*Question agreed to.*

## STANDING ORDERS ETC. (COMMITTEE ON EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION)

*Ordered,*

That the following temporary Standing Order and consequent modifications to Standing Orders and resolutions of the House shall have effect for twelve months from the date of this Order:—

A: Committee on Exiting the European Union (Temporary Standing order)

(1) There shall be a select committee, to be called the Committee on Exiting the European Union, to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Department for Exiting the European Union and related matters falling within the responsibilities of associated public bodies.

(2) The committee shall consist of no more than twenty-one Members; and the provisions of Standing Order No. 121(2) shall apply to motions for the nomination and discharge of Members to and from the committee as if it were a committee not established under a temporary Standing Order.

(3) Unless the House otherwise orders, each Member nominated to the committee shall continue to be a member of it for as long as this Order has effect.

(4) The committee shall have the power to appoint a sub-committee.

(5) The committee and any sub-committee appointed by it shall have the assistance of the Counsel to the Speaker.

(6) The committee and any sub-committee appointed by it shall have power to appoint legal advisers and specialist advisers either to supply information which is not readily available or to elucidate matters of complexity within the committee's order of reference.

(7) The committee and any sub-committee appointed by it shall have power to send for persons, papers and records, to sit notwithstanding any adjournment of the House, to adjourn from place to place and to report from time to time the evidence taken before them.

(8) The quorum of the committee shall be six and the quorum of any sub-committee appointed by it shall be three.

(9) The committee shall have power to report from time to time, and any sub-committee appointed by it shall have power to report to the committee from time to time.

B: Election of Select Committee Chairs (10) Standing Order No. 122B (Election of select committee chairs) is amended in paragraph (1), by inserting, in the appropriate place, “the Committee on Exiting the European Union”.

C: European Committees (11) Standing Order No. 119 (European Committees) is amended as follows: (a) in paragraph (4) by inserting after “departments” the words “, or the Committee on Exiting the European Union”; and (b) in the Table in paragraph (7), in respect of European Committee B, by inserting, in the appropriate place, “Exiting the European Union”.

D: European Scrutiny Committee (12) Paragraph (12) of Standing Order No. 143 (European Scrutiny Committee) is amended by inserting, in the appropriate place, “the Committee on Exiting the European Union”.

E: Public Bodies: Draft orders (13) Standing Order No. 152K (Public bodies: draft orders) is amended as follows: (a) after sub-paragraph (b) to paragraph (1) to insert: “(c) in respect of a draft order laid by a Minister in the Department for Exiting the European Union, the Committee on Exiting the European Union”; and (b) in paragraph (2) by inserting after “departments” the words “, or the Committee on Exiting the European Union”.

F: Positions for which additional salaries are payable for the purposes of section 4A(2) of the Parliamentary Standards Act 2009 (14) The resolution of the House of 19 March 2013 (Positions for which additional salaries are payable for the purposes of section 4A(2) of the Parliamentary Standards Act 2009) is amended, in paragraph (1)(a), by inserting, in the appropriate place, “the Committee on Exiting the European Union”.—(*Mr Marcus Jones.*)

#### SELECT COMMITTEES: ALLOCATION OF CHAIRS

*Ordered,*

That, pursuant to Standing Order No 122B (Election of Committee Chairs), the chairs of those select committees subject to the Standing Order be allocated as indicated in the following Table:

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#### Select committees appointed under Standing Order No. 152

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Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	Labour
Defence	Conservative
Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	Conservative
Education	Conservative
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	Conservative
Foreign Affairs	Conservative
Health and Social Care	Conservative
Home Affairs	Labour
Housing, Communities and Local Government	Labour
International Development	Labour
International Trade	Scottish National Party
Justice	Conservative
Northern Ireland Affairs	Conservative
Science and Technology	Conservative
Scottish Affairs	Scottish National Party
Transport	Conservative
Treasury	Conservative
Welsh Affairs	Conservative
Women and Equalities	Conservative
Work and Pensions	Labour

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#### Other specified select committees

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Environmental Audit	Conservative
Exiting the European Union	Labour
Petitions	Labour
Procedure	Conservative
Public Accounts	Labour
Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs	Conservative
Standards	Labour

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—(*Mr Marcus Jones.*)



## Deputy Speaker's Statement

5.18 pm

### Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):

Now that the House has agreed to the allocation of Committee Chairs, it may help Members if I announce that Mr Speaker has decided that the elections will take place on Wednesday 29 January. Nominations will close at 4 pm on Monday 27 January. The election of the Chair of the Backbench Business Committee will take place at the same time and on the same timetable as for the other Committees' Chairs. Nomination forms are available from the Table Office, the Vote Office and the Procedural Hub, but need not be used as long as the Standing Order requirements are met.

## INDEPENDENT PARLIAMENTARY STANDARDS AUTHORITY

*Ordered,*

That Marion Fellows, Dame Cheryl Gillan, Sir Desmond Swayne, Valerie Vaz and Sir Charles Walker be appointed to the Speaker's Committee for the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority until the end of the present Parliament, in pursuance of paragraph 1(d) of Schedule 3 to the Parliamentary Standards Act 2009, as amended.—(*Mr Marcus Jones.*)

## Protection for New Home Buyers

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—(*Mr Marcus Jones.*)

5.19 pm

**Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): I applied for this debate in anticipation of the Government's plans to bring forward measures in this Parliament relating to building standards and safety. In recent years, I have seen numerous examples in my constituency—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** Order. Could Members who are leaving the Chamber do so quietly, because the hon. Lady is trying to make her speech?

**Kate Green:** In recent years, I have seen numerous examples in my constituency of shoddy and sometimes downright dangerous workmanship, and a lack of redress for homeowners. The all-party parliamentary group for excellence in the built environment highlighted similar issues in reports in 2016 and 2018. I therefore welcome the announcement in the Queen's Speech of the Government's intention to act. I hope that, by sharing some of my constituents' experiences and concerns, I can urge speedy progress, and help to inform the Minister's thinking as policy is developed. I also hope that he will carefully consider the issues relating to the regulatory regime, enforcement and the operation of warranties that I will raise tonight.

May I start by placing on record my thanks to Martin Scott and Paul Hargreaves of solicitors Walker Morris, and Geoff Peter of New Build Guru, who have all been generous with their expertise in helping me to prepare for this debate? I also thank my constituents for bringing their concerns to my attention. They have shown great fortitude, and a determination that the problems that they have endured should not be suffered by other homeowners in years to come.

Let me give the House some idea of the defects experienced by my constituents. At a development in Stretford—undertaken by Mr Selcuk Pinarbasi through his family companies Pino Design and Build, and Talbot Gate Developments—homeowners showed me numerous defects that they found when they moved into their new homes, including unfinished and damaged bathrooms and fittings; floors, skirting boards, bannisters, windows and doors out of true; the measurements of a downstairs WC not complying with statutory requirements to enable wheelchair access; breaches of electrical safety regulations; and an incorrectly fitted gas sleeve.

In another development, in Old Trafford, buyers found that there had been failure by the developer to comply with conditions relating to external works including boundary treatments, security, lighting, landscaping and waste disposal. That developer, Mr Jason Alexander, was also behind the development of Aura Court, an apartment block on the border of my constituency and Manchester city centre that has been the subject of a "Granada Reports" programme highlighting the dangerous and incomplete state of the block, such that Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue has put a number of enforcement notices in place. Issues there include damaged fire doors; cladding not installed on external walls and

[Kate Green]

walkways; decking not installed on walkways; unauthorised window installation, affecting fire safety standards; waterlogging on escape routes; and dangerous staircase treads. Even so, the block remains occupied, despite its shoddy state.

**Justin Madders** (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): This is a really important debate. I think lots of Members will have examples of such issues in their constituency. My constituents have also experienced a real difficulty getting the guarantees behind these developments actually enforced. Premier Guarantee, which is apparently endorsed by all household lenders, has been in dispute with some of my constituents for three years over a series of defects in the property—defects that are accepted by Premier. Premier is now suggesting that the case needs to go to independent arbitration—at my constituents' expense—to resolve the issues, even though it accepts that the defects exist. Does that not show a fundamental need for the reform of the system?

**Kate Green:** I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend, who does excellent work through the all-party parliamentary group on leasehold and commonhold reform. I will be saying a little more about the deficiencies of the warranty arrangements, including those provided by Premier, in a few moments.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): The National House Building Council in Northern Ireland gives some guarantees to people who buy houses, although it may not always be able to have the enforcement powers that it would like to. Does the hon. Lady agree that there is also a responsibility on banks to intervene and help when it comes to mortgage repayments on a house that is not finished correctly?

**Kate Green:** I will say a little about mortgage lenders later in my speech.

The examples I have given the House are not isolated. Indeed, Mr Alexander is notorious for a number of poor-quality developments across Greater Manchester and beyond. But it appears that developers can continue to develop new properties that fail to meet buildings standards, sometimes to a dangerous degree, while avoiding taking any action to address defects in their previous developments. Local authorities lack resources for inspection and enforcement. They cannot take developers' previous failures into account to refuse them planning permission for future applications. Unscrupulous developers are free to continue to build with impunity, while buyers are left without redress.

How can it be right that such poor-quality buildings can be constructed, sold and occupied? How on earth are they receiving building regulations certificates? Section 57(1) of the Building Act 1984 means that it is an offence "recklessly" to issue such certificates, but it seems that they are being issued for clearly substandard buildings. I wonder whether the Minister can tell the House how many successful convictions have been brought under this legislation, because I have not been able to identify a single example.

Faced with defects and developers' refusals to rectify them, buyers may seek to rely on their buildings warranty cover, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port

and Neston (Justin Madders) mentioned. But as my constituents have found, all too often that does not offer the protection they expect. Warranty providers are able to carry out a dual role as both approved inspector and warranty provider. That surely creates a conflict of interest. Insurers have an incentive to suppress knowledge of defects, particularly when they may give rise to very large claims. Exclusions to the cover often leave significant risk with the homeowner, so the inspector may not even bother to inspect every property in a development—arguably, there is insufficient incentive to do so.

Perhaps, therefore, we should not be surprised to hear from my hon. Friend about his constituents' experiences with Premier Guarantee or that the main warranty provider in the UK, NHBC, told the all-party group in 2015 that of all the homeowners it covers, fewer than 5% contact NHBC with issues that result in a valid claim under the warranty. That does not of course tell us how many buyers try to claim under their warranty but are unsuccessful. It conceals the fact that warranty providers are extremely reluctant to rectify defects, as the onus will fall on them to recover the cost of doing so from the developer. Although defects the builder has failed or refused to deal with can be referred to NHBC's resolution service, by which it decides which claims to accept or reject, New Build Guru suggests that house builders and NHBC routinely liaise directly with each other without notice or reference to the policyholder, and privately decide between them which claims will be accepted, thus avoiding both cost for the developer and the need for NHBC to incur expense to recover its costs from the builder.

For all practical purposes, a homeowner cannot challenge the warranty provider if it refuses to accept their claim. The reason for this, as one of my constituents has recently discovered, is that the resolution service is not a regulated insurance activity. If NHBC rejects a claim and the homebuyer wishes to challenge the refusal, the Financial Ombudsman Service has no jurisdiction to deal with such complaints. Homeowners may be able to complain to the Construction Industry Council, which regulates approved inspectors, but failing that their only option—mostly costly and impractical—is to go to law.

**Jeff Smith** (Manchester, Withington) (Lab): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for bringing this matter to the attention of the House. My constituent Sarah bought a property off-plan from Bellway Homes in West Didsbury and ran into a whole host of problems. She is very supportive of the idea, which my hon. Friend has mentioned in the past, that homeowners should be able to retain a snagging fund, governed by an independent team and possibly held in an escrow account so that it can be fairly administered. Would my hon. Friend support such a system?

**Kate Green:** I most certainly would support that suggestion.

There are a number of other actions that the Government could take to address the slippery state of affairs that exists around warranties. Will the Minister consider, for example, standardisation of warranty policies, with the use of clear and unambiguous language, and an end to unreasonable exclusions? Would the Government consider amending the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 so that warranty policies are

brought within the meaning of “construction contracts” under section 104 of the Act? That would mean that disputes could at least be settled by the relatively quicker and less expensive route of arbitration, rather than people needing to pursue a court claim.

The Minister will know that the problems I have described are compounded for those who own leasehold property. Management companies should be under a positive duty to act in leaseholders’ best interests, but often they are powerless to claim on the leaseholder’s behalf under the defects cover that is taken out by and for the benefit of the developer and his design team, usually for a 10-year period, to cover total or partial collapse or some other latent structural defect. The position of leaseholders could be strengthened through new legislation to make it compulsory for management companies, and leaseholders, to benefit from decennial insurance, specifically requiring such insurance to be taken out, specifying minimum levels of cover and the term of the insurance, and giving leaseholders and management companies third-party rights to claim directly under these policies.

The Government could also strengthen the Defective Premises Act 1972. This legislation extends protection for a period of six years—a period that is obviously out of line not only with decennial insurance cover but with actions in tort, where claims are allowed for a three-year period from the date of knowledge, subject to an overall maximum of 15 years under the Latent Damage Act 1986. The limitations period in the Defective Premises Act could be extended to be consistent with tort actions to give owners more protection. This is particularly important following the case of *Murphy v. Brentwood District Council*, which means that the residential property owner cannot claim for economic loss in tort.

There is a further adjustment to the Defective Premises Act that I invite the Minister to consider. Section 1(1) sets a test that work should be done

“in a workmanlike or, as the case may be, professional manner, with proper materials...so that as regards that work the dwelling will be fit for habitation when completed.”

That is a high bar when measured against the relevant test in consumer legislation, which refers to goods needing to

“meet the standard that a reasonable person would consider satisfactory”

under the Consumer Rights Act 2015.

**Justin Madders:** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Kate Green:** I will not, if my hon. Friend will forgive me, because I think we are going to be tight on time for the Minister to respond, and I am covering—we are all covering—a lot of territory.

Is it right, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the law should offer more protection when you buy a toaster than when you buy a house? Why is not the standard similar in relation to the purchase of residential property?

I would like to mention two issues that are outside the direct remit of the Minister’s Department but that none the less impact on the overall picture of protection for homeowners. The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 means that, even if a householder does successfully pursue a defects claim in court, they may struggle to recover costs from their unsuccessful

opponent. Although conditional fee arrangements are still possible, success fees and after-the-event insurance costs cannot be recovered from the losing party. This is a big issue for defects actions, since these costs can leave successful litigants so out of pocket that they still cannot afford to carry out the work to remedy the defects that were the subject of the case in the first place. Will the Minister press his counterparts in the Ministry of Justice to exclude defects actions for residential property from the prohibition on recovery of success fees and after-the-event insurance costs so that a successful owner can use the damages awarded to carry out repairs?

The operation of company law also seems to assist rather than hinder unscrupulous developers, who can set up a new company for each development, then place the company in liquidation, leaving defects unaddressed and sometimes avoiding tax and money-laundering rules in the process too. One constituent has found neither Companies House nor the Insolvency Service very willing to act to prevent this from happening, even when the same developer has blatantly and repeatedly breached registration and company law requirements. How will the Ministry work with Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to ensure that company law operates robustly against such practices by developers?

While I am aware of attempts by the industry to address homebuyers’ concerns through the five-star system, of proposals for a new homes ombudsman, of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors’ intention to draft new guidance for its members and regulated firms on the inspection of new residential building works and snagging, and of UK Finance’s role in relation to mortgage lenders and improving building standards, these protections will still be insufficient.

The more I have looked into this matter, the more shocked I have been by the extent of the problem, the utter unscrupulousness of some developers and the absence of meaningful protection for homebuyers, many of whom are making the most significant purchase of their lives. I am sure the Minister will recognise from this brief description of the problems experienced by my constituents and those of my hon. Friends that the case for holistic, far-reaching, regulatory and legislative reform is both urgent and compelling and that any measures introduced must have real teeth. The Government’s stated intention to act to strengthen buildings standards and safety is a real opportunity, and I look forward to the Minister’s response.

5.36 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Luke Hall):** May I start by congratulating the hon. Member for Stretford and Urmston (Kate Green) on securing the debate and on making such an informed, well-researched speech? I know that she has worked hard to raise the issues that new homebuyers experience many times in the House, and I thank her for the opportunity to debate this.

This Government have been delivering on the new homes that this country needs. In 2018-19, the net additions were the highest since 1987. As we deliver new homes, we must ensure that they are of higher quality and higher standards and that homebuyers are treated fairly. This Government have been clear that safety,



[*Luke Hall*]

quality and fairness are our priorities. When people move into a home, they should have confidence that they can live their lives without the stress of unfair fees, safety issues or poor-quality workmanship. The protection of new homebuyers must, and will, improve. We expect all housing developers to deliver good-quality housing, to deliver it on time and to treat homebuyers fairly.

We are determined to learn the lessons from the Grenfell Tower fire and to strengthen the whole regulatory system for building safety, including fundamental changes to the regulatory framework for high rise-residential buildings. That will involve a fundamental change in both the regulatory framework and industry culture, creating a more accountable system. Our aim is to change the industry culture to ensure that there is accountability and responsibility and that residents are safe in their homes and have a stronger voice in the system. We will also legislate to close gaps in redress services, so that consumers are better protected and can navigate the market with confidence.

There is nothing more important than being and feeling safe in your own home. This Government will be putting residents at the heart of the new, stronger system of building safety. To ensure that all people are safe and secure in their homes, the Government are committed to bringing forward legislation that delivers meaningful and lasting change. The building safety Bill will put in place an enhanced safety framework for high-rise residential buildings, taking forward all the recommendations from Dame Judith Hackitt's independent review of building regulations and fire safety, and in some areas going even further.

The enhanced safety framework will provide clearer accountability and stronger duties for those responsible for the safety of high-rise buildings throughout the building's design, construction and occupation. We will include clear competence requirements to maintain high standards. The hon. Lady should note that we have consulted on the details of this regime, including a proposal that buildings will need to go through a new gateway process, in which duty holders will have to prove to the regulator that their building is safe and ready for occupation. Building owners will be required to demonstrate that risks are identified, understood and effectively managed on an ongoing basis. Those responsible for building safety will not simply be able to tick boxes to discharge their responsibilities.

The hon. Lady speaks incredibly well on behalf of her constituents, and I am proud that the building safety Bill will give residents a stronger voice in the system, ensuring that their concerns are never ignored and that they fully understand how they can contribute to maintaining safety in their buildings. We will be strengthening enforcement and sanctions to deter non-compliance with the new regime to hold the right people to account when mistakes are made and ensure they are not repeated. The building safety Bill will include a new stronger and clearer framework to provide national oversight of construction products to ensure all products meet high performance standards. There will be a new system to oversee the built environment, with local enforcement agencies and national regulators working together to ensure that the safety of all buildings is improved.

We are genuinely grateful to the hon. Lady for her input into this important matter. As we continue to develop the policy in the weeks ahead and bring forward legislation, I will make sure that her comments during this debate are taken into account. I would like to invite her, if she so wishes, to come to the Department, sit down with officials and me, and talk about how we can make sure this Bill is effective as it can be.

We have committed to implementing all the recommendations of the phase 1 report from the independent Grenfell Tower public inquiry led by Martin Moore-Bick. The Government will introduce a fire safety Bill to implement the relevant legislative recommendations. This includes putting it beyond doubt that the fire safety order will require building owners and managers of multi-occupied residential premises of any height fully to consider and mitigate the risks of any external wall systems and fire doors. The Bill will also strengthen the relevant enforcement powers to hold building owners and managers to account.

I am grateful to the hon. Lady for bringing to my attention the case of the specific developer that she mentioned in her contribution. I know that her constituents and all prospective homebuyers and tenants will want to note that the enhanced regime we are planning will have stronger protections at various stages of the building process. These protections will ensure that outstanding issues are resolved before buildings are occupied. I understand that the specific case mentioned is currently under appeal, and therefore I cannot comment at this stage. However, I will follow the outcome of the legal proceedings with interest.

**Kate Green:** In fact, Aura Court is not under appeal, but the same developer is in relation to another development. However, the general point applies that this developer has repeatedly been able to erect standard buildings and have them occupied while in very poor condition. Clearly, we need a legislative regime that means homeowners do not have to keep trying to go back to court to get these matters resolved.

**Luke Hall:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady for putting that point on the record. I hope that is one of the things we can discuss further in the weeks ahead.

We know that a stronger regulatory system is necessary, but it will not be enough to deliver the required cultural change, so we need industry to show the same leadership it has shown in successfully making building sites much safer for workers over recent years. They must also prioritise residents' safety in the construction of high-quality buildings.

The Government welcome the action we have already seen from industry, especially the early adopters group, which has spearheaded the building safety charter. The charter demonstrates the commitment to putting building safety first, ahead of all other priorities. All those across the industry that are involved in the life cycle of a building should follow suit. The industry-led competence steering group has developed proposals for raising the competence of those working on buildings in scope of the new regime. We support the group's proposals for an overarching system for competence oversight and have included them in our consultation as part of our package of measures to improve building safety. To

drive progress further, the industry safety steering group, chaired by Dame Judith Hackitt, is holding industry to account for making practical and cultural change happen.

The hon. Lady raised the issue of leasehold. The debate has a particular bearing on leaseholders, and I am grateful to the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Justin Madders) in that respect as well. We know that leaseholders can too often face unfair practices, poor management of properties and difficulties in taking action to address problems. We are clear that there is no place in a modern housing market for unfair leasehold practices, and we are undertaking a comprehensive programme to reform the leasehold system to ensure homebuyers are treated fairly and protected from abuse and poor service.

We are moving forward with legislation to reform the leasehold sector. This includes the ban on new leasehold homes, restricting future leases to ground rent of zero financial value and closing legal loopholes to prevent further unfair evictions. We are committed to helping current and future leaseholders. We welcome the recent report of the Law Commission on enfranchisement valuation. This included options on how to make the cost of buying a freehold or extending a lease cheaper, and we are now considering those in detail. We look forward to further reports from the Law Commission on the broader enfranchisement process, reinvigorating commonhold, and improving the right to manage later this spring.

We are deeply aware of the issues surrounding onerous ground rent and other unfair terms which some leaseholders are facing. We encouraged the Competition and Markets Authority to investigate the extent of any mis-selling of leasehold properties, and we look forward to receiving its findings.

**Justin Madders:** Will the Minister give way?

**Luke Hall:** I will not if that is okay, because of time.

The independent working group reported last year, and we are considering its recommendations. We will announce our next steps in due course. It can be expensive to take legal action against a landlord when that is necessary, and we are deeply concerned that leaseholders sometimes have to pay their landlord's legal costs, even if they win the case. That can lead to leaseholders facing bills that are higher than the charges they were seeking to challenge in the first place, and it can also deter leaseholders from taking their concerns to a tribunal at all. The Government believe that leaseholders should not be subject to unjustified legal costs, and we will close the legal loopholes that allow that to happen. Again, I am grateful for the hon. Lady's contribution on that matter, and perhaps we can take the issue forward in the weeks ahead.

Our plans to reform the housing sector will be a collaborative effort with colleagues across Government. We are also closing a gap in redress for leaseholders by extending mandatory membership of a redress scheme to freeholders who do not use a managing agent. Managing agents are already required to belong to a redress scheme,

but there is no such requirement for freeholders who do not use an agent. This change will give more leaseholders access to redress in the future.

There is much reform still to come, but we have taken action already. We have worked with industry to secure commitments to help existing leaseholders through our industry pledge. The leasehold sector is clearly ripe for reform, and I assure the House that the Government are fully committed to ensuring that such reform can happen.

Let me turn to the new homes ombudsman. Problems in the current redress system threaten the quality of the experience and product for new homebuyers. The Government are dedicated to ensuring that homebuyers are treated fairly when things go wrong, and for developers to up their game and get things right from the beginning. The hon. Lady raised important points about warranties, including warranty exclusions, the provision of clear information to consumers, and the resolution services of warranty providers. It is the responsibility of the Financial Conduct Authority to regulate new build warranties and protect consumers. If a consumer is unhappy with the warranty provider's action, they can contact the Financial Ombudsman Service for free. I agree that consumers must be provided with clearer information on warranty cover, and we are considering how that is best achieved.

The hon. Lady made a valid point about potential conflicts of interest where approved inspectors have dual roles. Dame Judith Hackitt recommended that where they are involved in regulatory oversight, an approved inspector must be completely independent of the duty holder. The Government accept that recommendation and are working with the Joint Regulators Group, representatives of approved inspectors, and local authorities, to identify ways of minimising conflicts of interest and ensure sufficient regulatory capability and capacity under the new system. The industry has acknowledged many of those problems and is working to improve consumer confidence and trust.

In conclusion—time is short—the Government are committed to ensuring that the housing market works for everyone. That means building more of the right homes in the right places, and ensuring that when consumers purchase a new home, they have the protection they deserve and need. I assure hon. Members that as we work towards our ambition of building 300,000 new homes a year, residents in all tenures are safe. They must be treated fairly and be able to live in sustainable, high-quality homes.

Once again I am hugely grateful to the hon. Lady for her contribution, and we will make sure it is taken into account. I hope that we can organise those meetings in the week ahead and see what we can incorporate. I look forward to the Government driving forward that vital reform.

*Question put and agreed to.*

5.48 pm

*House adjourned.*





# Written Statements

*Thursday 16 January 2020*

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### Agriculture Bill

**The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Theresa Villiers):** Today, I am introducing the Government's landmark Agriculture Bill to the House of Commons. This Bill delivers a new settlement for agriculture and those involved in this vital industry should be in no doubt of this Government's absolute commitment to them and all those who produce our food and protect our environment.

Agriculture is one of this country's great industries and nearly three-quarters of land in England is farmed. But despite its scale and importance to our nation, decisions about its future have, for the past half century, largely been decided in Brussels. All the while, our priorities have been overlooked, our productivity stifled, and farmers hindered in their preservation of our environment. These are the legacies of the common agricultural policy (CAP).

The CAP awarded subsidies based on the size of individual land holdings, and not the contribution farmers make to our society. The top 10% of recipients received the lion's share of payments—almost 50%—while the bottom 20% received just 2%. Meanwhile, our farmers struggled with burdensome and inflexible bureaucracy at the expense of our countryside and their own well-being.

Our Agriculture Bill marks a decisive shift and will remove the constraints and burdens of the CAP and replace it in England with a new and fairer system that rewards farmers properly for the work they do to enhance our environment and safeguard high animal welfare standards. And it will do so gradually allowing farmers and land managers time to adapt to our reforms and transform the agriculture sector for the better. Change takes time and the Government are conscious that farmers will need to plan and adapt. The Bill will enable a seven-year agricultural transition in England as we gradually move away from the CAP.

At the heart of the Government's proposal is a new system for England that pays public money for the delivery of public goods, such as clean air and water, from which we all benefit but the market alone does not provide. The Bill will allow us to invest public money in enriching wildlife habitats, preventing flooding, improving the quality of air and soil, planting more trees and raising standards of animal welfare. The enhancement of these public goods will help manage and mitigate the effects of climate change which is of profound public concern. The Bill will therefore be instrumental in delivering on the Government's crucial goal to be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.

This Bill champions food producers and makes ground breaking strides to allow for a fairer, more transparent supply chain that will increase productivity and protect producers and consumers from unfair trading practices.

It will create opportunities for new entrants who want to farm but have in the past had little prospect to do so. And it will incentivise longer-term thinking and investment while helping farm businesses to become more resilient and productive.

The Bill will also modernise aspects of agricultural regulation and make sure that they are tailored to the domestic market. It will include new UK-wide provisions on organics and fertiliser regulations. It will enable new marketing standards to be set for agricultural products in England and reform agricultural tenancies in England and Wales to reflect a more modern and fair agricultural system.

It has always been the Government's intention to change our agricultural policy once we had left the EU. The Agriculture Bill introduced on 12 September 2018 fell with the dissolution of Parliament last year, but the principles in that Bill had broad support in this House and with our farmers and land managers across this country. We now have a second chance to pass an Agriculture Bill that will set a bold new course for farming in this country for decades to come.

The Government is clear that future policy will respect the devolved status of farming. By bringing back powers from Brussels to Cardiff, Belfast and Edinburgh, devolved Administrations can design policies that meet the needs of their own farmers, foresters and consumers and the challenges of their unique landscapes. The Welsh Government and Northern Irish Executive have asked the Government to extend certain powers in the Bill to Wales and Northern Ireland. The Scottish Government have chosen not to take any powers in the Bill and have instead introduced the Agriculture (Retained EU Law and Data) (Scotland) Bill in the Scottish Parliament in November 2019.

This is an ambitious Bill which makes the most of the opportunities created from leaving the European Union. It marks the first domestic farming policy in nearly 50 years and the first step towards a brighter, better and greener future for farming and our environment outside the EU.

[HCWS43]

### Agriculture and Fisheries Council

**The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (George Eustice):** I represented the UK at the Agriculture and Fisheries Council in Brussels on 16, 17 and 18 December.

On fisheries, the focus of the Council was EU quota negotiations, involving decisions on fishing opportunities for the next year for quota stocks in the North sea, Atlantic, the English channel, Irish and Celtic seas. Fishing opportunities are set under the rules of the reformed common fisheries policy, which aims to have all stocks fished at sustainable levels by 2020 at the latest.

Prior to the Council, a number of negotiations had taken place with third countries, such as EUNorway, which set fishing opportunities for certain stocks. The EU share of these opportunities were endorsed at the Council.

This year member states agreed on significant cuts in cod quotas due to scientific concerns on the state of cod stocks in the Irish Sea, west of Scotland and Celtic sea.

The UK took a lead on setting zero total allowable catch (TAC) for Celtic cod, which ensured that the agreed quota would allow the Celtic sea fleet to avoid being tied up before they fished their target species quota.

To further protect vulnerable cod stocks, the UK has also successfully pushed for enhanced rules on sustainable fishing practices such as changing net sizes, to help cod stocks recover.

Concerning seabass, Ministers decided to slightly increase the by-catch levels in the northern areas and grant additional flexibility in their management. The bag limit for seabass recreational fisheries was set to two specimen per fisherman per day under certain conditions, and only from 1 March to 30 November 2020 for northern seabass.

Total fishing opportunities agreed for 2020 included increased quotas for:

North sea haddock (+23%)

Sole in the western channel (+19%)

The Commission also provided a general approach on regulations on Baltic cod and western fisheries herring. It announced that it will take measures to help fishermen cope with the harmful socioeconomic effects of the severe fishing restrictions on cod and western herring in the Baltic sea that are already in place and agreed for 2020.

The primary focus for agriculture was a debate on the post-2020 CAP reform package, including three legislative proposals: the first on CAP strategic plans; the second on financing, management and monitoring of the CAP; and the third on common market organisation (CMO) of agricultural products. The Commission proposed a new delivery model that would allow member states more flexibility in the way they use EU funds and would allow them to tailor their programmes.

In the discussion that followed, EU member states' Ministers broadly welcomed the report, considering it as a good basis for continuing work under the incoming Croatian presidency. They indicated that the "new delivery model" and the "green architecture" were the main elements requiring further debate, the latter also in light of the recently published "European Green Deal" communication. Amongst further issues, interventions in certain sectors and coupled support were also mentioned as elements which should be discussed further. Ministers stressed the importance for the agricultural budget to be in line with the proposed enhanced environmental and climate ambition.

The Council also adopted a conclusion on EU action to protect the world's forests during a ministerial lunch debate. Member states welcomed the Commission's political guidance on protecting and restoring the world's forests.

Five other items were discussed separately under "any other business":

The presidency informed the Council of the issue with long-term funding of the EU minor use of pesticides co-ordination facility (EUMUCF).

The French delegation informed Council about their views on informing consumers about the origin of food products.

The presidency updated Council about the conclusions on the updated EU bioeconomic strategy.

The Spanish and French delegations updated Council about the impact of US tariffs on European agrifood products.

The Czech delegation informed Council of budget flexibility within the European maritime and fisheries fund 2014-2020.

[HCWS42]

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

### Foreign Affairs Council

**The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Christopher Pincher):** The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HRVP), Josep Borrell, will chair the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) in Brussels on 20 January.

The FAC will discuss current affairs, the Sahel, climate diplomacy, and will be followed by an informal ministerial lunch to discuss the middle east peace process.

#### *Current affairs*

HRVP Borrell will raise Bolivia, ahead of the future elections, and the prospects of sending an EU electoral observation mission for May's elections.

On Venezuela, the HRVP will touch on recent developments following the parliamentary elections on 5 January and plans for EU engagement.

We also expect Germany to debrief on the planned Berlin summit on Libya. HRVP Borrell will focus on what role the EU can play in support of any outcomes in Berlin.

#### *The Sahel*

We expect HRVP Borrell to debrief on the outcomes of the G5 Sahel summit in Pau on 13 January. Ministers will discuss the EU's approach to the Sahel in the context of the deteriorating security situation in the region.

#### *Climate diplomacy*

Ministers will assess the EU's climate diplomacy strategy, drawing on the December European Council outcome. They will consider how they can work together to drive ambitious action at COP26, in order to deliver on the promise of the 2015 Paris agreement. The United Kingdom will emphasise the importance of, and its commitment to, tackling climate change as a national and global priority ahead of COP26.

#### *Informal ministerial lunch on the middle east peace process*

Following the FAC, Ministers will discuss the middle east peace process and the wider security and stability in the middle east. The United Kingdom will reiterate its support for a negotiated settlement based on the two-state solution, leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state. Ministers may also discuss developments in the wider region which were last discussed at the FAC on 10 January, following the E3 (France, United Kingdom and Germany) triggering the dispute resolution mechanism (DRM) on 14 January.

#### *Council conclusions*

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on climate diplomacy to give momentum and focus to its external engagement ahead of COP26.

[HCWS41]

**TRANSPORT****Manston Airport**

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Ms Nusrat Ghani):** I have been asked by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, to make this written ministerial statement. This statement concerns the application made by RiverOak Strategic Partners Ltd (“the applicant”) under the Planning Act 2008, of 17 July 2018 for the proposed reopening and development of Manston airport in Kent.

Under sub-section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make his decision within three months of receipt of the examining authority’s report unless exercising the power under sub-section

107(3) to extend the deadline and make a statement to the Houses of Parliament announcing the new deadline. The Secretary of State received the examining authority’s report on the Manston airport development consent order application on 18 October 2019 and the current deadline for a decision is 18 January 2020.

The deadline for the decision is to be extended to 18 May 2020 (an extension of four months) to enable further information on a range of issues to be provided by the applicant and other interested parties before determination of the application by the Secretary of State.

The decision to set a new deadline is without prejudice to the decision on whether to give development consent.

[HCWS40]





# ORAL ANSWERS

Thursday 16 January 2020

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
<b>ATTORNEY GENERAL</b> .....	1141	<b>DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT—continued</b>	
Domestic Violence: Prosecution of Cases .....	1141	Free TV Licences .....	1131
Hate Crimes: Prosecution Rate .....	1144	Full-fibre and Gigabit-capable Broadband.....	1129
Leaving the EU: Human Rights.....	1142	Leaving the EU: Creative Industries.....	1137
Unduly Lenient Sentence Scheme: Extension.....	1145	Topical Questions .....	1138
<b>DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT</b> .....	1129	Tourism Industry .....	1132
Commonwealth Games 2022: Benefits to West		UNESCO World Heritage Sites .....	1135
Midlands.....	1136	Yorkshire: Access to Arts and Culture .....	1134

# WRITTEN STATEMENTS

Thursday 16 January 2020

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
<b>ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS.</b>	45WS	<b>TRANSPORT</b> .....	49WS
Agriculture and Fisheries Council.....	46WS	Manston Airport .....	49WS
Agriculture Bill .....	45WS		
<b>FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE</b> .....	48WS		
Foreign Affairs Council .....	48WS		

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**not later than  
Thursday 23 January 2020**

STRICT ADHERENCE TO THIS ARRANGEMENT GREATLY FACILITATES THE  
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