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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Tuesday 14 September 2021

House of Commons

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The House met at half-past Eleven o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

BUSINESS BEFORE QUESTIONS

HIGHGATE CEMETERY BILL [LORDS]

Bill read the Third time and passed, with amendments.

Oral Answers to Questions

JUSTICE

The Secretary of State was asked—

Nightingale Courts

1. **Alex Norris** (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op): What plans his Department has to increase the number of Nightingale courts. [903405]

19. **Jeff Smith** (Manchester, Withington) (Lab): What plans his Department has to increase the number of Nightingale courts. [903425]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Chris Philp): I am pleased to tell the House that there are currently 47 Nightingale courtrooms in operation, of which 28 are used for Crown court purposes, and we are in the process of extending the operation of 32 of those until the end of March. I am sure colleagues across the House will welcome that. In addition, we are in the process of reopening 60 existing courtrooms in the Crown court estate that had been closed owing to social distancing; more than half have already reopened. When all of that is done, we expect to have about 500 Crown courtrooms available, of which well over half will be capable of accommodating jury trials.

Alex Norris: I am grateful for that answer. We have one such Nightingale court in Nottingham, but the backlogs across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire have grown to be extraordinary, with constituents finding the dates for their cases going to the back end of 2022. That will not do. It is bad for victims and bad for the strength of those cases as memories fade for witnesses and similar. Will the Minister commit to meet me and other Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Members to talk about what more we can do in our community to get the backlogs down?

Chris Philp: The relevant Justice Minister would be delighted to meet and discuss these issues. Naturally, the covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the justice system, but that is why the Government have: invested an extra quarter of a billion pounds in covid recovery; hired 1,600 staff for Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service; deployed the Cloud video platform that at its peak was hearing 20,000 cases across the

system remotely; and had the 47 extra Nightingale courtrooms. I am sure the House will unite in welcoming those measures. Our aim is to get cases heard as quickly as possible.

Jeff Smith: Nationally we have a record high Crown court backlog of about 60,000 cases a result of the court closures and a decade of Tory cuts. Will the Government commit to continuing Nightingale courts until the backlog has cleared? When does the Minister think that will happen?

Chris Philp: First, the number of outstanding cases is principally a function of the pandemic. The hon. Member may be interested to know that in March 2020—before the covid pandemic—the outstanding case load was about 39,000, which the House will be interested to hear was substantially lower than the 47,000 bequeathed by the last Labour Government. I have laid out the investments we are making in court recovery, including the quarter of a billion pounds being spent, and this financial year there is no limitation on Crown court sitting days. The Government's commitment to hearing these cases is without question.

Mr Speaker: I remind the Minister that the courtroom in Chorley is still available—it is back up for sale.

Oldfield Report: Probation Service Dynamic Framework

2. **Danny Kruger** (Devizes) (Con): What steps he is taking to implement the recommendations in Richard Oldfield's report on the dynamic framework of the probation service, published in June 2021. [903406]

The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice (Lucy Frazer): I thank my hon. Friend for his question and for his interest and input in this area. I welcome the findings and recommendations of Richard Oldfield's report, and in particular his primary conclusion that we should do more to encourage the participation of smaller organisations in the delivery of rehabilitation services. We are looking at how we can use more grants rather than contracts where it is appropriate to do so as well as how to simplify the qualification process and bidding process for the dynamic framework.

Danny Kruger: I declare that I am the founder and chairman of a small charity working in prisons and probation. I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for that answer. I congratulate Richard Oldfield on his report and the Minister on commissioning it. I am pleased to hear about the progress being made. Does the Minister agree that we need a culture change across the justice system, with managers and commissioners being prepared to trust the small community-based organisations that can deliver such good value, and that that entails having a bolder attitude to risk?

Lucy Frazer: I completely agree with my hon. Friend. It is really important that local community services deliver rehabilitative services in the communities that they serve and we are trying to ensure that culture change. Of the 26 organisations delivering rehabilitative services in the unified model, 23 are voluntary and

community sector organisations, but we will do more to ensure that those small community organisations deliver services for us.

Beating Crime Plan

4. **Antony Higginbotham** (Burnley) (Con): What recent discussions he has had with the Home Secretary on delivery of the Government's beating crime plan. [903409]

13. **Sarah Atherton** (Wrexham) (Con): What recent discussions he has had with the Home Secretary on delivery of the Government's beating crime plan. [903419]

The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Robert Buckland): I speak regularly with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary on the actions our Departments are taking to beat crime. Our joint approach will protect the law-abiding majority, swiftly bring criminals to justice, and ensure that offenders are managed with rigour and discipline. Significant work is already under way to deliver on our beating crime plan, including more joint supervision of offenders by probation and the police, working with other local services.

Antony Higginbotham: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for his answer. One of the key focuses in the beating crime plan is tackling violent crime, something I wholeheartedly endorse, but we know that this often follows drug offences. Can I urge him to review drug sentencing, because often the sentences that go with drug offences do not act as the real deterrent we need to make sure we do not end up with narco-neighbourhoods across the country?

Robert Buckland: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who speaks passionately for his community. He knows of course that sentencing guidelines are a matter for the independent Sentencing Council. Indeed, earlier this year it issued revised guidelines for drug offences that reflect many of the issues he raises, including the increased exploitation of children and vulnerable people to facilitate drug offences, changes to drug purity and the types of drugs commonly in circulation. Of course, I will continue to speak with him about these important matters.

Sarah Atherton: As we know, antisocial behaviour blights all our towns and cities, and Wrexham is no exception. I welcome this Government's strong stance to tackle crime through community sentencing orders. Will my right hon. and learned Friend congratulate Inspector Luke Hughes and the Wrexham town police station on their work, collaboratively with the council and other agencies, to tackle antisocial behaviour as our town has reopened and on championing the sobriety tags?

Robert Buckland: I am more than happy to join in that praise. My hon. Friend is right to highlight the local work that has been going on in Wrexham and in Wales. As announced in our beating crime plan, we are going to be trialling alcohol monitoring tags with prison leavers in Wales later this year. That I think will provide a clear incentive for offenders to control their drinking and ensure swift consequences if their alcohol-related risk is escalating.

Dame Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab): Surely any beating crime plan worth its name should include fraud. Ministers must be aware that a person is more likely to be victim of fraud than of any other crime, yet according to the Home Affairs Committee, a mere 3% of cases reported to Action Fraud even result in a charge or a summons, let alone a conviction. The system is failing and failing badly. When are Ministers going to do something about it?

Robert Buckland: Well, we are. The announcement of a replacement of the Action Fraud system was made some time ago. That represents just the sharp end of the Government's response to this growing issue. I can assure the hon. Member that the work that goes on with colleagues in the Home Office on fighting economic crime more generally and fraud is sustained. It involves work with the private sector, particularly the financial services industry, to help to design out fraud. So this is an end-to-end approach, and I can assure her that the work continues apace.

Victims Bill

5. **Alex Davies-Jones** (Pontypridd) (Lab): What progress he has made on bringing forward a victims Bill. [903410]

The Minister for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): The Government committed in the Queen's Speech to bring forward a Bill to enshrine the rights of victims in law, and the hon. Lady can expect to see a consultation on this issue later this year.

Alex Davies-Jones: As the Minister says, we first heard about this in the Queen's Speech over four months ago now, and we have heard nothing since. In the year ending March 2020, the crime survey for England and Wales estimates that more than 600,000 women aged 16 to 74 were victims of sexual assault. For these women, who desperately need to see protections enshrined in law, I ask the Minister: when can we expect this legislation on the Floor of the House?

Kit Malthouse: I do recognise the issue that the hon. Lady raises, and she will of course appreciate that we have spent significantly more money on increasing the number of independent sexual violence advisers across the whole of England and Wales. However, she is right to be impatient for the Bill, and as I say, she will see a consultation on this shortly.

Laura Farris (Newbury) (Con): It is hard for members of the public to feel confidence in the statutory provisions outlawing the rough sex defence in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 while a young woman such as Sophie Moss can be so violently killed and the perpetrator receive a sentence of just four years. Does my hon. Friend think there is an opportunity with the victims Bill to look seriously at the length of sentence for this kind of homicide, and could I urge him to press the Director of Public Prosecutions as to why so many of these cases are prosecuted as manslaughter, not murder?

Kit Malthouse: That case obviously caused consternation not just in the House but across the country, and Law Officers will be looking carefully at its implications. I am more than happy to consider the issues raised by my hon. Friend during the passage of the victims Bill, not

least because we want to ensure that every victim of crime in this country not only gets justice, but sees that justice is done.

Anna McMorris (Cardiff North) (Lab): For six years the Government have promised a victims Bill. Indeed, five Secretaries of State have promised that that will be their priority—will this be the one, Mr Speaker?—but meanwhile, victims are left waiting and traumatised, their rights ignored. I recently spoke to the father of a young girl who reported sexual assault two years ago. Delay after delay has meant that the family have been left not knowing when their case will be heard, with no explanation, poor communication, and the young girl having to relive her trauma. We now learn that one-third of victims would not report a future crime because of past experience. Labour has a victims Bill ready to go. Will the Minister work with us to bring that in? If not, will he tell that young girl why the Government continue to treat her as an afterthought?

Kit Malthouse: I think that is a deeply unfair characterisation of the work to which all Ministers, and indeed the professional public servants who are involved in victim and witness care across the country, including police officers, devote themselves every day. Having said that, we recognise that many victims are dissatisfied with the support they get, and they do not necessarily see the victims' charter writ large in their experience of the criminal justice system. As I said, we will soon be bringing forward legislation to enshrine their rights in law, and a consultation on that matter will be issued in the coming days.

Sentences for Rape

6. **Kate Osborne** (Jarrow) (Lab): What plans he has to increase sentences for people convicted of rape. [903411]

The Minister for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): The maximum penalty for rape is life imprisonment, and already rapists rightly receive significant sentences, with the average sentence in 2020 being more than 10 years. The Government believe that those who commit rape should spend more of their sentence in prison, and under the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, currently before Parliament, we will increase the time that they spend behind bars.

Kate Osborne: In 2019-20 just 3% of reported rapes led to a prosecution—an historic low. It may be that life sentences can be imposed, but of those who received a jail sentence since this Government came to power, almost 3,000 rapists have been jailed for six years or less. How can the Government claim to reassure victims that justice will be served with those appalling figures?

Kit Malthouse: As I said earlier, the average sentence for rape is more than 10 years, and two-thirds of those convicted of that appalling crime receive more than seven years in prison. However, the hon. Lady is right, and as the Lord Chancellor and I have said before in this House, the number of cases of this horrendous crime that get to court are not high enough. I am leading a taskforce, which includes the Crown Prosecution Service and police leaders across the country, to drive that number upwards. We are determined to get more cases into court, so that more victims see justice done.

Prison Officer Retirement Age

8. **Rachel Hopkins** (Luton South) (Lab): What discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the effect on the (a) recruitment, (b) retention, (c) safety and (d) morale of prison officers of raising the retirement age for that role to 68. [903413]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Alex Chalk): Our prison officers have done a truly remarkable job during the pandemic, and through their decisive actions and rapid contact tracing, literally hundreds if not thousands of prisoners' lives have been saved. Although there are no plans to revisit the retirement age, we are pursuing a series of initiatives to boost morale, safety and retention, and ensure that prisons are as secure and rehabilitative as possible.

Rachel Hopkins: The Government have previously stated that because of the higher potential for serious injury and fatality among firefighters and police, they do not consider prison officers deserving of the same pension age protections and the right to retire at 60. With serious violence against staff still plaguing our prisons, does the Minister accept that the message received by prison officers is that they will have to wait until one of their own is killed in the line of duty before their safety concerns are taken seriously?

Alex Chalk: The hon. Lady makes an important point. Mercifully, during the pandemic violence has come down in prisons, which we welcome. It is also important not to make false comparisons. For example, employee contributions for police officers are at 12%, and 14% for fire officers, and 5.45% for prison officers. Of course we keep such matters under review. We made a generous offer in 2017 to bring forward the retirement date when the taxpayer would pay the entirety of employee contributions, but I regret that that was rejected by the POA.

Ellie Reeves (Lewisham West and Penge) (Lab): Our prison officers do fantastic work keeping prisons and communities safe, and they have gone above and beyond throughout the pandemic. However, the Ministry of Justice's own figures show that more than 86,000 years of prison officer experience has been lost since 2010. These key workers are moving on to better-paid work that does not involve abuse and assaults on a daily basis. Why, then, did the Government reject the pay review body's recommendation of a £3,000 uplift for band 3 prison officers? Should we not be giving these key workers a pay rise to recognise their vital work in keeping our country safe?

Alex Chalk: Where the hon. Lady is absolutely right is that retention matters, because having more experience in a prison leads it to be safer and more rehabilitative. However, it is disappointing that she did not note that last year there was a minimum increase in pay of 2.5%, and in fact some officers received up to 7.5%. That was much higher than wage inflation in the economy. We will continue to do everything possible to increase retention, including, by the way, among new officers, many of whom I met over the course of the summer, who would really benefit from increased mentoring on wings to improve morale and retention. We are absolutely committed to that very important agenda.

Judges and Legal Professionals: Afghanistan

9. **Paul Holmes** (Eastleigh) (Con): What steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to support judges who remain in Afghanistan following the recent military operation to evacuate British nationals and eligible Afghans from that country. [903414]

18. **Mr Virendra Sharma** (Ealing, Southall) (Lab): What recent discussions he has had with the Foreign Secretary on ensuring the safety of judges and legal professionals in Afghanistan. [903424]

The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Robert Buckland): I acknowledge the grave concerns of judges, legal professionals and beyond, both here and in Afghanistan, which are real and present. My Department continues to work urgently to support cross-Government efforts to provide safe passage for judges in Afghanistan, including by ensuring that individual cases that are brought to my attention are immediately lodged with relevant parts of the system.

Paul Holmes: We have seen some of the most talented legal professionals leave Afghanistan and come to the UK, and they should have a valuable place in the UK when they come here. What engagement has the Secretary of State had with the judiciary and legal professionals on supporting Afghan judges and legal professionals who will come to the UK or have already arrived?

Robert Buckland: I can reassure my hon. Friend that I am in daily communication with the judiciary and the wider legal profession—in fact, I am in daily communication with judiciary in Afghanistan—and I commend everyone for their efforts to support those judges and those who have dedicated themselves to building the rule of law and human rights in Afghanistan. As an example, the noble Lord Wolfson and I have been in regular contact with Mrs Justice McGowan, and we have discussed ways in which the legal community might provide support to help resettle Afghan legal professionals here in the UK.

Mr Virendra Sharma: After raising directly with the Government hundreds of separate cases covering thousands of people, I know of only two cases that have been resolved. What are the Government doing to help refugees from Afghanistan who are facing massive delays in the tribunal backlog?

Robert Buckland: Let me deal with the specific issue of judges and other lawyers in Afghanistan, because that is what I am directly involved with. Yesterday, the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme was announced. That provides a clear route to safety for judges, who are one of the groups to be prioritised under the scheme. Some judges have already been resettled here in the UK, and I will not rest until everyone who fits those important criteria and needs the support and safety of the rule of law is accommodated.

Mr David Lammy (Tottenham) (Lab): Last month, soon after the Foreign Secretary was found topping up his suntan instead of doing his job, Labour worked with the Bar Council to send to the Foreign Office a list of 126 Afghan judges who were at risk. We received no response, and our only update was seeing the Justice Secretary publicly celebrating the fact that just nine of them have been relocated to the UK. Can he confirm

whether the number of Afghan judges relocated to the UK remains in single digits, what the number currently is, and how much higher he expects it could have been if the Foreign Secretary had not been missing in action?

Robert Buckland: I am sorry, but the right hon. Gentleman has not been in touch with me once about these matters directly. I have been working directly with the legal sector, the Bar Council and individual leading members of the profession, virtually daily to try to identify particular schemes and approaches we can take to assist judges, prosecutors and other lawyers in Afghanistan. I would love to see the list he talks about, because I can assure him that I will not rest until we do everything we can to help these dedicated professionals. I will, of course, keep the House updated on numbers as and when they are made available to me.

Mr Speaker: We just need to tone it down a little bit on all sides. I am concerned about some of the language that gets used and some of the accusations that are being made. I am sure we will be able to move on in a much more reasonable way.

Reducing Reoffending

10. **Dr Ben Spencer** (Runnymede and Weybridge) (Con): What steps he is taking to help ensure effective collaboration between his Department and the Home Office on reducing reoffending. [903415]

The Minister for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): The Ministry of Justice and the Home Office are working in close collaboration to beat crime and reduce fear of reoffending. I am the personification of that collaboration. The refreshed integrated offender management strategy is an example of that collaboration, improving working between probation and local police, meaning we can more easily identify persistent offenders in any particular area and take action to stop them from committing neighbourhood crime.

Dr Spencer: I thank my hon. Friend for being the personification of collaboration between the police and the Department. Will he join me in thanking and congratulating my local police forces in Runnymede and Weybridge on the incredible preventive work they have done around offending? Does he agree with me that prevention is better than cure, and could he lay out some of the work they are doing in terms of pre-offending, not just reoffending?

Kit Malthouse: My hon. Friend is quite right to point out that prevention is better than cure. One emphasis I have tried to bring to my mission as a joint Minister between the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice is that we should shift away from enforcement towards prevention as much as we possibly can. For example, he will know that we funded a series of violence reduction units across the country, working with young people well ahead of them moving towards offending or being involved in crime to make sure that they do not. We are also looking at innovative ways to deal with offenders leaving the secure estate to prevent them from offending, such as GPS tags. We are now currently tagging 100% of acquisitive criminals who leave prison in six police forces, soon to be expanded to a further 13, which is proving to be an enormous deterrent to their continuing offending, and is getting them back on to the straight and narrow.

Emma Hardy (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab): My constituent had a successful career until addiction took control and she ended up in prison for crimes related to her addiction. She is out of prison, she is not reoffending and she is clean. She is getting her life back. Last year, however, she was raped. The rapist has been convicted, but she has been told that she is not entitled to criminal injury compensation because she has a prior conviction. Is that fair?

Kit Malthouse: I am not aware of the specifics of that particular case. I am happy to meet or correspond with the hon. Lady if she wishes, but it is the case that people who have been convicted of a prior criminal offence are not entitled to compensation through the criminal injuries compensation scheme.

Jonathan Gullis (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Con): My hon. Friend will be aware that one of the best ways to reduce reoffending is education and work. When I speak to people in Stoke-on-Trent North, Kidsgrove and Talke, one of the things they want to see from people who are currently in prison who may be looking to leave is them not only gaining level 3 and level 4 qualifications, but getting out and working and earning money, whether that be through picking fruit and veg, or digging up roads. Can we see how that can be done through the Ministry of Justice?

Kit Malthouse: My hon. Friend, in his usual forthright way, is quite right and cuts to the heart of the issue. We believe there is a simple formula for success after prison: giving people a job, a house and friend. If we think about it, those three pillars are the foundation of success for most of our lives and so it should be for prisoners, too.

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): Many people who reoffend are involved in substance misuse and, as a result of that, have a criminal conviction. If a public health approach is taken, that not only diverts people away from crime but gives people a new opportunity for a future. North Yorkshire police are working very hard on diversion. What is the Minister doing across Departments to make sure that a public health approach is taken?

Kit Malthouse: The hon. Lady will recall that we were successful at the last spending round in securing, I think, £85 million to make sure that every single person who left the secure estate with a drug addiction was able to access treatment to help them back on to the straight and narrow. It is worth remembering what a public health approach means. Although there are therapeutic and often medical treatments and services that should be offered to offenders to help them with regard to their offending, at the same time we have to bear in mind that enforcement counts, too. Making sure that we treat them with rigour and discipline and that there is consequence for their non-compliance with the conditions that we put on them post-release from prison is critical to getting the psychology right. We are seeing this, for example, with our GPS tagging. In particular, when we expand the use of sobriety tags to those prisoners who are leaving the secure estate who have had an alcohol problem before, we hope to see that writ large.

Pet Theft

11. **Jason McCartney** (Colne Valley) (Con): What steps his Department is taking through the criminal justice system to tackle pet theft. [903417]

14. **Tom Randall** (Gedling) (Con): What steps his Department is taking through the criminal justice system to tackle pet theft. [903420]

20. **Karl McCartney** (Lincoln) (Con): What steps his Department is taking through the criminal justice system to tackle pet theft. [903426]

The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Robert Buckland): The Government recognise the deep distress that is caused when a pet is stolen, and the pet theft taskforce carried out a thorough investigation of this issue. Its excellent report, published earlier this month, contains a comprehensive set of recommendations that will allow us to tackle this issue head on.

Jason McCartney: As a fellow animal lover, Mr Speaker, I know that you, like me, will appreciate the extreme distress that the theft of a much loved family pet can cause, particularly with over 2,000 pet dogs reported as having been stolen last year. These measures cannot come soon enough, so can the Justice Secretary confirm how soon they will be brought forward to tackle pet theft?

Robert Buckland: I reassure my hon. Friend that we are already working on the new proposed offence of pet abduction and that work is already under way with many of the other recommendations stemming from the report, such as the review of microchipping and improvements in the recording of these offences. This will continue and I remind the House that the recommendation of the pet abduction offence is leagues better than the weak amendment proposed by Labour.

Tom Randall: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for his work on bringing criminals to book with the much needed criminal offence of pet theft. Does he agree that it is important that the sentence for this offence, when determined, will reflect the unique emotional suffering caused by the theft of a beloved pet, and will he ensure that that is reflected?

Robert Buckland: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The use of the term “abduction” is a crucial reflection of the fact that these are sentient beings; they are not mere chattels or goods. The emotional effect both on the pets and their owners has to be taken into account. I think there is a read-across to animal cruelty and the important reforms that we made recently in increasing maximum sentences.

Karl McCartney: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for his response and for his recent visit to our Crown court in Lincoln castle, the magistrates court in the city and Her Majesty’s prison Lincoln, none of which are up for sale, Mr Speaker, but the judge’s lodgings are, if you are interested. Pets are not just animals; they are often members of families, and many of my constituents in Lincoln would welcome changes to ensure that we protect our pets to the highest possible degree. As well as strengthening prosecution powers

through the pet abduction offence and expanding pet ownership databases, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that we must educate prospective owners to buy pets only from reputable breeders and potentially encompass farm animals in the same legislation?

Robert Buckland: My hon. Friend hits the nail on the head. The idea that buying an animal by the side of the road or in a garage forecourt for cash is somehow legitimate trade is clearly wrong. I am grateful to colleagues at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for doing important work on promoting safer purchasing through the “Petfished” campaign. We will build on that in the way in which we identify and track cases better, improve the recording of keepership data and deal with through-the-loop-hole breeders, who are frankly responsible for a lot of cruelty and suffering.

Karl Turner (Kingston upon Hull East) (Lab): I rarely congratulate the Justice Secretary, but I do on this issue because he has eventually agreed with Her Majesty’s loyal Opposition about making pet theft a specific offence. On a serious note, I congratulate all the campaigners on the issue, particularly John Cooper, QC, who has done an awful lot of work on it.

The Justice Secretary knows that when the shadow Justice Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy), tabled his amendment to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, the Tories rejected the idea of a specific offence time and again; I think I am right in saying that the Justice Secretary’s argument was that the Theft Act 1968 was sufficient. The taskforce has now reported, but I am not clear on when we expect the legislation to take effect. When can we expect those who are alleged to have stolen pets to face the criminal courts?

Robert Buckland: I am always grateful for the hon. Gentleman’s words of wisdom, but I will just correct him in this respect: there was a general agreement that the use of theft legislation to deal with what were more than goods and chattels just was not an adequate way to reflect not just the taking of a pet, but the suffering of the pet and of the owner. That is why abduction is a much better read-across, as he knows from the matter of child abduction, for example.

I take issue with the hon. Gentleman on the point and I challenge him and the Opposition: if the matter is brought forward in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, which they voted against again and again, will they now support it?

Anti-competitive Behaviour: Small Businesses

12. **John Penrose** (Weston-super-Mare) (Con): If he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of access to justice for small companies affected by anti-competitive behaviour that are ineligible (a) for the Competition Appeal Tribunal fast track procedure and (b) to have their cases taken up by the Competition and Markets Authority. [903418]

The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Robert Buckland): The Government are currently consulting on a range of reforms to competition and policy in order to more effectively and swiftly address anti-competitive behaviour. The consultation includes

many of the recommendations that my hon. Friend made in his excellent report. As part of it, we welcome suggestions from small businesses about how the system can be improved.

John Penrose: The Secretary of State understands that anti-competitive behaviour is just as likely among small firms as among big ones. The effects are terrible: fast-growing small firms that are future world beaters get throttled by slightly bigger incumbents, levelling up is slower and less likely because competition and productivity are much lower outside London, and residents are left with less choice and more vulnerability to rip-offs. Does he agree that the justice system plays a central role in tackling the problem and ensuring that small firms have some kind of redress? Will he therefore look closely at the proposal in my Government-commissioned report for a new tier of local county competition courts?

Robert Buckland: I will be as brief as I can, Mr Speaker. We have read my hon. Friend’s paper with great interest. With respect, I do not think that the way forward is to create a further tier of specialist courts. However, there is much that can be done with colleagues in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to make sure that the overall structure of the competition mechanism is reformed and improved. His point about access to justice is absolutely right: it should apply to small and medium-sized enterprises as much as to individuals.

The Rule of Law

15. **Allan Dorans** (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (SNP): What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on upholding the rule of law. [903421]

17. **Chris Stephens** (Glasgow South West) (SNP): What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on upholding the rule of law. [903423]

The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Robert Buckland): Naturally, I do not disclose the details of my private conversations with Cabinet colleagues, but they and everybody else should be in no doubt that I am, and will continue to be, a very active Lord Chancellor in supporting the rule of law. I use the authority of my office to advise, to warn and to encourage. I am absolutely committed, under the oath I took, to my constitutional duty to respect the rule of law.

Allan Dorans: The Secretary of State will no doubt agree that for any Government committed to the rule of law, respect for international law is as important as respect for domestic law. Will he therefore join me in condemning suggestions by the Home Secretary that she is prepared to break international refugee conventions and turn away boats in the channel? Will he meet her to stress how damaging that action would be to the United Kingdom’s international reputation and credibility?

Robert Buckland: I assure the hon. Gentleman that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has taken the fullest and most comprehensive advice on these matters. There is an immediate challenge: we face the appalling exploitation of people by gangmasters and traffickers across the English channel every day. It is absolutely right that she and Home Office colleagues explore every possible lawful avenue to deal with that. That is what

this Government are committed to, and there is no question that her actions would come close to breaking international law.

Mr Speaker: Chris Stephens is not here, so I call the shadow Justice Secretary, David Lammy.

Mr David Lammy (Tottenham) (Lab): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

In the middle of a pandemic, the Secretary of State's Government are prioritising attacking the Human Rights Act and judicial review, disenfranchising millions of voters with the Elections Bill on voter ID, and, now, threatening to break international law to make it harder for asylum seekers, including those from Afghanistan, to find sanctuary in Britain. The new president of the Law Society recently warned that those measures put respect for the rule of law in jeopardy in the UK. What does the Secretary of State say to the president of the Law Society?

Robert Buckland: I think the right hon. Gentleman will find that, across the piece, the commentary that has followed my speech and the introduction of the Judicial Review and Courts Bill has reflected the fact that this is a measured and incremental approach to constitutional reform, as, I am sure, will be the work on the independent review of the Human Rights Act. The idea that somehow I am the most dangerous Lord Chancellor in history is risible. [*Laughter.*]

Anne McLaughlin (Glasgow North East) (SNP): None of this is funny. This Government's disregard for the rule of law is wide-ranging, as we have heard. They are reducing access to justice, planning, for instance, to remove Cart judicial reviews; the Nationality and Borders Bill simply ignores the refugee convention, while the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill strips away legal certainty; and the Secretary of State's own comments to me in this place on 18 May demonstrated his disregard for our international obligations. Can he match my necessarily shortened list with examples that demonstrate the opposite?

Robert Buckland: I am afraid that that is emblematic of the problem that we are facing. Dressing up legitimate political debate as somehow a direct criticism of our adherence to the rule of law is, I am afraid, a regular trick of the left, and I am not going to fall for that sanctimonious list of nonsense. This Government are absolutely committed to the rule of law across our United Kingdom.

Anne McLaughlin: The Nationality and Borders Bill also lengthens the time for which those seeking asylum must wait for a decision, while shortening the time that they have in which to appeal. As we have heard, 22 female judges are trapped in Afghanistan, and neither yesterday nor today have we heard any firm plans to get them out. If they manage somehow to make it here without our assistance, how surprised does the Secretary of State think they will be to discover the complete disregard for them and for the rule of law in that Bill?

Robert Buckland: Again, the hon. Lady is way off the mark. The idea that there is not a clear plan was plainly negated by yesterday's statement from the Under-Secretary

of State for the Home Department, my hon. Friend the Member for Louth and Horncastle (Victoria Atkins). We have a very clear plan for Afghan judges. If the Scottish National party wishes to conduct a proper dialogue and a proper debate, I shall be interested to hear it; thus far, I do not hear it.

Prisoners Released on Licence and Victims' Families

22. **Liz Saville Roberts** (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): What recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Parole Board's communications with victims' families when deciding whether offenders sentenced to life imprisonment should be released on licence. [903428]

Robert Buckland: It is for the probation service, through its victim liaison officers, rather than the Parole Board to notify victims of upcoming parole reviews and to ensure that they are able to exercise their statutory rights to make a victim personal statement or request licence conditions. It is understandably distressing when victims are told of an offender's release, and we are therefore investing heavily in the probation service and its designated professional staff to give them further support.

Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): My constituent Michael McGrath is battling for justice for his family. His sister Rachel McGrath was murdered in a brutal stranger attack by Nicholas Burton in 1997. The trial judge described Burton as merciless and manipulative, and stated that no Home Secretary—as the arrangement was at the time—would ever be likely to allow his release. Rachel's elderly parents were recently told that Burton would walk free next year. They have not even been able to make a victim statement, and they believe that correct procedure has not been followed. Will the Secretary of State please agree to a ministerial meeting with the family to help ensure that they have all the information they need, and that their voice is heard and respected?

Robert Buckland: I thank the right hon. Lady for raising that extremely sensitive, distressing and frankly appalling case. Yes, of course I would be delighted to meet the family. May I also make a general point? We—and, in fairness, I think that this applies across all parties—are very keen for victims to be not spectators but participants in these matters, so their voice shall be heard, and we will continue to do everything possible to strengthen that voice.

Human Rights Act Review

23. **Sir David Evennett** (Bexleyheath and Crayford) (Con): What progress has been made on the independent Human Rights Act review. [903429]

The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Robert Buckland): The Government have established the independent Human Rights Act review to examine the framework of that Act, how it is operating in practice and whether any change is required. The review is considering the approach taken by our domestic courts to the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights, and it will also examine whether the HRA currently strikes the correct balance between the roles of the courts, the Government and Parliament. It will report back later this year.

Sir David Evennett: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that answer and welcome this review, as I think we all do on our side of the Chamber. However, will he commit to an open consultation on any proposed reforms resulting from the independent review of the Human Rights Act?

Robert Buckland: I am happy to commit to that open consultation once we have published the findings of the review.

Topical Questions

T1. [903430] **Patricia Gibson** (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Robert Buckland): May I take this opportunity to welcome the Minister of State, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for South East Cambridgeshire (Lucy Frazer), back to her place in the Ministry of Justice? We are grateful to see her back.

Our pets are valuable members of our families, and we rely on their companionship daily. This has been especially true throughout the pandemic. The reported rise in pet thefts throughout this time has been truly shocking, and the Government are not prepared to ignore the growing concern about this issue. The pet theft taskforce published its report this month, and it contains a comprehensive set of recommendations that would allow us to tackle this issue. Chief among them is the creation of a new offence of pet abduction. I agree wholeheartedly that this is the right course of action because it recognises that pets are more than mere property and distinguishes them from inanimate objects that can be replaced. The new offence also acknowledges that when the pet is stolen, there are two victims, not one. We will look to introduce the new offence when parliamentary time allows.

Patricia Gibson: Does the Secretary of State believe that it is safe or appropriate for prison officers—the invisible emergency service—who by definition deal with the most violent and dangerous criminals across the UK, to be expected to do so up to the age of 68, which is their retirement age? Does he not agree that this completely unrealistic retirement age has negatively impacted on retention and recruitment rates?

Robert Buckland: The hon. Lady is right to raise the retirement age issue. Indeed, the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk), rightly pointed out in answer to an earlier question that there had been two attempts in recent years to resolve this issue. No agreement was reached with the Prison Officers Association, but I very much hope that any future discussions will result in some agreement. We continue to look at this issue, and I want to put on record my warm tribute to the prison service and to the much hidden and misunderstood work of jailcraft that prison officers do, day in and day out, in England and Wales, and indeed in Scotland.

T2. [903431] **John Penrose** (Weston-super-Mare) (Con): Drug use in our prisons lines the pockets of organised criminals and smuggling gangs, puts prison staff at risk of pressure from those same gangs and makes the

already difficult job of prison rehabilitation far harder. How long do Ministers expect it to be before British prisons become practically drug free?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Alex Chalk): My hon. Friend raises a critical point, and we agree, which is why we have invested £100 million in gate security to ensure, for example, that body scanners can be installed to allow concealed items to be detected, that there is money for counter-corruption, and that rehabilitation and treatment can take place in jail. A time when our jails are completely drug free is something that we aspire to, and we are making important progress.

Alex Cunningham (Stockton North) (Lab): At the last Justice questions, I raised the issue of the wrongful prosecution and conviction of British citizens under schedule 22 to the Coronavirus Act 2020, an issue that has been publicised by Big Brother Watch, Fair Trials, and *The Guardian* newspaper. Sadly, the Minister blamed the Crown Prosecution Service and did not promise to correct this injustice, and more people might have been wrongly convicted since then. That said, following our intervention, the Government have expired the schedule. I am grateful for that, but can the Lord Chancellor tell us what action he is taking to quash all the illegal convictions?

Robert Buckland: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, this is not a question of our blaming the Crown Prosecution Service. There is a constitutional principle here. The Crown Prosecution Service is independent, and the Law Officers are responsible for the superintendence of that service. I am sure that his colleague the shadow Solicitor General will be able to ask the Law Officers these questions in the next few days.

T3. [903432] **Mr David Davis** (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con): In the recent court decision to extradite Dr Mike Lynch, the Serious Fraud Office made a submission in defiance of normal standards of British justice. Despite the SFO finding no case to answer, it nevertheless recommended extradition to the United States. It did so because American prosecutors have a higher chance of conviction because they use coercion and threats to turn junior staff into prosecution witnesses, which is done without the prosecutors being required to tell the court. These tactics also prevent defence witnesses from appearing. We explicitly prohibit such behaviour in British courts because we believe it would undermine British justice, so the SFO should not be recommending the extradition of British citizens to face this parody of justice. Will the Justice Secretary review this, with a view to putting in place proper guidelines to prevent it happening in future?

Robert Buckland: My right hon. Friend will appreciate that there are ongoing proceedings, including in the civil courts, and the extradition proceedings may be subject to further appeals, so it would not be right for me to comment directly on that case. The SFO is superintended by the Law Officers. However, I undertake to talk to him about the general issues of concern that he properly raises.

T4. [903433] **Kevin Brennan** (Cardiff West) (Lab): The Secretary of State spoke earlier about pets being sold from garage forecourts. Just this week, on 10 September,

the Welsh Labour Government in Cardiff introduced a new regulation that makes it an offence to sell a puppy or kitten that the seller has not bred themselves. Crucially, it also requires the seller to have bred the puppy or kitten on the premises, which puts a stop to transportation of the type he condemned. Will he undertake to bring forward similar regulations?

Robert Buckland: I am always keen, as the hon. Gentleman knows, to make sure that the law in England and Wales is consistent. I will, of course, look carefully at that particular issue. The report is welcome as we particularly looked at a read-across to scrap metal and the way in which we banned cash payments there. The evidence is emerging, and we are gathering it as quickly as possible. We will do everything we can, consistent with an appropriate approach, to deal with this type of illegitimate trade in defenceless animals.

T6. [903435] **Giles Watling** (Clacton) (Con): Last weekend a young man sadly lost his life in my constituency, and a county lines drug operation was peripherally involved. What are the Government doing to bring a stop to these county lines drug operations, which are ruining constituencies such as mine?

The Minister for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): I am extremely sorry to hear about the event in my hon. Friend's constituency, and I am pleased that he has raised it on the Floor of the House. He will know that, for the last two years, we have made dismantling the county lines business model a key priority of our work between the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice. He will be pleased to know that, following significant investment in the key exporting forces of London, the west midlands and Liverpool—Merseyside police—we have made significant progress. We reckon that we have managed to dismantle about a third of the county lines, but there is still significant work to do. He will be pleased to know that some counties, such as Essex and Norfolk, are showing significant success, but there is still a lot more to do to overcome this pernicious and particularly unpleasant business model that focuses on exploiting young and vulnerable people as part of its way of making money. I assure him that we will not stint over the coming years in trying to eradicate county lines from our country.

T5. [903434] **Sarah Champion** (Rotherham) (Lab): Too many people die in open water because of a lack of life-saving equipment. In May this year my constituent 16-year-old Sam Haycock drowned in a nearby lake. His friends tried to save his life, but they were unable to access the life belt because it was padlocked and they could not get it unlocked in time. It had been padlocked to prevent vandalism. The Criminal Damage Act 1971 contains no specific offence for the damage or destruction of life-saving equipment, so there is no deterrent to prevent vandalism. Does the Minister therefore agree that it is vital that appropriate and specific penalties are in place to save and protect the equipment that could have saved Sam's life?

Robert Buckland: The hon. Lady raises a case that shocks and concerns us all. I would be more than happy to talk to her directly about these issues. As she knows, the law of criminal damage is being reformed in other respects in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts

Bill, but I want to make sure that we reflect the often devastating consequences of thoughtless and criminal acts of damage against vital pieces of life-saving equipment such as life belts.

T7. [903436] **Mark Pawsey** (Rugby) (Con): My constituent is involved in a case where controlling and coercive behaviour is alleged, and the case has been delayed due to both covid and a number of failures within the court process. The delays mean she continues to have to interact with her ex-partner on matters such as arranging contact with their children, causing her great distress in the process. What steps is the Department taking to ensure that victims of domestic abuse are able to have their cases heard in a timely manner?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Chris Philp): I am extremely sorry to hear of the experience hon. Friend's constituent has undergone. I can confirm that this area is a priority in court recovery from covid. For example, domestic violence protection orders are being prioritised. In cases where there is a particular vulnerability, the judiciary, in deciding which cases to list, give that careful consideration. As I laid out in answer to the very first question, significant additional resources have gone into the justice system, which have resulted in higher levels of public family law disposals—they are significantly higher this year than last. We are using remote hearing technology and getting extra sitting days organised, for exactly the reasons he mentioned; hearing awful cases such as the one he described remains a significant priority.

T8. [903437] **Alan Brown** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): I come back to female Afghan judges, where the key question is: what steps is the Department taking to allow them safe passage out of Afghanistan? What timeframe is it working to? When does it think will be too late, because the executions will have begun?

Robert Buckland: As I said to the House earlier, the Afghan relocations and assistance policy scheme covered the initial flights out. We have now extended and created a new scheme yesterday, which will cover and make a priority those particular judges. The hon. Gentleman knows that the issues in the country are complex and that colleagues across Government are working out ways in which we can facilitate safe passage, but I assure him that everybody who fits that category will get the warmest of welcomes in this country and that that work goes on daily. [*Interruption.*] I do not know how many times I can explain this: there is a clear plan and we are getting on with it.

Rob Butler (Aylesbury) (Con): Prison officers and staff have done an amazing, excellent job of keeping prisoners safe during the pandemic, with much lower infection rates in jails than had been feared. That has mainly been achieved by keeping prisoners locked in their cells, but, obviously, we now need to move beyond that so that they can access education, work and other rehabilitation programmes. So will the Minister tell the House what progress has been made on rolling out vaccines in prisons, which would allow this vital work to resume?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Alex Chalk): I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who is absolutely right to pay tribute, and let me tell him why.

At the beginning of this pandemic there was a prediction that 2,700 prisoners would die in English jails, but the actual figure is under 130. Although every one of those is a tragedy, this is a powerful tribute to the work that those staff did. He makes an important point about vaccination. Every prisoner has been offered a vaccination, although there are some decline rates, which are higher in London, of up to 50%. Every effort is being made to encourage prisoners to get vaccinated, because we could then open up the regime.

T9. [903438] **Chi Onwurah** (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): Work cuts reoffending rates in half. The Recruitment Junction in my constituency has a 50% success rate in getting ex-offenders into work—that is twice the national average. It tells me that the biggest challenge is on housing, such as for my constituent “Stuart”, who was released after 30 years in prison and was provided with just eight weeks’ accommodation. If he does not find somewhere to live by tomorrow, he will be recalled into prison, at huge cost to himself and to the taxpayer. How is the Minister going to help Stuart to get somewhere to live by tomorrow?

The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice (Lucy Frazer): The hon. Lady makes an important point, because if we want to cut crime, we have to reduce reoffending. That means we have to get people who come out of prison a job, they need to get a home and if they are on drugs, they need to get off drugs. This is absolutely what we are doing and in July we launched our £20 million scheme to provide temporary accommodation for prison leavers at risk of homelessness in five probation regions. We are also working closely with the Department for Work and Pensions to ensure that we have work coaches in prison to get people jobs.

Siobhan Baillie (Stroud) (Con): Last year, the expert Family Solutions Group produced a hard-hitting report called “What about me?”, which focuses on the 280,000 children each year who experience their parents separating. With the divorce Act fast approaching and family courts increasingly stretched, will my right hon. and learned Friend meet me to discuss ideas and some of the report’s identified policy gaps on separating families?

Robert Buckland: My hon. Friend has considerable professional experience as a family lawyer of distinction, and I am more than happy to speak to her. It sounds as if that report complements the family harm report that was published earlier this year and the excellent work that is being done by senior judiciary in the family division to minimise the fight when it comes to the future of our children.

T10. [903439] **Jeff Smith** (Manchester, Withington) (Lab): The Law Commission is currently conducting an important review of intimate-image abuse that will, I hope, recommend making it an offence for a person to take photographs of someone breastfeeding without their consent. When does the Secretary of State expect that report to be published? Perhaps more importantly, what assurance can he provide that the report’s recommendations will be given timely, swift consideration and that action will be taken?

Robert Buckland: I am grateful to the hon. Member for raising the Law Commission report. I will write to him to clarify the date by which the commission will publish that clearly important piece of work. There is a shared will throughout the House to take action wherever it is appropriate, and the hon. Member can rest assured that the Government will not slack when it comes to the protection of women and other vulnerable people.

Edward Timpson (Eddisbury) (Con): I know, Mr Speaker, that you will be exercised by the Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill that is currently going through the other place, and particularly by clause 103, which will raise the retirement age of magistrates from 70 to 75, thus fulfilling the ambition behind the private Member’s Bill that I introduced in the previous Session. While we wait for that legislation to go through, what other measures is my right hon. and learned Friend taking to get through the backlog of cases in courts, particularly through online cases?

Robert Buckland: My hon. Friend was himself a practitioner of many years’ standing. I assure him that we are using every tool available—including remote hearings, bringing back judges who have recently retired and, indeed, harnessing the entire legal profession—to deal with the number of cases before the courts. The restriction on sitting days has been lifted and colleagues in Her Majesty’s Courts and Tribunals Service are working tirelessly to deal with the case load.

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): May I return to the case of the female Afghan judges, which I raised yesterday with the Lord Chancellor’s Home Office colleague, the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, the hon. Member for Louth and Horncastle (Victoria Atkins)? A female former Afghan judge who escaped two assassination attempts by the Taliban and is now a British citizen contacted me at the weekend to explain the very real and immediate danger that her colleagues face, particularly from dangerous criminals and terrorists who have been released from prison. I am bringing her into Parliament at 5 pm this evening to meet informally with the Justice Committee; will the Lord Chancellor, or perhaps one of his junior colleagues, come to that meeting and meet this lady to hear at first hand how desperate the situation really is?

Robert Buckland: I will of course make sure that my diary is adjusted so that I can do that. The hon. and learned Lady can rest assured that I am getting emails from her colleagues directly to my parliamentary account. These are harrowing tales of harrowing experiences, which is why I meant what I said in my answers earlier. I am very grateful to the hon. and learned Lady.

Mr David Lammy (Tottenham) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Is it a point of order relating to the questions we have just had?

Mr Lammy: Yes, Mr Speaker.

In oral questions, the whole House expressed tremendous concern about the situation that faces Afghan judges. In response to my question earlier, the Secretary of State for Justice said that he has not been written to by me once about judges in Afghanistan, in reference to my

role as shadow Secretary of State for Justice. With all graciousness, I ask the Secretary of State to correct the record: I wrote to him on 16 August—I have the letter in front of me and it is available online—and he replied to me on 25 August.

Robert Buckland: Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I am happy to correct the record and, of course, to apologise to the right hon. Gentleman. I remind him that I am more than happy to speak directly

to him. He will know that the urgency of this situation means that phone calls and texts are absolutely acceptable, and I would be more than happy to discuss the matter with him in that way. As you know, Mr Speaker, this has been a very busy time, and I hope the House will forgive me if on this occasion I got it wrong. I do apologise to the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr Speaker: That is good to see; harmony has broken out.

Covid-19 Update

12.34 pm

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Sajid Javid): Mr Speaker, before I make my statement today, I am sure that the whole House will want to join me in offering our condolences to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my noble Friend Baron Johnson of Marylebone on the loss of their mother who sadly passed away yesterday. Our thoughts are with them and their whole family at this most difficult of times.

With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the pandemic and our autumn and winter plan to manage the risk of covid-19.

Over the past few months, we have been making progress down the road to recovery, carefully and cautiously moving closer to normal life. As we do this, we have been working hard to strengthen our defences against this deadly virus. We have been continuing the roll-out of our vaccination programme, with 81% of people over the age of 16 having had the protection of both doses. We have expanded our testing capacity yet further, opening a new mega-lab in Leamington Spa, and we have continued supporting research into long covid, taking our total investment to £50 million.

Thanks to that determined effort, we have made some major steps forward. The link between cases, hospitalisations and death has weakened significantly since the start of the pandemic and deaths from covid-19 have been mercifully low compared with previous waves. None the less, we must be vigilant as autumn and winter are favourable conditions for covid-19 and other seasonal viruses. Children have returned to school. More and more people are returning to work. The changing weather means that there will be more people spending time indoors, and there is likely to be a lot of non-covid demand on the NHS, including flu and norovirus.

Today, keeping our commitment to this House, I would like to provide an update on our review of preparedness for autumn and winter. The plan shows how we will give this nation the best possible chance of living with covid without the need for stringent social and economic restrictions.

There are five pillars to this plan. The first is further strengthening our pharmaceutical defences such as vaccines. The latest statistics from the Office for National Statistics show that almost 99% of covid-19 deaths in the first half of this year were people who had not received both doses of a covid-19 vaccine. This shows the importance of our vaccination programme, and, by extending the programme further, we can protect even more people. Almost 6 million people over the age of 16 remain unvaccinated in the UK, and the more people there are who are unvaccinated the larger the holes in our collective defences. We will renew our efforts to maximise uptake among those who are eligible but who have not yet, for whatever reason, taken up the offer.

Next, we have been planning our booster doses, too. As with many other vaccines, there is evidence that the protection offered by covid-19 vaccines reduces over time, particularly for older people who are at greater risk. Booster doses are an important way of keeping the virus under control for the long term.

This morning, we published the advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation on a booster programme. It recommended that people who

were vaccinated in phase 1—priority groups 1 to 9—should be offered a booster vaccine; that this vaccine should be offered no earlier than six months after the completion of the primary vaccine course; and that, as far as possible, the booster programme should be deployed in the same order as phase 1. I can confirm that I have accepted the JCVI's advice and that the NHS is preparing to offer booster doses from next week. The NHS will contact people at the right time and nobody needs to come forward at this point. This booster programme will protect the most vulnerable through the winter months and strengthen our wall of defence even further.

As well as that, we will be extending the offer of a covid-19 vaccine to even more people, as the Minister for covid-19 vaccine deployment announced yesterday in the House—thank you, Mr Speaker, for allowing him to make that statement yesterday. All young people aged 16 to 17 in England have already been offered a dose of a covid-19 vaccine to give them the protection as they return to school. Yesterday, the UK's chief medical officers unanimously recommended making a universal offer of a first dose of a vaccine to people between the ages of 12 and 15. The Government have accepted that recommendation, too, and will move with urgency to put this into action. We are also seeing great advances in the use of antivirals and therapeutics. Several covid-19 treatments are already available through the NHS and our antivirals taskforce is leading the search for breakthroughs in antivirals, which have so much more potential to offer.

Secondly, testing, tracing and self-isolation have been another vital defence. Over the autumn and winter, PCR testing for those with covid-19 symptoms and contacts of confirmed cases will continue to be available free of charge. Regular asymptomatic testing, which currently identifies about a quarter of all reported cases, will also continue in the coming months, with a focus on those who are not fully vaccinated: perhaps those in education or other higher-risk settings. Contact tracing will continue through the NHS Test and Trace system. We do not want people to face hardship as they carry out their duty to self-isolate, so we will keep offering practical and financial support for those who are eligible and need assistance who are still required to self-isolate. We will review the regulations and support by the end of March 2022.

The third pillar is that we are supporting the NHS and social care. Last week, I announced a £5.4 billion injection for the NHS to support the covid-19 response over the next six months, including £1 billion extra to tackle the elective backlog caused by covid-19. We have also launched a consultation on protecting vulnerable patients by making covid-19 and flu vaccinations a condition of deployment for frontline healthcare staff and wider social care workers in England. We are already making this a condition of employment in Care Quality Commission-registered adult care homes. Although we are keeping an open mind and will not be making a final decision until we fully consider the results of the consultation, it is highly likely that frontline NHS staff and those working in wider social care settings will also have to be vaccinated to protect those around them, and that this will be an important step in protecting those at greatest risk.

Fourthly, we will keep encouraging people to take steps to keep seasonal illnesses, including flu and covid-19, at bay. The best step we can all take is to get vaccinations

for covid-19 and flu if we are eligible, so along with our covid-19 vaccination programme the next few months will see the largest flu vaccination campaign that the country has ever seen. Our plan also sets out a number of changes that we can all make to our daily routines, such as: meeting outdoors where possible; trying to let in fresh air if we need to be indoors; and wearing a face mask in crowded and enclosed spaces where we come into contact with people who we do not normally meet.

Our fifth pillar is how we will look beyond our shores and pursue an international approach. Last week, I attended the G20 Health Ministers' Meeting, where I met counterparts from across the world and talked about the part that we will be playing to lead the global effort to accelerate access to vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics. As we do this, we will maintain our strong defences at the border, allowing us to identify and respond to variants of concern. It is these defences, and the progress of vaccination campaigns both here and abroad, that have allowed us to manage the risks and to start carefully reopening international travel once again. We have already relaxed the rules for fully vaccinated travellers and I asked the Competition and Markets Authority to review the issue of exploitative behaviour in the private testing market. The review reported last week and I am looking into what further action we can take. On top of those measures, we will be publishing a new framework for international travel. My right hon. Friend the Transport Secretary will be announcing more details ahead of the formal review point on 1 October.

Thanks to the defences that we have built, we have been able to remove many of the regulations that have governed our daily lives—rules that were unprecedented yet necessary. Our plan shows how we will be removing more of these powers while maintaining those that are essential for our response. This includes expiring more of the powers in the Coronavirus Act 2020, such as the powers directing the temporary closure of educational institutions. The remaining provisions will be those that are critical to the Government's response to the pandemic—for example, ensuring that the NHS is properly resourced, and supporting statutory sick pay for those who are self-isolating.

The plan before the House today is our plan A—a comprehensive plan to steer this country through the autumn and winter. But we have seen how quickly this virus can adapt and change, so we have prepared a plan B of contingency measures, which we can call upon only if they are needed and supported by the data, to prevent unsustainable pressure on the NHS. These measures would be: communicating clearly and urgently to the public the need for caution; legally mandating face coverings in certain settings; and, while we are not going ahead with mandatory vaccine-only covid status certification now, holding that power in reserve. As well as those three steps, we would consider a further measure of asking people to work from home if they can for a limited time if that is supported by the data. Any responsible Government must prepare for all eventualities. Although these measures are not an outcome that anyone wants, it is one that we need to be ready for just in case.

Ever since we published our road map to recovery seven months ago, we have been carefully but cautiously getting this nation closer to normal life. Now we have

come so far and achieved so much, we must stay vigilant as we approach this critical chapter, so that we can protect the progress that we have all made together. I commend this statement to the House.

12.46 pm

Jonathan Ashworth (Leicester South) (Lab/Co-op): I thank the Secretary of State for advance sight of his statement. Like him, I want to send my condolences to the Prime Minister and the wider Johnson family at this difficult time.

Infection levels today are actually higher than they were at this time last year, so the test of the Secretary of State's plan A and plan B is whether we push infections down, minimise sickness and save lives, keep schools open, protect care homes, maintain access to all care in the national health service, and avoid a winter lockdown. He has talked about a plan B. Can he tell us what level of infection and hospitalisation would trigger plan B? Yesterday, Downing Street briefed about a lockdown as a last resort. What, then, is the first resort in combating the virus to avoid a winter lockdown? Will the Secretary of State rule out today local and regional lockdowns like we saw in my city of Leicester, in Bolton and in parts of West Yorkshire last year?

On vaccination, last night we had confirmation of a vaccine programme for children. We welcome and support that. The Secretary of State has now confirmed a booster jab as well. Again, we welcome and support that. But how will he boost vaccination in those areas of the country where vaccine take-up remains relatively low? For example, in Bradford, second doses are running at about 65%, in Wolverhampton at 65%, in Burnley at 69%, and in my own city of Leicester at 61%. What support will be made available to those areas, or others, so that they can boost vaccine take-up?

Vaccinating children is often justified, in my view wrongly, on the basis of its impact on adults and wider transmission. But children and young people would actually benefit further if vaccination rates were increased among adults. Among younger adults—25 to 30-year-olds—it is running at about 55% on a second dose, and among 30 to 35-year-olds at 68%. So what is the Secretary of State going to do to vaccinate more younger adults? What campaign is he going to run to get those vaccination rates up?

What is the plan for those who are immune-suppressed and have shielded throughout this crisis? For example, 1 million cancer patients cannot produce an immune response to vaccines. Will they be offered the prophylactic antibody treatments that are now available, or will they be expected to shield further throughout the winter?

The Secretary of State is right to raise flu and seasonal viruses, but he will know that the Australian flu season has been minimal. That is good for Australia, obviously, but it impacts the ability to collect samples to make an appropriate vaccine for the strain that might hit us. Is he confident of the effectiveness of the flu vaccine to match this year's strain?

On Test and Trace and wider diagnostics, we are likely to see more flu and RSV—respiratory syncytial virus—and more common colds and coughs. These are viruses with overlapping symptoms to covid, and an increasing range of symptoms is associated with covid as well. Will he look at multiplex testing, which as well

[Jonathan Ashworth]

as diagnosing whether someone is covid positive also diagnoses flu and RSV? The Academy of Medical Sciences has recommended this.

The Secretary of State said that PCR testing will continue free of charge through autumn and winter. I think that is the first time that a timeframe has been put on free PCR testing. Is he suggesting that we will move to a different system for PCR testing from next spring and summer, where perhaps people will be expected to pay for a test? Could he clarify the Government's thinking on testing next spring and summer and the rest of the year?

Isolation rules have changed, understandably, but we still need tracing systems. So will local authorities get the resources they need to do contact tracing? For those who need to isolate still, will local authorities have more money in their funds to pay isolation payments? We know that it is such a struggle for those who are low-paid, on zero-hours contracts and so on to isolate.

The Secretary of State has talked about mask wearing and working from home, but he has not talked about ventilation so much. We know that the virus is airborne. We know that workplaces have legal standards about the quantity of fresh air and purified air that is appropriate, so what will he do to drive up ventilation in workplaces and to support public buildings to install the relevant air purification kits, so that people are not effectively breathing in contaminated air?

The Secretary of State did not mention social care. One of the most devastating consequences of failing to protect care homes or to put that protective ring around them was the tragic number of deaths in care homes. The infection control fund ends on 30 September for social care. Will it be extended?

On vaccine passports, will the Secretary of State clarify what exactly the Government's position is now? What are the Government actually proposing? What will they ask the House to decide? On Sky, he said he was not ruling vaccine passports out. On the BBC, he said he was ruling the idea out. He is now saying they will keep it in reserve. Yesterday, Downing Street said that vaccine passports are a "first-line defence" against a winter wave. What exactly is the position? Rather than zig-zagging all over the place on vaccine passports, can we just get clarity and can the House make a final decision on whether or not we think they are an appropriate intervention?

Sajid Javid: The right hon. Gentleman asked a number of questions, so I will quickly plough through them. We have made clear that plan A is absolutely our focus. It is the situation we are in. Vaccines remain a critical part of it, as do testing and surveillance. I thank him for his support for our vaccine programme, including his comments yesterday. He also asked me about plan B. It is absolutely right that the Government have a contingency plan, and the trigger, so to speak, for plan B, as I mentioned in my statement, would be to look carefully at the pressures on the NHS. If at any point we deemed them to be unsustainable—if there was a significant rise in hospitalisations and we thought it was unsustainable—we would look carefully at whether we needed to take any of those plan B measures. That

would be informed by the data, and of course we would come to the House at the time and make the appropriate response.

It is really important to emphasise, as we cannot do enough, the importance of vaccines. We now know from data just yesterday from the Office for National Statistics that, in the first half of this year, 99% of those who died from covid-19 sadly were not vaccinated. That highlights the importance of vaccination.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about people who are immuno-suppressed. He will see that we set out more details on that in the plan we have published today, including treatments that either are currently available or may soon be available. I have mentioned the antivirals taskforce, which is doing great work. There are a number of possible new treatments, and it is something in which the UK is very engaged. He will know that, for those immuno-suppressed people who can take the vaccine, just last week, we announced a third dose as part of the primary treatment. That again is a reminder of the action we are taking. Our advisers are constantly looking to see what more we can do.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about the flu risk. It is a significant risk this year, not least because, for reasons we are all familiar with, there was not much flu last year. There is a lot less natural immunity around in our communities, and the flu vaccine, which is being deployed not only in the UK, but across Europe, has less efficacy than normal, but it is still effective and a worthwhile vaccine, and that is why we will be trying to maximise uptake with the biggest roll-out programme and communications programme that this country has ever seen for the flu vaccine.

On diagnosis, the right hon. Gentleman made a good point, and it is something that we are looking at with covid and flu jointly. On testing arrangements, I think I have set them out clearly in the statement. We have no plans to change the current arrangements, but of course we keep that constantly under review. However, as long as those tests are needed available free for the public, that will be the case. But as I say we will keep that under review.

In terms of infection control in social care settings, a substantial amount of funding is available. We have already made available for this financial year some £34 billion of funding in total for the NHS and the care system for a lot of these extra measures. That is a huge amount of funding. Much of it is going to essential work, such as infection control, and we will ensure that what is needed is there.

The right hon. Gentleman's last question was about vaccine certification. I think I have made the Government's position clear. It is not something we are implementing. We are not going ahead with any plans for that. For any Government to do something like that, it would be such a big decision, and it would have to be backed up by the evidence and the data. That evidence is not there, and I hope that we will never be in the situation that it is. To keep it in reserve is the right thing to do.

Jeremy Hunt (South West Surrey) (Con): I welcome this announcement, particularly on boosters. Yesterday, I asked the Minister for Covid Vaccine Deployment, my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi), when we would hear about boosters. Just

15 hours later, the Secretary of State is making a statement. It is almost as if the Government are listening, and it is very good news. Nowhere wants to get back to normal more quickly than the NHS itself.

Will the Secretary of State commit that the backlog in mental health treatment will be treated every bit as seriously as the backlog in physical health? In particular, will he commit that the NHS and the Government will continue to adhere to the mental health investment standard, which says that mental health spending will increase at a higher rate than overall NHS spending, particularly when it comes to the extra money coming from the levy? Parity of esteem is supported by all parts of the House and legislated for in this House. There is a lot of worry in the mental health world that the money from the levy will not reflect the needs of the mental health backlog.

Sajid Javid: First, I always listen to the former Health Secretary. He always has some good advice, and I am pleased that he thinks the Government are moving quickly. He is absolutely right to raise the backlog in mental health. The Government are absolutely committed to parity of esteem. That is not just in law, but in our manifesto. I take this opportunity to reassure everyone who is particularly concerned and who may have raised this issue with my right hon. Friend that that commitment remains. The new funding that will go in over the next three years to help to deal with the backlog absolutely includes mental health funding.

Martyn Day (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP): I start by extending my condolences and those of my party to the Prime Minister on his family bereavement. I am also grateful to the Secretary of State for advance sight of his statement, and I echo his call for vigilance and the importance of getting vaccinated. Covid data has shown how few deaths between January and July were among the fully vaccinated and clearly demonstrates the effect of vaccines in driving down deaths, which is a message we all have to take home to our constituencies.

With winter approaching and more favourable conditions for the transmission of the virus, it is welcome that we are extending vaccines to our younger citizens. The news on booster vaccines is also welcome. However, what more does the Secretary of State think can be done to encourage the million people over the age of 60 who have not yet been double-vaccinated to become so? The winter will be a difficult time for many in the UK, with the annual flu wave potentially coinciding with another covid wave. The disruption that that will entail will come immediately after the end of furlough and the universal credit uplift, and at a time of rising fuel bills. Why are the UK Government insisting on ending two of the key measures supporting people through the pandemic shortly before a potentially difficult winter for millions? It is essential that self-isolation remains affordable.

Finally, the UK Government have cancelled the contract with vaccine company Valneva, which was set to produce vaccines for the UK in Scotland, at its Livingston facility. Those on these Benches would be very grateful if the Secretary of State could provide an explanation of why the deal was cancelled before the trials were even completed, threatening jobs in Scotland.

Sajid Javid: I thank the hon. Gentleman for again raising the importance of vaccines. I agree wholeheartedly with what he said about that, and he is right to think about what more can be done to encourage people, and particularly older people—over 60s—throughout the UK to take up the offer. A number of things are being done both here in England and in Scotland to focus on that, including making greater use of family GPs and taking the time necessary to allay hesitant people's concerns, allowing them to speak to the clinicians to whom they want access to give them that comfort. That work will continue, and we are constantly looking for new and perhaps even better ways to do that.

On universal credit, it was made clear when the Government announced the increase that it was temporary. As it is temporary, it has to come to an end at some point, and the time for that is now. As our economy has—thankfully—started to reopen, job availability is increasing and economic growth has come back, and this is the right time to do that. However, as I said earlier, we must continue to provide the necessary financial support such as that for those who are self-isolating.

Lastly, the hon. Gentleman asked about Valneva. I should be careful what I say as there is a commercial contract, but it might help him to know that I have been in touch with the Health Minister in Scotland, who is fully aware of the situation. We remain in dialogue.

Esther McVey (Tatton) (Con): Given that figures sent to me by the Secretary of State's Department show that since the pandemic the number of hospital beds has fallen by more than 6,000, will he assure me that proper additional capacity will be built back into the NHS as part of his plan rather than resorting to hugely damaging lockdowns and restrictions?

Sajid Javid: My right hon. Friend is right to raise the importance of capacity in the NHS. She will know that the reason for the fall in capacity in the first place was to control the spread of the virus and ensure that those in hospital, who are naturally vulnerable in any case, are protected. Hospitals currently have what are referred to as green channels and red channels to try to segregate those who have the virus from those who do not. I assure her that the NHS keeps that under review and would like to get rid of the segregation as soon as possible. When it does, that will increase capacity.

Vicky Foxcroft (Lewisham, Deptford) (Lab): What are the Secretary of State's plans for communications with immunocompromised people who do not yet know how effective the vaccine is for them? As my right hon. Friend the Member for Leicester South (Jonathan Ashworth) said, the group accounts for 13.1% of deaths within the fully vaccinated population despite making up less than 1% of the general population. Does he agree that we should be advising them not to return to unsafe workplaces until we know more?

Sajid Javid: The hon. Lady is right to raise this important issue. Throughout the pandemic we have offered advice for those who are immunocompromised and given guidance through clinicians working with the NHS, and that is constantly updated as the nature of the covid threat is constantly changing. As I said a moment ago, we got clear advice that for certain people who are immunocompromised but can take the vaccine—I think it affects about 500,000 people—the antibody

[Sajid Javid]

response from two doses was not enough and there should be a third dose as part of a primary course. We accepted that advice and acted on it immediately. We will continue to keep that under review and do whatever we can.

Sir Graham Brady (Altrincham and Sale West) (Con): I welcome the Government's rethink on vaccine passports and hope that it presages a move to trusting people more to make decisions for themselves. The Secretary of State will know about the evidence that people who returned from green list and amber list countries over the summer had a lower level of covid than those who stayed here. Does he accept that that makes a powerful case for getting rid of the day 2 PCR test for people returning from those countries?

Sajid Javid: My hon. Friend is right to raise that point. That is why we have kept our travel rules relating to covid constantly under review. He may have heard that I referred in my statement to a set of changes that we are looking to make, and my right hon. Friend the Transport Secretary will bring those changes to the House as soon as he possibly can.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): The Secretary of State is quite correctly urging people to get vaccinated. He will be aware that, sadly, certain ethnic minorities have relatively low vaccine take-up, and we see that in my borough of Hackney. Has he considered anything that the Government could do nationally to support outreach to ethnic minority communities?

Sajid Javid: The right hon. Lady makes an important point. We want everyone to take up the offer of a vaccine, and she is right to point out the disparity in take-up in certain communities. The good news is that—I think partly as a response to Government action and especially because of the fantastic people I have come across in London working for Public Health England, who have worked with and reached out to communities to increase uptake—we saw a significant increase in uptake over the summer in the communities to which she referred. That work continues, and it remains a priority.

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con): I welcome the booster programme for the vulnerable as set out by my right hon. Friend, but may I ask him about the vexed issue of parental consent? The NHS website states that it would rarely be appropriate or safe for a child to consent without parents' involvement and that a parent's consent must be sought before vaccination. Will he confirm whether the intention is to follow that advice? If not, on what legal basis has that decision been made? The Gillick competence and later case law was intended for a far narrower set of circumstances than a mass roll-out of treatment to otherwise healthy children. If he is to make that decision, there must be parental consent to ensure credibility in the system.

Sajid Javid: I reassure my right hon. Friend that, first, the legal basis that we are following for vaccinations, and for child vaccinations in particular, has been set out since the 1980s and applied by successive Governments for all child vaccinations. The covid-19 vaccine offer

will work no differently from the processes currently deployed. That requires, in the first instance, parents to be asked for their consent.

I am told by the school-age immunisation service—the specialists in the school system who work on child vaccination—that there is no dispute between what a child and the parent decide in the vast majority of cases; it works normally. Where there is a difference of opinion between the parent and the child, the service will bring both parties together to try to reach consensus, and only in the rare situations where they cannot reach consensus is it determined through the Gillick competence whether the child in question is competent enough to make decisions regarding their own health. I am told that, in general, the older the child, the more likely there is to be a decision that they are competent enough, but I stress that this process has been followed for decades under successive Governments and we will not be changing it.

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): We know that the ring of protection that the Government spoke of last year was non-existent and left many vulnerable adults in social care exposed to infection. Will the Secretary of State therefore say what specific resources will be made available for care homes this winter to ensure that they have the staffing levels they need and to prevent the devastating infection rates we saw last year?

Sajid Javid: This year, we have already planned to spend an additional £34 billion on both the NHS and care homes, helping to pay for additional measures such as infection controls and some additional staffing costs. We keep that under constant review.

Angela Richardson (Guildford) (Con): I echo the comments my constituency neighbour and the Chair of the Health Committee, my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt) made in raising concerns about mental health. I am dealing at the moment with a constituent who has been sectioned under the Mental Health Act, but there were no beds in Surrey and she has had to be moved to Kent. Would my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State look at increasing capacity in the most severe cases so that families do not have to undertake such a journey in what is already a difficult set of circumstances for them?

Sajid Javid: My hon. Friend is right to raise that. It is a very difficult situation, as of course I think everyone in this House understands. It is one of the reasons we are increasing capacity—there is new funding and support—and it remains a priority.

Munira Wilson (Twickenham) (LD): Could I start by extending my condolences and, on behalf of my party, those of my right hon. and hon. Friends to the Prime Minister and his family today?

Children and young people have done everything that has been asked of them through this pandemic, as have their parents, yet children have paid a high price in lost learning and mental health particularly, and they have been an overthought for the Government throughout. It is all very well announcing today that the power to close schools in the Coronavirus Act will be expired—it makes a great headline—but the Health Secretary is

well aware that that power was never used previously to close schools; it was just guidance from the Education Secretary. Will the Health Secretary give pupils and parents across the country a cast-iron guarantee today that his Government will not close schools again this winter?

Sajid Javid: I think the hon. Lady would agree that we are as a country in a much better place today with covid than we were even at the start of this year. That is down to many factors, and I referred to a number of those in my statement, but I believe that with the measures we have set out today, we can be confident that our children will not have to go again through the kind of disruption they have seen in the last couple of years.

Mr David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con): The distinguishing characteristic of the emergency Coronavirus Act was not so much the new powers, which already existed in the Civil Contingencies Act 2014 and other Acts, but in the fact that Ministers were not required to get them approved by Parliament before implementation, which is one of the reasons for the poor quality of some of the decisions taken in the last year. Will the Secretary of State give an undertaking that any new regulations and indeed any regulations he retains will be put to the House before implementation, including vaccine certification if the Government are unwise enough to pursue that course?

Sajid Javid: I can tell my right hon. Friend that when the Government or any Government make decisions that have such an impact on people's liberties, even if those decisions are made for all the right reasons—in this case, of course, to deal with this pandemic—they should be working with the House and working with colleagues. On any measures that are significant, of course the Government will come to the House and seek a vote of the House.

Dame Meg Hillier (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op): The Secretary of State talked about international work, and unless we tackle this issue across the world we are going to be in a pandemic forever. When he was at the G20, he shared with other countries what we are doing to help tackle it internationally, so could he please share with the House what is being done to tackle vaccination rates across the globe?

Sajid Javid: I can tell the hon. Lady that there was significant discussion about that with my G20 colleagues, but not all of them have, let us say, behaved in the same way as the UK in offering donations to poorer countries of vaccines. The hon. Lady will know that we are committed to offering 100 million doses to international friends, and that we have already provided or donated 9.2 million doses, most of those for the COVAX programme. We remain committed to that programme, and one of the things we are trying to do internationally, including through the Foreign Secretary, is encourage more countries to honour their commitments to COVAX and encourage those who have not joined the COVAX commitment to come forward and help in that way.

Dean Russell (Watford) (Con): Across Watford, we are served by some amazing GP surgeries, including the Manor View practice and its team. However, I am hearing from constituents that some GP surgeries are

still not opening their doors to do face-to-face appointments. Would the Secretary of State agree with me that we should encourage those GP surgeries to start opening up to help with the backlog and help see people face to face?

Sajid Javid: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend, and he is right to raise this. I think everyone can understand why, during the height of the pandemic, GPs could not provide access in the normal way, but we are way past that now. Life is starting to return almost back to completely normal, and as that is happening it should be happening in our GP surgeries too. More GPs should be offering face-to-face access, and we intend to do a lot more about it.

Hannah Bardell (Livingston) (SNP): The Secretary of State rightly speaks of the importance of vaccines, and Valneva in my Livingston constituency is playing a crucial role in the global fight against covid. Those at Valneva have worked incredibly hard to augment and adapt their work on a vaccine as new variants have emerged, as requested by his UK Government. So, Mr Speaker, you can imagine their shock and mine that its contract to produce 100 million vaccines was cancelled with very little notice or consultation. To compound that shock, there appears to be little clarity and reasoning, and while I will not repeat the rumours printed in the media, does the Health Secretary not agree that this is a shocking way to treat a company that is working tirelessly on a vaccine? Will he meet me to ensure that the future of this site, its work and its workers is secure, and will he rethink this disastrous decision?

Sajid Javid: I have to say to the hon. Lady that I do not agree with her. There are commercial reasons why we have cancelled the contract, but I can tell her that it was also clear to us that the vaccine in question that the company was developing would not get approval by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency here in the UK, and obviously she is not recommending that we administer vaccines that do not get approval.¹ I do understand her point about Livingston and the factory there. That is very important to the UK Government and of course to the Scottish Government, and it is something we will be working on together to see what more we can do.

Dr Luke Evans (Bosworth) (Con): I have a clarification and a request. On the clarification, I welcome the boosters, but could the Secretary of State clarify whether people who have had the AstraZeneca or the Pfizer will be having the same vaccine or mixing vaccines? On the request, one of the slowest things when it comes to dealing with the Pfizer vaccination is the 15-minutes that people have to wait to see that they do not have a reaction. We should now have the data, so will he ask the NHS to look at whether this could be removed to relieve some of the pressure on those delivering the vaccines over the winter?

Sajid Javid: On the booster programme, everyone on that programme will be offered either the Pfizer vaccine or half a dose of the Moderna vaccine. In the vast majority of cases I think it will be the Pfizer vaccine. On the data that is now available on the 15-minute wait, we are analysing it to see whether we can make any difference to the way in which we administer vaccines.

1. [Official Report, 16 September 2021, Vol. 700, c. 10MC.]

Jack Dromey (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab): Jane Roche from Erdington lost her father to covid and then, five days later, lost her sister to covid. She led the hundreds of families who came to London last week to walk down the memorial wall, calling with one voice for the promised inquiry to take place. They are frustrated because they want not just to know why their family members died, but that no one else should die as a consequence of mistakes made. When will the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister agree to honour the pledge that has been made to meet Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice, because those families have a right to be heard at the next stages?

Sajid Javid: The hon. Gentleman is right to raise the concerns of Jane and many others up and down the country and to express her frustration in the way he did. I am certain that, when this inquiry gets going, people such as Jane and many others will have the opportunity to set out their views.

Mr Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con): First, thank you, Mr Speaker, for granting the statement last night. I think it was important that the House heard at an early opportunity the Government's decision. Regretfully, there were one or two inadvertent inaccuracies in some responses to the questions, but having raised those with the Minister for Covid Vaccine Deployment, whom I respect greatly, I am very pleased to say that a correction has either been made or is going to be made very quickly. I think it is admirable that the Department has sought to put the record straight at a very early opportunity.

In his statement, the Secretary of State said of those in education:

"Regular asymptomatic testing...will also continue in the coming months".

My understanding is that there was to be a review at the end of September of regularly testing children who have no symptoms. Is that still going to continue? My view is that we should not be regularly testing children who have no symptoms, only those who have symptoms, and that is also the view of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. Can I urge the Secretary of State to drop regular asymptomatic testing of children, which I think would be good for their education and good for their mental health?

Sajid Javid: My right hon. Friend mentioned yesterday's statement. My hon. Friend the Minister for Covid Vaccine Deployment was referring to whether the Department had received advice on boosters from the Joint Committee on Vaccines and Immunisation, but at the time of his statement he was not aware that we had received such advice. As my right hon. Friend says, that was inadvertent, and the Minister has written a letter of correction that will go in the Library of the House today. Asymptomatic testing of schoolchildren is planned to continue this month. I am not aware whether a final decision has been made on whether we will continue beyond that, and that is something on which my Department consults the Department for Education. My right hon. Friend's general point is that we should end such testing as soon as we can, especially if we believe it is not making much of a difference. Of course we keep the issue under review, and if we continue with it, it must be supported by the evidence.

Dame Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab): In Wirral there has been a 13% increase in levels of infection in one week, and sadly four people have died in hospital. After a period of there being very few deaths, we now have a much higher infection rate. What level of deaths are the Government prepared to accept from covid before they consider measures to try to prevent the ongoing spread?

Sajid Javid: No one wants to see deaths from any disease, including covid. As we have learned more about covid, everyone understands that it is not completely preventable, but our vaccines are making a difference in Wirral and across the country. There is no level of deaths that I would describe as acceptable, and the job of the Government is to keep that to an absolute minimum. However, there are not just covid deaths, and we must also be alive to deaths from cancer, heart disease and other things. As the hon. Lady will know, at the height of the restrictions many people suffered in other ways because they were not able to go to the NHS, and we must keep that at the front of our minds.

Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): Covid has been tough for all health professionals, so will the Secretary of State wholeheartedly condemn the abuse that some GPs have been suffering recently? If vulnerable people are unable to get through on the telephone to their surgery, should it be the clinical commissioning group or the Department that steps in to try to sort that out?

Sajid Javid: I join my hon. Friend in condemning anyone who gives abuse to our fantastic GPs up and down the country. If someone cannot get through to their GP, they should try their clinical commissioning group. If for any reason that does not work, they should please come to the Department and consult Ministers.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck (South Shields) (Lab): The Secretary of State has not delivered a concrete plan today, and there is no real clarity on thresholds for further lockdowns, or details of what draconian and unnecessary powers in the Coronavirus Act 2020 he wants to hold on to. Will he at least say when that soon-to-expire Act will be back before the House for a vote?

Sajid Javid: May I suggest that the hon. Lady reads the plan before she comments on it?

Steve Brine (Winchester) (Con): I welcome much of what is a sensible plan from the Secretary of State, although I have a creeping feeling that we are preparing to treat flu like covid, more than the other way round. Before we start extending the vaccine programme and boosters, will the Secretary of State get a grip on the creeping issue of people who have had one vaccination in England and another in Scotland, or the other way round, but the two systems are not talking to each other, and people are not getting the benefits of having been fully jabbed? We need to deliver for those who have done what we asked them to do before we deliver vaccines to others.

Sajid Javid: My hon. Friend is right to make that point—indeed, people in my family had that very issue. I know that the Minister for Covid Vaccine Deployment

is looking at that matter, and I have discussed it with the health Minister in Scotland. We are working to see what more we can do.

Dave Doogan (Angus) (SNP): As we go into another winter, placing the welfare of our communities in the hands of health and social care staff, will the Secretary of State reflect on the fact that in England the 3% NHS pay rise does not marry up well with the 4% backdated pay rise in Scotland? Why will he not grant the same esteem to health and social care staff in England as we do in Scotland?

Sajid Javid: When it came to the pay rise to which the hon. Gentleman refers, we accepted the recommendation of the independent pay review body. I think that was the right thing to do.

Greg Clark (Tunbridge Wells) (Con): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the likely course of the pandemic means that more and more people, vaccinated or not, are likely to be infected by covid, but that levels of protection from the vaccines will keep them from serious disease? Will he say something about the triggers for any future lockdown or other restrictions, and confirm that the expected increase in the transmission of covid will not be among them?

Sajid Javid: My right hon. Friend is right about the importance of vaccines. On any potential triggers, I have not yet today mentioned the importance of being on guard against future variants, especially if there is ever a vaccine-escape variant. No one can rule that out, which is why our surveillance system is so important, and in that situation the Government would have to take further action. We cannot say today what such action would be, but that is the kind of risk against which we need to be on guard.

Dame Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): Hull has the second highest rate of covid infection in the country, and one ward in my constituency has only 51% coverage of second doses of the covid vaccination. The Secretary of State said that the national average is 81%, and those figures go to the heart of our problems with regional and health inequalities. How will he ensure that we maximise the number of people in Hull who receive the vaccination, so that people in Hull are not left behind in the recovery?

Sajid Javid: Of course no one should be left behind, wherever they are in the UK. The differential take-up of the vaccine can be based on a number of factors—for example, there is definitely a difference in age groups. Working with the NHS, we are trying to tailor our message to convince people about the benefits of the vaccine to those respective age groups, and we also try to do that on a localised basis. If the right hon. Lady has any particular suggestions about Hull, we would be more than happy to listen to her.

Sir Desmond Swayne (New Forest West) (Con): The Secretary of State retains all the powers of the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984, which were used to take away our liberties without prior parliamentary authority. Will he undertake to review that and to give us a new public health Act?

Sajid Javid: We keep all rules and Acts under review at all times.

Mr Ben Bradshaw (Exeter) (Lab): The Secretary of State will know from the discussions he describes with international colleagues that although travel in the rest of Europe has recovered to 60% of pre-covid levels, it is a fraction of that in the United Kingdom. When will he scrap the outdated, unnecessary and hugely expensive travel testing regime, save what is left of an industry, and end a situation in which foreign travel has once again become the preserve of the rich?

Sajid Javid: I would say two things to the right hon. Gentleman. First, it is important that we have a system of surveillance, especially for variants across the world. There are different ways to do that. We have chosen a particular path at the moment, and I hope he agrees it is important to have that surveillance. Also, as I said in my statement, we are planning to make some changes to the travel regime, and my right hon. Friend the Transport Secretary will come to the House as soon as he is ready.

Saqib Bhatti (Meriden) (Con): Time and again I hear from constituents that they cannot get face-to-face appointments with GPs, who I know are under immense pressure. Further to the answer that he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Dean Russell), will the Secretary of State elaborate on the work that he and his Department are doing to encourage GPs to give face-to-face appointments to those who need them?

Sajid Javid: Yes, I will. This is an important issue, and we are working on it with the British Medical Association, the NHS, and other important organisations. We can do a number of things, but we are trying to do so by agreement at this point. My hon. Friend is right to raise that issue and, as I said, it is high time that GPs started operating in the way they did before the pandemic, and offering face-to-face appointments to everyone who would like one.

Anum Qaisar-Javed (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): The first issue that the Secretary of State mentioned in his statement was the importance of vaccines. We know that 40% of the world's population has been single-vaccinated against covid, but only 1.8% of those in low-income countries have been vaccinated, and those countries are not on track to vaccinate their populations until 2023. To be frank, the Government have previously taken a dangerous route with their international policies, such as their anti-refugee Bill for an insular Britain. Will they commit to ensuring that the UK plays its part in vaccinating the poorest nations in the world, first to save lives and secondly to avoid the potential emergence of further covid variations?

Sajid Javid: We are more than playing our part, Mr Speaker.

Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): I know that the international travel sector will welcome the framework. Given that it will come out on 1 October, will that give colleagues, and indeed Select Committees, the opportunity to feed in their ideas on behalf of their constituents? Will the Secretary of State entertain the idea of moving to lateral flow tests, which are cheaper, with only the small proportion of positive cases needing to take a PCR test?

Sajid Javid: I know that these are important issues for the House, and particularly for my hon. Friend, who chairs the Transport Committee. I do not want to pre-empt the statement by my right hon. Friend the Transport Secretary, but I believe that when he makes that statement, my hon. Friend will be pleased.

Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): Pages 23 and 24 of the autumn and winter plan specify that, as part of plan B, the Government will introduce vaccine passports for all nightclubs, for indoor settings of 500 people or more, which presumably would include this Chamber of 650 Members, for outdoor settings of 4,000 or more, and for anywhere—that is a very big place—where there are 10,000 people. How does the Secretary of State square that with his assertion in reply to the shadow Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Leicester South (Jonathan Ashworth), that the evidence on the usefulness of vaccine passports is just not there? If the evidence is not there, why are they part of plan B? The Government's document also says that plan B could be brought into force at very short notice, so can the Secretary of State give the House some assurance that that will not happen without a vote?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): We need short questions and short answers.

Sajid Javid: We have made huge progress as a country in fighting this virus, and that is why we do not need certification; we do not need the plan B measures that the right hon. Gentleman has just set out. As I made in clear in my statement, while we can keep other measures in reserve, what matters is what we are actually doing, and if we keep making progress against this virus in the way that we are, we will not need any of the things he talked about.

Jason McCartney (Colne Valley) (Con): It is worth highlighting once again the latest stats from the Office for National Statistics, which show that almost 99% of covid deaths in the first half of this year were of people who had not received both doses of the covid-19 vaccine. That really shows the importance of our world-leading vaccination programme. As we roll out these booster jabs, how will the Secretary of State build on the success of the network of GP surgeries, community pharmacies and volunteers who have helped, particularly in my part of the world, roll out all these covid vaccinations?

Sajid Javid: My hon. Friend is right to raise that. The booster jabs will be hugely important in maintaining protection. The GP networks and the NHS vaccination centres have all been part of our planning for this. Given that these are booster jabs, I think we can move much more quickly than we did with the original doses.

Emma Hardy (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab): Parents will quite rightly have questions and concerns, but can the Secretary of State confirm that those questions and concerns should not be directed to school staff or headteachers, even if the vaccination happens to take place in a school building, and that all questions related to the vaccine should instead be directed to the appropriate medical team?

Sajid Javid: Yes.

Mr Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con): Among other things, my right hon. Friend is keeping covid status certification in reserve, and he is leaving mass asymptomatic testing in place, together with contact tracing. As my right hon. Friend the Member for New Forest West (Sir Desmond Swayne) said, the public health powers are still there, of course allowing the Secretary of State to lock us down at the stroke of his pen without prior votes or any formal way of justifying the proportionality of those powers. When can we expect all those things to be dealt with, so that we can all have the certainty that will come from knowing that, thanks to the vaccine, we are living with an endemic disease, in the way that we live with the endemic disease flu, and we can all get on with our lives?

Sajid Javid: I know that my hon. Friend may not agree with every measure that the Government are keeping in place or have set out, but I hope that he agrees that at least the measures that I have set out—around making sure that we are vaccinating the public, offering vaccines to as many people as possible, having some kind of testing regime, and having some surveillance of the results of those tests to look out for any new variants—are the right measures and the kinds of things that need to be done as we live with covid-19.

Patricia Gibson (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP): We were told by the UK Government that vaccine passports were going ahead, then they were not going ahead, then we were told that they were still the first line of defence against a winter wave, and now the latest position is that they are a definite maybe. We have not seen such dithering since the great confusion over mask wearing, which we can see if we look around this Chamber. How irresponsible does the Secretary of State think that dangerous and confused public messaging is during a pandemic?

Sajid Javid: I believe we have been very clear on this issue.

Jane Hunt (Loughborough) (Con): Last Friday, Leicestershire MPs met NHS officials locally. We were told that around three quarters of all those in hospital with covid were not vaccinated. Does my right hon. Friend agree that if we do not want to be in lockdown this winter, all who can get the vaccine should get it, especially in Leicester, where I now understand from the shadow Secretary of State's comments that take-up is only 61%?

Sajid Javid: I agree with my hon. Friend. Some 6 million adults throughout the UK remain unvaccinated, and we should all do that we can to at least encourage them to think about taking the vaccine, not only to protect themselves but to protect their loved ones.

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): I am seriously concerned about the hole in the Secretary of State's defence—taking away contact tracing from public health teams. The data coming through is now completely insufficient to carry out an effective operation locally and therefore to lock down the virus, and not people, in the future. Will he look at that and ensure that local authorities such as York can have that zero data so we can get on top of contact tracing as soon as the data emerges?

Sajid Javid: There are measures that, when it makes sense, we must remove. The reason that we can take a different approach to contact tracing than we did a few months ago is largely down to the high rates of vaccination we are seeing throughout the country. Of course we want them to increase, but as we vaccinate more, that allows us to start removing these restrictions, additional costs and burdens on individual livelihoods. It is right that we take a balanced approach and keep increasing vaccination so we can keep removing other restrictions.

Mr Simon Clarke (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) (Con): I welcome the Secretary of State's statement. May I raise the plight of care home residents, many of whom have been kept apart from their families and loved ones owing to outbreaks being declared in their home? Obviously, we need to strike a proportionate balance here, but the threshold for intervention by declaring an outbreak is really quite low. Will the Secretary of State commit to looking at that so we can ensure that people can see their loved ones throughout the winter ahead?

Sajid Javid: Yes, I can give my hon. Friend that commitment. He may also be interested to know that, with the booster announcement today, care home residents will be an absolute priority.

Layla Moran (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD): Back in June, the Prime Minister committed the UK and other G7 nations to vaccinating the world by the end of 2022 and

“to end this terrible pandemic”.

Can the Secretary of State tell the House how offering a third vaccine to a fully vaccinated, healthy adult in the UK before a first vaccine to a nurse in a lower-income country helps that goal of vaccinating the world by 2022?

Sajid Javid: I do understand the point the hon. Lady makes, but may I suggest that, if she has not yet, she should read the JCVI's advice on booster vaccines? I think then she might better appreciate the importance of the booster programme.

Dr Ben Spencer (Runnymede and Weybridge) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for his statement. I think we all hope that plan B is not activated, but may I follow up the question asked by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tunbridge Wells (Greg Clark) and ask the Secretary of State to lay out exactly what “unsustainable pressure” means? In his assessment of NHS capacity over winter, where does he see the bottleneck? Is it staff? Is it medication? Is it beds? What work is being done to enhance that capacity?

Sajid Javid: When I talked earlier about unsustainable pressure, it would be things like hospital occupancy, in particular in intensive care units, the admissions of vaccinated individuals versus unvaccinated individuals and the rate of growth in admissions. I know there is a lot there, but I think it is right that there is not one particular trigger and that we take a number of issues into account. I hope my hon. Friend agrees that the Government are right to plan for all contingencies.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): On behalf of the Democratic Unionist party, I convey my sincere sympathies to the Prime Minister and his family on the death of his

mun. I thank the Secretary of State for his statement and for his efforts on behalf of us all. Will he confirm that the booster roll-out for the over-50s will be managed in line with the flu jab roll-out, which seems to be facing some delay? Will he further confirm that additional funding is being allocated to GP practices to enable the enhanced roll-out to take place?

Sajid Javid: Yes. GPs do get and will get additional funding to support vaccination programmes, including the flu vaccination programme. In terms of co-administering the covid vaccine with the flu vaccine, if that is what the hon. Gentleman was asking, while the JCVI said that in its opinion there is no reason why that should not happen—it thinks that that can work—in practical terms, mainly because of the 15-minute wait after a Pfizer jab, it will probably happen in very few cases. Regardless, the flu vaccination programme this year will also be a very high priority.

Ruth Edwards (Rushcliffe) (Con): As my right hon. Friend said, our vaccination programme has enabled us to get almost back to normal. Will he join me in thanking staff and volunteers at Gamston community centre, who have been rolling out the vaccine in Rushcliffe and giving my constituents the best protection they can have against coronavirus?

Sajid Javid: Yes, of course I will. Gamston community centre, and community centres, village halls and so many other places up and down the country, including of course in my hon. Friend's constituency, have done an amazing job. We still need them to help in our fight against the virus.

Gary Sambrook (Birmingham, Northfield) (Con): As the Secretary of State may know, in Birmingham, Northfield, just next door to his own constituency, vaccine take-up has been about 75%. Unfortunately, in some parts of Birmingham it has been as low as 47%. Will he join me in encouraging anyone who is hesitant about taking the vaccine to take part in Birmingham City Council's quick one-minute survey about why they have those anxieties? It is very important that we all understand where those anxieties lie, because, after all, the vaccine is pivotal to our success.

Sajid Javid: Yes, I will join my hon. Friend in encouraging people to do that. It will be a one minute very well spent.

Jack Brereton (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Con): Across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, uptake of the vaccine has been very good. I thank all those who have been delivering the vaccine across Stoke-on-Trent in particular. Many 16 and 17-year-olds currently cannot use the online booking system. They have to wait for their GP to contact them or for one of the very few walk-in centres. Will my right hon. Friend look at extending that online booking system to all 16 and 17-year-olds?

Sajid Javid: I can tell my hon. Friend that we keep that under review. At the moment, we have found that the quickest way to encourage 16 and 17-year-olds to take up the offer is through the schools and colleges network, and through GPs in particular. We keep that under review, but he might be interested to know the

[Sajid Javid]

latest numbers are that over 54% of 16 and 17-year-olds are vaccinated. There is progress to be made, but that is good progress so far.

James Wild (North West Norfolk) (Con): My local hospital, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, which as my right hon. Friend knows needs to be rebuilt, currently has 46 covid patients. Is not the best way to ensure that the QEH and the NHS have the capacity to cope with winter pressures to increase the level of vaccine take-up? Will he ensure that evidence of what works in doing that is shared across the country?

Sajid Javid: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. That is one reason why we are constantly publishing more and more information on the impact and effectiveness of vaccines, including the data from the ONS today, which I referred to earlier.

Sara Britcliffe (Hyndburn) (Con): The Secretary of State will be aware that Hyndburn and Haslingden have faced restrictions for longer than most in the country. Will he please clarify whether local restrictions are being considered by the Government and, if so, what they might be?

Sajid Javid: I was not sure from my hon. Friend's question whether she was referring only to her own area or more generally in terms of local restrictions. In terms of the plans I announced today, the Government will retain some powers for local restrictions, working with local authorities, if absolutely necessary. If she is interested more in the current situation in her own area, I or other Ministers will be happy to talk with her.

Paul Holmes (Eastleigh) (Con): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Dean Russell), may I emphasise to the Secretary of State the amount of anger there is in Eastleigh about not being able to get a face-to-face appointment with a GP? He stood at the Dispatch Box and encouraged GPs to get back to work. If necessary, and if that uptake has not happened, will he instruct them to get back to work, so we can at least have face-to-face appointments for my constituents?

Sajid Javid: I agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of giving patients the choice. Some patients actually prefer not to have a face-to-face appointment. They may be at work and they might like that kind of technology, and that is fine, but the important thing is that for those who want to have a face-to-face appointment it should be made available. The Department and the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St Edmunds (Jo Churchill) are looking at what measures can be taken. My hon. Friend will be more than happy to meet him to take him through some of those initiatives.

Antony Higginbotham (Burnley) (Con): The NHS and volunteers across Burnley and Padiham have done a brilliant job of vaccinating people, but we know there is still hesitancy about getting the vaccine. That includes not only people who have not turned up or do not want to have the first vaccine, but those who have had the first vaccine but are then hesitant about the second. What steps is the Secretary of State taking to understand why that hesitancy is there and what we can do to try to get people the vaccine?

Sajid Javid: I am pleased that my hon. Friend has raised this issue of where, in a minority of cases, someone has taken a first dose but has become hesitant about the second. In all those cases, people are being individually contacted, often by their GPs or other clinicians, and offered meetings and phone calls. They are being talked to, to try to encourage them to take the second dose. It is really important that in that situation people follow up with a second dose to get the full protection they deserve.

Tom Hunt (Ipswich) (Con): We have heard a lot about variants and how they can evade the vaccine. It was not that long ago that I was reading a lot about enhancing and tweaking the existing vaccines, and potentially even a universal vaccine that was a kind of a variant-busting vaccine. What are things looking like in that regard, and what is the possible timeframe in which we can release a vaccine that can better protect us against variants?

Sajid Javid: I think it is reasonable to assume that at some point in the future, perhaps as early as next year, there may be what I referred to as bi-variant or perhaps even multi-variant vaccines. The flu vaccine is a multi-variant vaccine, for example. In terms of availability and getting approval from regulators, we are not there yet, but I believe that is the general direction of travel. When we do get there, I think it will be much easier to live with covid-19.

Aaron Bell (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Con): My constituents have very much enjoyed getting back to normal in these last few weeks, so I welcome what the Secretary of State said, in particular on plan A. Does he agree that, while we must not be complacent, we must also not be overcautious? To that end, what assessment has he made of the data in the past few weeks and whether it utterly vindicates the Government's decision to proceed on 19 July, a decision they took in the teeth of some opposition?

Sajid Javid: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to raise that point. Many people, including many in this House, especially those on the Opposition Benches, told us that the decision we made to go ahead with step 4 and remove all those restrictions was the wrong one. Events have clearly shown that we made the right decision. The status of the pandemic at the moment is that cases are steady. We of course have to remain vigilant, but my hon. Friend makes a very fair point.

Points of Order

1.48 pm

Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West) (SNP): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Yesterday, during the statement on Afghanistan, the Minister with responsibility for Afghan relocation—the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, the hon. Member for Louth and Horncastle (Victoria Atkins)—said that “we have to be very careful about offering either encouragement or support for people who may be in a perilous situation in Afghanistan on making that journey to borders.”—[*Official Report*, 13 September 2021; Vol. 700, c. 688.]

She also sent a “Dear Colleague” letter, which said the Government

“cannot pursue cases concerning Afghan people in country in the usual ways”,

and asked us to signpost people to gov.uk for the latest information on the Afghan relocation and assistance policy and the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme. It was therefore surprising to hear a Government Member—the hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Tom Tugendhat)—say yesterday:

“I pay enormous tribute not only to my hon. Friend the Minister but to the Home Secretary, whom I was texting barely half an hour before I came into the Chamber about an Afghan who is currently near a border, and she was personally sorting out the transit documents that I hope will enable him to come through.”—[*Official Report*, 13 September 2021; Vol. 700, c. 690.]

I am very pleased that that individual was able to make the journey, but it seems that we have a two-tier system here for advocacy. I and probably many Opposition Members do not have the Home Secretary’s phone number, so I am wondering how I can raise cases, because I have a large Afghan community in my constituency and I have been inundated with cases of people who are concerned. How do we raise such cases?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving me notice of her point of order. I am sure she will understand that it is not for the Chair to police how right hon. and hon. Members communicate with one another. However, it is extremely important that all Members can make effective contact with Government Departments and that all Members get responses in good time. I feel that that is particularly true in the case of Afghanistan, where many of the issues are of the utmost urgency. I do expect, and I know the Speaker expects, Ministers to do everything they can to make sure that they and their Departments are responsible to all right hon. and hon. Members. I hope that those on the Treasury Bench will feed back the concern that has been raised.

Layla Moran (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Thank you very much for your answer, because it helped to provide clarification, and I thank the hon. Member for Glasgow North West (Carol Monaghan) for raising the point of order. I share her concern; my office alone is supporting 400 Afghans. I just point out that the “Dear Colleague” letter said that the Government “cannot pursue” these cases and that they would consider “how this data will be used in the future”,

which seemed to suggest that all the correspondence that MPs have been sending to the Department will not

be answered. Furthermore, it says to us not to write to the Department. Is that proper? In my time as an MP—it has been four years now—sometimes letters have been late, but they have always come back.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. Lady for that further point of order. I know that this was raised quite a few times in the urgent question yesterday. Again, I am sure that those on the Treasury Bench will take that point back and ensure that right hon. and hon. Members get clarification about the situation.

Mr David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I raise this partly for information and partly with regard to the role of the Chair in protecting the rights of the House. We have all the stages of a very important Bill being taken in one day today. This is incredibly unusual. Normally, it is done only for matters that are very urgent—typically, terrorism legislation, with imminent terrorist attacks and so on. The last time that it was done inappropriately was the Data Retention and Investigatory Powers Act 2014, on which you may remember, Madam Deputy Speaker, I took the Government to court and they lost at all levels. I would not like to see something like that happen to the business today. Can you tell the House who approves such a proposal when the Government brings it to the House? Is it the Speaker? Is it the Opposition Front Benchers? Is it an instrument of the House? How does it come to be that we are faced with the option solely of having to take all this very important, very effective legislation all in one day?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for notice of that point of order. He is a very experienced Member of Parliament and former Minister. The Government have put their proposals for the timetable in the business of the House motion, and it is for the House to decide whether it agrees with the motion. There is the opportunity for the House to disagree with that motion. That is the way it will work today. I am confident that the right hon. Gentleman will have made his concerns clear to the Government and many other people—

Mr David Davis: The powers that be.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The powers that be. That is how it works. The House has the option to reject the motion if it does not like it.

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I will take the further point of order, but I must say that we do need to move on.

Mr Baron: Very briefly, Madam Deputy Speaker, is there anything that Mr Speaker can do about extending the time that Parliament has to scrutinise this important legislation today? We are raising tens of billions of pounds for a social care reform of which Parliament has had no opportunity to scrutinise the details. In fact, I am not even sure that the details have been supplied. That is the wrong way of going about business in this place and it does not reflect well on us here.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman could have tabled an amendment to the business of the House motion and given the House different choices as to how long it wished to spend discussing the Bill. As it is, it is in the hands of the House to decide whether it accepts or otherwise the business of the House motion. I hope that is clear.

Jonathan Ashworth (Leicester South) (Lab/Co-op): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. May I reinforce the point that the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay (Mr Baron) just made? If Ministers are going to impose on our constituents a punishing, unfair tax rise, surely a Health Minister must come to the House and explain what that money is actually going to be spent on.

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is obviously a point of a view—it has been expressed previously by Members in different parts of the House—but it is not really a matter for the Chair. I am sure that it may come up in debate. Having said that, I think we should now move on to the ten-minute rule motion.

Non-Disclosure Agreements (No. 2)

Motion for leave to bring in a Bill (Standing Order No. 23)

1.56 pm

Mrs Maria Miller (Basingstoke) (Con): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to restrict the use of non-disclosure agreements; and for connected purposes.

We have some of the best laws and regulations in the world to protect people from bullying, discrimination and abuse in the workplace, yet we allow scurrilous employers to conceal unlawful wrongdoing through the use of non-disclosure agreements, effectively rendering legal protections that we have voted for in this Chamber null and void. Many hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people a year—people we represent—do not have access to proper protection at work because we are allowing employers, through their lawyers and HR professionals, to cover up wrongdoing through an apparently legitimate means: non-disclosure agreements.

Let us be clear from the outset that most employers value and invest in their staff, knowing that they are their most important asset, and most employees never experience the sort of discrimination, bullying and worse that non-disclosure agreements are being used to cover up. It is absolutely right that employees can be required not to divulge confidential information that they have access to in the course of their employment and almost every employment contract should, and would, contain such provisions. But that is not the same as a non-disclosure agreement, which seeks to silence the disclosure of wrongdoing experienced at work. Non-disclosure agreements were invented by lawyers to protect intellectual property, not to create an atmosphere of secrecy in the workplace.

I believe that the use of non-disclosure agreements is driving the wrong culture in the British workplace—a culture where poor management can be covered up and where the silence of employees who have experienced significant wrongdoing can effectively be purchased, even motivating a small number of employees to vexatiously seek payouts from employers by making spurious allegations. We simply have to break this damaging cycle. My Bill would do just that: it would make it a basic principle of our legal system that no one, however powerful, could buy an employee's silence if there were allegations of wrongdoing in the workplace.

Putting that into practice is not simple. If an employer is willing to cover up even unlawful behaviour with an NDA, what is stopping their putting pressure on employees to withdraw allegations of wrongdoing in return for a pay-out and an NDA never to divulge what has happened? There is a powerful argument to completely ban NDAs for that reason alone, but we need to look to the legal sector to see whether there is a transparent way to resolve that tension. If not, a ban is the only option.

At the moment, non-disclosure agreements are completely unregulated. They can be, and are being, used to attempt to cover up even criminal allegations; they can even include unenforceable conditions to scare employees away from seeking support or redress from the criminal justice system or the employment tribunal system. My Bill would change that by restricting the use of non-disclosure agreements and ensuring that employees could always enjoy the protection of the law as intended.

I commend the work that the Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Paul Scully), who is in his place on the Front Bench, is doing on the matter, but I know that over the past four years Ministers have faced significant problems in tackling it. Since the #MeToo campaign started in 2017 and the Women and Equalities Committee published its report in 2019, the scale of the problem has been very difficult for the Government to get their hands around. No statistics are published, because people who have agreed to an NDA may feel that they cannot tell a third party that they have undertaken such an agreement. That is why I support Can't Buy My Silence, the new campaign launched today by Zelda Perkins, which will enable people who have had bad experiences of NDAs to talk publicly about them for the first time, anonymously.

Some people have expressed concerns to me that those who have suffered wrongdoing simply want to get out of the situation and get on with their life. Nothing in the Bill would stop that. If an employee makes an allegation of wrongdoing that an employer will not investigate and resolve, the employee could still accept an offer to leave an organisation in return for financial compensation; the change would be that employers could not demand a non-disclosure agreement, because it would be unlawful. That would be an important step forward.

I welcome the Government's early indications in the violence against women and girls strategy, which was published in July, that they would review the use of NDAs in universities in cases of sexual harassment. However, if NDAs are wrong when they are used to cover up the sexual harassment of students, why are they not wrong when they relate to the sexual harassment of mature students, members of university staff or people who work in other types of organisation, or when they relate to other sorts of harm?

In acknowledging the harm caused by NDAs, as they have done in the VAWG strategy, I believe that the Government must act consistently and outlaw their use when there are allegations of wrongdoing elsewhere. The Government already have their own evidence, which came through in their 2019 consultation, of the dreadful harms caused to people's mental health through non-disclosure agreements.

There may be people listening to the debate who are concerned that they have used non-disclosure agreements at work, maybe even to cover up wrongdoing. There may be employment lawyers listening who are concerned that they might face professional sanctions if the law changed. These are really important issues that we need to tackle, because the legal profession needs to resolve the matter and find a way forward. Such fears cannot stop a long-overdue clean-up of UK working practices.

Legislation is already being considered and put in place in California, Canada, Ireland—the list goes on. We cannot be left behind. We need to legislate for change. We can no longer pretend that abuse of the law is not happening; it is happening, and the Government have evidence of that. Parliament must legislate now if we are to ensure that everybody is protected equally at work under the law.

Question put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That Mrs Maria Miller, Mrs Flick Drummond, Mary Robinson, Sarah Champion, Angela Crawley, Kevin Hollinrake, Jo Gideon, Andrea Leadsom, Tulip Siddiq, Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck and Philip Davies present the Bill.

Mrs Maria Miller accordingly presented the Bill.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 18 March 2022, and to be printed (Bill 162).

Health and Social Care Levy Bill: Business of the House

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the following provisions shall apply to the proceedings on the Health and Social Care Levy Bill:

Timetable

(1) (a) Proceedings on Second Reading and in Committee of the whole House, any proceedings on Consideration and proceedings on Third Reading shall be taken at today's sitting in accordance with this Order.

(b) Proceedings on Second Reading shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the Motion for this Order.

(c) Proceedings in Committee of the whole House and any proceedings on Consideration shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion six hours after the commencement of proceedings on the Motion for this Order.

(d) Proceedings on Third Reading shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion seven hours after the commencement of proceedings on the Motion for this Order.

(e) This paragraph shall have effect notwithstanding the practice of the House as to the intervals between stages of a Bill brought in upon Ways and Means Resolutions.

Timing of proceedings and Questions to be put

(2) When the Bill has been read a second time:

(a) it shall, despite Standing Order No. 63 (Committal of bills not subject to a programme order), stand committed to a Committee of the whole House without any Question being put;

(b) proceedings on the Bill shall stand postponed while the Question is put, in accordance with Standing Order No. 52(1)(a) (Money resolutions and ways and means resolutions in connection with bills), on any financial resolution relating to the Bill;

(c) on the conclusion of proceedings on any financial resolution relating to the Bill, proceedings on the Bill shall be resumed and the Speaker shall leave the chair whether or not notice of an Instruction has been given.

(3) (a) On the conclusion of proceedings in Committee of the whole House, the Chair shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question.

(b) If the Bill is reported with amendments, the House shall proceed to consider the Bill as amended without any Question being put.

(4) For the purpose of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph (1), the Chair or Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions in the same order as they would fall to be put if this Order did not apply:

(a) any Question already proposed from the chair;

(b) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed;

(c) the Question on any amendment, new Clause or new Schedule selected by the Chair or Speaker for separate decision;

(d) the Question on any amendment moved or Motion made by a Minister of the Crown;

(e) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded; and shall not put any other questions, other than the question on any motion described in paragraph (9)(a) of this Order.

(5) On a Motion made for a new Clause or a new Schedule, the Chair or Speaker shall put only the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill.

(6) If two or more Questions would fall to be put under paragraph (4)(d) on successive amendments moved or Motions made by a Minister of the Crown, the Chair or Speaker shall instead put a single Question in relation to those amendments or Motions.

(7) If two or more Questions would fall to be put under paragraph (4)(e) in relation to successive provisions of the Bill, the Chair shall instead put a single Question in relation to those provisions, except that the Question shall be put separately on any Clause or Schedule to the Bill which a Minister of the Crown has signified an intention to leave out.

Miscellaneous

(8) Standing Order No. 82 (Business Committee) shall not apply in relation to any proceedings to which this Order applies.

(9) (a) No Motion shall be made, except by a Minister of the Crown, to alter the order in which any proceedings on the Bill are taken, to recommit the Bill or to vary or supplement the provisions of this Order.

(b) No notice shall be required of such a Motion.

(c) Such a motion may be considered forthwith without any Question being put; and any proceedings interrupted for that purpose shall be suspended accordingly.

(d) The Question on such a Motion shall be put forthwith; and any proceedings suspended under sub-paragraph (c) shall thereupon be resumed.

(e) Standing Order No. 15(1) (Exempted business) shall apply to proceedings on such a Motion.

(10) (a) No dilatory Motion shall be made in relation to proceedings to which this Order applies except by a Minister of the Crown.

(b) The Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(11) The start of any debate under Standing Order No. 24 (Emergency debates) to be held at today's sitting shall be postponed until the conclusion of any proceedings to which this Order applies.

(12) Proceedings to which this Order applies shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(13) (a) Any private business which has been set down for consideration at a time falling after the commencement of proceedings on the Motion for this Order shall, instead of being considered as provided by Standing Orders or by any Order of the House, be considered at the conclusion of any proceedings to which this Order applies.

(b) Standing Order No. 15(1) (Exempted business) shall apply to the private business so far as necessary for the purpose of securing that the business may be considered for a period of three hours.—(*David Rutley*.)

2.5 pm

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): I will keep my comments brief because I know that they are eating into our time. For the same reason, I will not divide the House, but I reiterate the concern many of us have that today, in haste, we are discussing very important legislation that will introduce a massive tax increase—bigger than that of some Budgets—and yet we do not have details of the social care reforms being proposed. That is not the way to go about business in this place.

In my 20 years' experience in this place, when we have rushed through decisions, as we are doing today—the measure was announced only last week—it has often increased the chance of big mistakes being made. I know that Ministers on the Front Bench are not listening, but I ask them even at this late stage to consider allowing more time to consider this important matter. If we do not know the detail of what is proposed, how in heaven are we to know how much money to raise for it?

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to speak, he can speak, but this is a debate, not a point of order. Does he wish to speak?

Geraint Davies *indicated dissent.*

2.7 pm

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): I support my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon and Billericay (Mr Baron), although I will not press the matter to a Division either; I understand that the Government have a sense of urgency.

I think we need three debates, not one. First, we need a debate about how an extra £10 billion or £12 billion would make a big difference to waiting lists in the NHS; I would like to know the plan for that. Secondly, we need a debate about how we transition the money from health to social care and about what the social care plan looks like. Thirdly, we need an economic policy debate about whether we actually need to raise £12 billion in tax and, if so, whether this is the right tax to raise it with.

I urge the Government, in their own interest, to unpackage all that, at least in their own remarks, and understand that we need to see the cases for their propositions. If I go to a shop, I do not present it with some money and go away being told that in a month's time I will get a brochure about what I might have bought; I expect to get the goods. Call me old-fashioned, but I would like to see what the goods will be. Would I like waiting lists down? You bet. Would I like people in my constituency to have access to better public social care? You bet, but I want to know that I will get that, and I want to know why the Government think that they need a tax.

2.8 pm

Dr Andrew Murrison (South West Wiltshire) (Con): It is very clear to most of our constituents that, after 18 months, there will need to be a tax rise to pay for service items that the NHS has not been able to provide because it has been dealing with the pandemic. There is also an expectation that we will improve social care, and most people would say that that comes with a price tag.

It seems to me entirely reasonable for the Government to say that they will publish a White Paper to flesh out the finer detail, after consultation, on matters that my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon and Billericay (Mr Baron) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (John Redwood) have just described. However, I think we have to assume that it will come with a not insignificant price tag. It is therefore perfectly reasonable for the Government to put this Bill before the House in order to anticipate the funds that will be necessary and a prerequisite for the proposals that we imagine will be fleshed out as part of the White Paper. There is some urgency in this.

Question put and agreed to.

Health and Social Care Levy Bill

Second Reading

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): The reasoned amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition has been selected.

2.10 pm

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Steve Barclay): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Last week the Prime Minister announced a plan to tackle the NHS backlog, put the adult social care system on a sustainable long-term footing, and end the situation in which those who need help in their old age risk losing everything to pay for it. The Government's plan will make an extraordinary difference to the lives of millions of people across the country, and it will be funded with a record £36 billion investment in the NHS and social care. In order to pay for a significant increase in spending in a responsible and fair way, the Bill introduces a new 1.25% health and social care levy based on national insurance contributions.

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): We need to give credit where it is due, and the Government are absolutely right to try to grasp this nettle, but many of us are concerned about the haste with which it is being done. Does my right hon. Friend think it is a good idea to raise taxes on jobs ineffectively, and risk choking off an economic recovery before we have even got to know the details of the social care reforms?

Steve Barclay: My hon. Friend, and good friend, has raised two connected points. The first was dealt with earlier in points of order: it is the will of the House that decides the timings of debates, and the Chair addressed that point. As for the second, we discussed it at length during last week's ways and means debate. We discussed the wider purpose in dealing with the consequences of covid and the backlog in care that needs to be tackled, but we also discussed grasping the nettle in relation to the long-term challenges surrounding social care—challenges that the House has debated repeatedly over many years.

The levy will apply UK-wide to taxpayers liable for class 1 employee and employer, class 1A, class 1B and class 4 self-employed national insurance contributions. However, it will not apply where taxpayers pay class 2 or class 3 NICs. It will be introduced in April 2022, and from April 2023 it will also apply to those working over the state pension age. As my right hon. and hon. Friends will understand, it takes time for Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs to prepare its systems for such a major shift. That is why, as set out in clause 5, in 2022-23 the levy will be delivered through a temporary increase in NICs rates of 1.25% for one year only.

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): Does the Secretary of State agree that in principle hypothecation is to be avoided, and that what we should be doing is defining what spending is financially desirable and economically effective, and then asking a separate question: what is a socially equitable and effective tax regime? Those are two different issues, but we are smashing them together, and we do not even know what we are spending the money on. This is farcical, and it is being done in a mad rush.

Steve Barclay: There is a precedent in the form of what the hon. Gentleman's party did in 2002-03. I do not think it is fair for him to say it is farcical to do something which was done by the Government whom he supported. He has opened up a much wider question about hypothecation, on which many a former Treasury official has commented, and I think that that is a separate debate; but there is a precedent for the use of national insurance in the way that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has set out.

Let me stress that all revenues generated by this increase will be ring-fenced and paid not just to the NHS in England, but to NHS Scotland, NHS Wales, and the equivalent in Northern Ireland.

Mr Andrew Mitchell (Sutton Coldfield) (Con): I have a great deal of sympathy with what my right hon. Friend is saying, and I think the Government deserve considerable credit for grasping this nettle at last, but may I ask for an assurance? When the charge has been introduced, will he ensure that every six months a Treasury Minister comes to the House and tells us what results are being achieved—what money has been raised through the levy and what results have been delivered; in other words, what additional treatment has been achieved—so that we can see and show our constituents why it was right to raise this levy and what they are getting for the money?

Steve Barclay: As a former Chief Whip, my right hon. Friend knows better than most that it is for the House to decide which Ministers come to the House and provide updates. Obviously, in respect of regular fiscal events and others—[*Interruption.*] It is. The right hon. Member for Leicester South (Jonathan Ashworth) chunters from a sedentary position, but through urgent questions and other such devices it is always for the House to decide which Ministers come here and, of course, there are regular events such as Treasury and other departmental questions. [Interruption.] He chunters but, as I have said, there are many procedures through which updates—[Interruption.] The procedures to which I referred.

Under clause 2, this revenue will be ring-fenced for health and for social care—

Mr Mitchell: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Steve Barclay: I will make a little progress. I have taken a number of interventions, including one from my right hon. Friend.

Existing NICs reliefs and allowances will also apply to the levy. That will mean that 40% of all businesses will not be affected owing to the employment allowance. When it comes to individuals, those earning more will pay more. Indeed, the top 14 per cent. of taxpayers will pay about half the revenues. Conversely, at least 6.2 million people earning less than the NICs primary threshold will not pay the levy at all.

Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab) *rose*—

Steve Barclay: I am sure that the hon. Lady rises to welcome the progressive nature of that measure.

Catherine West: Does the Secretary of State accept that, if 40% of businesses or employers are not affected, the other 60% therefore will be? What assessment has

the Treasury made of the number of jobs that employers will not create because of, apart from anything else, the introduction of this measure at a time when the recovery from covid is fragile?

Steve Barclay: It is not just that the first 40% will not pay anything, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor mentioned. The next 40% will pay less than 1% of their wage bill, and indeed 70% of the employer contribution comes from just 1% of business. To some extent, the hon. Lady's point was also picked up by the Monetary Policy Committee in its evidence to the Treasury Committee, when it said, "You should not ignore one half of the policy announcement." Of course, one needs to look at the spending implications of the measures, not just—

Steve Brine (Winchester) (Con): In my experience of being a Minister at the Department of Health—with my right hon. Friend, indeed—Treasury Ministers do not like to spend billions of pounds without knowing exactly what they are getting for their money, and rightly so: it is our constituents' money. We know that there is a very carefully worked out plan that the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has agreed with the NHS for the catch-up programme. Will the Minister help us to see that published, so that we as representatives can hold the NHS to account for the money that this levy is raising and our constituents are therefore spending?

Steve Barclay: I could probably go slightly further—Chief Secretaries do not like to spend, not necessarily just on any particular area of Government policy—but my hon. Friend is absolutely right about the importance of delivery and how the money is spent, particularly the £8 billion allocated to electives catch-up. Just yesterday I was at a meeting in No. 10 with the leadership of the NHS, discussing that issue with the chief executive of NHS England and other senior health leaders. I know that it is an issue of concern to a number of Members, but ultimately it is an issue of concern throughout the House, because through our constituency surgeries we see the consequence of the backlog in terms of electives. That is, I think, an area of common ground.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): Will the Minister give way?

Steve Barclay: I will give way once more.

Christine Jardine: The Minister has made the point that we see the impact in our constituencies. Yes, we do, but we are also seeing the impact in our constituencies of the pandemic on business. What would the Minister say to the Federation of Small Businesses, which, notwithstanding what he has just said, believes that

"Business owners who have done all they can to retain and support their staff during the pandemic are now being punished"? The FSB sees this as a jobs tax, and we will see that impact in our constituencies as well.

Steve Barclay: First, in order to meet the quantum of spend, one needs a broad-based tax. That is a point that my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker), who is not in his place, raised in the debate last week. Secondly, I would point to the more than £400 billion—[Interruption.] I do not know why SNP Members are laughing at £400 billion of support. I do not think that this is a point of difference. I think we can all agree

across the House that there has been huge fiscal support across the UK through the broad shoulders of the United Kingdom to support business, at a cost of £400 billion to businesses, public services and individuals, and that has a consequence. Most of the business leaders I speak to recognise that, and recognise that the backlog in the NHS needs to be dealt with. I would add the further point that those businesses benefit from the NHS clearing its backlog because it is members of staff in those businesses that are affected.

Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (Ind): What analysis has been undertaken of the long-term sustainability of this policy, which targets working-age people at a time of an ageing population? There will be 10 million extra pensioners within 20 years, which means that the pool of people who are paying in is shrinking in relative terms while demand is increasing.

Steve Barclay: Again, this is why, as is standard practice, my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury has published the tax information and impact note on the tax change. Of course, that will be dynamic because it will interact with the fiscal forecast that the Office for Budget Responsibility will set out alongside the Budget on 27 October. So that is dealt with in the normal way for measures such as this—

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con) *rose*—

Geraint Davies *rose*—

Steve Barclay: I want to make some progress, and I have already given way once to the hon. Member for Swansea West (Geraint Davies).

Let me remind the House why this levy is necessary. As the Prime Minister and the Chancellor have said, the levy will enable the Government to provide additional funding to the NHS so that it can recover from the pandemic. Senior NHS leaders have made it clear that, without additional financial support, we will not properly be able to address the significant backlog in the national health service. However, it is going to take time to get everyone the care they need. In addition, our social care plan will create a dramatically expanded safety net for people in their later life. This means that, instead of individuals having to bear the financial risk of catastrophic care costs themselves, we as a country are deciding to share more of that risk collectively.

Munira Wilson (Twickenham) (LD): Could the right hon. Gentleman explain to people up and down the country who are either in receipt of care now or will need to start care between now and October 2023 and are facing catastrophic care costs what they are meant to do? Does he accept that there will be a massive cliff edge? Lots of people will try to avoid coming forward for care in the months before October 2023, and there will then be a massive surge. How do the Government plan to deal with that?

Steve Barclay: In a number of ways. First, this fiscal support is not in isolation. There is £33.9 billion of additional support going into the core NHS budget over the five years of the long-term plan. That has had a significant impact. On top of that, significant covid support has gone into the NHS. One of the points that came out of the debate on the ways and means last

Wednesday was the interrelated nature of the impact on the NHS and on social care. That is why it is right that we are gripping this issue, but it is alongside the wider financial support that the Treasury has offered.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Steve Barclay: Given that we need to progress on to Committee, I shall just point out that this is a permanent new role for the Government and a structural increase in the size of the British state. We therefore need a permanent new way to pay for it. The only alternative would be to borrow indefinitely, but that would clearly be the wrong course of action when our national debt is already at the highest it has been in peacetime. Borrowing even more today would just mean higher taxes in the future.

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con): With money tight, did the Treasury support the appointment of, I think, 43 new executives on £270,000 a year to check where all this money is going?

Steve Barclay: I think one needs to see whether these are roles that are driving efficiency and creating savings elsewhere, or whether they are viewed in isolation. That is why one needs to understand the workforce as a whole, where there are overlaps within the NHS but, above all, how we deliver reform, which is something I know that the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care is passionately committed to doing. That relates to the point that was rightly raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Steve Brine) on the delivery of reform in order to maximise the value for money of the spend that the levy will unlock.

Finally, we need to fund our vision for the future of health and social care in this country over the longer term. As the Prime Minister said, with proper funding, we can not only tackle the NHS backlog and expand the social care safety net but afford the nurses' pay rise, invest in the best equipment and prepare for the next pandemic. We can provide the largest investment ever to upskill social care workers and build the modern, more efficient health service the British public deserve.

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): It seems to me that we are spending this money twice, so can the Minister tell the House specifically how much will go into the NHS from this increase and how much will go into social care? What I am hearing from him is that we are going to deal with the backlog, which will take us back to pre-pandemic levels. That will leave us with a 2 million waiting list, so can he tell us specifically how much is going into the NHS and how much is going into social care?

Steve Barclay: Of the £36 billion, £5.4 billion is going to adult social care, with the rest going into the NHS or through Barnett. That is over three years.

Dame Andrea Leadsom (South Northamptonshire) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend think that the Government could consider different bands for frontline staff in the NHS and management staff in the NHS, to get away from the concern that so many of my constituents have that any pay rises in the NHS will be taken up by managers over frontline operators?

Steve Barclay: In the public sector pay agreement that we reached, we accepted the recommendations of the independent pay review body. That is why we decided on 3% and why the NHS was treated differently from other areas of the public sector such as the police and teachers. This recognised the importance of those frontline workers and it was why those under the threshold of £24,000 were carved out. This recognises the point that my right hon. Friend has raised.

In conclusion, this levy will enable the Government to tackle the backlog in the NHS. It will provide a new permanent way to pay for the Government's reforms to social care and it will allow the Government to fund our vision for the future of health and social care in this country over the long term. I commend the Bill to the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Before I call the shadow Minister, I should say that there will be a six-minute limit on Back-Bench speeches to start with. If anybody wishes to speak, they should catch my eye, and to do that it is important to keep standing. If colleagues have not put in to speak but wish to do so, it would be helpful to let me know. They will have to have been here from the beginning of the debate, and they will be expected to be here for the wind-ups, which will start at approximately 4.45. Bearing all that in mind, I now call the shadow Minister, James Murray.

2.28 pm

James Murray (Ealing North) (Lab/Co-op): I beg to move an amendment, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and add:

"this House declines to give a Second Reading to the Health and Social Care Levy Bill because, notwithstanding the need to increase funding for health and social care, the Bill raises money for an approach announced by the Government that fails to set out a plan to fix the crisis in social care, improve pay and conditions for social care workers, or clear the NHS waiting list backlog by the end of this Parliament, while breaking the Prime Minister's promise that no one will have to sell their home to pay for care; because it lacks a guarantee that Parliament will vote on a social care plan before spending the money it raises; and because it breaks the Government's promise not to increase National Insurance, raising taxes on employment that will disproportionately hit working families, young people, those on low and middle incomes and businesses trying to create more jobs in the wider economy, whilst leaving income from other sources untouched."

Today, the Government are pushing through a new tax on working people and their jobs. All scrutiny by the House of Commons of the Government's manifesto-breaking plans has been squeezed into a single day. As Conservative Members have said, we have just a few hours of scrutiny on this entire Bill, just one week after the Government first revealed their intentions. Why the sudden rush? The truth is that the Prime Minister and the Chancellor are desperate to avoid giving their own side enough time to push back. They want to make sure that, by the time it sinks in with their own MPs what a mistake this tax rise is, it will be too late for their Back Benchers to mount any opposition.

Perhaps it is also sinking in with Conservative Back Benchers that the Prime Minister and the Chancellor are pushing through these plans for a tax rise without having a plan for social care. If we are to believe the Prime Minister, and there is absolutely no reason why

we should, he had a plan for social care two years ago. We are still waiting to see it. All we have today is a tax rise for working people and for businesses that are creating jobs.

Catherine West: Does my hon. Friend agree that these problems began in 2010? The NHS's satisfaction rate in 2009 was 80%, and now it is way lower. In fact, they might have got rid of all the satisfaction surveys so that we do not know what people really think.

James Murray: My hon. Friend makes an important point about the Conservative Government's impact on the national health service over the last decade, running it into the ground and leaving it in such a state when the covid pandemic hit.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds West (Rachel Reeves), the shadow Chancellor, said last week:

"There are two tests for the package announced yesterday. First, does it fix social care? Secondly, is it funded fairly?"—[*Official Report*, 8 September 2021; Vol. 700, c. 327.]

Looking at the Bill, it is clearer than ever that the answer to both those questions remains a resounding no.

Gary Sambrook (Birmingham, Northfield) (Con): On the basis of those two tests, which tax would the hon. Gentleman increase to pay for social care?

James Murray: We are clear that taxes will have to rise to pay for social care, but we are also clear that this increase in national insurance contributions is not the way to raise the money fairly. When it comes to funding the NHS, social care and all our public services, we are clear that those with the broadest shoulders should be asked to contribute more.

This five-page Bill contains nothing at all about a plan to fix social care; it does not even mention a plan. Put simply, there is no guarantee that a plan for social care will be in place even when the levy comes into force.

Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab): I was going to pose this question to the Minister, but he would not take my intervention. Last week I was told by the insurance arm of a major bank that the Government are actively encouraging it to produce insurance products specifically for health and social care. Is my hon. Friend as concerned as I am not only about who is encouraging such developments but about what it means for the acceleration of privatisation not only in social care but in the health service?

James Murray: My hon. Friend makes us think about what we have read recently about what the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr Fysh) has been saying about a rebate from this tax for those who take out private insurance. Make no mistake, that is a slippery slope towards a two-tier healthcare system.

Dr Andrew Murrison (South West Wiltshire) (Con): The hon. Gentleman has been speaking for some time, but he has not said what taxes he would raise. Why was it okay for Labour to raise national insurance to pay for healthcare in 2003, when there was not a pandemic and we did not have the scale of social care need that we have today? If it was right then, why is it not right now?

James Murray: The right hon. Gentleman speaks about a tax rise 20 years ago, following a decade of wage growth, and it came with a plan for how the money would be invested. In stark contrast, this

Government's tax rise hits working people after a decade of stagnating wages, after we have been hit by a global pandemic and after years during which where people get their money from has changed. Above all, the Conservatives' tax rise comes with no promise that it will clear the NHS waiting list backlog in this Parliament and no promise that any money will be seen by the social care sector.

Despite all that has been said, there is no guarantee in the Bill that social care will benefit from the Government's tax rise. In fact, the Bill explicitly rules out any money going towards social care in the first year, and there is nothing to guarantee that a single penny of this new levy will ever go into the social care sector.

The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services realises this, and it said on Monday that

"it is not clear that there is any new money for adult social care to help improve care and support from April 1st next year... It will not add a single minute of extra care and support, or improve the quality of life for older people, disabled people and unpaid carers."

As the association rightly points out, this could leave councils with no option other than to raise council tax. Indeed, the Government have admitted that they expect councils to cover increasing need and rising costs. Despite £8 billion having been cut from local council care budgets by a decade of Conservative Government, there is no money for councils that need it now.

In truth, this levy does not set out to fix the crisis in social care. It seeks only to be a political fix for the Prime Minister. I suspect Conservative Members know that, and I suspect the Prime Minister is noticing that his attempt at a political fix is quickly becoming a political headache.

Although some Conservative Members may be worried about how to explain to their constituents that they have broken their manifesto promise and still failed to fix social care, others have a different agenda. The hon. Member for Yeovil, as I mentioned earlier, has been reported as saying that he wants people with private social care insurance to get a rebate from the new tax. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Leicester South (Jonathan Ashworth), the shadow Health Secretary has said, this looks very much like a "slippery slope" towards a two-tier healthcare system and privatisation.

Mr Marcus Fysh (Yeovil) (Con): My comments have been misreported. The origins of the Labour movement and the Liberal movement are in trade unions, co-operatives and friendly societies that came together to look after each other. What I am suggesting is that we get money into such systems to help people look after and pay for themselves in older age. There are myriad ways in which the system can be made much more progressive, and I am on their side in trying to make this more progressive than it is at the moment.

James Murray: As the hon. Gentleman is on our side, I look forward to him joining us in the Lobby this evening.

Will the Chief Secretary to the Treasury or the Financial Secretary to the Treasury put it unequivocally on the record that no rebate from the health and social care levy for those with private insurance will ever be entertained? A two-tier healthcare system is the very last thing we

need. What the social care sector desperately needs is guaranteed funding and a plan to transform the sector. This Bill delivers neither.

Craig Mackinlay (South Thanet) (Con): The hon. Gentleman is talking about a two-tier system. Is he saying that the millions of people in the public sector and the not-for-profit sector who have auto-enrolled pensions are rather daft to have a sensible pot under their own name, with the flexibility that it brings? Are you calling millions of taxpayers daft?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. The hon. Gentleman is experienced enough to know that he should not speak directly to another Member.

James Murray: The hon. Member for South Thanet (Craig Mackinlay) knows full well that his question is not relevant to this discussion. We are talking about the NHS and the social care system, and we need reassurance from Ministers that they will not entertain a two-tier healthcare system on the back of comments made by Conservative Members.

We need to transform social care into the service that people want, need and deserve, which is why our plan for social care would include: enshrining the principle of home first; making a fundamental shift in the focus of support towards prevention and early intervention; getting care workers the pay, terms and conditions they deserve—at the very least, a real living wage of £10 an hour—while transforming training to improve the quality of care; and, crucially, making sure that England's 11 million unpaid family carers get proper information, advice, breaks and the workplace flexibility they need to balance work and caring responsibilities.

Of course, today we are not discussing how to transform social care. We are debating a Bill that introduces a tax rise that may never go towards helping social care, and one that is raised on the backs of working people and businesses that are creating jobs.

Dame Andrea Leadsom (South Northamptonshire) (Con): What would the hon. Gentleman do about the backlog of 5 million people, as a result of covid, waiting for procedures and operations in the NHS? Does he not want that backlog to be dealt with?

James Murray: The right hon. Lady raises points about the backlog in the NHS. We have had 10 years of a Conservative Government, of whom she has been a key part. She is responsible for the backlog, along with all her colleagues on the Conservative Benches. They should take some responsibility for the mess they have caused.

We know that social care desperately needs more funding, but are the Government raising taxes for those with large portfolios of stocks and shares? No. Are they increasing taxes on landlords who rent out multiple properties? No. Are they going further to tackle large online multinationals that shift their profits overseas? No. The Government have gone for a tax rise on working people and businesses creating jobs.

Last week, the Government tried to soften the blow by claiming that their tax plans are fair because this tax rise on working people is accompanied by a tax rise on dividends. So where is the tax rise on dividends? The

[James Murray]

Government's proposal documents last week admitted that that might be legislated for in the next Finance Bill, and indeed there is nothing on raising taxes on dividends in the Bill in front of us today. They are pulling out the stops to increase taxes on working people as quickly as possible, ramming this legislation through in one day, but when it comes to dividends and a tax that the Prime Minister acknowledged last week would affect

"better-off business owners and investors"—[*Official Report*, 7 September 2021; Vol. 700, c. 154.]

suddenly there is no rush. Let us not fall for the claim that the dividend tax rise will make the Government's proposals fair. The dividend tax—if it ever happens; we have only the Prime Minister's word for that, after all—would raise only 5% of the total revenue. Some 95% of the tax bill would land on employment.

If we want to understand the impact of this tax rise on people and their jobs, let us start by looking at the Government's own view. Their own tax information and impact note on this tax rise was signed off personally by the Financial Secretary to the Treasury and published on 9 September—curiously, this was a couple of days after the Government's proposals were announced. It says in no uncertain terms:

"There may be an impact on family formation, stability or breakdown as individuals, who are currently just about managing financially, will see their disposable income reduce."

Five years ago, the Prime Minister's predecessor began her time in office claiming to be an ally for people who are "just about managing". Now we have the Government's own report admitting that they are the ones who will suffer.

The report is blunt too about the impact of this tax rise on businesses. It makes it clear:

"Behavioural effects are likely to be large, and these will include...business decisions around wage bills and recruitment."

It is there in the Government's own analysis: this will be a tax blow to jobs and wages. Others agree, with the chair of the Federation of Small Businesses saying last week:

"Breaking a manifesto promise by increasing National Insurance Contributions just at the moment when firms are struggling to get back on their feet would be devastating for small businesses and the local communities they serve...If this hike happens, fewer jobs will be created by the UK's small business community over the crucial months ahead."

The British Chambers of Commerce agrees, warning:

"A rise in National Insurance Contributions would represent a hammer blow to jobs growth at this crucial point in the UK's economic recovery."

The CBI president said:

"National Insurance increase will directly hurt a business's ability to hire staff, at a time when businesses have faced a torrid 18 months and are now fighting crippling labour shortages."

Do the Financial Secretary and the Chief Secretary think the Federation of Small Businesses, the British Chambers of Commerce and the CBI are all wrong? Perhaps the Financial Secretary will get up to tell me the answer to that. [Interruption.] Sorry, I thought the Financial Secretary was keen to get to his feet to respond to my question. He does not want to, no. He does not

want to answer whether he thinks the FSB, the BCC and the CBI are all wrong. Do other Members from his party think they are wrong?

Andrew Griffith (Arundel and South Downs) (Con) *rose*—

James Murray: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to intervene to answer that question.

Andrew Griffith: I am just wondering whether the hon. Gentleman's tax primer in low corporate taxes has enlightened him with any ideas of his own as to how his party would propose to fund this. The proposal on the table is a broad-based tax. How would he fund this?

James Murray: We have been absolutely clear that when it comes to funding the NHS and social care, those with the broadest shoulders should pay the most. The idea that this is a "broad-based" tax rise is completely wrong. The hon. Gentleman knows that, we know that and the British public know that. I note that when he got to his feet, he did not answer the question as to whether he thought the FSB, the BCC and the CBI are all wrong. Next time another Conservative Member gets to their feet, I would like to hear their answer to that. I would also like to know whether they think TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady was wrong when she said last week:

"We know social care needs extra funding. But the prime minister is raiding the pockets of low-paid workers, while leaving the wealthy barely touched."

That is the fundamental unfairness at the heart of this Government's tax rise.

The Prime Minister and Chancellor are desperate to pretend this is the only way to raise the money, but that simply is not true. A fairer approach would see funding for the NHS, social care and all our public services borne by those with the broadest shoulders—this would include those with incomes from large financial assets, multiple rental properties, and other income from wealth contributing more. But they have not been considered by this Government, who would prefer to hit workers instead.

This Government are landing a tax rise, which they claim will go toward social care, on low-paid social care workers themselves. The truth is that this is a tax on working people and their jobs. This tax rise tells us nothing about how the Government plan to fix social care, but it tells us everything we need to know about the instincts of the Tories when they are in power. That is why it is wrong. That is why we will be voting against this Bill. And that is why Conservative MPs would do well to join us tonight if, come the next election, they want to be able to look their constituents in the eye.

2.46 pm

Jeremy Hunt (South West Surrey) (Con): Select Committee Chairs have to hold the Government to account, but just occasionally they also have to hold the other parties to account. I am afraid that today is one of those days, because the opposition of the parties on the Benches opposite to this Bill does not bear any scrutiny at all. That is not just because Gordon Brown proposed an increase in national insurance in 2002 to fund the NHS or because senior members of those parties have supported NI as a way of funding the social care system

as recently as three years ago; it is because for more than a decade the parties opposite have argued, with some justification, that more money needs to go into the health and care, and this Bill will add £12 billion every year into our health and care system. That is more than any wealth tax would generate—to my knowledge, it is more than any of them have been arguing—and it is more progressive than using plain NI, because it is progressive between the generations. That is because, for the first time, working pensioners will be paying this tax, as well as people who pay dividends.

I may not make friends on my side of the House either, because while I commend the courage of a Conservative Prime Minister and a Conservative Chancellor, supported by his team, in doing what we find extremely difficult, for the right reasons—increasing taxes—I fear that if what we have done so far is tough, what is to come will be tougher still. I say that because if you put your hands into people's pockets and take money out of them, and they do not see visible improvements in the services they receive, they get very angry indeed.

Steve Brine: Will my right hon. Friend use his position on the Select Committee and his vast experience to scrutinise this plan, which I mentioned to the Minister but which I know the Secretary of State has agreed with NHS England and me, as to how exactly they are going to spend every penny of our constituents' money on this catch-up programme? Will my right hon. Friend's Select Committee scrutinise that for us?

Jeremy Hunt: As it happens, we are currently conducting an inquiry into how to deal with the covid backlog, so I commit to my hon. Friend, with whom I so enjoyed working at the Department of Health and Social Care, that we will certainly do that.

Clive Efford *rose*—

Jeremy Hunt: I will give way and then make some progress.

Clive Efford: I have heard what the former Secretary of State has said about the record on social care, but can he explain what he did to try to prevent the Conservative Government from taking £8 billion out of social care?

Jeremy Hunt: First, we passed the Care Act 2014, which put in place the legislative foundations for the proposals that we are now going to fund. Secondly, I happen to agree with the hon. Gentleman: the social care system has needed more money for some time. That is why it is so extraordinary that his party is to vote against this Bill.

If we are going to take £12 billion a year out of people's pockets, we need to avoid falling into three traps—and I say this as someone who has fallen into more traps in this policy area than anyone else in this House. The first trap that we need to be careful of is the workforce. If we put an extra £8 billion into the NHS but we do not have £8 billion-worth of additional doctors and nurses to do the extra treatments, the risk is that that money will hit the ground without touching the sides. That is why we need a workforce plan.

The Health Foundation says that the backlog will require 4,000 more doctors and 18,000 more nurses, but we have not had any workforce plan from the DHSC. I suspect that in the short term we will have to relax all

the immigration requirements for doctors and nurses. That will not be great for developing countries, but it may well be our only choice. In the medium term, the best suggestion is what my Select Committee and many others have proposed: we should give Health Education England the statutory responsibility to produce independent workforce estimates and create a discipline, a bit like the OBR does for Budgets, to make sure that we are training enough doctors and nurses. That is the first trap.

John Redwood *rose*—

Jeremy Hunt: I will make some progress, if I may.

The second trap is that we must not inadvertently sleepwalk into another Mid Staffs. People forget that when Mid Staffs happened, NHS budgets were actually going up. There was huge pressure to reduce waiting times and that ended up creating a targets culture in which numbers matter more than people. We have to be very careful that we do not make the same mistake again. I know that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, who worked with me at the Department of Health and Social Care, understands that because of his commitment to patient safety.

The third trap involves social care funding. Although the settlement we are discussing is generous, if we are honest, in the next three years social care will not actually get as much money as it needs. The truth is that there is a risk that the NHS will continue to gobble up the lion's share after that, which is why it is essential to ring-fence the amount of money that goes to social care after those three years.

Mr Fysh *rose*—

Jeremy Hunt: I am going to make some progress, if I may.

Finally, let me say this. We, as Conservatives, criticised the Labour party in the 2000s for pouring money into the NHS without a proper plan. We were wrong to say that the NHS did not need more money, but we were right to say that there needed to be a proper plan. We must learn the lessons of history; that is the least we can do for frontline workers in the NHS and care system.

2.53 pm

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): To start where the right hon. Member for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt) left off, in the Bill before us this afternoon we have the lack of a proper plan. We have a means of raising taxes, but absolutely no detail whatsoever on how the money is to be spent.

Let me start with a useful note sent round by the Hansard Society, which says:

“Parliament's scrutiny of financial matters is generally poor, and the treatment of the new Health and Social Care Levy demonstrates many of the worst aspects of both the financial and legislative scrutiny processes: acting at speed with insufficient policy detail available for MPs to consider; important constitutional questions brushed aside; and broad powers delegated to Ministers with a lack of clarity about how they are to be used in future.”

I agree with every single word of that.

Scrutiny and accountability are absolutely key to this issue, because we have been presented with a huge additional spending commitment but no detail whatsoever as to how it will actually be spent on the other side. I know that there are Conservative Members who are

[Alison Thewliss]

extremely nervous about this levy; far be it from me to agree with them, but I am right to agree with them on that, because we do not know how this money is going to be spent. People are incredibly nervous that health and social care will be at the back of the queue when the money is to be spent.

As the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay (Mr Baron) pointed out earlier, we are considering this Bill in unseemly haste. Is this to do with the election cycle, testing the loyalty of Government Back Benchers or making sure that people are loyal in the run-up to any reshuffle? We cannot see the real reason for this haste. If we could wait, we could see a little more detail as to exactly why we have to proceed in this way. There is also a difficulty in scrutinising the spending of the levy because it is outwith the usual estimates process and the usual Budget process. We cannot have any real clarity in that respect.

Most worryingly of all, the Government have—as they have done in so many different ways—taken back control only to give all the power back to themselves and their cronies. A lot of the work in respect of the Bill will be done through regulations. Clause 4 gives the Government very wide scope to make regulations on this matter later, which means we will lose all sense of scrutiny from this place. It will all go to civil servants rather than to Parliament. That is entirely undemocratic and wrong. Yet again, there is a wide-ranging power grab from this place and in respect of our job as Members of Parliament here. I cannot see the justification for that in the Bill; it would be interesting to hear why Ministers intend to do that.

We on the SNP Benches demand urgent clarity about every penny of Barnett consequentials that will be given to the devolved Administrations. In line with our manifesto, any additional money that Scotland gets will be spent on health and social care, but there must be no attempt by the UK Government to sell Scotland short by clawing back our share through cuts in other devolved policy areas. It would be just like Government colleagues to give money with one hand while pinching money out of our back pocket with the other. The UK Government must give urgent assurances that we will get every penny we are due—as should Wales and Northern Ireland.

Last week, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care told “Good Morning Scotland” that, ultimately, it will be for the Scottish Government to decide how the money raised is spent, but that is not what the Prime Minister said. In his statement last week, he said:

“Although Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have their own systems, we will direct money raised through the levy to their health and social care services.”—[*Official Report*, 7 September 2021; Vol. 700, c. 154.]

To direct money would be to override the devolved settlement. It would override our Scottish Parliament and our Scottish Government. It is also unclear where it is intended that that money should go. Will it go to NHS Scotland or to the health boards, the integration joint boards or the health and social care partnerships that sit underneath? Will the formula by which funding is distributed in Scotland be disrupted?

We need certainty as to how the money will be spent, and the Bill currently does not give that. All the Bill says is that money will be paid

“in such shares as between health care and social care, and in such shares as between England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, as the Treasury may determine.”

That means more power for Treasury Ministers, which I am sure they will enjoy having, but less power for this Parliament and even less power for the devolved institutions. It is their right to know how that money is to come to them and how it is spent. We should not get one penny less than we were due.

Many analysts have pointed out that other parts of devolved spending have been cut because of, for example, the Barnett consequentials of the cuts to local government or to justice. Such cuts mean that we get less money coming through, even if the Government like to pretend, through things such as this levy, that there will be more. It is unclear in the documentation published by the Government exactly what the Barnett consequentials will look like. Their plan for social care says that the Barnett consequentials will be £2.1 billion in 2022-23, drop to £1.7 billion in 2023-24 and be £1.9 billion in 2024-25. If the money that comes is going to jump about by such significant amounts over those years, we will not know exactly how things are going to look, what the certainty is and how we can plan. The Scottish Government deserve certainty so that they can plan for services.

Let me highlight some of our other major issues with the proposals, which are a tax on the poorest working people in this country. They are completely unjustifiable on that basis. The levy is disproportionate and unfair. There is a bit of brass neck from Government Members: they howled when Scotland put money on income tax—a progressive system in which those at the wealthier end of things paid a little more into our system for our services in Scotland. They said it was terrible and awful, yet today there is not a peep out of them to complain about the lack of progressive taxation and the fact that Scotland will have to pay for England’s social care crisis, which is completely unjustifiable. This is also a tax on jobs and the recovery. Reflecting on the ONS figures that show that the recovery is now stalling, the Federation of Small Businesses says that this tax on jobs will mean 50,000 more people becoming unemployed. That is 50,000 people losing their jobs as a result of this Government’s incompetence in taxing jobs and the recovery. We really could not make this up. From every angle that we approach this tax, it makes absolutely no sense whatsoever.

I will talk in greater detail about our amendments when we come to the Committee stage, but my reflection for now is that we have Scottish taxpayers paying for England’s health and social care crisis, and an undermining of devolution in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and of the services that our Parliaments are democratically elected to provide.

Christine Jardine: Can the hon. Lady explain how Scottish taxpayers, of which I am one, are paying for this levy? I am confused by the thinking. We either agree with the fairness of the levy or we do not. In Scotland, we would get more than we paid in, so I am confused by her thinking.

Alison Thewliss: The point is that we do not know what we will get out of this. We do not know because it is not clear in the documentation that has been provided. We also do not know what will happen on the other side

of that equation—money in other devolved areas could be whipped away from us at our expense. Organisations such as the British Association of Social Workers have pointed out that cuts to local government will fundamentally undermine the social care provision in England. Authorities will not receive anything for three years, which will also have an impact on the money that we have to spend in Scotland.

These moves tax the poorest. They come at the same time as £20 a week is being removed from universal credit. Some 2.5 million people across the UK will be affected by both of those policies at a time when they can least afford it. The tax on jobs will stifle the recovery. Rather than being a Union dividend as Ministers like to try to claim, this is a Union dead end.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): In order to try to get everybody in, I will reduce the time limit to five minutes, and I have been able to warn the next speakers of that. If people do not get in, let me remind them that there is a Committee stage to follow and they might like to bear that in mind.

3.2 pm

Mr Marcus Fysh (Yeovil) (Con): I will not speak for long now because I want to speak at the Committee stage later on.

We all want better health and social care and we understand that that comes with a cost. I am concerned that the plan does not make sufficient provision for allowing the discharge of patients from hospital into social care, which will be so critical when it comes to dealing with the backlog of cases. I want to work with the Government on trying to find ways of getting more money into social care earlier. We will get more money through the health provision for supporting the health needs of patients in residential care, but that is not the same thing. In the meantime, our adult social care system is creaking, with 30% more demand than there was before the pandemic. Many local government leaders are very worried about where they will find the money in the meantime to pay for this.

I rise to speak in support of those who will be affected by this national insurance rise. As we have heard, it is very broad based, but it is not the most progressive way to deal with this matter. I do not like the fact that this is the choice that we have made. It is wrong to be raising taxes at this point, particularly taxes on jobs and employment, when both are so central to spending in the economy. It is ordinary people having the confidence to go out and spend money that makes the most difference to our economic performance. At the end of the day, it is that economic performance that will grow the other tax revenue lines and it is those tax revenue lines that will make the most difference to how much money that we, as a nation, have to spend on these massively important priorities.

I want to compliment the Government, and the Prime Minister personally, for raising the issue of adult social care to the top of the national agenda, because they are absolutely right that we do need to sort this matter out. I also stand here for the people in that system now who are being short-changed in one way or another, whether it is on the services or on the way that the financing occurs. We need to work together, across the House if possible, to find innovative new ways of creating a long-term plan to get that service operating better.

John Redwood: Does my hon. Friend share my surprise that the Treasury can be precise in saying that it needs £12 billion from a new tax when it overstated the budget deficit by £90 billion last year, which shows that it does not have a clue about how much money will come in anyway?

Mr Fysh: My right hon. Friend makes a good point. Yes, it would have been great to have had more detailed context of where we can get to in this economic recovery so that we could know where we were in terms of revenue before we make such momentous changes that affect the aspirations and potential of so many people within the economy. We also need to look at whether this measure will increase costs and cost pressures within the system that we are trying to help. Many local authorities outsource provision of social care to private contractors, and these private businesses will be very much affected by these plans for the tax. We have also heard that the plan will mean that private providers cannot cross-subsidise their state provision of residential care places with private places, which could risk taking capacity out of the system at exactly the wrong moment when we want to get health and social care operating correctly. There are ways of making this measure more intergenerationally fair and I look forward to trying to work with the Government on different and innovative ways of doing that.

Going back to my original point, I think that we marry in haste and repent at leisure. Let me be clear that I am not referring to my own marriage; it is a very successful one and I love my wife dearly. None the less, it would have been much better to have had more time to think about all the ramifications of this Bill and the associated plan. I hope the Government will engage positively with our ideas about how we can evolve things whatever the outcome today.

3.7 pm

Dame Margaret Hodge (Barking) (Lab): I hope that the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr Fysh) will join the Opposition in the Lobby tonight given what he has just said in his contribution.

We should give credit where it is due. We are starting a debate not on whether we can rescue our broken health and social care services, but on how we do so. These services were damaged not just by covid, but by a decade of savage cuts. Tragically, the Government are flinging away this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to do something that will endure, that will tackle the underlying problems facing these critical services, and that will be fair to us all—whatever our age, wherever we live and whatever our income.

These shambolic proposals will not meet the needs of the elderly and disabled who depend on social care. They will not properly protect our NHS. They will further ravage struggling local authorities, and the tax proposals are needlessly regressive.

I wish to focus on the tax. The health and social care levy is an unfair hike that will hit younger working people the hardest.

Taiwo Owatemi (Coventry North West) (Lab): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is completely unfair that a graduate nurse who works a night shift as an

[*Taiwo Owatemi*]

Uber driver now faces a £12,500 tax hike over their working life due to this new levy? That is the reality facing many of my constituents. It is high time that we start calling this measure what it is. This is not a social care levy; this is the workers' tax.

Dame Margaret Hodge: My hon. Friend makes the point very powerfully. I was going to illustrate it more generally by saying that families whose personal allowance will be frozen, such as the one she mentioned, and who lose the £20 a week from universal credit cuts—the very families that the Government proclaim they want to level up—will suffer.

Do not just listen to me. I am going to re-quote the quotation that my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing North (James Murray) used in his excellent speech. Listen to what the Government's tax authority, HMRC, says:

“There may be an impact on family formation, stability or breakdown as individuals, who are currently just about managing financially, will see their disposable income reduce.”

Is that what the Government really want?

Half the revenue will be paid by people who are under 45, most of whom will be hit by a 10% rise in NICs. That is regressive. National insurance kicks in at a lower level of earnings than income tax. That is regressive. The self-employed pay a lower rate. That is regressive. Income from assets such as rent from property remain untouched. That is regressive. And squirreled away in the policy document, the Government say that they expect that

“demographic and unit cost pressures will be met through council tax...and long-term efficiencies.”

That means further cuts and a hidden hike of the outdated council tax—a tax that hits those in Barking and Dagenham harder than those in Kensington and Chelsea. That is also regressive.

I am rather tired of being told by the Government that there is no alternative. There are plenty. For a Government committed to fairness between individuals, fairness between generations and fairness between income secured through wealth as well as work, there is a raft of better ways to fund health and social care. Put a penny on income tax and equalise rates for dividend and income tax: £13 billion. Equalise capital gains and income tax rates: £14 billion. Or, as suggested by academics Advani, Summers and others, plug the unfair gaps in national insurance by extending it in full—not just the levy, but all of it—to all investment income and working pensioners: £12 billion. If we scrapped the upper earnings limit and equalised the rates of NICs paid between high and low earners, we would not just raise enough to meet roughly the same amount as the Government propose; we could cut the main rate of NICs by 1.25 percentage points.

This unfair plan is simply not fit for purpose. The numbers do not stack up. The poor will pay for the rich. The young will pay for the old. The struggling tenant will pay for the wealthy landlord. The asset-poor worker will pay for the asset-rich retiree. Make no mistake: these are political choices—choices that fail working people, fail our NHS and fail those in desperate need of quality social care. I cannot support them.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):

Obviously we have had one or two interventions along the way, so after the next speaker I shall reduce the time limit to four minutes, but I think that it should be fairly consistent from then on.

3.13 pm

Paul Bristow (Peterborough) (Con): I refer the House to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests. As a member of the Health and Social Care Committee, I rise to support the Bill and to argue that the money raised by this levy be spent well. I commend my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt) on his chairmanship of the Committee, in which we are conducting those lessons-learnt inquiries to ensure that our money is spent well. I want to mention three areas; if we focused on them, we could ensure that this money is spent well and get the desired outcomes.

The first is capacity in the acute sector. It is clear that the NHS needs to strike a long-term deal with the independent sector to try to power through the backlog of elective procedures. We are talking about hips and knees, hernias and cataract operations. I read and hear reports, with alarm, that the independent sector capacity that the NHS has bought is being underused—or, if it is not being underused yet, there is a fear that it may well be—because of ideological reasons that the independent sector should not be used and we should be funnelling all these procedures into the NHS. If we do not use the independent sector, we will not have the desired outcomes. We cannot let ideology dictate, as this will ensure that people are left in pain for longer and do not have the right quality of life. We need to ensure that the independent sector is used to its full capacity, so that we can get through this elective backlog.

Similarly, we need to ensure that initiatives such as “Getting It Right First Time”, or GIRFT, are used properly. The NHS has spent money, resources and experts' time on understanding which procedures work at high volume and low risk. We should use the lessons learnt from GIRFT to deal with the elective backlog. Let us not reinvent the wheel, but let us ensure that we do learn those lessons. Ultimately, these are usually minimally invasive techniques and technologies for procedures that can be done as day surgery, and this will ensure that we power through the backlog and get the elective procedure waiting list under control.

The second issue that the Health and Social Care Committee has heard about is the importance of the diagnostic sector. In the past, I think the NHS has been guilty of focusing on the treatment of conditions, rather than on prevention. If we get the early diagnosis correct and invest in diagnostics technology, we can find out who is at risk of suffering from cancer, heart disease and other long-term conditions before they present at an acute level. It is really important that we invest in that sort of technology, so that we can save money in the long term.

Finally, let me turn to innovation in our NHS in general. I have worked in health politics, if you like, for 20 years. As I said last week, there is a cultural aversion to the private sector, technology and innovation in our NHS. That aversion may be at the margins, but it is at least having an impact, and it needs to be dealt with straight away. If we do not adopt

innovation—new technologies, pathways and ways of doing things—we are not going to ensure that this money is spent well.

I would challenge that something that should come out of the health service reforms that we are looking to introduce is the appointment of an innovation officer, or someone who is responsible for innovation in every NHS trust. Let us make it their job. I welcome the fact that we are at last beginning to ensure that the NHS will have a degree of accountability again, and that politicians will have the ability to challenge NHS trust managers to ensure that this money is spent well. One way to do that is by having an innovation officer who is responsible for reform and innovation, ensuring that new pathways are adopted and this money is spent well. If we do not, we could be here again in three or four years' time, and the money that we want to transfer to social care in due course could have been gobbled up by the NHS, which my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey said was a real risk.

As far as I am concerned, those are the three real challenges: acute capacity; investment in diagnostic capability; and ensuring that innovation is properly recognised in our NHS.

3.18 pm

Mick Whitley (Birkenhead) (Lab): I draw the attention of the House to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

More than two years ago, the Prime Minister promised that he had a plan to fix our country's broken social care system. It was something that my constituents in Birkenhead so desperately needed—from the elderly people denied the most basic right of dignity in old age, to the dedicated but overworked carers earning less than the minimum wage and forced to turn to universal credit just to get by.

After a decade of brutal austerity measures and chronic Tory mismanagement, there is absolutely no doubt that we need a funding settlement for social care, but the Prime Minister's announcement last week will have provided no relief to the people I have the privilege of representing. Instead of asking those with the broadest shoulders to contribute just a little bit more, the Government are intent on pursuing an utterly regressive tax on hard-working families and British businesses. Charities working on the ground in my constituency predict that the impending cut to universal credit, coupled with soaring energy bills, will force another 6,500 people living in the Wirral into poverty. Now, many of those families will be bracing themselves to lose even more in increased national insurance contributions, while the very wealthiest in our society are left untouched.

Not only will this tax bombshell make it even harder for thousands of my constituents to make ends meet; it will also deal a devastating hammer blow to many of the small and independent businesses that play such a precious role in the life of our town. It will cost jobs and dangerously undermine a very fragile economy. Let us be clear: this tax hike makes a mockery of the Government's promises to level up and build back better.

We do need solutions to the crisis in social care, but these proposals just are not fair or credible.

3.20 pm

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): I urge the Government to think again about the health plans. On the Treasury figures, this year the health budget in the public sector overall is £230 billion—£64 billion higher than the 2019-20 budget pre-pandemic. I understand that there were lots of one-off and special costs in setting up and dealing with procedures for tackling the pandemic, and I, like everybody else, am very grateful for the work that went in from health staff and experts. But that cost will drop away, so what happens to that money when it is no longer pre-empted by the special costs of the pandemic, and can it not be applied?

I hope the Government will listen to the Chairman of the Health Committee, my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt), about the need for a manpower plan, because if we wish to clear the backlogs it is quite obvious that more nurses and doctors are going to have to carry out more treatments and procedures. Some of that will be possible through reallocation and improved working of the staff we already have, but a lot of it will require additional recruitment.

I am also very worried about the lack of a detailed social care plan, particularly for my own area of Wokingham. We have a large number of self-payers at the moment. How could I be sure that if we went for this levy scheme, which is still not properly detailed, sufficient money would come from it to a local authority like Wokingham, already under enormous pressure on its social care budget?

I am very suspicious of hypothecated levies. It is particularly dangerous to hypothecate a levy that is a tiny fraction of the budget one is trying to improve. That will give some people the misleading impression that the social care levy will pay for social care, whereas, on the numbers, the levy would be able to match under one fifth of the total public social care budget. Pitted against the huge numbers for the NHS and wider public health budget, that is just over 4% of the total, so it is a very insignificant amount in relation to the huge sums we are already talking about for the health budgets. However, it is a big sum of money when it is broken down and becomes a tax burden on people on quite modest incomes and those struggling in self-employment or trying to get their little businesses going. The last thing they need, when we need rapid growth and a faster recovery, is a tax rise.

The economy does not need sandbagging with austerity economics; it needs promoting for faster growth. It is still below the levels of output before the pandemic hit. Up until this point, the Treasury has been magnificent in making an avalanche of money available to get us through a most difficult time. We have got away with it. It has been borrowed at very close to zero interest. In these unique circumstances, it was possible to take extraordinary monetary measures that one would not normally be able to rely on and would not want to, and I am very grateful that that was done.

I say to the Government: it is too soon to start braking the economy. The growth rate almost disappeared in the last month. I am hoping it is going to look a bit better in the next month or two when we get more opening. But before the economy is completely opened up, and people have stabilised their businesses and repaired some of the balance sheet damage that the pandemic measures did, is not the right time to take

[John Redwood]

money off them. We need more spending power, not less; more demand, not less. If the Government back that, the revenues will come tumbling in to a much greater extent than if we put rates up. Do they not understand that they were £90 billion wrong last year because there was more recovery than expected? They are already £26 billion under this year because there was a fast recovery in the first few months. Do not kill the recovery and you will get the money.

3.24 pm

Helen Hayes (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): I rise to speak as a co-chair of the all-party parliamentary group on adult social care. Since the Prime Minister's statement last week, I have been in touch with a number of members of the APPG's working group, which has very wide membership from across the social care sector. There is absolute consensus that the Prime Minister's plans simply do not deliver for social care. The first clue to this was the total absence of meaningful reference to social care in the Prime Minister's statement itself. He did not say anything about the importance of adult social care or acknowledge the diversity of the sector and the need to fund care for both working-age adults and older people, nor did he pay any tribute to the hard work and sacrifice of social care workers during the pandemic or to the vital importance of their role.

The social care sector sees through this plan. Our NHS and social care are both in desperate need of additional funding now. Funding one and pretending that that will help the other is an insult to a social care sector full of brilliant, dedicated, highly skilled staff that has been brought to its knees by this Government's neglect and complacency.

The Prime Minister's proposals fail to make any commitment to a pay rise for social care staff. One of the members of the APPG working group, not-for-profit care provider Community Integrated Care, recently commissioned a benchmarking exercise to assess the value of social care work compared with other related professions such as healthcare assistant roles in the NHS. Its report, entitled "Unfair To Care", found that the skills and tasks required by a social care worker employed in a care home were on a par with those of a level 3 healthcare assistant working in the NHS. The healthcare assistant receives a remuneration package worth £30,000 a year, but the social care worker receives just £17,000 on average. The social care sector has 114,000 unfilled vacancies at present—and is it any wonder when there is no parity for social care workers, and when in many parts of the country you can earn more working at the local supermarket than you can caring for our most precious loved ones?

Instead of committing to a pay increase, the Government are penalising the very care workers who are the backbone of social care, hitting them with a national insurance increase and many also with a £1,000 cut to their universal credit. How do the Government think this is in any way fair? Social care workers are not the only valued public servants who will face the punitive consequences of this Bill. Teachers, classroom assistants, social workers, prison officers, youth workers and many others will all face a cut in their take-home pay as a consequence of this wrong-headed plan.

This Government inexplicably persist in ignoring the need for real and fundamental social care reform. The Health and Care Bill proposes to integrate health and social care without reforming social care, failing to give proper voice to the sector or place it on a sustainable footing for the long term, and this Bill raises revenue without specifying how, when or where it will be spent. The Government must also acknowledge the diversity and fragmentation of the social care system, the need for a clear and comprehensive regulatory framework that includes supported living, and the need for a much greater voice for people who rely on social care and much more co-production of support services.

It is deeply regrettable that the Government have chosen to ignore decades of cross-party work on social care. They have chosen to ignore a constructive and serious piece of work by the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee in 2018 in favour of their own ill-considered and half-baked plan. Social care and our NHS both desperately need additional funding, but this Bill delivers no firm commitment to the social care sector. It is an insult to dedicated social care workers across the country, and I will be voting against it tonight.

3.28 pm

Ruth Edwards (Rushcliffe) (Con): It started with a series of bizarre reports from my grandmother. My grandfather had started to put on his coat in the middle of the night and insist on going for a walk. She found plates of cheese in the airing cupboard, instead of the fridge. It was not long before he needed constant residential care for the last four years of his life. I have always thought that dementia is one of life's cruellest diseases, both for the sufferer and their family. The reality is that you lose your loved one long before they actually die.

Sufferers of dementia and their families have their lives turned on end, sometimes in quite short spaces of time. The last thing they need is uncertainty and financial worries to add to that. Here in the UK, we have an ageing population—and with that come complex, long-term physical and mental health conditions—which means that the length of time people may require care if they are hit by dementia or similar conditions later in life is increasing, as are the numbers of people needing that care.

It is an urgent problem, yet for decades, Governments of all parties have pushed the issue down the road or to one side. Our health service and councils across the country have started to see the impacts of this increase in demand without an increase in ring-fenced resources. I am therefore glad to see the Government tackling this head on, both with the social care levy set out in this Bill and the planned White Paper in the autumn. Only through a system that encourages long-term planning for social care will we achieve a sustainable care sector.

Like with pensions, we should be thinking about care provision, planning and taking responsibility for that provision from the start of our working lives. We need to change the culture around how we talk and think about care, and this Bill is the first plank of that new platform. It has been written in a way that means that people on higher salaries will pay more. It is also the first part of a broader new care settlement that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Paul Bristow) said, must see reform and innovation throughout the NHS and our social care system, and proper integration between the two, if it is to have public support.

Raising taxes is not something I take lightly, but the public know we have just been through the most unprecedented 18 months in more than half a century. Those on the Opposition Front Bench have criticised the Government for taking two years to put forward a plan. They have taken 24 years, and they still have no plan, unless we are counting the broad shoulders tax, which I am sure we all look forward to hearing more details on. Will it be a tax on income, on assets or on literal shoulders? I wait to see.

Words are easy; decisions are hard. That is why the public voted this Government into office: to make those tough decisions and plan for the long term. That is what we are doing today.

3.31 pm

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): I do not believe there can be many issues on which this House is more intent than ensuring the future of our national health service and social care for the good of every person in this country, but sadly this Government, who have procrastinated over every possible thing for the past two years, instead of taking time to consider this properly are bouncing Parliament into a hurried decision—a decision that has met with condemnation across the country. It is a proposal that the Federation of Small Businesses has described as a “jobs tax”, which the British Chambers of Commerce has described as an “anchor” on jobs growth, and which the Confederation of British Industry has said

“will directly hurt a business’s ability to hire staff at a time when businesses have faced a torrid 18 months”.

But it is much worse than a job tax—it is a tax on nurses, who on average will pay an extra £270 a year. It is a tax on our teachers, police and care home workers—the very same people who have kept the country going throughout this pandemic. It is a tax that will disproportionately hit low earners, at a time when families are already seeing their income squeezed by the pandemic. This is the worst possible time to be hitting families and businesses with a crippling and unfair tax hike. Instead of boosting hiring and spending, it will damage confidence and investment. The Government are not only breaking their promise to the electorate; they risk breaking the backbone of our economy.

Instead of rushing us into this, the Government could have taken the time to have cross-party discussions and come up with a proper, detailed plan, which I believe would have had the support of everyone in this place, because we all want to see a good, sound, constructive plan for the national health service and social care. Sadly, this is not it.

3.34 pm

Andrew Griffith (Arundel and South Downs) (Con): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Ruth Edwards) for her remarks.

My constituency has a disproportionately older demographic—those who live there are 50% more likely to be over 65 than the national average—but I want to lay to rest the misperception on both sides of the House that social care is simply about the older generation. More than one in three people in the system is under the age of 65, and because younger adults are in the system for longer, spend on them is proportionately greater, so this is not just about a battle of the generations.

I pay tribute to the millions of unpaid carers in society who for years have been papering over the cracks in the system and the capricious nature of continuing healthcare assessments. I have personal experience of some of that as for many years my father was my mother’s unpaid carer and had to deal with that at the sharp end. For that reason, I celebrate the fact that this is a nettle grasped. It is not necessarily the whole solution but it is the start of a package of measures that moves forward a debate that has been stalled for too long. That is one reason why we should all come to the House and use our voice and platform on the hard issues that we face in society.

I applaud the Government on their selection of national insurance, which is the tax with the broadest reach. It is progressive, and that is why so many of our European neighbours have chosen to fund their social systems through similar measures. It is a chimera to think that there is another way—perhaps Opposition Members have been taking medicinal hallucinogenics—because the national insurance take is more than 10 times that of capital gains tax and inheritance tax combined. No mythical tax on wealth will give us anything like what we need to take this issue seriously—and we should take it seriously.

Anthony Browne (South Cambridgeshire) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is the height of political cynicism for Opposition parties to campaign repeatedly to increase taxes to spend money on health and social care and then, when the Government introduce such measures, oppose them? Does he think that they should commit themselves to scrapping the health and social care levy once it is introduced?

Andrew Griffith: My hon. Friend, as ever, makes an important point. We should be on a quest for consensus, and it would be useful to hear more from Opposition Members in the wind-ups.

I pay tribute to the many dedicated workers in care homes across my constituency as well as their residents—from Barlavington Manor in the north to Valerie Manor in the south and from Villa Adastra in the east to Westergate House in the west. They are just four of the 28 care homes in my constituency providing fantastic quality care. It would be lovely to see more resources pumped into them as well as their staff.

Let me conclude broadly where I started. This is a down payment on a process of reform in our healthcare systems, building on the innovation that we have seen. However, a health and social care system cannot be managed permanently on an exceptions basis. We need reorganisation, better data and better decision making to build the high-quality health and social care system that both sides of the House want to see.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. Before we move on, I remind colleagues—I am sure they know—that it is very courteous to listen to a lot of the debate before intervening, because many colleagues have sat here from the beginning and are waiting to speak.

3.38 pm

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): Take no comfort, nor relief. Those things you dread will still be true. But now, poorer through life and poorer through

[*Rachael Maskell*]

death. Through life, you will pay. When frail, you will pay. Disabled people will pay and pay and pay. For what? None of us knows. Time and again, we have been promised that social care plan. Like the emperor's new clothes, there is nothing to show. But, rest assured, things are about to get tougher, budgets tighter and ends not meeting. That personal debt will grow.

Two weeks ago, there was no plan. The Prime Minister tossed a coin, and this is where it has landed. Now he is rushing through this Bill with no pre-legislative scrutiny, no impact assessment and no plan to fix the care crisis for those already in the system or the 1.5 million longing for help. There is nothing for unpaid carers, and £8 billion has been cut from the system. As ever, the Prime Minister is throwing out the headlines with little thought and then moving on, leaving a path of destruction behind him for someone else to clear up and, in this case, to pay up.

This will not clear the NHS backlog. As we have heard today, the staff shortages are not being addressed, and how can they be in such a short period. Just this weekend, we were 74 nurses short in York. That is the scale of the challenge, and one that the Government have not answered.

A decade into this Tory Government, there is still no plan. We just pay up, and one day we may learn what for. For starters, if someone holds assets above the thresholds, they will still pay £86,000—the vast majority of average care costs—and will still need to sell their home. Then there will be accommodation, if needing residential care, and living costs on top, and no cap until October 2023. This is why we need a public national care service that is free at the point of use and fairly contributed to by all.

With 84% of care home beds owned by private investors, including private equity firms, who are not paying this levy and whose sole purpose is to profit—profit from the frail—it is the social care reform we need that we should be debating today. Just one provider in my constituency made a 25% profit increase ahead of the pandemic, but it will be its staff, who were promised a pay rise while clapped by the Prime Minister, who will now have to pay the levy instead. But we have been denied the opportunity to debate what this nation is paying for.

The Labour party cannot consent. We believe that those who have more, should pay more. Take the London School of Economics wealth tax commission, which reported last December. It found that a tax on assets worth over £500,000 at 5% would draw a pot of £260 billion, which would pay for health and social care and that much-needed pay rise. The tax would be assessed on individuals rather than households, with the rate of tax being 5%, albeit with a standard payment period of five years, allowing a tax rate of 1% to be paid for each of those five years. The amount raised is the equivalent of income tax at 9%. Alternatively, if the threshold was £2 million, £80 billion would still be raised.

That would start another conversation: instead of low-paid workers funding the social care of the wealthy, the wealthy would be funding the social care of all. I ask Members: is this fair? This may not be the full answer, but it starts a different conversation—one that, in rushing through the legislation today, the Government are running away from.

3.42 pm

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): I join many Members who have already spoken in wholeheartedly supporting the Government in trying to grasp this nettle, which has been pushed into the long grass for too long by too many Governments of all persuasions. However, I think many of us are concerned about the haste with which this reform—or this funding, certainly—is being introduced. Parliament has little time to scrutinise the details properly, and there are so few details out there. Questions to the Prime Minister only last week, in a letter copied in to the Chancellor and indeed to the Secretary of State for Health, have been left unanswered.

I would ask those on the Front Bench what other types of funding for social care systems have been considered. Have they looked at the insurance-based systems on the continent? Why not a public insurance system, which has many merits? We are unclear about the exact improvements to social care, yet today we are signing off a massive tax increase—bigger than that raised by some Budgets.

I would also suggest that this is the wrong approach to the funding. The Conservative party has traditionally referred to national insurance as a tax on jobs. The Prime Minister, when opposing Labour's increase from the Back Benches in 2002, called it regressive. He was right then, and I am afraid that he is wrong now in introducing this national insurance contribution tax increase.

The core of my one nation Conservatism is a belief that, in order better to help the more vulnerable and ensure that we maintain low unemployment, we should encourage economic prosperity. Low taxes help businesses, encourage prosperity and keep unemployment down—they certainly help to. Yet here we are, increasing taxes at a time when the recovery is still fragile after the pandemic. This will cost jobs, and it will result in lower pay and higher prices. I also to a certain extent question the fairness of this increase in our national insurance contributions, which will disproportionately fall on the lower paid. Why should wealthy non-working pensioners be exempt? If this were a truly broad-based tax, we would be answering that question, but there is nothing but silence from the Government on that point.

I am concerned about the lack of response from the NHS with all this extra funding going in and the lack of accountability. I was chair of the all-party group on cancer for 10 years. We continue to point out that we are failing to match international averages when it comes to our cancer survival rates. We have a mass of process targets that create myriad bureaucracies, but we are still not catching up when it comes to average cancer survival rates. Only half the NHS workforce is medically trained. We need to address that, because more money alone is not the answer. We need genuine reform that focuses on outcome measures, not process targets. So we need more time to consider the proposals and I will not be supporting the Government in the Lobbies tonight.

3.47 pm

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): I probably agreed with at least three quarters of what the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay (Mr Baron) just said. One thing I did not agree with him on was his belief that the Government have grasped the nettle. I believe they have walked past the nettle, barely nodding

at it, and the people who will be stung are the people still in social care, the people working in social care, and the people who will disproportionately pay for what the Government are proposing.

Conservative MPs and the Conservative press are concerned about the Prime Minister breaking his promise on taxation, but the promise he has most definitely broken is the one he made during the leadership contest in 2019, when he said he would

“fix the crisis in social care once and for all”.

He has done no such thing; that proposal is not before the House today. There was a promise not to raise taxes. If the Government chose to break that promise, I would be happy to provide them with cover for that. Labour may have dodged the issue, but I am clear that we should raise income tax so that this is paid for by people who have the wealth and ability to pay for it—not by national insurance, which often will disproportionately fall on younger working-age people. What do those people tend to have in common? They cannot afford a home, or at least a house that they own. What will we be asking them to do? To fund those who have a home to have the right to leave it to those who come after them.

Nobody should be forced to sell their home to pay for care. Just a few weeks ago, I was talking to a friend of mine who sadly has cancer. This was a terrible thing to say, but he said, “I feared cancer and I feared dementia, but I’ve got the least bad of the two.” He is living with cancer now. The reality is that, for many reasons, his care is paid for, but for those like my father-in-law, my grandfather and others who suffer from dementia, that care is not provided for. So it is right to have radical reform of social care, but this is not it. It is right that all the parties should get together to ensure we have a common approach to this, but this proposal has been dreamt up and issued as a press release—it is not the reform of social care we need.

This reform of social care does nothing to tackle the 120,000 care assistant vacancies in our country, or to give social care staff the pay and esteem they deserve. One reason there is a crisis is that wonderful people can earn more money stacking shelves than they can caring for our loved ones, of whatever age. This plan will do nothing to give local authorities the money they need to backfill the terrible backlog and black holes that the Government have left them. Again, they are taking unpaid carers for granted and—the hon. Member for Arundel and South Downs (Andrew Griffith) rightly mentioned this earlier—not addressing the needs of those in care who are not of retirement age but significantly younger. This is a massive missed opportunity that will be paid for by people who have the least.

In my community in Cumbria, we are about 10 years above the national average age. We have a smaller working-age population and a disproportionately large population in need of care. We have colossal staffing shortages as things are. This measure does nothing to meet the needs of the people in my community, because it does nothing to invest in the quality and standard of the care that they will receive.

Dr Murrison: I am loth to give the hon. Gentleman an extra minute, but I must ask him how much he would put on income tax. I know that his party was famously keen on putting a penny on income tax, but he has just made a whole load of spending commitments—particularly

raising incomes for care staff. I assume he has costed that. If so, will he say how many pennies on income tax he proposes to burden our constituents with?

Tim Farron: We would need to raise income tax to do what the hon. Gentleman’s Government say they need to do in the short term to get through, and then we would have a ring-fenced, bespoke tax that would deal with social care. If people had lived to the age they do now when Lord Beveridge, the fine Liberal who came up with the welfare state and the NHS in the first place, wrote his plan, there is no doubt that social care would have been part of that package, and we would be paying more tax now as a consequence. I say we should be doing what we were doing around Dilnot a few years ago, when we were moving in the right direction, working often across the House, and coming up with a package that we would pay for. In the short term, though, we would immediately raise a tax that is affordable and fair and does not just clobber those people on low wages and people of working age. That is the right thing to do.

That is why this measure is not just the wrong way of going about this but a colossal missed opportunity. We were promised something like the Beveridge report, and we ended up with something written on the back of a fag packet. We need something that means people will look back on this generation the way people still do on the generation of politicians post war who built the welfare state in the first place.

3.51 pm

Craig Mackinlay (South Thanet) (Con): In common with my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon and Billericay (Mr Baron), I am wondering—I think many of us are—why we are here today. We have a fiscal event, the autumn Budget, in just six weeks’ time, which would seem to be the right forum to discuss these matters. One cannot help but wonder: why the haste.

We had the Dilnot commission report in July 2011, 10 years ago. Arguably, even then, that was 10 years too late. It was intended to solve the inherent unfairness between two people who were on similar incomes throughout their lives, one who rented and one who bought their home, whereby one lost everything and one got everything for free. That is at the heart of these issues and of affordability in the longer term. I get that, and the Government have to be applauded for finally thinking about these things, but haste is not due at this time.

I am sad that we are just reaching for the tax lever. That is not what Conservatives do. We are going to end up with a tax take at the highest level of GDP for 70 years. Since we are raising NICs—particularly employer’s NICs—it stands to reason that any employer with a pot that they were thinking about using to increase general salaries across their workforce will reduce that pot by 1.25%.

Let us concentrate on NICs. On our first day back at school last Monday, we debated the National Insurance Contributions Bill, which exempts from NICs veterans and potentially new freeport businesses. We have employer’s NIC relief for the under-21s and for those under 25 on apprenticeships. We have an employment allowance to exempt employers from national insurance. That was at £3,000 for all small employers, and it has now increased to £4,000, because exempting employers from national insurance is deemed to be a good thing.

[Craig Mackinlay]

I say to those on the Treasury Bench: please help me. We tend to tax things that are deemed to be bad. We tax things such as alcohol, cigarettes and fuel because we want lower use of them. They are deemed to be bad. Increasing a tax on jobs, something we want a lot of, seems rather bizarre.

I serve on the Public Accounts Committee, and just last week we did an investigation into the Department for Work and Pensions. Last year alone, there was £8.3 billion of fraud and error in its payments out. Obviously, the pandemic had something to do with that, but there is an in-built annual loss of £5.5 billion through fraud and error. That is something approaching half of what we are looking for here to solve these problems.

As Conservatives, we grasp difficult problems. We grasp and understand the problem of an ageing demographic in our populations. On pensions, we did something novel. We could have just reached for the tax lever, but we did not. We introduced auto enrolment pensions, where the employer and the employee contribute and every employee in the land earning above a certain amount has a pot that they can call their own, with the flexibility that that has. To me, that is the type of thinking we should be doing now. I am very concerned that we will just sink another load of tax into the Department of Health and Social Care and hope for a different outcome, when we have been throwing money into these Departments for many years, yet our waiting lists are at the highest ever.

Her Majesty's loyal Opposition have been howling, "Let's have wealth taxes." Well, I am very pleased to tell them that, yes, we have a very substantial wealth tax in play and it is called inheritance tax. It has doubled since 2011, from £2.7 billion to £5.4 billion today, and that will be going in one direction, given asset value inflations and the fiscal drag within the IHT system.

Dr Murrison: Of course, we have also had a wealth tax in the form of the removal of indexation allowance on capital gains tax for some years now, which is very substantial over time.

Craig Mackinlay: I am very grateful to my right hon. Friend for highlighting some of the fiscal drags that have been beneficial to the Treasury. In terms of asset price inflation, which has nothing to do with the activities of the taxpayer, other factors of low interest rates are involved. There are big windfalls coming towards the Treasury, in terms of IHT and capital taxes, which were never really forecast and are now bearing some substantial fruit. So I would have hoped that the Treasury Bench might have thought, "Where are those taxes going? Where are the other losses within the system across different Departments? Are there procurement gains? Are we really saying that the way the NHS is run today is the best way of running it?" I would have hoped that that could have formed the new pot to solve our social care problem.

I am very concerned that this is going to be wasted cash. I am very unimpressed and I will not be supporting the Government tonight.

3.57 pm

Fleur Anderson (Putney) (Lab): I would like to declare an interest, as my daughter is a care worker.

I pay tribute to care workers across the country for all the additional work they have been doing throughout the pandemic, to unpaid carers and to community care services run by amazing staff and volunteers, such as Regenerate-Rise in my own constituency and the Katherine Low Settlement, where I used to work, running services for older people, before I became an MP.

This is definitely a problem that needs fixing, but I am really hoping for another Government U-turn on this issue today. There are 300,000 people on waiting lists for care services. There is a huge disconnect between the NHS and social care services. There are delays in getting care plans, community services are patchy across the country because of different funding and activities for adults with disabilities are being cut across the country, too. Mencap reports that one in three local authorities have closed day services for people with learning disabilities and that 57% of people with learning disabilities no longer receive any day services. Family carers are having to give up work and people cannot lead the full life that they want. There is an increase in isolation and a massive increase in requests for care services. At the same time, there are soaring budgets and shrinking budgets.

I have three problems with the issue today. One is the deferred payment. This is not solving the adult care crisis because it will go to fix the NHS backlog. How will we be able to cut that crisis in future years? In two or three years' time, there will be increased staff, resources and facilities—absolutely needed after 10 years of underfunding—but how will we cut that in two or three years? This is absolutely a jam tomorrow policy and I do not know how it will work. We need money for adult social care services now. This will really frustrate people who are receiving care as well as those working in the care sector.

Secondly, this is the wrong way to raise the funds.

Back in March, the Chancellor said:

"We're not going to raise the rates of income tax, national insurance, or VAT... It is a tax policy that is progressive and fair." So by his own admission, this is a tax policy that is not progressive or fair. It is taking from the poorest and leaving the wealthiest relatively untouched. It is a tax on jobs and disproportionately on working people. Why not tax dividends, capital gains or income from property?

Some 2.5 million families across the country face a double whammy of a national insurance rise and the £1,000-a-year universal credit cut at the same time. Care workers will not be getting a pay rise. They are promised some changes down the road, but nothing now, and yet they will have a tax rise. The £86,000 cap will still leave people having to sell their house. Inequality will increase and what will the levy fund? Where is the plan?

We need to transform access to care. There needs to be a home-first policy. Prevention is so important and, as I said, we need to join up the NHS with social care policies. One of the biggest frustrations I faced as an adult care worker was that we did not have a continuity of care between the two. It is not just about money; the systems must be reformed. Why should we have to pay for it when we do not know what systems will be changed? This huge tax increase cannot be guaranteed to fix the adult social care problem, because we have not been told what on earth it will be spent on. It is unfair, it will not fix the crisis and I hope to see that U-turn very soon. I cannot support this Bill.

4.1 pm

Sir Mike Penning (Hemel Hempstead) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow many colleagues who have talked from the heart about the great concerns that their constituents and we as family members have about the health and social care framework.

I will be supporting the Bill tonight because, as I said last week, kicking the can down the road, as several Governments have for years and years, is not the answer, but I have a couple of questions that I would like the Treasury Minister to address. I completely agree with the Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee, my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt) that if we just throw this money into the NHS and social care, it will not even touch the sides. It will just disappear. Previous Governments have done it up to now, so we have to be really careful about how the money is hypothecated and where it goes.

I am particularly worried that the top management, who earn so much, will not actually address the issues that we are talking about today. Naturally, I pay tribute to all the frontline workers in social care, all of our emergency workers and those in the NHS, but I worry about the decisions that are made and the salaries that some chief executives of trusts are on. Frankly, they are not only miles above what the Prime Minister gets, but miles above what even those in the City get. It is absolutely mind-boggling, so we have to be really careful about that and about the trusts doing what Parliament tells them to do. I know that will be addressed in the Health and Care Bill. We cannot have a situation again like the one I mentioned last week, where the Prime Minister came into my part of the world and said, "You are going to get a new hospital." That was fantastic news; I put out press releases galore. We have been campaigning for that for years, but what we are going to get is a refurbished Victorian hospital in the middle of Watford. That is not the answer. The trusts need to do what they are told.

I will touch on one other area—dementia—which is the elephant in the room, and which my hon. Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Ruth Edwards) mentioned. There is a lottery for our constituents and our loved ones when we are trying to sort out the difference between personal care and healthcare when it comes to dementia and Alzheimer's. What goes on is immoral: one silo, the Department of Health and Social Care, fights against another, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, about who might pay for that care. We have seen it in my family, in my constituency and in my surgeries. We have been fighting to appeal. People seem to be encouraged to appeal, so people appeal, but by the time the situation is dealt with, many of our loved ones and many of those in care have passed away. Only then do people win, so something is seriously wrong.

As we look at the extra money that is going in, we must break down the silos and the really immoral way—postcode lotteries are going on around the country today—that we judge who is entitled to healthcare and who is entitled to personal care. Dementia and Alzheimer's—I always mix up the two—are illnesses, not something that people want or have brought on themselves, yet many people are having to fight to show that they have a condition so that the Department of Health and Social Care might pay for care. I hope that

as we look forward we can try to address that. These are difficult conundrums, but we cannot put our constituents with Alzheimer's or dementia—our loved ones, in my case and that of other hon. Members—in a position where they have to beg because their care relates to a different condition.

4.4 pm

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): Thank you for calling me to speak, Mr Deputy Speaker. Like many others, I am put in a difficult position by the Bill. I believe that there must be big changes to create an influx into the NHS for the reform that we are desperate for, but I have seen too many broken families who have lost a loved one who was waiting for mental health support, who could have been saved if their cancer diagnosis had come in time, or who are awaiting support to make their child's educational journey positive, not a hellish nightmare without the support that they need.

I am torn, because I see the need for reform. I see mentally and physically exhausted staff at the end of themselves, trying to meet their obligations in the NHS, and desperate trusts putting up advertisements for off-duty staff to come in because of dangerously understaffed wards. All those things tell me that there is need for reform, but I do not and cannot support this method. I cannot support the middle class and the small businessman bearing the brunt of the cost again. I cannot wrap my mind around the concept that someone earning £15,000 a year will have the same amount taken away in national insurance contributions as someone on £150,000 a year.

I make it clear that I am not a socialist; there is nothing wrong with being a socialist, but I am a capitalist. I believe that the system that we have is important. I understand that big business must have big results to support the big workforce, but I believe that when raising money, the easiest way is not always best.

We must ensure that we do not continue to squeeze the middle class. The Government have not been able to assure me or my colleagues that their proposal is the best way or that it is better than a graduated system whereby those on huge wages paid an extra amount that they would not overly notice, instead of families on the brink having to sacrifice and struggle each day.

I speak to constituents who are earning too much for support but not enough to live comfortably. They are the group who will be most affected, but the burden could and should be more judiciously shared. For those middle-class families, for the small businesswoman employing 11 staff and for the pensioner who has been taxed for their entire life, I do not think that the proposed method is the best one, and I do not feel that I can support it.

From the refusal to lift the child benefit threshold above £50,000, which is preventing families from taking a pay rise for fear of losing the monthly child benefit payment that pays for necessities for their children, to the situation facing pensioners who thought that they had set aside enough to last, only to deal with an increase in the cost of living along with a raid of the pension in their savings account, life is uncomfortable for those who have worked hard and who believed that they would retire in peace. Those people are all willing to make a contribution to the NHS, but is it fair that they should feel the brunt alone? I feel that that is what is happening; it is not right and I cannot support it.

[Jim Shannon]

I have one more small comment to make, which is about the £420 million that will be allocated to Northern Ireland through the Barnett formula. Whatever process the moneys come through, I would like to see them ring-fenced, because as Departments bid for funding, there is every possibility that the money will be deflected from doing good to simply being abused. In Northern Ireland, it could be used for the machinations of other parties, while teenagers suffer from eating disorders and while child and adolescent mental health services teams cannot prevent children from hurting or abusing themselves. I have watched as the Northern Ireland Office has been strong-armed into funding endless legacy investigations to the tune of Sinn Féin, which wishes to rewrite history.

I have not heard that the Bill will prevent the misappropriation of central funding, so I cannot support it. That goes against the grain for me, because I believe in the principle of reform. I would welcome reform if a different method of raising funding were put forward, but I simply cannot agree with the Government's method. I ask them, even at this late stage, to revisit the methodology and allow us all to support our NHS, as people want to, without further squeezing the middle class. That cannot happen.

4.9 pm

Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes) (Con): As someone with naturally Conservative instincts, I am inclined to say no to tax increases, and to greatly prefer the options that allow the Government to create the economic conditions for growth in order to fund our public services. We have to recognise, however, that the expectations of the public are much greater now than they were a relatively short time ago. Whether we approve or not, the Government are now expected to provide more and more services, and the public do recognise that there is a cost to that.

I am a child of the 1950s. At that time, it was expected that the family would look after children—not necessarily just the parents, but the wider family, and the next-door neighbour might be involved as well. Now, however, there is an expectation that the Government must fund facilities for childcare. The same applies to adult care: that, too, was something that families took on. It was a burden, there is no denying that, but one that was expected, and, in the family context, accepted. It was not ideal then, and what the Government are proposing now, I suspect, will also not be ideal. It will have imperfections. Our surgeries will be full of people saying, "My neighbour is getting this and I am not." We all hear of such anomalies from constituents. There will be the issue of differences in property prices, for example. My part of the world has low property values: for £350,000, one can buy a nice four-bedroom executive property; that is not the case here in the south. There will be anomalies that need further consideration.

Then we need to ask, "How are we going to do this?" The Government need money now. That is the expectation of the general public. Yes, there is a danger that the money could fall into a black hole, but we all have the ability to challenge our local health trusts. My hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Lia Nici) and I have regular meetings with our hospital trust. We must expect the Government to challenge the NHS senior

management at national level, but we all have a role to play. Our local authorities have scrutiny panels that can ask questions, but we as individual Members of Parliament can take part in detailed scrutiny. We want to know what has been done to improve dementia care in, for instance, Grimsby and Cleethorpes. We want to know what has been done to improve cancer care. Is the stroke unit better located at Scunthorpe General Hospital, which is the case in our district? There is much that we can all do to aid the Government, and, more important, to aid and help our constituents.

This is a massive challenge for Governments. Governments have to accept the world as it is, and not as they would like it to be. I urge my colleagues who have expressed perfectly legitimate reservations about supporting the Bill to have a rethink. The Government are delivering on what the public expect. The public know that massive amounts of money have gone into dealing with the pandemic, and they recognise that if they want a better health service—which they all do—and better social care, there is a cost. It is not a cost that I like, but it is the best way forward at the moment.

4.13 pm

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): The only way to sustainably finance the costs of social care and the NHS for an ageing population is a growing economy, so why is the Chancellor taxing work? He said at the last Question Time that the only way to tackle poverty was to encourage work, but he is taxing work, and specifically he is taxing poorer, younger workers who do not have assets to pay for the care costs of often richer, non-earning, asset-rich people. It is not fair, it is not economically effective, it is being rushed through—it is wrong in so many ways that it should just be scrapped.

Obviously, we need to pay for care costs. It is appalling that one in four people will be hit with massive care costs through no fault of their own, and we need a system that is fair in terms of taxation to pay for that. I am not a great fan of hypothecation, because we should be deciding how to tax in a fair and economically sensible way and setting out precisely what we are going to spend our money on, neither of which has been done. If we want to grow the economy and tax things that we do not want to occur—people have talked about alcohol and cigarettes—we should be tackling, in particular, air pollution. I say this as the chair of the all-party parliamentary group on air pollution. Air pollution costs us £20 billion in lost productivity and health costs, so why do we not have some sort of escalator on diesel? Why do we not have an incinerator tax? The plan is to double incineration by 2030, yet we read from the latest medical reports that a very small increase in NOx massively increases dementia and mental health issues by something like 32%, with an 18% increase in hospital admissions. We have heard new research about ultrafine particulates from incinerators in urban environments getting straight into the bloodstream and causing problems for the heart, the mind and the lungs in particular, but there has been no mention of any of this.

And what about plastics? There will be more plastics than fish in the sea by 2050. We plan to tax plastics at £200 per tonne, but in the EU the figure is £685 per tonne. If we put an extra £400 per tonne on the 12 million tonnes of plastic we produce each year, we would

generate £5 billion. Why should we not be able to get a cheaper cup of coffee in a china cup than in a plastic one? That would save the environment.

I support the points that were made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Dame Margaret Hodge) and others on progressive taxation. Gordon Brown had a national insurance increase all the way up the income scale. Obviously we need a threshold if we are going to use national insurance. Lord Hendy is now putting forward the Status of Workers Bill, which would capture large numbers of people who are currently deemed to be self-employed so that their employers do not have to pay national insurance. In that way, we could have a larger tax footprint, which would be fairer.

Obviously companies such as Amazon should pay more and there should be a transactions tax. Landlords have made capital gains through stamp duty holidays and with interest rates at low levels, and we should also look at a carbon border tax at a time when China is producing more emissions than the United States and the EU combined.

We should tax the bad things—namely, climate change and pollution—not the good things such as work and the economy. On debt costs, the interest rates have been low—they are down £14 billion year on year—and this looks like another attempt to bring down the debt. We must tax the right things, not the wrong things, to sort out the problem.

4.17 pm

Dr Andrew Murrison (South West Wiltshire) (Con): I will certainly be supporting the Government in the Lobby this evening, and the reason is this: in 1948, we instituted a system of socialised medicine, which has the support of all major political parties in this country, for all medical conditions save just a few. They tend to be things such as dementia, the general frailty of old age and associated conditions such as Parkinson's. Nobody in this place has any cause to hector or lecture on these subjects unless they have had personal caring experience for somebody with that spectrum of conditions, because I can tell them that it alters your perspective dramatically on what is needed to improve services for an increasing proportion of our population. It is no good Opposition Members professing their support for our model of socialised medicine while excepting the growing burden of ill health that tends to attend advanced years. That is chiefly what lies at the heart of this measure today.

If we are all agreed that it is invidious to except dementia and the frailty of old age from the provision that we have celebrated since 1948, we have to find an equitable way of paying for it, and that implies the use of a broad tax base. It is not clear to me from anything that has been said this afternoon that anyone other than those on the Government Front Bench has a clue as to how that alternative balance sheet would stack up. Despite interventions that I have made, I am none the wiser about what their alternative would be. Nobody enjoys taxation. As a Conservative, I loathe putting my hand in other people's pockets, but there is a general expectation, after the pandemic, that money will have to be raised from somewhere. The only question that I would concede is when should we do that?

I would like to put one or two points to the Minister, having given him my support. We are fundamentally changing the health and social care system by providing

this increase in funds and an alternative way of paying for health and social care through a hypothecated levy. It is likely that the social care industry will respond, as all businesses will. I am ever so slightly worried that things like hotel costs will be ramped up, as they are not covered by this, to the disadvantage of our constituents, and that costs will be frontloaded to about, say, £86,000.

I hope that Ministers, in their White Paper and subsequently, will insist on some way of limiting and moderating such frontloading; otherwise I fear that many of the advantages we want for our constituents and their families in this situation will be eroded. We need an indicative sum on, for example, hotel costs. Please do not assume that all within this sector are acting for pure and altruistic reasons. They are businesses and will respond as all businesses do.

I support the levy, as it is the right thing to do. No alternative has been put forward that is remotely credible, and I will strongly support the Government this evening.

4.21 pm

Kim Johnson (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab): I pay tribute to the social care workers working in care homes and the domiciliary sector in my Liverpool, Riverside constituency.

This country is in the grip of a social care crisis, and this Bill needed to be a watershed moment for the sector. Instead, we have been presented with a package that neither fixes the social care system for service users and workers nor funds it fairly. Unprecedented numbers of staff are leaving the profession, with 600,000 care workers currently earning only the national minimum wage, more than 110,000 vacancies and a massive turnover of 30% a year.

We are in desperate need of a detailed plan to mend and future-proof a system broken by years of underfunding and neglect. Decent pay, terms and conditions for undervalued employees must take centre stage of any serious plan to tackle the deep-rooted structural issues in the social care sector, along with a long-term workforce strategy and improved quality and standards of care.

Instead, this plan does nothing to address the job retention and vacancy problem facing the adult social care sector by improving pay, terms and conditions. Can the Minister tell us what thought, if any, this Government have put into tackling job retention and vacancies in the social care sector?

Despite being the primary commissioner of adult social care services, local government is glaringly absent from the Government's package. Age UK has called for a big injection of funding into councils' care budgets, including a social care workforce strategy to meet rising demand and the needs of disabled and older people by widening the criteria for state support alongside a new deal for unpaid, informal carers.

We need a plan to fundamentally tackle the social care crisis through local government bringing services back in house, with proper funding raised by a wealth tax on the richest. Billionaires in Britain got £290 million richer every single day during this crisis. While they were raking in massive profits, millions across this country were struggling to make ends meet and many relied on food banks.

This package will leave a key worker earning £26,000 a year facing a hike in their NI contributions, on top of a pay freeze, rising council tax, and a frozen personal

[Kim Johnson]

allowance for income tax—and all this at a time when food, fuel and energy prices are increasing. It is obscene that, after all this, the Tories are pushing through a tax hike that will hit the lowest-paid workers while leaving the wealthy untouched.

The Prime Minister gave a strong assurance that he would fix the social care crisis after a decade of cuts by this Conservative Government, which took £8 billion out of the social care system. This plan does not come close to the additional £7 billion for social care called for by the Health and Social Care Committee, and much of the funds that will be raised risk being absorbed by a resource-starved NHS.

Social care should be universally free at the point of use, just like healthcare. Once again, we see another broken Tory promise. The lip service paid by this Government to levelling up is shown to be just as hollow as their promises not to hike taxes, and I will not be supporting this.

4.25 pm

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con): I am a great believer in the Conservative philosophy being probably the simplest of those of all the political parties. We believe in freedom—freedom of the individual and freedom from the state. We believe in low taxes. We believe in hard work and a safety net for those who fall into it. Aping Labour by spending billions of pounds we cannot afford will not fool the electorate for long. The NHS has become a religion—no one dares take its name—but a radical review of health provision is crucial if we are not to pour money into a black hole; we have heard this expression used repeatedly today, but it is a bottomless pit. Without reform, this money, well intended by the Government, will disappear.

Interestingly, and soberingly, the Resolution Foundation estimates that shortly 40% of all government expenditure will be on the Department of Health and Social Care. We repeatedly talk about reform but nothing happens. I was shocked when last week, having finished the debate, I learned that 43 new executives—I think I am right in saying this—are going to be employed by the NHS, on £270,000 each. I just do not know what to say. There are already enough executives in the NHS to run it, so why do we need 43 more, on these huge salaries?

As has been said, we are aiming our fire at business with this NI rise, and we are doing so at a time when the Office for National Statistics shows good news: employment is back to pre-pandemic levels, with more than 1 million job vacancies. That is fantastic news and so this is not the time to raise taxes. Every instinct in me screams for us to lower them, because if we do that, we get more money—that is a fact. There is no doubt that social care and the NHS need more money, but with it must come reform, as I have said. As a colleague said so wisely in the Chamber last week, we will never win the “arms race” with Labour when it comes to pouring money into the NHS. Like any household budget, if we cannot borrow, we have to prioritise what we spend. We have to cut in other areas.

As I said last week, where is the Singapore-style, low-tax economy we were promised once free of the European Union? Where is the narrative on a way forward as this pandemic becomes endemic and life

returns to normal? Where is the vision? I sympathise with the Government and the Front Benchers, as these are unprecedented times, but I urge them: don't go Labour-lite on us now. With our finances in a perilous state, we need to work our way out of this mess, not tax our way out. We need to galvanise our economy. Courage is needed, not hesitancy. Throwing out a sea anchor—I am a sailor and I know what I am talking about—will only create a drag on our recovery. It will not help it.

Let me remind the House, in the few seconds I have left, that we are talking about taxpayers' money, something that, as Conservatives, we should not squander. I made this point last time, but this is taxpayers' hard-earned money. Those on this side of the House are responsible for people's money or we are not Conservatives at all.

4.29 pm

Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): I must agree with the hon. Member for South Dorset (Richard Drax) in one regard: we are talking today about not a small tax rise but a whopper. This levy takes us back to 1950s levels of taxation.

The post-pandemic recovery is currently particularly fragile. Usefully, the House of Commons Library sent me the statistics on the jobless figures today—I am sure many other Members have theirs—and in Hornsey and Wood Green there are 6,430 jobless people. That is 4,000 more than pre-pandemic, so the idea that the recovery is secure is for the birds. There is a real question mark in my constituency over job retention following the end of furlough, because the recovery in the service-based economy is yet to take off securely.

What is on the minds of my constituents in Hornsey and Wood Green? First, the likely cut of £20 per week for those on universal credit, which will affect 12,970 households in Hornsey and Wood Green.

Secondly, the two-child limit. If people in Hornsey and Wood Green have large families and rely on the benefit system for some assistance, only the first two children get any help. I am a third child. I do not know how many Members are third, fourth or fifth children, but they should think about their parents cursing them because they were born third, fourth or fifth.

Thirdly, energy bills are about to go up. I am sure the Minister has done his own analysis of the fact that we did not have a windy summer, which meant that the renewables did not do as much as we had hoped. We will be reliant on gas and even coal, which we should not be given all our commitments in respect of COP26. For those reasons, we will see increases in our energy bills this winter.

Fourthly, the potential for higher food costs is on my constituents' minds—that is, if they can find the food that they like in the supermarkets after the effects of Brexit and covid.

Matt Rodda (Reading East) (Lab): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way on that very good point. Does she agree that it is fundamentally unfair for hard-working younger people, who face dramatically increased costs of living and high rental costs, to have to pay more than their landlords, who will not be taxed under the Government's proposal?

Catherine West: My hon. Friend, who always talks about the impact of measures of this sort on those who rent, makes an excellent point. This levy is going to be very difficult for them, yet it will probably not be nearly as hard for their landlords.

Fifthly, the likelihood of a council tax increase is on my constituents' minds. Why does council tax shoot up under Tory Governments? Because if local government is starved, council tax has to increase to cover local issues. In the case of this measure, the lowest paid will not only be paying for a whopper of a tax increase—the biggest since the 1950s—but will be faced with rising council tax bills and the precept for social care, because this measure will not adequately look after the local government aspect of social care. I declare an interest as a vice-chair of the Local Government Association and a former council leader.

I wish to make two further brief points—

Alexander Stafford (Rother Valley) (Con): I am listening carefully to the hon. Lady's interesting speech and her list of what her constituents speak to her about. One of the top issues that my constituents speak to me about is the need to deal with social care and to make sure that older people and people who need social care have adequate facilities and funding, yet I have not heard about Labour's plan to deal with this important issue.

Catherine West: I am sure that when the shadow Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Thamesmead (Abena Oppong-Asare), responds to the debate she will give the full detail of Labour's proposals.

Let me return to my point about the important elements of reform that we need in local government. First, we need all care workers to be paid the living wage. By that I mean not Mr Osborne's fake national living wage, which was the national minimum wage, but the real living wage, which in London is now more than £10 an hour but still languishes under £9 in other parts of the country. That must be addressed urgently. We need to look at those wages not least because of the important point that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Kim Johnson) said, we are losing so many carers from the care sector. In addition, the Government are mandating vaccinations, and there is a big question mark over whether that is the correct strategy for those workers. Perhaps that is just another policy area where the Government are like a shopping trolley. Perhaps they will do another U-turn tomorrow and we will see that gone, we just do not know.

The other important element is training. Many experts have told me about the importance of training in the care sector, in the NHS, and especially in those dispersed jobs where people are actually working in the homes of those for whom they care and in our care homes. There is a desperate need for training and a proper career path in order to encourage people into the sector. Even the promise on the apprenticeship opportunities for young people to enter the care sector has been deeply disappointing in terms of the figures involved. Very few from the kickstart programme have ended up in the care sector, which desperately needs young people or people who are re-entering the workforce, but they need to be on a proper training path and in a proper career so that we have high quality care.

I hope that Members will search their consciences and think about how those leaflets will look at the next general election. We will be brutal about this, because the measure is attacking those who are least able to afford it.

4.35 pm

Duncan Baker (North Norfolk) (Con): Whether it is speaking about young carers, improving the pay and conditions of our care workers or pushing social care reforms for our older citizens, I have found myself in this place speaking about social care countless times since my election. One could conclude that I am happy that the Government are beginning to tackle this issue. I might be expected to say that as the MP who represents North Norfolk, an area where the social care sector is particularly important given the demographics of my residents.

As I have said to the many people who have asked for my thoughts on this Bill, in my view the prize of fixing social care is far greater in the long term than bickering about how we pay for it. It is regrettable, obviously, that we have to increase tax, but one simply has to be able to recognise the situation that the country finds itself in. The Exchequer cannot keep funding, in the current tax take, £12 billion to £14 billion a year—not to the extent that it has already supported the country to the tune of some £400 billion. Any reasonable person can recognise that. It would be fiscally irresponsible to continue to heap debt upon debt. There is probably no right way of creating the funding that we will require—a way that will satisfy everybody. Equally, there is no wrong way either. As I have not heard of a significant amount of consensus, a marginal rise in national insurance, to which, as we know, employees as well as employers will contribute, has, to a large degree in my constituency, been met with some understanding of the conundrum that we face.

The Opposition were asked time and again about how they would deal with this matter, but the hon. Member for Ealing North (James Murray) would not put a marker in the sand and explain what he would do.

Geraint Davies: I know the hon. Member said that it would be fiscally irresponsible to increase debt, but is he aware that the interest cost of debt per year has gone down by £14 billion because of historically low interest rates? Therefore, at this particular window in time, as we are coming out of a pandemic, would it not be better not to tax jobs?

Duncan Baker: I am sure the hon. Gentleman will remember the old adage that what goes up must come down, and, obviously, it could happen vice versa as well.

This Government have been incredibly financially prudent over the years. Most constituents around the country would say, "Thank goodness that we have had a Conservative Government looking after this country as they have produced one of the best responses to the pandemic in the entire world."

What constituents want to see now are the tangible changes on the ground and the benefits. What we see today is probably one of the greatest welfare benefits that we have—the fact that there is a cap on how much a person pays in their later life for their care costs and that they will not have to sell their home will create security for a great number of people.

[Duncan Baker]

As the White Paper comes forward, I want to say three things to the Treasury and get these points on the record. First, I am a patron for the Holt Youth Project, which is a marvellous young people's charity in my constituency. It has looked after some 50 young carers throughout the pandemic. Everybody knows that the life chances of young people are significantly affected as a result of looking after a sick or debilitated parent. I want to ensure that we can channel the funding that we get from this levy; there have been many asks today, including for dementia and other incredibly important causes, but please let us ensure that we fund young carers properly.

Secondly, let us ensure that unpaid carers are properly looked after. For those who take the burden off the state to care for their loved ones, the current allowance is £67 a week, at a cost to the Treasury of £3 billion a year. This must be looked at again.

Finally, let me address the recurring problem that we hear about all the time: the shortage of care workers. These people need to have the same high status and high regard as any NHS worker. We have to tackle and get to grips with the skills required to care for somebody with dementia or to give end of life care, and ensure that those care workers are properly rewarded.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): To resume her seat no later than 4.45 pm—we will put the timer on—I call Nickie Aiken.

4.41 pm

Nickie Aiken (Cities of London and Westminster) (Con): I am a low-tax Conservative, but I have concluded over many years that if we are to resolve the social care crisis, it is necessary to raise the money to pay for it. I therefore support the introduction of a national health and social care levy. Pandemic or no pandemic, we have to raise the funds somehow. I feel that successive Governments, whether Labour, coalition or Conservative, have failed to address the social care crisis in this country because they were too scared to face the fact that we would have to raise the funds—until now. Well, the Prime Minister has made the brave decision to do it, but with that decision to raise funds must come reform.

I accept that the pandemic has meant that we now have a huge NHS waiting list of more than 5 million people. If we do not address that, it will only increase. I therefore accept that the money, in the first year or so, has to go to the NHS. However, as we have heard from across the Chamber over the last couple of hours, we must have reform. We cannot allow the money to continue to go into what has been described as a black hole.

When I was the leader of Westminster City Council, 40% of my budget was for social care and adult social services. That is an incredible amount of money. We know that people are living longer, whether in their own homes or in care homes. We have to ensure that local authorities are properly funded to provide the frontline services that they do. The Local Government Association claims that there is a gap of more than £2 billion, so I ask the Government to ensure that, in the spending review, local authorities are given the funding they need to address the immediate social care issues that they face.

During the summer recess, I was proud to spend a week looking after my father, who has advanced Alzheimer's, while my mother had a respite holiday. It was a pleasure, but it was also very difficult. I pay tribute to all those family members who look after their loved ones who have dementia and Alzheimer's. Our society owes them a huge debt. I hope that the money raised from this levy will go towards helping partners who look after their loved ones with respite care, and towards providing brilliant care workers—whether in care homes or providing care at home—with the pay and conditions that they deserve. Throughout the pandemic, they have shown what a brilliant service they provide.

I support the Government this evening, but I hope that we will see reform along with the tax rise.

4.44 pm

Abena Oppong-Asare (Erith and Thamesmead) (Lab): It is a pleasure to respond to this Second Reading debate on behalf of the official Opposition. I thank all hon. Members for their contributions. As several have said, it is good that we are now debating these issues, even though the Government have provided a short time today.

We have heard some excellent contributions, including from my right hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Dame Margaret Hodge), who spoke about how unfair the new tax is on working families. She also made it clear how many alternatives there are to this tax. My hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mick Whitley) talked about how the combined impact of this tax and the universal credit cut will push more families in his constituency into poverty. My hon. Friends the Members for Dulwich and West Norwood (Helen Hayes) and for Putney (Fleur Anderson) spoke powerfully on behalf of hard-working and underpaid social care staff, pointing out that the Government are increasing their tax through this Bill. As my hon. Friend the Member for York Central (Rachael Maskell) said, there is nothing in the Prime Minister's announcement for unpaid carers. My hon. Friends the Members for Swansea West (Geraint Davies), Liverpool, Riverside (Kim Johnson) and for Hornsey and Wood Green (Catherine West) talked about the unfairness in this Bill.

The hon. Member for Rushcliffe (Ruth Edwards) made a powerful speech about her family's experience with dementia and reminded us about the people at the heart of this debate. Several Conservative Members also called on the Government to think again about this tax rise, including the right hon. Member for Wokingham (John Redwood) and the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay (Mr Baron). I hope they will join us in the Lobby tonight.

As the shadow Chancellor, my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds West (Rachel Reeves), set out last week, and as my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing North (James Murray) said earlier, Labour has two tests for the Government's proposals: first, do they fix the health and care crisis; and secondly, are they funded in a fair way? The answer to both is a resounding no.

Gary Sambrook: We have had three hours of this Second Reading debate, and as far as I am concerned, not a single Opposition Member has actually said how they are going to fund their plan and how it is going to

be fair, so will the hon. Lady take this opportunity now to tell the House what individual tax Labour would put up to fund it?

Abena Oppong-Asare: I am a bit concerned that the hon. Member has not been listening to the debate carefully. We have made it very clear: if a tax has to be raised, it should be fair across income groups and generations. The national insurance rise fails to pass these tests, and the Chancellor wants us to believe that there is no way to do so. That is not the case. I want to hear from the hon. Member what he is going to tell his constituents about breaking his manifesto promise, and why he has done so. What will he say to the low-paid hospital cleaners who will have to pay this tax when some of the wealthiest people in his constituency will not?

It has become increasingly clear that this Government do not have a plan to fix the social care crisis or to tackle spiralling NHS waiting lists. It is certainly not in this Bill, which only says that the Chancellor will decide how to distribute the revenues between health and care. Even if we look at the broader proposals, it is clear that there is still no plan for social care. Indeed, the Chair of the Health Committee made this point earlier. A promise of a White Paper is simply not good enough. Despite the Government repeatedly stating that they have finally grasped the social care nettle, the small print reveals that only a fraction of this spending will go to social care over the next three years—and even that is not guaranteed.

Of course our NHS needs more funding, not least because the Tories have underfunded it for a decade, but funding without a plan is not an answer. On social care, the Institute for Fiscal Studies has said that

“the extra funding will not be sufficient to reverse the cuts in the numbers receiving care”

since 2010. Under the Tories, billions have been cut from social care despite growing demand, vacancies have soared, and waiting lists have grown ever longer. This sector is in crisis and it needs help now. Instead, the Government are making it wait. The hard-working and underpaid staff in the care sector deserve better than that. As my hon. Friend the Member for York Central said, even with the new cap, hundreds of people will be left with high care costs, with many costs associated with being in a care home excluded completely from the cap. The cap does not even kick in until 2023. For those paying for social care, or those who need it but cannot afford it, this is no help at all. Even when it does start, too many will begin to face charges of hundreds of pounds a week even after they hit the cap.

The Government cannot even guarantee that this new system will prevent people from being forced to sell their home to pay for care. For those who live in the north, where house prices are generally lower, that is even more likely—£86,000 is a big proportion of house values in the north and the midlands. The plan fails on its own terms, and it is not only Labour saying that. Last week, the Conservative chair of the Local Government Association said that the Government’s announcement would make the situation worse because private care providers would face increased tax bills. Let that sink in: the leading Tory voice for local government is not only saying that the proposals will not help, but that they will make things worse, and it is not just him. The hon. Member for Stevenage (Stephen McPartland)—also a Conservative, last time I checked—said:

“The new health and social care levy provides no new money to fund social care for three years. No money for living costs, only personal care costs. Selling your home is just deferred. It is a tax on jobs.”

The Government have no plan for social care and no plan to bring down NHS waiting lists. Instead, all we are left with in this Bill is a manifesto-breaking tax rise on working people and the businesses who employ them—a tax rise that will cost a typical employee an extra £261. I say that again to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Gary Sambrook): this tax rise will cost a typical employee an extra £261. It is a tax rise that leaves many graduates with a marginal tax rate of nearly 50% and that comes after this Government are already hitting working families with higher taxes and a freeze in the income tax personal allowance.

That is a triple whammy of taxes on working people, yet the Government have chosen not to extend the health and care levy to rental income, even though 67% of people who own buy-to-let properties are in the top fifth of income distribution. Nor have the Government looked properly at financial assets, stocks and shares, or income from other forms of wealth. The proposed dividend tax rise will raise only £600 million, compared with the £11.4 billion coming from workers and businesses, and it is not even in the Bill. Just £1 in every £20 is coming from dividends, rather than people’s wages, and the Government will not even rule out further tax rises on working people during the rest of this Parliament.

The tax rises could not come at a worse time. A fragile recovery is being put at risk at precisely the time we need businesses to create jobs. Family incomes are being hit by the universal credit cut and rising household bills. In fact, when combined with the universal credit cut, a care worker will be over £1,000 worse off a year. Let me repeat that: £1,000 worse off over a year. The Government’s own tax impact assessment, which my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing North referenced earlier, states:

“There may be an impact on family formation, stability or breakdown as individuals, who are currently just about managing financially, will see their disposable income reduce.”

That just sums up how this Government are treating workers and families.

The impact assessment also states that the new tax will affect business decisions about hiring new workers and putting up wages. It is a tax on jobs, a tax on workers, a tax rise with unfairness at its heart, and a tax rise without a plan. Politics is about choices—Labour would not have made these choices. We cannot support this Bill, and I urge Government Members to remember their manifesto commitments that they each made, to think of the lowest paid in their constituencies and those in desperate need of care today and to do the right thing and vote against the Bill on Second Reading.

4.53 pm

Jesse Norman: I thank everyone who has taken part in what has been, with one or two exceptions, a generally constructive debate. I will start with the contribution of the hon. Member for Erith and Thamesmead (Abena Oppong-Asare). She said rightly that politics is about choices, but what choice has Labour given the people of this country? Has it given the people of this country a healthcare plan or a social care plan? Has it given the people of this country any indication of what taxes it

[Jesse Norman]

would raise? Again and again, the Opposition have been asked by Members not just on the Government Benches, but elsewhere, what taxes they would raise and what their plan is, and there is no plan.

Helen Hayes: Will the Minister give way?

Jesse Norman: There have been 27 speeches, so, if I may, I will continue for a while. I may take an intervention later if we have made a bit more progress.

I feel particularly badly for the hon. Member for Erith and Thamesmead because, when the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Catherine West) was asked what Labour's plan was, she said that her Front-Bench colleagues would address that in their remarks. We waited with bated breath for the moment when they would address the question of what the plan was or what taxes would fund it. I can tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that it will need a lot more than £12 billion of health and social care funding to repair the damage from that hospital pass from the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green.

Catherine West: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way, as he mentioned me. The UK economy has seen enormous asset price bubbles, yet not much appears to be getting back from those who have made quite a lot of money over the years through real estate. Why is he taking more money from working people instead of those who have gained enormous amounts—millions—from the asset bubble?

Jesse Norman: I am desperately sad, because I thought the hon. Lady was going to answer my questions about Labour's plan or the taxation for it. Of course, we would expect people earning that income to pay property and income taxes in the proper way, and, if they are receiving dividends, their tax will go up as a result of the changes that we have made. [Interruption.] I am asked on what basis I say that. It is on the basis of a distribution analysis of the overall package of measures published by the Treasury in the last week, which is available for all Members to read and consult. If they do, they will see that this is a very redistributive package, with the highest-income 20% of households contributing 40 times that of the poorest 20% of households. It is a genuinely progressive policy, and the distribution analysis makes that clear.

Paul Holmes (Eastleigh) (Con): I do not think that the Minister will mind me saying that he has served in the House for slightly longer than me. In his time, has he ever known a situation in which the Labour party—a supposed party of the NHS—has voted against billions of pounds of investment in the NHS?

Jesse Norman: It is a desperate shame that the Labour party has decided to take this party political position, because this area above all is one where we would expect it to back its own policy priorities. I remind the House that these measures are more progressive than the national insurance contribution rise of 2003 for which Labour Members enthusiastically voted, yet they are not supporting them. I find that extraordinary—[Interruption.] I am asked where my plan is. It is written down, and it is

called “Build Back Better: Our Plan for Health and Social Care” That is a plan. The void that exists on the Opposition side is not just a void of a plan but a void of a tax package to pay for it.

Colleagues throughout the House have made the right and proper suggestion and implored the Government to look carefully at how the funds that we are raising can be appropriately spent. We must be careful about that. No Conservative wants to raise taxes, and indeed no Conservative would like to waste money. I want hon. Members to understand that Ministers very much take that on board. As hon. Members will know, we have a health and social care plan coming forward in a White Paper, and legislation is in place to put it on the statute book. That is the position.

My hon. Friend the Member for North Norfolk (Duncan Baker) and the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Kim Johnson) rightly made a point about younger people and support for care workers. Of course, we have not just the already published plan for jobs but £500 million of new money pledged to support social care workers, including through new qualifications, progression, and wellbeing and mental health support. That is an important part of what we are doing.

There was one Opposition Member who had genuine ideas for taxation that would support social care: the right hon. Member for Barking (Dame Margaret Hodge). She presented a whole raft of ideas. I do not accept the ideas she put forward, for different reasons, and I think the proposal that the Government have put forward is superior as a single, broad-based package of measures that has this progressive, distributional effect, but she came forward with ideas. What a void, what an emptiness, what a vacuity sat around her from the Labour Front Bench and from the rest of her party. I congratulate her on at least trying to answer the question put by the hon. Member for Erith and Thamesmead that politics involves choices; and what was the choice? The right hon. Member for Barking gave us one.

In doing so, however, I think the right hon. Lady erred. There has been some discussion about the tax information and impact note that the Treasury put out last week. Let us be perfectly clear: that is a technical document that relates only to this levy. It does not relate to the overall effect of the package of measures that it funds; macroeconomically, we expect that overall effect to be broadly economically neutral. That is the picture we are presenting, so just to look at the tax side, as the right hon. Lady did, is I am afraid to miss half the point of it. The point was made very well by Ben Broadbent, a member of the Monetary Policy Committee of the Bank of England. He said that

“one should not ignore one half of that policy announcement as far as the effects on the economy concerned”,

and he was absolutely right about that. So what we have is a balanced policy: we have a health and social care plan with a funding package that the House is considering at the moment.

Let me talk a little more about colleagues. I very much support the comments of my right hon. Friend the Member for Hemel Hempstead (Sir Mike Penning) about the concern that other Members across this House have about the increase in pay at hospital trusts and in some parts of the NHS. That is a matter of concern, and we have to be absolutely clear that that money is

being properly spent in the NHS and across hospital trusts. It is a very strong concern of my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, because he—like us, like me—is concerned to support not just our NHS, but the taxpayer in making sure that that money is properly spent.

I very much supported the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel and South Downs (Andrew Griffith) when he celebrated the adult social care workforce. He was absolutely right to do that, and I hope he will be pleased at the £500 million that we have mentioned in that regard.

May I remind the House that, in grasping this nettle, the Government have not just moved forward on an issue that has been outstanding before this House for many years, but have shown how inadequate the Labour party response was to its own royal commission of 1999, from which, as we can see, virtually no social care—no enduring social care—package followed? If you do not like that, Mr Deputy Speaker, let me direct you to the Wanless report of 2006, on the basis of which no sustainable social care package was developed. That situation is changing now. This Government are putting that sustainable social care funding in place. We are doing it with a levy that tracks many other countries that have social care levies in place. This is a progressive, long-term way to address a problem that has remained in front of us, but unaddressed, for far too long, and I commend this measure to the House.

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 249, Noes 327.

Division No. 68]

[5.4 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane	Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Abrahams, Debbie	Campbell, Mr Gregory
Ali, Rushanara	Carden, Dan
Ali, Tahir	Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Chamberlain, Wendy
Amesbury, Mike	Champion, Sarah
Anderson, Fleur	Chapman, Douglas
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Charalambous, Bambos
Ashworth, rh Jonathan	Cherry, Joanna
Barker, Paula	Clark, Feryal (<i>Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore</i>)
Beckett, rh Margaret	Cooper, Daisy
Begum, Apsana	Cooper, rh Yvette
Benn, rh Hilary	Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Betts, Mr Clive	Cowan, Ronnie
Blackford, rh Ian	Coyle, Neil
Blackman, Kirsty	Crawley, Angela
Blake, Olivia	Creasy, Stella (<i>Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore</i>)
Blomfield, Paul	Cruddas, Jon
Bonnar, Steven	Cummins, Judith
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Cunningham, Alex
Brennan, Kevin	Daby, Janet
Brock, Deidre	Davey, rh Ed
Brown, Alan	David, Wayne
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Davies, Geraint
Bryant, Chris	Davies-Jones, Alex
Buck, Ms Karen	Day, Martyn
Burgon, Richard	De Cordova, Marsha
Butler, Dawn	Debbonaire, Thangam
Byrne, Ian	Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Byrne, rh Liam	Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Cadbury, Ruth	
Cameron, Dr Lisa	

Dodds, Anneliese	Law, Chris
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.	Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Doogan, Dave	Lewis, Clive
Dorans, Allan	Linden, David
Doughty, Stephen	Lloyd, Tony
Dromey, Jack	Long Bailey, Rebecca
Duffield, Rosie	Lucas, Caroline
Eagle, Dame Angela	Lynch, Holly
Eagle, Maria	MacAskill, Kenny
Eastwood, Colum	Madders, Justin
Edwards, Jonathan	Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Efford, Clive	Mahmood, Shabana
Elliott, Julie	Malhotra, Seema
Elmore, Chris	Maskell, Rachael
Eshalomi, Florence	Mc Nally, John
Esterson, Bill	McCabe, Steve
Evans, Chris	McCarthy, Kerry
Farron, Tim	McDonagh, Siobhain
Farry, Stephen	McDonald, Andy
Fellows, Marion	McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
Ferrier, Margaret	McDonald, Stuart C.
Flynn, Stephen	McDonnell, rh John
Fovargue, Yvonne	McFadden, rh Mr Pat
Foxcroft, Vicky	McGovern, Alison
Furniss, Gill	McKinnell, Catherine
Gardiner, Barry	McLaughlin, Anne
Gibson, Patricia	McMahon, Jim
Gill, Preet Kaur	McMorris, Anna
Girvan, Paul	Mearns, Ian
Glindon, Mary	Miliband, rh Edward
Grady, Patrick	Mishra, Navendu
Green, Kate	Monaghan, Carol
Green, Sarah	Moran, Layla
Greenwood, Lillian	Morgan, Stephen
Greenwood, Margaret	Murray, James
Griffith, Nia	Nandy, Lisa
Gwynne, Andrew	Newlands, Gavin
Haigh, Louise	Nichols, Charlotte
Hamilton, Fabian	Nicolson, John
Hanna, Claire	Norris, Alex
Hardy, Emma	O'Hara, Brendan
Harris, Carolyn	Olney, Sarah
Hayes, Helen	Onwurah, Chi
Hendrick, Sir Mark	Oppong-Asare, Abena
Hendry, Drew	Osamor, Kate
Hillier, Dame Meg	Osborne, Kate
Hobhouse, Wera	Oswald, Kirsten
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret	Owatemi, Taiwo
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon	Owen, Sarah
Hollern, Kate	Paisley, Ian
Hopkins, Rachel	Peacock, Stephanie
Hosie, rh Stewart	Pennycook, Matthew
Howarth, rh Sir George	Perkins, Mr Toby
Huq, Dr Rupa	Phillips, Jess
Hussain, Imran	Phillipson, Bridget
Jardine, Christine	Powell, Lucy
Jarvis, Dan	Qaisar-Javed, Anum
Johnson, rh Dame Diana	Qureshi, Yasmin
Johnson, Kim	Rayner, rh Angela
Jones, Darren	Reed, Steve
Jones, Gerald	Rees, Christina
Jones, rh Mr Kevan	Reeves, Ellie
Jones, Ruth	Reeves, Rachel
Jones, Sarah	Reynolds, Jonathan
Kane, Mike	Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Kendall, Liz	Rimmer, Ms Marie
Khan, Afzal	Rodda, Matt
Kinnock, Stephen	Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Kyle, Peter	Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Lake, Ben	Shah, Naz
Lammy, rh Mr David	Shannon, Jim
Lavery, Ian	Sharma, Mr Virendra

Sheerman, Mr Barry
Sheppard, Tommy
Siddiq, Tulip
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Alyn
Smith, Cat
Smith, Jeff
Smith, Nick
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Spellar, rh John
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Stone, Jamie
Streeting, Wes
Stringer, Graham
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Tarry, Sam
Thewliss, Alison
Thomas, Gareth
Thompson, Owen
Thomson, Richard

Thornberry, rh Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Trickett, Jon
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Derek
Twist, Liz
Vaz, rh Valerie
West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Whitley, Mick
Whittome, Nadia
Williams, Hywel
Wilson, Munira
Wilson, rh Sammy
Winter, Beth
Wishart, Pete
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Colleen Fletcher and
Jessica Morden

NOES

Adams, Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aiken, Nickie
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Amess, Sir David
Anderson, Lee
Anderson, Stuart
Andrew, rh Stuart
Argar, Edward
Atherton, Sarah
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Gareth
Bacon, Mr Richard
Badenoch, Kemi
Bailey, Shaun
Baillie, Siobhan
Baker, Duncan
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Steve
Baynes, Simon
Bell, Aaron
Benton, Scott
Beresford, Sir Paul
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, Ben
Bradley, rh Karen
Brady, Sir Graham
Braverman, rh Suella
Brereton, Jack
Brine, Steve
Bristow, Paul
Britcliffe, Sara
Brokenshire, rh James
Browne, Anthony
Bruce, Fiona
Buchan, Felicity
Buckland, rh Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, rh Conor
Butler, Rob
Cairns, rh Alun

Carter, Andy
Cartledge, James
Cash, Sir William
Cates, Miriam
Chalk, Alex
Chishty, Rehman
Chope, Sir Christopher
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, Mr Simon
Clarke, Theo
Clarke-Smith, Brendan
Clarkson, Chris
Cleverly, rh James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
Colburn, Elliot
Collins, Damian
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Coutinho, Claire
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
Crabb, rh Stephen
Crosbie, Virginia
Crouch, Tracey
Daly, James
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Gareth
Davies, Dr James
Davies, Mims
Davison, Dehenna
Dinenage, Caroline
Dines, Miss Sarah
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
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
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
Eustice, rh George
Evans, Dr Luke
Evennett, rh Sir David
Everitt, Ben
Fabricant, Michael
Farris, Laura
Fell, Simon
Fletcher, Katherine
Fletcher, Mark
Fletcher, Nick
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Frazer, rh Lucy
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
Fuller, Richard
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Garnier, Mark
Gibb, rh Nick
Gibson, Peter
Gideon, Jo
Glen, John
Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Graham, Richard
Grant, Mrs Helen
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
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Sally-Ann
Hart, rh Simon
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heapey, James
Heaton-Harris, Chris
Henderson, Gordon
Henry, Darren
Higginbotham, Antony
Hinds, rh Damian
Hoare, Simon
Holden, Mr Richard
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Adam
Holmes, Paul
Howell, John
Howell, Paul
Huddleston, Nigel
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, Jane
Hunt, rh Jeremy
Hunt, Tom
Jack, rh Mr Alister
Javid, rh Sajid
Jenkin, Sir Bernard

Jenkinson, Mark
Jenkyns, Andrea
Jenrick, rh Robert
Johnson, rh Boris
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnson, Gareth
Johnston, David
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Jones, Fay
Jupp, Simon
Kawczynski, Daniel
Kearns, Alicia
Keegan, Gillian
Knight, rh Sir Greg
Kruger, Danny
Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
Lamont, John
Largan, Robert
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Leadsom, rh Dame Andrea
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Loder, Chris
Logan, Mark
Longhi, Marco
Lopez, Julia
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Mackrory, Cheryl
Maclean, Rachel
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, Kit
Mangnall, Anthony
Mann, Scott
Marson, Julie
May, rh Mrs Theresa
Mayhew, Jerome
Maynard, Paul
McCartney, Jason
McCartney, Karl
Menzies, Mark
Merriman, Huw
Metcalfe, Stephen
Millar, Robin
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, rh Amanda
Mills, Nigel
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Damien
Moore, Robbie
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morris, David
Morris, James
Morrissey, Joy
Mortimer, Jill
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

Opperman, Guy
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 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
 Quince, Will
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Randall, Tom
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
 Richards, Nicola
 Richardson, Angela
 Roberts, Rob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Mary
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Russell, Dean
 Sambrook, Gary
 Saxby, Selaine
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, rh Alok
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec
 Simmonds, David
 Skidmore, rh Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Solloway, Amanda
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stevenson, Jane
 Stewart, rh Bob
 Stewart, Iain

Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunderland, James
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Throup, Maggie
 Timpson, Edward
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie
 Trott, Laura
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Vara, Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Vickers, Matt
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Wakeford, Christian
 Walker, Sir Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 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:
Maria Caulfield and
David Rutley

Braverman, rh Suella
 Brereton, Jack
 Brine, Steve
 Bristow, Paul
 Britcliffe, Sara
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Browne, Anthony
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buchan, Felicity
 Buckland, rh Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, rh Conor
 Butler, Rob
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Carter, Andy
 Cartledge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Cates, Miriam
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Clarke, Theo
 Clarke-Smith, Brendan
 Clarkson, Chris
 Cleverly, rh James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
 Colburn, Elliot
 Collins, Damian
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Coutinho, Claire
 Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crosbie, Virginia
 Crouch, Tracey
 Daly, James
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Gareth
 Davies, Dr James
 Davies, Mims
 Dinage, Caroline
 Dines, Miss Sarah
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty, Leo
 Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Ms Nadine
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, rh Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drummond, Mrs Flick
 Duddridge, James
 Duguid, David
 Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
 Dunne, rh Philip
 Eastwood, Mark
 Edwards, Ruth
 Ellis, rh Michael
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
 Eustice, rh George
 Evans, Dr Luke
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Farris, Laura
 Fell, Simon
 Fletcher, Katherine
 Fletcher, Mark
 Fletcher, Nick
 Ford, Vicky

Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Frazer, rh Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fuller, Richard
 Garnier, Mark
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gibson, Peter
 Gideon, Jo
 Giddens, John
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 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
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Sally-Ann
 Hart, rh Simon
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Henderson, Gordon
 Henry, Darren
 Higginbotham, Antony
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Holden, Mr Richard
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Holmes, Paul
 Howell, John
 Howell, Paul
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, Jane
 Hunt, rh Jeremy
 Hunt, Tom
 Jack, rh Mr Alister
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkinson, Mark
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, rh Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnston, David
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Fay
 Jupp, Simon
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kearns, Alicia
 Keegan, Gillian
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Kruger, Danny
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi

Question accordingly negated.

*Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 62(2)),
 That the Bill be now read a Second time.*

The House divided: Ayes 317, Noes 256.

Division No. 69]

[5.17 pm

AYES

Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aiken, Nickie
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Amess, Sir David
 Anderson, Lee
 Anderson, Stuart
 Andrew, rh Stuart
 Argar, Edward
 Atherton, Sarah
 Atkins, Victoria
 Bacon, Gareth
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Kemi

Bailey, Shaun
 Baillie, Siobhan
 Baker, Duncan
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Steve
 Baynes, Simon
 Bell, Aaron
 Benton, Scott
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Bhatti, Saqib
 Blackman, Bob
 Blunt, Crispin
 Bowie, Andrew
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Brady, Sir Graham

Lamont, John
 Largan, Robert
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Dame Andrea
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Loder, Chris
 Logan, Mark
 Longhi, Marco
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Mackrory, Cheryl
 Maclean, Rachel
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mangnall, Anthony
 Mann, Scott
 Marson, Julie
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Mayhew, Jerome
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 Menzies, Mark
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Millar, Robin
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, rh Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan
 Moore, Damien
 Moore, Robbie
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morrissey, Joy
 Mortimer, Jill
 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
 Opperman, Guy
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 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
 Quince, Will
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Randall, Tom
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
 Richards, Nicola
 Richardson, Angela

Roberts, Rob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Mary
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Russell, Dean
 Sambrook, Gary
 Saxby, Selaine
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, rh Alok
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec
 Simmonds, David
 Skidmore, rh Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Solloway, Amanda
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stevenson, Jane
 Stewart, rh Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Sunderland, James
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Throup, Maggie
 Timpson, Edward
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie
 Trott, Laura
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Vara, Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Vickers, Matt
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Wakeford, Christian
 Walker, Sir Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 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 Ayes:

David Rutley and
 Maria Caulfield

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Ali, Rushanara
 Ali, Tahir
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Amesbury, Mike
 Anderson, Fleur
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, rh Jonathan
 Bardell, Hannah
 Barker, Paula
 Baron, Mr John
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Begum, Apsana
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Blackford, rh Ian
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Blake, Olivia
 Blomfield, Paul
 Bonnar, Steven
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brock, Deidre
 Brown, Alan
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burgon, Richard
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, Ian
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Chamberlain, Wendy
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Cherry, Joanna
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Clark, Feryal (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Cooper, Daisy
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Coyle, Neil
 Crawley, Angela
 Creasy, Stella (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Daby, Janet
 Davey, rh Ed
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Geraint
 Davies, Philip
 Davies-Jones, Alex
 Davison, Dehenna
 Day, Martyn
 De Cordova, Marsha
 Debonnaire, Thangam
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 Doogan, Dave
 Dorans, Allan
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Dame Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Eastwood, Colum
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Elmore, Chris
 Eshalomi, Florence
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Everitt, Ben
 Farron, Tim
 Farry, Stephen
 Fellows, Marion
 Ferrier, Margaret
 Flynn, Stephen
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Furniss, Gill
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Girvan, Paul
 Glindon, Mary
 Grady, Patrick
 Green, Kate
 Green, Sarah
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanna, Claire
 Hardy, Emma
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayles, Helen
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hillier, Dame Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Hosie, rh Stewart
 Howarth, rh Sir George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, rh Dame Diana
 Johnson, Kim
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Ruth
 Jones, Sarah
 Kane, Mike
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Lake, Ben
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian

Law, Chris
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 MacAskill, Kenny
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Maskell, Rachael
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLaughlin, Anne
 McMahan, Jim
 McMorrin, Anna
 McVey, rh Esther
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Mishra, Navendu
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moran, Layla
 Morgan, Stephen
 Murray, James
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Nichols, Charlotte
 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
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Powell, Lucy
 Qaisar-Javed, Anum
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rayner, rh Angela

Reed, Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Rodda, Matt
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Shannon, Jim
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smith, Alyn
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick
 Smyth, Karin
 Sobel, Alex
 Spellar, rh John
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeting, Wes
 Stringer, Graham
 Sultana, Zarah
 Tami, rh Mark
 Tarry, Sam
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thompson, Owen
 Thomson, Richard
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twist, Liz
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Whitley, Mick
 Whittome, Nadia
 Williams, Hywel
 Wilson, Munira
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Winter, Beth
 Wishart, Pete
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:
Colleen Fletcher and
Jessica Morden

Health and Social Care Levy Bill

Considered in Committee (Order, this day)

[MR NIGEL EVANS *in the Chair*]

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr Nigel Evans): I should explain that although the Chair of the Committee would normally sit in the Clerk's chair during a Committee stage, I will remain here in the Speaker's chair while we still have screens around the table, although I will be carrying out the role not of Deputy Speaker, but as Chairman of the Committee. I should therefore be referred to as the Chair of the Committee rather than as the Deputy Speaker.

Clause 1

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE LEVY

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following:

Amendment 8, in clause 2, page 2, line 21, at end insert—

“(1A) HMRC shall publish a forecast of the estimated costs of collecting the health and social care levy for the tax year 2023-24 by 31 March 2022.”

This amendment would require the Government to publish in advance of the levy coming into force its assessment of the extra costs of collecting the levy.

Amendment 7, page 2, line 23, after “cost” insert “in current or future years”.

Amendment 1, page 2, line 28, leave out from first “as” to end of line 30 and insert

“determined by joint agreement between the Treasury and the devolved administrations of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.”

This amendment would require agreement between the Treasury and the devolved administrations of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland as to the shares of the proceeds of the levy that are allocated between health and social care and between England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Amendment 4, page 2, line 29, leave out from “as” to end of line 30 and insert

“determined jointly by the Treasury and the devolved governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.”

The amendment would require joint agreement between the Treasury and the governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as to how the levy proceeds are to be shared between the four areas and between health care and social care.

Clauses 2 to 7 stand part.

New clause 1—*Equality impact analysis*—

“(1) The Chancellor of the Exchequer must review the equality impact of this Act and lay a report of that review before the House of Commons within six months of the passing of this Act.

(2) A review under this section must consider the impact of the Act on—

- (a) households at different levels of income,
- (b) households at different levels of wealth,
- (c) equality between different ages, and
- (d) impact between the nations of the UK and regions of England.

(3) In this section ‘regions of England’ has the same meaning as that used by the Office for National Statistics.”

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

[The Second Deputy Chairman]

This new clause seeks an equality impact assessment of the Bill covering households at different levels of income and wealth; equality between different ages; and the impact between the nations of the UK and regions of England.

New clause 2—Review of economic impact of Act—

“(1) The Chancellor of the Exchequer must review the economic impact in parts of the United Kingdom and regions of England of the changes made by this Act and lay a report of that review before the House of Commons within six months of the passing of this Act.

(2) A review under this section must consider the effects of the provisions of the Act on—

- (a) business investment,
- (b) employment,
- (c) productivity,
- (d) GDP growth, and
- (e) poverty.

(3) In this section ‘parts of the United Kingdom’ means—

- (a) England,
- (b) Scotland,
- (c) Wales, and
- (d) Northern Ireland

and ‘regions of England’ has the same meaning as that used by the Office for National Statistics.”

This new clause seeks an economic assessment of the Bill on investment, employment, productivity, growth and poverty in the devolved nations and English regions.

New clause 3—Review of revenue effects of Act—

“(1) The Chancellor of the Exchequer must review the revenue effects of this Act and lay a report before the House of Commons within six months of the passing of this Act and every 12 months thereafter.

(2) Any review under this section must include an assessment of—

- (a) the impact of this Act on revenue derived from—
 - (i) employment, and
 - (ii) self-employment; and
- (b) the impact of the revenues under this Act from employment and self-employment on the revenues derived from taxation on—
 - (i) dividends,
 - (ii) rental income, and
 - (iii) other forms of personal income.”

This new clause would require the Chancellor to report to the House on the impact of the Act on tax revenue derived from different sources of income.

New clause 4—Review of impact of Act on business—

“(1) The Chancellor of the Exchequer must review the impact of this Act on business and lay a report before the House of Commons within six months of the passing of this Act and every 12 months thereafter.

(2) Any review under this section must provide a separate analysis of the impact of the Act on the operating costs and profits of—

- (a) small and medium sized enterprises,
- (b) large enterprises solely based in the UK, and
- (c) large multinational enterprises.”

This new clause would require the Chancellor to report to the House on the impact of the Act on the operating costs and profits of different sizes of business enterprises.

New clause 5—Review of equality impact of Act—

“(1) The Chancellor of the Exchequer must review the equality impact of this Act and lay a report before the House of Commons within six months of the passing of this Act and every 12 months thereafter.

(2) A review under this section must provide a separate analysis of the equality impact of this Act on—

- (a) income inequality,
- (b) wealth inequality,
- (c) geographical inequality,
- (d) inequality between people with protected characteristics (within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010), and
- (e) socio-economic status.”

This new clause would require the Chancellor to report to the House on the equality impact of the Act.

New clause 6—Report on levy expenditure shares—

“The Chancellor of the Exchequer must report to the House of Commons at the end of each financial year the share of the levy spent on—

- (a) health care, and
- (b) social care.”

This new clause would require the Chancellor to report annually to the House on the share of the levy spent on health care and on social care.

New clause 7—Report on levy revenue derived from those in the social care sector—

“The Chancellor of the Exchequer must lay a report before the House of Commons within six months of the passing of this Act, and every 12 months thereafter, containing an assessment of the levy revenue derived from those working in the social care sector.”

This new clause would require the Chancellor to report to the House on levy revenue derived from those working in the social care sector.

New clause 10—OTS Assessment of levy and National Insurance increase—

“(1) The Office for Tax Simplification shall publish by 30 September 2022 a report assessing the advantages and disadvantages of introducing the health and social care levy in comparison to the increase in National Insurance.

(2) The report shall include an assessment of the costs of HMRC in collecting the levy and for employers in complying with their obligations in relation to the levy.”

This new clause would require the OTS to publish by September 2022 its assessment of the merits of the levy in comparison with the increase in National Insurance, including costs of compliance with and collection of the levy.

5.30 pm

Jesse Norman: It is a great pleasure to be here today to explain the clauses in this Bill.

The Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 sets out the earnings and profits on which employees, employers and the self-employed are liable to pay national insurance contributions. Clause 1 of the Bill introduces a new tax, to be known as the health and social care levy, which will be charged on the same basis as national insurance contributions. The levy will be set at 1.25%, and will affect earnings from 6 April 2023 onwards. When individuals or employers are liable for a qualifying national insurance contribution, they will also be liable for the levy. The levy will be payable on the earnings and profits on which those contributions are payable. The qualifying national insurance contributions in question are primary class 1 NICs that employees pay on their earnings, secondary class 1 NICs that employers pay on the earnings of their employees, class 1A and class B NICs that employers pay on benefits in kind received by their employees, and class 4 NICs paid by the self-employed.

This new levy has been introduced to raise funds for health and social care, so it is only right that individuals of all ages who are able to pay should do so. Therefore, individuals over state pension age who would be liable for those contributions were they not exempt will be liable for this levy.

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): If we are talking about an insurance system, can the Government explain why they have ruled out state-sponsored insurance? I can understand why they cannot rely entirely on private insurance—the risk is too great—but Dilnot originally came up with the idea that people could take out insurance when they retired which would be a charge on their house, and they would have to pay it back when they died on the basis of the value of their house. I am not asking the Government to accept these ideas now; I am simply asking whether they have an open mind and are prepared to look at them. This is a complicated matter, and we want to have a real insurance system.

Jesse Norman: In the collective sense, this is a state insurance system, because it is making long-term provision for catastrophic outcomes in people's health and social care, but the point that my right hon. Friend has made is an acute one. He will be aware that both the King's Fund and the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee have looked at private insurance models and concluded that they have severe limitations that would not make them appropriate. Indeed, no country in the world has a purely private insurance model. It has certainly been contemplated by Professor Dilnot, and it is compatible with the thrust of this legislation, that there should then arise a private insurance market, now that some of these catastrophic risks have been removed from the calculus that individuals have to make about their own social care. I hope that that addresses my right hon. Friend's point.

As I was saying, individuals over state pension age who would be liable for those contributions were they not exempt will be liable for this levy. That means that pensioners in work will now contribute 1.25% of their "NIC-able" earnings, or profit, to health and social care in the same way as working-age employees and self-employed individuals.

Clause 3 discusses in more detail how NICs legislation applies to the levy. However, clause 1 also ensures that when an employer benefits from a zero rate of secondary class 1 NICs, such as employers of people under 21, of apprentices who are under 25, of veterans or of employees in freeports, those earnings that are subject to the zero rate will not be liable for the levy. That will ensure that businesses continue to invest in young people developing strong skill sets, and in those who have served this country.

John Redwood: As I understand it, it is the Government's wish that the social care levy should appear as a separately identified line item, with that phrasing, on a payslip. Could it also be clear on a payslip that it would represent only a small fraction of social care costs and a tiny fraction of health costs? Otherwise, it could be very misleading.

Jesse Norman: That is a helpful suggestion. I do not think there will be any ambiguity in the language on the slip, but of course it might not be clear that it is not the

totality of the funding that goes through Government. If I may, I will take what my right hon. Friend has said as a suggestion and refer it to colleagues.

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): I would like to ask the Minister, as he has such responsibilities across the board, whether he has contemplated the question of public waste in the context of, for example, HS2? If we were to cut that back and to cut back waste generally throughout Government, would that not send an enormously powerful message to the British people that we are not only concentrating on this aspect of public expenditure but balancing it off by making real savings in other areas, given that the Treasury or its economic advisers have said that they have put phase 2a of the HS2 legislation on red watch because it is so impossible to achieve its objectives?

Jesse Norman: My hon. Friend has successfully dragooned a topic that has nothing to do with national insurance contributions or the levy into the debate, but let me reassure him that the Treasury seeks to exercise a hawk-like vigilance over all public spending. I do not think it would be appropriate to think of the response to the pandemic of the past two years as characteristic of the Treasury's overall largesse, and we look very closely at the spending on HS2, which is the specific responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and one that I know he takes with great seriousness.

Dr Murrison: The fact that the social care levy will be introduced in 2023 and not 2022, and that in the interim we will have to rely on national insurance, suggests that creating it will involve quite a lot of work and expense. How much is it going to cost to introduce the levy, beyond national insurance? Based on that, we will need to make an assessment as to whether it is worth while putting the 1.25% levy on people who are past state retirement age. If it is costly, we should not do it and simply rely on national insurance contributions. Allied to that, how much does my right hon. Friend think the 1.25% levy is going to raise from people who are beyond state retirement age?

Jesse Norman: That was a series of questions. The payslips that people are given will be generated by their own companies in the large part, and it is therefore important to think not only about the changes that HMRC will have to make but about the changes to be made by companies in order to reflect the amendment to payslips. In the case of HMRC, the Government have clarified in a letter to the Treasury Committee that, although it is very early days, HMRC provisionally estimates the operational costs of implementing the levy at between £50 million and £60 million, which is not nothing but it is not substantial in the context of the overall amount to be raised. I think the final part of my right hon. Friend's question related to the amount that would be attributed to the over-65s. One would expect that to be relatively modest, because the number of qualifying people will not be enormous and because they generally have a high propensity to manage their work-life balance, meaning that there might be a dynamic effect from the levy. I am not aware that we have put that number into the public domain, but if we have it, I will see if we can publish it, probably at a future fiscal event—at the Budget or thereafter.

Dr Murrison *rose*—

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. Just before Dr Murrison makes a further intervention, can I ask the Minister please to face the microphone? Otherwise, Members will not be able to hear his responses; I have found it difficult to hear him.

Jesse Norman: I do apologise, Mr Evans.

Dr Murrison: Just to clarify my thinking on this matter, is that £50 million to £60 million a one-off or a recurring feature?

Jesse Norman: I think it is the set-up cost, although it may be incurred over more than one year. As I say, it is a very preliminary number that we have tried to get for the purposes of responding to the Treasury Committee's inquiry.

Nigel Mills (Amber Valley) (Con): My right hon. Friend talks about the advantages of having clarity on payslips about what people are paying for with the health and social care levy. Has he thought about combining the existing national insurance contributions that are allocated directly to the NHS and do not go into the National Insurance Fund? They are around £26 billion each year, which would effectively treble the amount of money in the levy. That would make it much clearer that people are paying all of it towards the health system, rather than having two different taxes doing exactly the same thing in slightly different ways.

Jesse Norman: My hon. Friend rightly points out that an element of NICs is already hypothecated, which is sometimes forgotten by people who are concerned about the hypothecation in the levy. I will take his remarks as a suggestion and reflect on them further. I recognise his expertise in this area, so I am grateful for the intervention.

Serendipitously, I will now address my hon. Friend's amendment. This amendment asks that HMRC should publish a forecast of the estimated costs of collecting the levy. The published tax information impact note sets out clearly that the operational costs of the levy are being quantified. I have given a preliminary indication, but we will publish the final estimates before the levy comes into effect in April 2022. This amendment is therefore not necessary and I would ask him to consider not pressing it to a vote.

Matt Hancock (West Suffolk) (Con): Building on the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (John Redwood), is not one of the advantages of having a separate health and social care levy that, as people's representatives, we can explain more clearly that if we want to put more money into the system, it has to be paid for? Will that advantage not ultimately help connect people to where their money goes and, therefore, enrich the debate?

Jesse Norman: I think it will, which is why the Government have decided to make this rather important change. It may well be that this is not the end of the story, and in due course the desire for clarity about how money is spent, which is expressed elsewhere in the tax system, might manifest itself in other ways. I do not want to speculate on that, but my right hon. Friend has outlined the importance of accountability, clarity and perspicuity in how money is spent.

Sir Christopher Chope (Christchurch) (Con): Would it not be even simpler and more transparent if we had a social care levy standing on its own? Is it not the case that the Government do not want to have a social care levy on its own because they know that, if there were transparency, it would be obvious that we were renegeing on our manifesto commitment of two years ago?

Jesse Norman: I do not think that is true at all. The reason for putting it on the payslip is so that taxpayers can see that this new tax is clearly represented. If they need reassurance that the support for social care, in their own life and in the life of their family and community, will be long standing and enduring, they need only look at their payslip.

Sir Christopher Chope: If it is about social care, why do we not have an exclusive levy relating to social care? Would that not be much clearer and more transparent?

Jesse Norman: My hon. Friend invites us to think of social care as a completely separate thing, but of course there is a tremendous overlap between social care and some aspects of health. It is important to make sure that the system, which I think all hon. Members realise is too disjointed, is more joined up. This treatment therefore appears to be more appropriate to an area where we want to see more integration.

Clive Lewis (Norwich South) (Lab): Will the Minister give way?

Jesse Norman: The hon. Gentleman has not featured in the debate so far, so I will make a bit more progress before happily taking his intervention.

Amendment 7, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr Fysh), seeks to ensure that proceeds from the levy can be used in any tax year. As the Committee will be aware, the levy is designed to mirror the approach of the national insurance system, which has always operated on a pay-as-you-go basis. Indeed, that has been the case since the NHS and the National Insurance Fund were established in 1948. This means that national insurance contributions collected in one year are used to pay for the NHS and contributory benefits paid out in the same year. The pay-as-you-go basis provides a clear precedent for how the levy should operate and that also ensures simplicity and consistency across the NICs system. So I hope that my hon. Friend will not press his amendment, for the reasons I have outlined.

5.45 pm

Clive Lewis: On the point made by the hon. Member for Christchurch (Sir Christopher Chope), one reason the Government have used the term "health and social care" is that they have established a principle that people pay at the point of delivery. As we see health and social care begin to integrate, the fear for many Labour Members is that this is a Trojan horse for introducing those payments for healthcare—for the NHS. One of my fears when the Prime Minister spoke of this delivering "profoundly Conservative" outcomes was just that danger.

Jesse Norman: It is helpful to have a diagnosis of why Labour Members might be opposed to or worried by this, but the fear is entirely without foundation. There is no suggestion that the Government wish to create a

system that is anything other than free at the point of delivery, and that is the basis on which the Government have always proceeded and proceed now. We are trying to put a longer-term arrangement in place for social care that allows us to bring the same kind of clarity to it that people have enjoyed for many years with the NHS.

Nadia Whittome (Nottingham East) (Lab): If the Government believe in a social care system that is free at the point of use, why are they not delivering a social care system like that, one like the NHS, which is universal and available to everyone?

Jesse Norman: I do not know whether the hon. Lady heard, but I was talking about the NHS and that has been a founding principle of the NHS, one the Conservative party have always adhered to, and rightly so. What we are doing with the levy is funding an expansion and a development of an existing set of arrangements, and, as I have discussed in relation to the question from my right hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh), the potential to expand that through the use of other mechanisms of support, now that these catastrophic risks have been removed, or will be removed, from people's lives.

Let me turn to the amendments tabled by the Scottish National party and Plaid Cymru which look to require a joint agreement between the Treasury and the Governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as to how the levy proceeds are to be shared between the four parts of the UK, and between healthcare and social care. As for how the levy revenue will be split between the four parts of the UK, this legislation mirrors existing legislation on how NHS allocation is divided between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It is right and appropriate that we should follow that established precedent. The Government will work closely with the devolved Administrations on the implementation of the levy, including on the process for allocating revenues across the UK and on the split between health and social care from April 2023 onwards. It is also worth bearing in mind that the devolved Administrations' overall funding will continue to be determined by the Barnett formula, so that this process will just determine the element provided by the levy. I hope that the Members concerned will not press their amendments, for the reasons I have outlined.

Alison Thewliss: I do not know whether the Minister has read the note from the Hansard Society on this, but it is concerned by some of the implications for the devolution settlement. It says:

"There is also no requirement in the Bill for the Treasury or the Health Secretary to consult the devolved administrations about any aspect of the process."

Is that not a cause for concern?

Jesse Norman: The Treasury already consults the devolved Administrations very closely on many aspects of tax policy and there is no reason to think, and the Bill does not suggest, that there should be any other reason for handling this. On the contrary, following an existing hypothecation gives direct support to devolved Administrations that they will be able to receive the Union dividend, which is generated and delivered by this policy.

Clause 2 creates a legally binding obligation to use the funds raised by this levy for the purposes of health and social care, and sets out that HMRC will direct funds to the Secretary of State to be used for the cost of health and social care in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The funds from the levy will be shared between healthcare and social care, and will be shared between each nation in a proportion determined by the Treasury. The Treasury has used the long-standing Barnett formula to fund devolved Administrations and will continue to do so for the proceeds of this measure. Clause 2 goes further and ensures that any interest or penalties that can be attributed to the levy will also be used to fund health and social care. However, any expenses incurred by HMRC in collecting the levy will be deducted from the proceeds, which ensures that HMRC has the ability to collect and police this levy properly. I therefore ask Members to allow clause 2 to stand part of the Bill.

Dr Murrison: On clause 2, in 2014 we passed the Care Act and accepted the Dilnot proposals; slightly less than two years later, we canned the central part of the Dilnot proposals, in that it was decided that local government should in fact have the social care uplift, which had been anticipated in 2014. What certainty do we have that the measures we are passing today will not be dealt with in a similar way if, in two or three years' time, we find that the pressures on local government are so acute, which they may well be, that we have to can some of the measures we discussed earlier?

Jesse Norman: I thank my right hon. Friend for his question. I think the point is perfectly clear: this levy is intended to be and will be a long-term, permanent funding arrangement to support health and social care. The plan includes a component that is designed to support local government in the delivery of care services without distorting markets that are already in existence. There is no reason to think, and we do not anticipate, that there will be specific issues that cannot be addressed at the time. The commitment to provide a longer-term funding settlement that can be reviewed and considered by individuals when they pay their national insurance contributions, and to do so in a way that gives them comfort that that same settlement will be in place, in a way similar to the state pension system, so that they can plan against it, is manifest. The Government have made that clear.

Clause 3 specifies that any provisions that apply to a qualifying national insurance contribution are to apply to equivalent payments in respect of the health and social care levy. It also sets out the limitations of such provisions applying to the levy.

Clause 4 provides for regulations for the purposes of the health and social care levy to be made under the Bill and specifies the parliamentary procedure that will apply to those regulations.

Clause 5 sets out the transitional arrangements for the measure and specifies that they will apply only for the 2022-23 tax year. Its effect will be to increase temporarily the rates of classes 1, 1A, 1B and 4 NICs by 1.25% for one year. There will be a corresponding temporary increase in the amount of contributions allocated to the NHS by the same amount.

[Jesse Norman]

Clause 6 defines various terms used in the Bill. Clause 7 specifies the short title of the Act as the Health and Social Care Levy Act 2021 and states that the levy is payable by or in relation to employees of the Crown. I commend all those clauses to the House.

Let me turn to new clauses 1 and 2, tabled by the SNP, and clauses 3 to 5, tabled by Labour. These new clauses ask the Government to review and report on the impact of the revenue effects of the levy, its impact on business and its impact on equality. I wish to explain why they are unnecessary.

The Government have already provided a number of assessments of the levy's impact, including a distributional analysis of the impact of the combined tax and spending announcements that shows that lower-income households will be large net beneficiaries from the package, with the poorest households gaining most as a proportion of income. It also shows that the 20% of highest-income households will contribute more than 40 times the contribution of the 20% of lowest-income households.

There is a further assessment in a technical annex in the Government's plan for health and social care. It sets out the impact on the Exchequer, individuals and businesses and shows that 70% of the money raised from businesses will come from the largest 1% of businesses, while 40% of all businesses will pay nothing extra.

The tax information impact note is a third form of assessment. It sets out the equality impact of the levy specifically rather than of the overall package of measures.

Alex Sobel (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): As well as on businesses, the levy will have a large effect on the bills of public services. For instance, West Yorkshire Police is looking at having to pay an extra £3 million of national insurance, and for Leeds City Council the amount for directly employed services is also in the region of £3 million. Somewhat ironically, many of the social care services that the council uses are outsourced, so the NICs will push up the cost of those services. What assessment has the Minister made of the effect of the levy on local government and the police?

Jesse Norman: The plan is clear that, to the extent that national insurance contributions are incurred by public bodies, they will be met. The funding is set up on that basis. In respect of local government, extra pressures other than those already contemplated are matters for discussion in the spending review. That is the normal fiscal procedure and the one the Government are following.

I turn now to address the Opposition's new clauses 6 and 7 on reporting the levy expenditure shares and the revenue derived from those in the social care sector. First, on the share of levy spent on health and social care, the Government already routinely publish data on departmental spending throughout the year, including at main and supplementary estimates, through public expenditure, statistical analyses and in departmental annual reports and accounts as well as data on the revenue raised from individual taxes.

At present, this reporting shows, for example, exactly how much revenue NHS England receives from national insurance contributions. In future, this will show the contribution that this levy makes to the budgets of the

Department of Health and Social Care and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. There is no need for additional reporting in that context as all the relevant information will readily be publicly available. The Government have already published the amounts that will go to the NHS and to adult social care over the next three years as a result of this levy and will confirm final allocations at the spending review.

Finally, on the levy revenue derived from those in the social care sector, existing data sources do not include or reliably collect data on employment by sector. It is not known which sector an individual works in, only their income types and amounts. I hope that, given these considerations, Opposition Members will not press their new clauses for the reasons that I have outlined.

Let me turn to new clause 10 tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Nigel Mills). This would require the Office for Tax Simplification to publish an assessment of the merits of the levy. As outlined in the Finance Act 2016, the statutory role of the OTS is to advise on the simplification of the tax system. To assess fully the advantages and disadvantages of introducing the health and social care levy would require the OTS to consider and comment on choices with far broader policy considerations, including on health and social care, which sit well beyond its remit and expertise.

The OTS functions as an adviser to the Chancellor rather to Parliament and it is for the Chancellor to commission work for the OTS or for the OTS to advise the Chancellor on its own initiative as it sees appropriate. It is not the role of Parliament to commission work from the OTS, though I have no doubt that the Treasury will have taken on board this new clause, and I thank my hon. Friend for tabling it.

The published tax information and impact notes set out clearly that the operational costs for the levy are being quantified and the Government will publish these estimates before the measure comes into effect in April 2022.

Nigel Mills: Does my right hon. Friend have any rough estimate of the cost to business of having to comply with the rules of paying, in effect, a third payroll tax? Does he have any idea of the costs of changing the software to include that levy and of redesigning payslips? All those costs will have to be borne. Does he have any estimate for us before we decide whether we want a new tax or just to increase national insurance as we are doing for the first year?

Jesse Norman: It is true that, just in relation to the levy, business will bear some cost and the existing tax information and impact notes outline that there will be costs to be borne, as one would expect with any tax, let alone a broad-based tax of this kind. The package goes well beyond this, and businesses will be large beneficiaries in many ways from aspects of the package because they will benefit from having a healthier and more secure workforce than they would otherwise have. How one measures that I am not entirely clear, but I take the point that my hon. Friend makes and will, of course, refer it to colleagues. Having said that, I hope that he will not press his new clause for the reasons that I have outlined.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): I would just like an indication of who will want to make independent speeches by bobbing—thank you.

James Murray: As we turn to the Bill's Committee stage, I will address the new clauses tabled in my name and the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Thamesmead (Abena Oppong-Asare).

We know that social care desperately needs more funding and the Government claim that their Bill today will help to raise some of that money, but the truth is that there is nothing in this Bill that will guarantee a penny going towards social care. I will return to that point when I address new clause 6, but first I want to look at the core measure that this Bill introduces—the unfair tax rise on working people and their jobs. Our new clause 3 would require the Government to report to the House of Commons on the impact that the Bill will have on tax revenue derived from different sources of income. On the one hand, there is income from employment and self-employment, which the Government have chosen to tax hard. On the other hand, as new clause 3 mentions, there is income from dividends, rental properties and other sources of wealth, which the Government have left untouched. We know that the Government have chosen not to raise taxes for those with large portfolios of stocks and shares, and for landlords renting out multiple properties, but the Bill even lacks any mention of taxes on dividends, despite the Prime Minister saying that they would be taxed more. Perhaps when the Financial Secretary to the Treasury responds, he could explain why the Government have chosen to delay implementing a tax rise in dividends until the next Finance Bill or beyond. Will he give us his word that the increase in tax on dividends will definitely go ahead?

6 pm

As I said earlier, the Government have pulled out all the stops to push through legislation that raises taxes on jobs at breakneck speed, but they show no urgency whatever in raising the tax on dividends by an equivalent amount. Let us be clear, though: even if they do go ahead with their dividends tax increase, they have already admitted that it will raise just a small percentage of the amount that they are seeking; 95% of the revenue that they expect to generate still comes off the back of working people and their jobs.

The Government have said many times that they believe that there is no alternative to the national insurance rise and the levy introduced in the Bill. Yet in the days that followed the Government's announcement, the London School of Economics, Warwick University, the Institute for Public Policy Research, the Social Market Foundation and many others have all come forward with other ways of raising the money. Our new clause 8 would have required the Government to report, before the levy comes in, on how the revenue could be raised by increasing taxes on income derived from wealth such as rental income and income from trading financial assets, instead of from employment. Although new clause 8 has not been selected today, I hope that Government Back Benchers will have had the chance to see it on the amendment paper. Ahead of the levy's planned introduction in 2023, there is ample time for the Government to produce such a report.

Dr Dan Poulter (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich) (Con): I am someone who has believed in getting cross-party consensus on the future of social care funding, and who has been calling for a health and social care levy since 2016. Does the hon. Member recognise that there has actually been cross-party consensus on this issue, and that the shadow Care Minister, the hon. Member for Leicester West (Liz Kendall), called for a health and care levy in 2018? How does he reconcile that with his comments just now?

James Murray: Let us be really clear about what the shadow Care Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester West (Liz Kendall), proposed, because it was entirely different from what is being discussed now. She proposed that the tax should be raised from unearned income, and that it should be progressive and fair between generations, which fundamentally differentiates it from what we are discussing today. If the Government had truly sought to build cross-party consensus, does the hon. Gentleman not think that they would have done better to take some time over the Bill, rather than rushing it through within a week of the proposals first being announced, with limited ability for scrutiny and without any discussion of cross-party consensus about how to proceed?

Dr Poulter: Will the hon. Member give way?

James Murray: I am going to make some progress now; I have given way to the hon. Gentleman already.

As I said, although new clause 8 has not been selected today, I hope that Government Back Benchers have seen it on the amendment paper and will perhaps raise the matter with their colleagues on the Front Bench.

I hope, however, that there will be a vote this evening on new clause 5, and I urge Government Members to join us in voting for this crucial review of how the Bill will make inequality worse. We know how widespread and deep rooted inequality has become in our country. The latest bulletin from the Office for National Statistics on household income inequality in the UK for the financial year ending 2020 confirms what we all know: the income gap between the richest in society and the rest of the population has widened over the last decade. A tax rise that singles out income from employment can only make this inequality worse, and new clause 5 seeks to expose this.

Not only does inequality manifest between people who may live in the same area, it also creates divides between different nations of a country and the regions within them. In areas where average wages are lower and fewer people get income from other assets, the impact of the national insurance rise and the levy will be more acutely felt. Recent analysis in the *New Statesman* suggested that within the regions of England, it is people in the north-west and the west midlands who will take the greatest hit to their disposable income as a result of the Bill.

Data from the Office for National Statistics' wealth and assets survey shows that the south-east is home to well over 3 million adults living in families with net wealth per adult of more than £250,000. That is roughly six times the number in the north-east. A tax increase that ignores income from renting out properties and selling financial assets, and that seeks to fund a plan

[James Murray]

that ignores differences in house prices and care costs between different regions, is destined to make inequality worse.

Dr Murrison: We are getting more granularity in the proposals that Opposition Front Benchers have in their heads for funding the uplift, which I think we all agree is necessary for health and social care, but can I probe the hon. Gentleman to describe the nature of the landlords or property-based businesses he has in his crosshairs for the levy of the moneys that he has in mind? Does he mean, for example, the mom and pop organisation that has bought a small residential property because it has no public sector pension, for example, and is relying on that for income in old age, or does he have in mind a business like any other business that has large numbers of commercial properties? How much does he think he is going to raise from the alternative that he has suggested?

James Murray: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his intervention, but I do feel that there is a broad consensus across this country that those with the broadest shoulders should make more of a contribution. It is quite clear from the reaction that people have had to the Government's proposed increase in national insurance and new levy that this is falling on working people and jobs rather than taking other sources of income from wealth into account.

I have just spoken about the massive impact that this will have on inequality between different regions of the country. I therefore ask Conservative Members to guess how many times last Tuesday, when the Prime Minister announced his approach here in the House of Commons, he used the phrase "levelling up" in that 90 minute statement. It was zero. Last Wednesday, when the Financial Secretary had to take the rap here on this tax rise, how many times did he use the phrase "levelling up" in a six-hour debate? Zero. The truth is that we are a very long way from the levelling-up agenda that we hear, or at least used to hear, so much about.

Of course it is not just workers and the self-employed who will feel the direct impact of the Government's tax rise in this Bill. This tax rise will hit businesses that want to create jobs too. That is why we have tabled new clause 4 to show the impact it will have on businesses, and on small and medium-sized businesses in particular. There will be no point in the Financial Secretary denying the impact of this measure on businesses creating jobs: it is set out starkly in the Government's own tax information impact note that he approved last week and that we have referred to several times today. I set out earlier how this note admits that the Government's approach will impact business decisions around wage bills and recruitment. It goes on to explain how this measure

"is expected to have a significant impact on over 1.6 million employers who will be required to introduce this change."

No wonder the Government have managed to unite business groups, workers and trade unions against their plans. At just the time when we need to see job growth, and when furlough is ending, the Government impose an extra flat cost on getting people into work. The Federation of Small Businesses has shown that this move could lead to 50,000 more people being left out of work. Yet again, small and medium-sized businesses

least able to afford this tax rise will be hit hardest while online multinationals continue to dodge their tax on this Government's watch.

The Government's justification for much of the Bill is that they claim the levy will fix the crisis in social care. As we made clear on Second Reading, however, there is no plan to fix social care, nor even a mention of or reference to one, in this Bill. Fundamentally, despite all the rhetoric from the Prime Minister and the Chancellor, there is no guarantee that social care will benefit from the Government's tax rise in any way at all. In the first year, the Bill explicitly rules out any money raised going toward social care. Beyond that, when the levy comes into force, it is entirely possible that not a single penny of any money raised will ever go towards the social care sector. I know that Treasury Ministers will deny that this is the case, so we ask them and Conservative Members to back our straightforward new clause 6. I note the Financial Secretary's comment that the new clause would simply require the Chancellor to report transparently and straightforwardly on the share of the levy spent on social care each year so that we can all see what proportion of the money raised is going to the social care sector.

Finally, I turn to our new clause 7. Nothing could sum up the intrinsic unfairness at the heart of this Bill more than the case that this new clause points towards. The unfairness of the Government's approach is impossible to ignore when we realise that this tax rise, raising money the Government claim will go towards social care, will not see those with the broadest shoulders paying their fair share but instead hit low-paid social care workers themselves. Our new clause asks the Government to be transparent and honest about this by requiring the Chancellor to report on how much revenue the levy raises from those working in the social care sector. This Government's choices to raise national insurance, to cut universal credit and to freeze personal allowances mean that a social care worker will pay £1,108 more in tax a year. The Chancellor once clapped for key workers; now he is taxing key workers. This will hit working people hard, and we will not let voters forget it.

Mr Fysh: My intention with amendment 7, which I have tabled with esteemed colleagues, was to try to get the Government to focus on a way of looking at the future costs of social care and how to finance them more creatively. I have to ask: if not now, when?

We know that the most powerful way to address costs in the future is to provide for them in the present and to have the power of compounding investment returns over a period of years to meet the liabilities that people have. I am passionate about encouraging the Government to look at ways to encourage people across the board, with progressive incentives in different ways, to make provision for themselves with support from the state.

People think that they pay a contribution into national insurance that rolls up over time and gives them an entitlement to a pot of money—I have heard constituent after constituent talk about that—when we in this place know that that is not in fact the case. In fact, my right hon. Friend the Minister confirmed that that is not the Treasury's view and that national insurance is a tax collected in-year that must be spent in-year.

There is a big opportunity for reform and innovation that could be useful and get very much back to the ethos behind the Beveridge report and the origins that I spoke to in the Second Reading debate. There was a radical movement trying to help individuals and groups provide for each other. Lloyd George and the Liberal Government's 1911 Act was about getting national aid into the system in a creative way. I think there is an opportunity for us to talk as one whole House about innovating for the modern world in that way. What was wrong with some of those older schemes and co-operatives, friendly societies and such things in the old days was that sometimes people ran off with the money. That was one reason why there was a need to put more of a national embrace around it and administer it that way. In the modern world, we can do it differently.

All I was trying to do with the amendment was give scope for the Government to think about applying some of the funds from an element of national insurance or something related to it—that is, the levy, which clause 2 sets out—to help incentivise such pooled saving schemes. That is not necessarily insurance or private insurance with a middleman; it could be national schemes or community schemes that are properly co-operative and very low-cost. There are many modern approaches to that in the digital world, such as digital autonomous organisations, where there are no middlemen at all and people do not have to rely on a contract.

That was the pure intent of my amendment, so I am a little disappointed that the Government do not seem to want to engage with it. I urge my right hon. Friend and those on the Treasury Bench to think about ways we might do that in the future, because I can see it as a useful evolution of the policy that might bring people from all parts of the House together in the way I have been describing.

Dr Poulter: I am sympathetic to the point that my hon. Friend is making. In principle it is a very good point, but the practicalities are that the moment we move towards the system that he is advocating, we have to clearly define what is health and what is social care, and that makes the integration of the two systems much more challenging. In the context of better integrating health and social care, has he considered that practical element in putting forward this proposal?

6.15 pm

Mr Fysh: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. The truth is that, yes, I have thought about that, and I must emphasise that I am thinking about this measure only in terms of social care costs and liabilities. We have heard how residential care living costs will be excluded from the funding produced by the levy. Pooled savings schemes or liability defrayal schemes could easily include such elements and make a really big difference. I am not talking about the costs of healthcare in the healthcare system.

There are ways in which the healthcare system could look at insuring itself against particular outcomes. Sometimes, unfortunate things happen in neonatology, for example, which have a long liability tail in younger people living with healthcare needs. Those are targeted things, but that is completely separate from the present need to get money into social care. That is what I am

talking about, and such a scheme could get money into social care more quickly than the plan that we have heard to date.

Dr Murrison: I have been listening carefully to my hon. Friend and what he has said has a great deal of merit. Does he agree, however, that while the Government's aim is to integrate health and social care, which arguably have been divorced one from the other since 1948, to the great detriment of the people we represent, the system he suggests might exacerbate that problem? That would be in contrast to the provisions of clause 2, which leave it up to the Treasury to decide how moneys raised by the levy should be apportioned. Surely it is better that the Treasury can do that so that it can facilitate the integration of health and those elements of social care that relate to care as opposed to residential costs.

Mr Fysh: I do not think that the amendment would remove any of the Treasury's discretion in clause 2; all it would do is specify that moneys raised could be used either in the current year or against future years' costs. The Treasury would govern how such schemes worked and how to achieve that integration.

Since I was elected, I have been passionate about the integration of health and social care, and I anticipate that, through such an amendment, the Government could help to get money into the system to help it work well. I hope that the Government will reconsider their request for me to withdraw the amendment. I would love them to adopt it. It would be no skin off their nose to do so; the amendment would just give them a bit more flexibility in the Bill. I look forward to hearing my right hon. Friend the Minister's response.

This is a probing amendment, and I cannot be confident that the Labour party will support it, perhaps because of their slight misunderstanding of its purpose, so this might not be the time to force the Government's hand. However, it could be a useful evolution of the national insurance policy, given the direction in which the Government want to go on that.

Stephen Flynn (Aberdeen South) (SNP): It is a remarkable feat indeed that the Government have managed to unite the left-wing press, the right-wing press, the Unionist press, the nationalist press, pressure groups in favour of ending poverty and pressure groups who want to see businesses excel, all in condemnation of the Bill. Although I do not think anyone in the House doubts that it will once again sail through the voting Lobbies this evening, I would like to put in my two cents for what little it is worth. In that regard, I commend the amendments in my name and those of my learned colleagues.

As colleagues across the Chamber will recognise, new clause 1 seeks to get the Government to provide an equality impact assessment of the effect of this Bill, by age, on people's wealth or income. The reason they will not accept that, despite the polite remarks of the Minister, as always, is that such an equality impact assessment would put in black and white what all the pressure groups are telling us. Indeed, much of what we have heard from Members across the Chamber throughout today and last week is that the Bill, in its entirety, will hammer the youngest and those who work the hardest in society, but not necessarily those in the south-east of England who have the most to give.

[Stephen Flynn]

I heard a remark earlier that about 50% of the income that will be generated by this Bill will come from those under the age of 45. It will be coming primarily from younger people, who are the very people whose horizons have been shortened by Brexit, and whose job opportunities, career opportunities and educational opportunities have been hammered by the pandemic. What the Government are seeking to do is impose further challenges to their lives. It is an unforgivable act, but one that they are going to push through with no contrition whatsoever, as far as I can see, and in the knowledge that they also plan to cut universal credit in the coming weeks—a double whammy on those in society who can least afford to face the real challenges in front of them, and an abdication of responsibility of the highest order.

However, it is not just individuals, young people, working people or families who will be hammered by this tax; it is also businesses. That takes me nicely to our new clause 2, which involves trying to get the Government to do an economic impact assessment of these policies. However, they will not do that either, because they know what the outcome would be, as we see in the language being used by business groups. The Federation of Small Businesses has been absolutely clearcut about its expectation that the proposal will force 50,000 into unemployment. It is a disaster for business.

The Tory party was once, when I was growing up anyway, regarded as the party of business. What has happened? Why are we in a situation now in which not only have the Government forced through Brexit in the middle of a pandemic—and businesses are having to deal with the challenges of exporting goods and the shortages of supplies, to pay back bounce back loans before they have even had the opportunity to bounce back, and to deal with the fact that furlough is going to end despite the clear uncertainty facing them—but they are seeking to impose a jobs tax? Where is the justification for that? I encourage any Government Member to rise to their feet and disagree with anything I have said, but they will not because they know that we are right in this regard.

Dr Poulter: I declare an interest as a practising NHS doctor. Will the hon. Member reflect on the fact that the single biggest transformation delivered to health and care in the last 20 or 30 years was when Tony Blair increased national insurance to give a huge injection of funding to improve care for patients throughout the United Kingdom, including Scotland? In reflecting on that, can he see the benefits that will come from this levy for patients in his constituency and all our constituencies in the years to come, because it will make a difference? Will he reflect on the difference that it will make to real people's lives—improving cancer care, reducing waiting times—and does he see that there is a benefit in that?

Stephen Flynn: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention and for the tone in which it was made, and I shall reflect on two points in relation to what he said. He said that perhaps the biggest change to health and social care was the action of Tony Blair, but I happily disagree with that. In fact, it was in 2016 in Scotland, when we did something that I heard Members discussing

earlier at length: we integrated health and social care in Scotland. That was on top of the fact that we provide free personal care for our elderly and so on, and that is in contrast to the situation in England, which has led to the crisis we see before us.

On the hon. Gentleman's point about finance, which is the crux of this argument, do the ends justify the means? That is the purpose of this discussion. I believe in the ends. I believe our NHS and social care services deserve more money, but I do not believe that this is the right way to do it. That obviously leads to the next question, which is about how we should fund this. I heard Conservative Members—rightly—shouting at the Labour Benches, “What is your plan?”, but what is the cost of Trident? What is the cost of nuclear weapons? Over their lifespan I believe it is between £164 billion and £200 billion. Conservative Members will not say that those weapons should be scrapped, but I will. They should absolutely be scrapped, and we can use that money to fund our vital NHS services. The answer is staring them in the face, but they choose not to look at it because this is about priorities, and their politics and priorities differ massively from mine, and ultimately from those of the people of Scotland.

Finally, amendment 4 goes to the nub of where much of our frustration lies with the Bill, because if we shake it about a bit, this is ultimately another UK Government power grab. They are seeking to tell the Scottish Parliament how it should spend money in devolved areas. Whether they agree or disagree with the national insurance hike, all members of the Committee, certainly Unionist Members, should be concerned about the consequences of the UK Government seeking to impose themselves once again on devolution. I say that not as someone who seeks to defend the Union—by all means continue to do it—but because all the UK Government are doing is driving home the message in the minds of the people of Scotland that they do not respect the devolution settlement and they do not respect the Scottish Parliament.

Nigel Mills: I come at this debate from a slightly different angle. When we first heard rumours of a tax rise to fund health and social care I felt that, given that we had just spent £400 billion to get us through a pandemic, and that we wanted to get health care services to 110% of previous capacity to clear the backlog, we could accept that a tax rise had to be found to do that. I thought there was no other way, given that the economy and tax revenues are still smaller than they were, and that that was the responsible and prudent thing to do. I may not have chosen national insurance, but I accept that it is probably one of three taxes that the Government could have chosen.

My interest is in why, in the long term, we have chosen not to raise national insurance but to have a new tax. I remember that when I was first elected we were keen on simplifying the tax regime. We even had a review into whether we could merge income tax and national insurance, so that we could have one tax fewer, and make it cheaper and simpler to collect. For some reason that I will try to work out, we have now moved on to adding a kind of son or daughter of national insurance to the tax code. I think the only slight difference is that the new tax will apply to the earned income of people over retirement age, where national insurance does not. I do not know how much that will collect—the

Minister would not give us an estimate—but I think it is a pretty tiny amount, and I am not sure there is huge advantage in that.

Being a bit of a cynical sort of person I thought that perhaps because our manifesto promise ruled out tax rises we could have a levy, and that people would fall for that, but I am glad we did not take that line. Indeed, the Government were clear that we are breaching our manifesto promise, for justifiable reasons in the circumstances.

Perhaps we are trying to create some clarity, thinking that if people can see a hypothecated tax, they can see how much they are paying for health and social care and they will understand and value what is happening, except of course we are raising by this levy £12 billion a year or so—a tiny fraction of what we spend on the NHS, let alone social care—and people will see a social care levy on their council tax bill. In fact, this money is not even the biggest part of national insurance that will go to the NHS; as I said earlier, £26 billion a year—roughly 2% of the national insurance contributions in each class—already goes directly to the NHS and does not go down the usual route of national insurance funding. I am not sure that we are going to get the benefit of clarity for people about what they are paying.

6.30 pm

We should remember that we now create a personal tax statement for everyone every year, from which they can see what proportion of the tax they have paid has gone to which public service. If we want them to see how much of what they are paying goes to the NHS and to social care, that is already there for them in a much clearer way than having a strangely hypothecated tax, for a tiny fraction of the bill.

I am not at all clear what the justification is for creating a whole new tax. I was keen to know how much that was going to cost. The Minister has neutralised my amendment 8 by setting out in a letter to the Treasury Committee that he thinks HMRC will spend about £60 million to create the systems to collect this tax.

Jesse Norman: I am afraid that I must correct myself. It is actually £40 million to £50 million, rather than £50 million to £60 million. I was relying on an imperfect memory.

Nigel Mills: Perhaps the Minister was building in some optimism bias, as the Treasury normally does to other people's forecasts, and going for £50 million to £60 million to make sure. I do not know whether that is the cost of building the systems to enable the returns to be made, or to enable the systems to collect or chase the money, or whether there is going to be some ongoing annual cost; I assume that there will be some ongoing annual cost in trying to chase compliance too. However, we do not have an estimate for how much we are going to be imposing on business to pay this tax.

I imagine that this will be a separate tax that is not collected in the same way—the same box—as national insurance. I assume that there will have to be different parts of the payroll returning different calculations, which will require every software provider to change all their software coding to cope with it and to add in the new amount that is being paid by people over retirement age who do not normally pay national insurance. All that will cost time and money and need testing and

compliance, and then we will have to check whether employers are following it and chase them for the money.

I suspect that there will be quite a large up-front cost for all that work to be done, and then a reasonable annual cost to ensure compliance, so there is a first-order question whether we are raising more by quite rightly taxing people over retirement age on their earned income—this 1.25%—than we are having spent on obtaining that. From the Minister's remarks, I am not convinced that the answer will be positive, so in actual fact, we are creating a whole new tax to raise less money than it costs to collect it, for no real advantage other than a presentational one.

John Redwood: My hon. Friend is such an expert on this. Has he probed or got anywhere with finding out how much consequential tax loss there might be from the national insurance rise, or the care tax rise, itself? Presumably, there are some losses that will have to be offset, so gross will not necessarily be net.

Nigel Mills: I assume that my right hon. Friend is right that, if we reduce the number of people in work or reduce their pay rises, that will work its way through the system. The Minister may be better placed than I am to work out an answer to that question.

The nub of my argument, and the reason for amendment 8 and new clause 10, is that we have 18 months before the new levy comes into force—we accept that we cannot bring it into force in six months' time, presumably because it is so hard to get the systems in place, and that we have to raise national insurance for the first year and move to the levy after that—so perhaps if we had all the information in front of us in the next six months or year, we could make a choice whether to go ahead with the new levy for the small amount of extra income, or whether to stick with the national insurance rise and find other ways to explain to people what they are paying their taxes for.

I think the Minister accepted that HMRC will publish its estimate, and I am sure we could find a way of getting an accurate estimate of the cost to business of complying with the levy. We could then take an informed decision before we finally introduced the levy. I think that would be a positive step in tax policy. However, if we really believe that we want a separate levy to show what people are paying directly for health and social care, I think that we should move the existing 2% of national insurance that goes directly to the health service into the levy, so there is one hypothecated payroll tax that goes to the NHS on people's payslips, rather than it being hidden in a part of national insurance. I cannot see any reason why, if we go down the line of introducing a new health and social care tax, we would not want to have all the hypothecated payroll taxes going into the NHS or social care to get any of the advantages of that.

I will not be pressing my two new clauses to a Division, but I urge the Minister to give some serious consideration—I suspect he did not know about this new levy until around about last weekend, when it was probably dreamt up in No. 10 as a way of selling a tax rise—to using the 18 months he has before the levy comes in to try to work out whether the costs of collecting it are worth the small change. If he really does think there is a compelling argument for charging

[Nigel Mills]

people over retirement age national insurance if they stay in work and are earning, let us charge them the full rate, rather than 1.25%. I cannot see how we can justify that they do not pay the existing 2% that goes to the NHS but they do pay the 1.25%. There seems to be no logic in that at all to me, so perhaps we should think properly and coherently about the tax system. Let us have the full rate in that situation.

Let us have a decision when we get around to the Budget in 2022. Is going ahead with this levy going to raise more money than it costs? If it is not, let us just leave it on national insurance where it will be sat at that point. That would be a more coherent way of running our taxes.

Nadia Whittome: With your permission, Dame Eleanor, I will speak to new clauses 3 and 5, tabled my hon. Friends the Members for Ealing North (James Murray) and for Erith and Thamesmead (Abena Oppong-Asare). New clause 3 requires the Chancellor to assess the impact of the Act on tax revenue from different sources of income and new clause 5 calls on the Government to publish an equality impact assessment of the Act.

Dame Eleanor, given that even in Committee this has been a wide-ranging and broad debate, I hope you will allow me to set out the context of those new clauses. It is people in poorly paid jobs who will bear the brunt of the national insurance increase, at a time when in-work poverty is already at a record high. How can it be right to ask those who are already saddled with extortionate housing costs, poverty wages and mountains of debt to pick up the tab for this Government's failures on social care? To put it simply, the Government are choosing to protect the interests of the wealthy who fund them at the expense of low-income workers and renters. While landlords and the super-rich who are hoarding wealth and housing pay nothing under this new tax, my constituents will be having their pockets raided.

Since 2010, under this Government's watch, £7.7 billion has been cut from social care budgets. If I could sum up this policy—if we can call it a policy—in one word, it would be “unfair”: unfair on the working people who are funding the tax rise; unfair on the care workers who will not see their pay and conditions improve; and unfair on those relying on social care, whose needs will continue to be unmet. Figures released this week show that nearly 70,000 people in England could die waiting for social care before these changes even come into force.

If the Government were interested in fairness, they would tackle the soaring housing costs, low-paid jobs and inadequate benefits that my constituents are facing. Instead, their policy agenda is fuelling inequality and impoverishment. As we heard from the hon. Member for Aberdeen South (Stephen Flynn), 2.5 million working households will be hit by the cut to universal credit and the increase in national insurance. Working families will be losing, on average, over £1,000 next year. Meanwhile, the furlough scheme is ending and evictions are resuming.

There is, however, a group of people who have benefited from the pandemic—who have done very well, in fact: British billionaires. They have increased their wealth by over £100 billion. That is why now is the time to get serious about taxing wealth. The Chair of the Health

and Social Care Committee, the right hon. Member for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt), said earlier in the debate that this tax hike would raise more than a wealth tax, but I am afraid that that is not true on any measure. *City A.M.*—this is *City A.M.*, not “Das Kapital”—calculated that one wealth tax option would be to tax wealth progressively between £1 million and £10 million, with all wealth beyond £10 million taxed at 3%. That would bring in a total of £55 billion over five years. Alternatively, the economist Richard Murphy calculated that, if wealth was taxed at the same rate as income, that could raise up to £174 billion a year.

Will the Minister explain why none of those options was considered and what the Treasury makes of those calculations? And perhaps the Chancellor could explain to us, as a multimillionaire, why he cannot dig deep into his own pockets and why it has to be my constituents—in fact, all our constituents—instead. I think that this House and working people across the country deserve to know why a wealth tax was dismissed in favour of a tax on the poorest and the lowest paid, and what is more, to fund a plan that will not even work.

We have heard during this Committee that the Government's excuse for not ring-fencing the money raised for social care is that health and social care are interlinked. I agree, to an extent, and that is why, to fix our social care system, we need a national care service, like our national health service, which is free at the point of use. We need to redesign the system so that the needs of care users, for want of a better word, and care workers are at its heart. The money to do that is there but it is in the pockets of the richest and it is the political will from this Government that is sorely lacking. Anything less than a national care service, funded by a tax on wealth, not on workers, would be a great disservice to the people we are elected to this place to represent.

John Redwood: I have worries about hypothecation. I thought the Treasury used to be against it and it is a difficult doctrine to make work well, because it is not always the case that a particular tax just happens to raise the right amount of revenue for a particular purpose, or if it does in one particular year, that may not be true in a future year because the revenue may grow too slowly for the purpose, or the purpose may become less popular and the revenue may exceed what is needed. I have always favoured the Treasury orthodoxy—I am not always someone to support Treasury orthodoxy—that it is better that we have a very big general pot into which we collect the taxes, and then we have general distribution based on tightly argued issues between Government Ministers and Departments on what their spending priorities are and the minimum amounts that they need to spend to get good results in their leading areas.

However, now that Ministers are treading the boards of hypothecation for the first time in this interesting way, I advise them that it is a very good rule, if they wish to sell the idea of hypothecation, that the tax revenue that they collect should pay for the thing that they are attaching to the hypothecated revenue. My big worry about this hypothecation is that the sum of money for social care—when we eventually get to that point after three years—collected by the so-called social care tax will be only about one fifth of the actual costs of social care to the public sector. Of course, there are additional costs to private individuals as well and I

would not want my constituents to be misled. I have already had emails from constituents saying, “As the Government seem to be pressing ahead with this social care levy, I assume that I will no longer be asked to make any contribution through my council tax to social care”. Being an honest man, I have written back and said, “No, you can’t assume that at all. Social care is going to need a lot of money and I don’t think the idea is that the council tax levy part of it, or the need for that, will suddenly disappear.” So I think one does need to look again at hypothecation. If, for example, we wish to have hypothecated taxes to pay for the current costs of health, as identified by the Treasury for the current financial year, we would need to say that all income tax, all capital gains tax, all inheritance tax and all stamp duty—in other words, all income and wealth taxation—were already going to pay the large sums required for health in this year’s public budgets. Maybe we could start by renaming income tax and all the wealth taxes as a health tax, which would give people some idea of the scale of expenditure that we are talking about. There might then be a more interesting and useful debate to be had.

6.45 pm

I am also a bit concerned about gross and net, a point that I asked my expert hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Nigel Mills) about a few minutes ago. Clearly, if we put up a tax such as national insurance—or the son or daughter of national insurance, the care tax—companies will make less profit, so there will be less profit to tax after we have taken off the other costs. Individuals will also have less money to spend because of the deduction from their pay packet, so they will pay less in VAT and other taxes on things that they would otherwise spend their money on. There must be some tax loss as an offset, so the net will not be as large as the gross. One of the dangers of overcomplicating the tax system is that we get too many gross-to-net net-offs and it starts to get expensive. I am glad that my hon. Friend also raised questions about whether the set-up cost is worth while and what the running costs will be, because there will be HMRC running costs and, clearly, private business running costs as a result of introducing a new tax.

The best way to get the deficit down, which the Treasury rightly worries about, is to grow the economy faster. We have seen already that, with a very sharp rate of recovery in the early months once lockdown started to be relaxed, there was a very good impact on revenues: they outperformed the predictions of the Office for Budget Responsibility and the Treasury. I think that that is the best way to proceed. I am still surprised by the Treasury’s precision in thinking that £12 billion is the magic extra number that will first solve health and then go on to resolve social care; it is a very small percentage of the much larger totals that we already spend, and it is a tiny percentage of the total revenues that we hope to collect if we promote a really good recovery.

I am also concerned about the impact on those people, on whom much of our debate has focused, who find that they need care home assistance in their later months or years of life—the impact on their family finances as well as on their lifestyle. At the moment, there are broadly three categories of people: those

whose financial and care needs are taken care of entirely by the state because they do not have the benefit of capital, a home of their own and all the rest of it; those who are quite well off enough that they can make their own provision and pay all their own bills; and those in the middle, who may need a mixture of the two kinds of funding, or who may start off by self-funding and then turn to the state for assistance when the money runs out.

As I understand it, the purpose of the policy is to increase the middle category, allowing more people to have a mixture of state money and self-funding, and reducing the number in the entirely self-funding category. If that is the purpose of the policy, it is very important to be honest about how much protection it will actually give and how easy it is for people to work out what their personal liability will be, what the legitimate calls on their capital or income will be, and what the state will do that it is not currently doing. I do not think that I have that clarity yet. We need a much more detailed paper with working examples, so that we can see what the impact will be on individuals in our constituencies who may face that problem.

Dr Murrison: I am listening carefully to my right hon. Friend. Does he share my concern that there may be an element of gaming by the social care sector, in so far as hotel costs are clearly exempted? Our constituents who may be listening might not be fully aware of that. There is a real possibility and risk that the sector will seek to enhance and embellish those costs so that they become a bigger and bigger proportion of the total take. Does that not need to be made explicit? Does my right hon. Friend think that in the White Paper process that we are about to embark on, there would be merit in limiting that cost in some way to ensure that the potential market exploitation of the Bill’s proposals is avoided?

John Redwood: I was with my right hon. Friend until his last recommendation. He had pre-empted what I was going to say next: that we need greater clarity about the three different kinds of costs that an elderly person can face.

All of us in this House agree that we believe in a health service that is free at the point of need, so that any elderly person, like anyone else, has complete entitlement to completely free healthcare if they need GP or hospital treatment. That is not in dispute. However, as my right hon. Friend has just reminded the Committee, it looks as though these proposals also say that if an elderly person is living in a care home, the board and lodging, or the hotel costs or whatever we like to call it, are not part of that kind of treatment, so if the person has money, they will have to pay for those.

I find it difficult to say that we need to pre-empt the possibility of care homes wishing to charge a bit more for that hotel accommodation, because there could be good reasons for their needing to do so, and the law is a very clumsy instrument when it comes to intervening in thousands of decisions that individuals and businesses have to make about what is a fair price. I do not think that there should be absolute price control, because it might be a period when wage costs or food costs had gone up, which the care home needed to pass on—or the care home might be improving the quality of what it

[John Redwood]

was offering, in which case it would be mutually beneficial, or at any rate perfectly reasonable, for it to pass on that cost.

Dr Murrison: My right hon. Friend is being very generous in giving way. May I just clarify my intent? It would be reasonable to have an indicative cost. After all, in the case of most of our constituents who are living in a residential set-up—we are talking, basically, about a bedsit—what is usually involved, in my experience, is fairly basic food and some heating. The cost of that is not enormous, and it is the sort of thing that we would be expected to fund in any event were we living in our own homes; probably rather more so. Would it not be reasonable to have an indicative amount that it is felt reasonable for homes to be charging people—particularly, I have to say, if they are being funded through local government?

John Redwood: I do not think that that is possible at all. Property costs vary to an incredible degree across the country. Levels of staff provision are different in different homes, the quality and level of service are different, and the needs of individual residents are different. Some are in relatively good health, and do not need to find the back-up or assistance that others require. What I want to see—and I think that we need to debate this more than we have so far—is better quality for everyone who needs end-of-life care or time in a nursing home. My right hon. Friend has suggested that some are quite basic, and I think we need to worry about that and work at it.

For me, the big care problem is whether it is adequate. I am not quite as worried about the family finances as I am about the experience of the elderly person and whether it is good enough, and, where the state is the sole funder or a substantial funder of the care, whether we are doing a good enough job in allowing a reasonable quality of care in terms of staffing numbers, training of staff and staff wages. When elderly relatives in my family have been in care, we have always wanted to make sure that the staff were well remunerated, rewarded and motivated, and had proper training, support and back-up from the care home, because I wanted them to be well looked after.

There is a much happier environment if the people working in the home are proud of it and have, for instance, a decent career structure. I therefore think that we need to be very careful about a cost-down or standard-cost approach. We need to understand the variety of life, but we also need to make sure that those who rely entirely on state support, or who may be becoming more reliant on it under the Government's likely policy, will none the less look forward to a reasonable standard of care, and that the people who work with them and for them are treated well by employers who respect them and offer them a career structure, proper training, decent support and all those other good things.

In conclusion, I hope the Government will look again at some of these points to ensure that there is no muddle over the true costs of these services and the contribution that the tax will make, if they insist on it, because it will be quite a small contribution as a proportion of the whole. Will they also look at a big care issue that

does not get enough attention in the Bill, which is the quality of the care? That leads immediately into the quality of the experience for the employees, their career structure and their ability to create good atmospheres in care homes that are of a high standard. Can we also have a bit more thought and more information on what this will mean for individuals going into care homes and their supporting families? I am afraid that I still do not have a clear explanation to offer my constituents as to what their experience would be under these proposals.

Richard Burgon (Leeds East) (Lab): I am speaking in support of new clause 3, which would require the Chancellor to look at different taxes to raise income. There are many other ways to raise this money and, in particular, I believe that we need to look at ways to tax wealth rather than taxing working people. Wealth in this country is concentrated among the top 1%, so instead of imposing a tax bombshell of £12 billion a year on working people, the Government could focus on the wealthy. They choose not to; instead, we have a tax system rigged in favour of those who already have wealth. They pay lower taxes than the millions who have to go out to work to make a living. The truth is that the Government's proposal makes that situation even worse, and that is not right. The Government could reform capital gains tax, so that instead of lower taxes for wealthy people, that money could be used to fund social care, but they choose not to do so. They could raise many more billions of pounds by a direct wealth tax on the richest 1% with assets of more than £5 million, but they choose not to do so.

I am backing new clause 3, because there is always an alternative. That the Government refuse to back such alternatives speaks volumes. Aneurin Bevan once said that socialism was the language of priorities, but conservatism is the language of priorities too: the priority of safeguarding the wealth of the super-rich and sticking the boot into working people. This is the same old Tory party, attacking working people and defending the wealthy. We have heard a lot in this debate about so-called tough choices, but when politicians speak the language of tough choices, it usually means that they are taking the path they think is easiest. The truth is that the Government are taking the easy choice: not levelling up but kicking down and taking a hands-off approach to the wealth of the super-rich. There are alternatives, and that is why I am backing new clause 3.

Mr Richard Holden (North West Durham) (Con): I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way, and I would also like to welcome the hon. Member for Nottingham East (Nadia Whittome) back. It is great to see her back on the Opposition Benches. There is a similarity between what the hon. Gentleman is saying and what those on the Government Front Bench are saying; at least they are both putting forward proposals. He is putting forward a wealth tax and the hon. Member for Aberdeen South (Stephen Flynn) proposed the scrapping of Trident, but the Government are at least being honest in saying that people are going to have to pay more through national insurance: £907 a year for a Member of Parliament and £80 a year for somebody on the national minimum wage. Has the hon. Member for Leeds East (Richard Burgon) managed to convince those on his Front Bench to be as honest as he and the Government are in coming forward with an actual proposal for what they would do?

Richard Burgon: I had actually finished my remarks, but I would be happy to take this up with the hon. Gentleman on another occasion if he so wishes.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Eleanor Laing): I have to say I was not quite sure about that. I thought that the hon. Member for Leeds East (Richard Burgon) had finished, but the hon. Member for North West Durham (Mr Holden) nevertheless managed to make his intervention. He may indeed have wanted more, but the hon. Member for Leeds East read the mood of the House very well.

Sir Christopher Chope: It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Leeds East (Richard Burgon). He talked about alternatives, and perhaps I can throw out a possible alternative that he might think reasonable. Why should the very rich have unrestricted access to a free NHS?

Whenever that is raised by Conservative Members, Opposition Members object to the idea and say that it would undermine the principles of the NHS. I do not expect him to answer that question, but I throw it out there because it is another alternative that could be considered.

7 pm

Richard Burgon: It is useful that Members on both sides of the Committee are coming clean with all sorts of ideas. I would assert the principle of universalism—universalism of the welfare state and universalism of the NHS.

Sir Christopher Chope: I thought that might be the hon. Gentleman's response. Today we are talking about social care as well as healthcare, and the principle of universalism does not apply to social care because it is and will continue to be the subject of means-testing.

The Government talk the talk of integrating health and social care, and I had an exchange with my right hon. Friend the Minister on this subject. He justifies having a health and social care levy on the basis that they are interdependent. If they are interdependent and we are moving towards an integrated scheme, why do we not apply the same principles to both NHS healthcare and social care? We could have means-testing for healthcare, in the same way as we have for social care, or we could not have any means-testing for social care, in the same way as we do not have any means-testing for healthcare. If we are going to merge the two schemes, we need to resolve those anomalies. I am afraid that everything that has come out of this short debate shows that the Bill is a muddled fudge that perpetuates the distinction between health and social care but does not meet the challenge I put to the Minister: why not have a distinct social care levy?

Is it reasonable that we should have co-payment in the NHS? If so, it would generate an enormous amount of additional income. We essentially have co-payment on prescription charges, ophthalmology services, dentistry and, increasingly, audiology services. The idea that we should have co-payment more widely, so that people who can afford it contribute, say, half the cost of an orthopaedic operation, seems to be anathema to the Government. I do not understand why, if they want to get more money into the system.

Our system differs from most overseas systems. We are not spending more on healthcare in this country, but we are spending more on publicly funded healthcare and not enough on privately funded healthcare. I would like to see a Government strategy to encourage more investment by ordinary individuals in the healthcare system. I have a private Member's Bill on co-payment coming up in the new year, but perhaps before that we might be able to get some movement from the Government on these principles. We have co-payment in the social care sector. If it is all right in the social care sector, why is it not all right in the healthcare sector? We are excluding hotel costs—the board and lodging costs—from the £86,000 social care threshold, but we do not charge any hotel costs to rich people who are in hospital. Why not? There does not seem to be any logic in that.

I am glad it looks like the Minister will have a long time to answer these points and the other important points raised by my hon. and right hon. Friends. If we are going to have a complete review and fundamental change of outlook on health and social care, we need to meet those challenges. What is the answer as to why we do not charge hotel costs for millionaires in hospital? That would introduce more income into the service and bring it into line with what happens with social care.

Those questions remain to be answered, but there are a whole lot more besides. I was looking at the *Official Report* of an exchange in the other place yesterday evening. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Lord Bethell, said that

“we recognise that family carers play a vital role. When we announced an additional £4.5 billion over three years for social care, it included a commitment to take steps to ensure unpaid carers have the support, advice and respite they need.”

We know that there are about 1.6 million unpaid carers, and that was leading them to believe that there was some sort of dividend around the corner for them. However, Lord Lilley picked up on that point and asked the Minister to

“confirm that...there would be only £1.5 billion a year going to social care from the large increase in national insurance”.

Obviously, that is correct. He then asked the Minister to

“confirm that nearly half of that will be absorbed by the need to pay for the extension of free social care to those with valuable homes...That means that nothing will be left to help domestic carers.”

That was a perfectly straightforward question, and as it was not answered in the other place last night, I hope that the Financial Secretary can answer it tonight. The answer that that Health Minister gave—perhaps the Treasury has a better view on this—was that

“the maths that my noble friend has done is a little bit premature.”

I did not think that maths could ever be premature. He continued:

“The White Paper will come out later this year; it will spell out the precise financial arrangements, and I am looking forward to that.” —[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 13 September 2021; Vol. 814, c. 1130.]

The Minister was implying that he did not really have a clue as to what was going to be in it when it came out. That is an example of the muddled thinking, the failure of the Government to answer precise questions and the very dangerous policy of raising expectations among our constituents that somehow they are all going to be able to relax and spend all their hard-earned savings

[*Sir Christopher Chope*]

and use their houses for themselves without having to contribute much towards the long-term costs of social care.

May I throw out a suggestion arising from that exchange in the other place last night? If we have 1.6 million people providing free care for their loved ones, why are we choosing to impose upon them an extra levy, an extra tax? Surely it would be reasonable—clause 4 enables this to be done by subsidiary legislation—to exclude those who are looking after their loved ones, doing the right thing and saving the state a lot of money. We could say, “In return for doing that, you will be exempt from the 1.5% levy.”

John Redwood *indicated assent.*

Sir Christopher Chope: I am delighted to see that my right hon. Friend thinks that is a good idea. I hope we will get some nodding soon from those on the Front Bench, but I have looked there in vain so far.

Anybody who speaks in a debate such as this is open to the challenge as to how they would pay for this. That challenge was put across the Dispatch Box today by Conservative Members to Opposition Members, and answer came there none. I have an anecdote to share with the House. Probably around a fortnight ago I was talking to a former very senior aide at No. 10. He said that one great thing that has come out of the covid-19 emergency is the sure knowledge that we can manage with 25% fewer civil servants in government without any detriment to the quality of government. That came from a senior adviser at No. 10. How many fewer civil servants does my right hon. Friend the Minister think we can have without any detriment to the public service?

John Redwood: My hon. Friend is making an interesting speech. Does he think that as a lot of civil servants now find they can work pretty well from home, we do not need all these expensive offices and perhaps ought to be surrendering leases?

Sir Christopher Chope: That is another excellent idea. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for the suggestion, but I fear that the Government are so focused on spending money that they have lost any incentive to try to control expenditure, which I thought was the Treasury’s job. It takes me back to Geoffrey Howe’s first Budget. The Conservatives had become a national Government on the back of very high socialist spending and a popular rebellion against socialist waste and high taxation. In his first Budget, Geoffrey Howe emphasised: “Finance must determine expenditure”. That message has now been lost by the Government, who are saying that expenditure must determine finance. Our Government—I say “our Government” advisedly—have reverted to the old socialist tax and spend philosophy in which expenditure determines finance. I hope that my right hon. Friend on the Front Bench will explain why he thinks that to change our philosophy fundamentally is consistent with Conservative values.

My final point is about the Barnett formula. The Bill recites a restatement of the fact that the Barnett formula is there and says, “Isn’t it fair?” My constituents are incensed at the unfairness of the Barnett formula, which

results in their paying higher taxes so that the people of Scotland can receive higher public services, with much more spent on those services in Scotland than is spent in England, financed by our constituents in England. Why, when we should be looking at issues that relate to expenditure, are we just saying that the Barnett formula is going to apply? Will my right hon. Friend the Minister say what will happen when the Barnett formula is reviewed or abolished, as surely it must be because it has outlived its usefulness? The House of Lords did a comprehensive demolition job on the Barnett formula, which was brought in years ago as a stopgap—a plastering over of some cracks—and has now almost reached the status of some religious doctrine.

My right hon. Friend the Minister will not be able to persuade me to do other than vote against this Bill’s Third Reading, because introducing it is a chronic mistake by the Government, and it is even worse that we should be imposing taxes without explaining how we are to spend them. But let me leave that on one side. I hope that my right hon. Friend, wearing his Treasury hat, will be able to explain exactly what the Government are doing to help to constrain and reduce waste in public expenditure, whether it be by getting rid of leases on surplus buildings; by sacking staff who are not productive; by introducing the long-promised cap on exit payments; by stopping the obscene salaries that are paid in much of the public service; or by addressing the problem of all these bureaucrats in the health service who seem to squeeze out productive activity, for whom we are having to pay dearly and are going to have to pay the highest taxes in our lifetimes. Those are the challenges that the Government must face up to if they are to be able to recover not just my support, but the support of so many Conservative activists up and down the country.

7.15 pm

Jesse Norman: I thank colleagues for their contributions to the debate. It has been very wide ranging—especially the last speech—occasionally touching on the subject of the Bill and the clauses and amendments in it.

Let me start with the hon. Member for Ealing North (James Murray) who speaks for the Opposition. He asked why the dividend tax has not been brought in. The answer to that question is that it does not fall under a national insurance contributions Bill. Dividends are subject to a separate dividend tax regime. That is a tax that is already in existence and it will be handled, as the Government have already made clear, in the course of the forthcoming Finance Bill.

The hon. Gentleman asked questions about levelling up and multinationals’ tax avoidance. I think he is aware that the Government’s approach to levelling up is extremely manifest, most recently in the work that we have done with the UK Infrastructure Bank, which is specifically dedicated to net zero and levelling up and which has just recruited a world-class new chief executive. On the case of multinationals, he has obviously forgotten that the Government have been in the vanguard of the G20 and the G7 in arranging and leading on a new settlement on Pillar One and Pillar Two multinationals’ tax avoidance.

The hon. Gentleman repeated his untrue claim from the earlier debate that these measures contain no new funding for social care. In fact, as the Chief Secretary to

the Treasury said a few minutes before he first said that, the measures contain £5.4 billion to support social care, which is in the plan. In case he missed it, it is in paragraph 36 of the plan. It is no wonder that those on the Labour Front Bench do not think that we have a plan if they cannot be bothered to read the plan that we have actually published.

James Murray: To be absolutely clear, the question that I was putting to the Minister was: where in the Bill is there a guarantee that a single penny of this new levy will go to social care?

Jesse Norman: The Bill is designed to fund the plan and the plan has been published. The plan is perfectly explicit as to where the money is going with regard to social care and how much is going to social care. It is in paragraph 36. The hon. Gentleman only needs to look at the plan to see it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr Fysh) tabled a probing amendment and explained the background to his own amendment 7, and I thank him for that. I mean him no disrespect when I say that the Government have taken the amendment on board, and will take it on board, but I still ask him to withdraw his amendment.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen South (Stephen Flynn) talked airily about unfunded social care plans controlled, as it were, by England over Scotland. Nothing could be further from the truth. The truth is that Scotland has social care plans that are underfunded. Audit Scotland said that more money was needed. The Independent Review of Adult Social Care in Scotland said that more money will need to be spent over the longer term. Unfortunately, he also ignores what has been accurately described by the Prime Minister as the Union dividend from which all the devolved Administrations will benefit.

My hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Nigel Mills) asked the important question of why a new tax. It is important to focus on this. The reason there is a new tax is that this is a fundamental change in how we have been thinking about social care. Andrew Dilnot himself has said that he does not think it inappropriate to have a new tax funded to support this.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (John Redwood) talked about Treasury concern with hypothecation, which remains intact. There is already an existing level of hypothecation within the national insurance contributions system and this plays off that. The hon. Member for Nottingham East (Nadia Whittome) went into a long diatribe, in which she accused the Government of seeking to protect the richest people in society, to which the only simple answer is that that is absolute nonsense. I think she missed the debate on Second Reading, but if she read the distributional analysis, she would see that this package means that the 20% of highest income households will contribute 40 times the amount contributed by the least well off 20% of households. It is also worth pointing out that the highest earning 14% will pay roughly half of all revenues. Even the Wealth Tax Commission, which is independent of Government and dedicated to the idea of arguing for a wealth tax, acknowledged that the UK is on par with G7 countries as regards a wealth tax. Under a more inclusive definition—one that includes, for example, stamp duty land tax—the UK is near the top of the G7 countries in terms of a wealth tax.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham talked about hypothecation; I perfectly understand that. He also mentioned gross net revenues. These are net revenues—revenues that have been calculated net of the effects. The detail is set out in the technical annex to the published plan.

The hon. Member for Leeds East (Richard Burgon) revisited some of the themes set out by the hon. Member for Nottingham East, but I am afraid no more persuasively.

My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Sir Christopher Chope) went on a glorious canter, or possibly a ramble, around various public spending concerns. I fully appreciate his concerns. Very little of what he said actually bears direct relation to the levy, but let me address the parts that do. He asked why there is no distinct social care levy. Of course, it is possible to claim, as I did, that there is a need for greater integration between healthcare and social care, without suggesting that the funding for those things needs to be handled in exactly the same way across both. This provision blends the funding in a way that is felicitous for both elements.

My hon. Friend argued vigorously for co-payment. I take his arguments as I am sure he means them and look forward to seeing his Bill. He also mentioned millionaires in hospitals. He is right that maths is eternal; our noble Friend Lord Bethell may have been referring to the fact that calculations are not eternal, but may be in time and premature.

Sir Christopher Chope: In the Conservative party manifesto almost two years ago, we promised that we would reform social care at the same time as promising that we would not increase VAT, national insurance or any other taxes. If it had not been for the pandemic, how would we have dealt with the challenge of reforming social care without raising taxes? Surely one way of doing it would have been to reduce public expenditure elsewhere.

Jesse Norman: It is very hard for me to comment on such a remote hypothetical, but the fact of the matter is, as the Prime Minister said, no political party had a pandemic in their manifesto and we have to deal with the situation—

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. I would be grateful if the Minister would address the Chair.

Jesse Norman: I am so sorry, Dame Eleanor. I am rightly chastised and thank you for that point.

My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch asked why the Barnett formula applies and what will happen once it is abolished, but once again he takes the Committee to the outer reaches of speculation. The fact is that it does apply and it has thoroughly beneficial effects for the devolved Administrations as regards this piece of legislation.

With that, I ask those who have tabled amendments and new clauses to withdraw them. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 1 accordingly ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2DESTINATION OF PROCEEDS OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL
CARE LEVY

Amendment proposed: 4, page 2, line 29, leave out from “as” to end of line 30 and insert “determined jointly by the Treasury and the devolved governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.”

The amendment would require joint agreement between the Treasury and the governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as to how the levy proceeds are to be shared between the four areas and between health care and social care.—(Alison Thewliss.)

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 56, Noes 324.

Division No. 70]

[7.23 pm

AYES

Bardell, Hannah	Linden, David
Blackford, rh Ian	Lucas, Caroline
Blackman, Kirsty	MacAskill, Kenny
Bonnar, Steven	McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
Brock, Deidre	McDonald, Stuart C.
Brown, Alan	McLaughlin, Anne
Cameron, Dr Lisa	Monaghan, Carol
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	Moran, Layla
Chamberlain, Wendy	Newlands, Gavin
Cherry, Joanna	Nicolson, John
Cowan, Ronnie	O’Hara, Brendan
Crawley, Angela	Olney, Sarah
Day, Martyn	Oswald, Kirsten
Docherty-Hughes, Martin	Qaisar-Javed, Anum
Doogan, Dave	Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Dorans, Allan	Sheppard, Tommy
Eastwood, Colum	Smith, Alyn
Edwards, Jonathan	Stephens, Chris
Farron, Tim	Thewliss, Alison
Farry, Stephen	Thompson, Owen
Ferrier, Margaret	Thomson, Richard
Flynn, Stephen	Whitford, Dr Philippa
Gibson, Patricia	Williams, Hywel
Grady, Patrick	Wilson, Munira
Green, Sarah	Wishart, Pete
Hanna, Claire	
Hendry, Drew	
Hosie, rh Stewart	
Jardine, Christine	
Lake, Ben	

Tellers for the Ayes:
Marion Fellows and
Chris Law

NOES

Adams, Nigel	Baldwin, Harriett
Afolami, Bim	Barclay, rh Steve
Afriyie, Adam	Baynes, Simon
Aiken, Nickie	Bell, Aaron
Aldous, Peter	Benton, Scott
Allan, Lucy	Beresford, Sir Paul
Amess, Sir David	Bhatti, Saqib
Anderson, Lee	Blackman, Bob
Anderson, Stuart	Blunt, Crispin
Andrew, rh Stuart	Bowie, Andrew
Argar, Edward	Bradley, Ben
Atherton, Sarah	Bradley, rh Karen
Atkins, Victoria	Brady, Sir Graham
Bacon, Gareth	Braverman, rh Suella
Bacon, Mr Richard	Brereton, Jack
Badenoch, Kemi	Brine, Steve
Bailey, Shaun	Bristow, Paul
Baillie, Siobhan	Brokenshire, rh James
Baker, Duncan	Browne, Anthony

Bruce, Fiona	Freer, Mike
Buchan, Felicity	Fuller, Richard
Buckland, rh Robert	Fysh, Mr Marcus
Burghart, Alex	Garnier, Mark
Burns, rh Conor	Gibb, rh Nick
Butler, Rob	Gibson, Peter
Cairns, rh Alun	Gideon, Jo
Carter, Andy	Glen, John
Cartledge, James	Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Cates, Miriam	Gove, rh Michael
Chalk, Alex	Graham, Richard
Chishti, Rehman	Grant, Mrs Helen
Chope, Sir Christopher	Gray, James
Churchill, Jo	Grayling, rh Chris
Clark, rh Greg	Green, Chris
Clarke, Mr Simon	Green, rh Damian
Clarke, Theo	Griffith, Andrew
Clarke-Smith, Brendan	Griffiths, Kate
Clarkson, Chris	Grundy, James
Cleverly, rh James	Gullis, Jonathan
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey	Halfon, rh Robert
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse	Hall, Luke
Colburn, Elliot	Hammond, Stephen
Collins, Damian	Hancock, rh Matt
Costa, Alberto	Hands, rh Greg
Courts, Robert	Harris, Rebecca
Coutinho, Claire	Harrison, Trudy
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey	Hart, Sally-Ann
Crabb, rh Stephen	Hart, rh Simon
Crosbie, Virginia	Hayes, rh Sir John
Crouch, Tracey	Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Daly, James	Heapey, James
Davies, David T. C.	Heaton-Harris, Chris
Davies, Gareth	Henderson, Gordon
Davies, Dr James	Henry, Darren
Davies, Mims	Higginbotham, Antony
Davies, Philip	Hinds, rh Damian
Davison, Dehenna	Hoare, Simon
Dinenage, Caroline	Holden, Mr Richard
Dines, Miss Sarah	Hollinrake, Kevin
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Hollobone, Mr Philip
Docherty, Leo	Holloway, Adam
Donelan, Michelle	Holmes, Paul
Dorries, Ms Nadine	Howell, John
Double, Steve	Howell, Paul
Dowden, rh Oliver	Huddleston, Nigel
Doyle-Price, Jackie	Hudson, Dr Neil
Drax, Richard	Hughes, Eddie
Drummond, Mrs Flick	Hunt, Jane
Duddridge, James	Hunt, rh Jeremy
Duguid, David	Hunt, Tom
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain	Jack, rh Mr Alister
Dunne, rh Philip	Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Eastwood, Mark	Jenkinson, Mark
Edwards, Ruth	Jenkyns, Andrea
Ellis, rh Michael	Jenrick, rh Robert
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie	Johnson, Dr Caroline
Eustice, rh George	Johnson, Gareth
Evans, Dr Luke	Johnston, David
Evennett, rh Sir David	Jones, Andrew
Everitt, Ben	Jones, rh Mr David
Fabricant, Michael	Jones, Fay
Farris, Laura	Jupp, Simon
Fell, Simon	Kawczynski, Daniel
Fletcher, Katherine	Kearns, Alicia
Fletcher, Mark	Keegan, Gillian
Fletcher, Nick	Knight, rh Sir Greg
Ford, Vicky	Kruger, Danny
Foster, Kevin	Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
Fox, rh Dr Liam	Lamont, John
Frazer, rh Lucy	Largan, Robert
Freeman, George	Latham, Mrs Pauline

Leadsom, rh Dame Andrea
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Loder, Chris
 Logan, Mark
 Longhi, Marco
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Mackrory, Cherilyn
 Maclean, Rachel
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mangnall, Anthony
 Mann, Scott
 Marson, Julie
 Mayhew, Jerome
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 McVey, rh Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Millar, Robin
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Mills, Nigel
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan
 Moore, Damien
 Moore, Robbie
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Mortimer, Jill
 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
 Opperman, Guy
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 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
 Quince, Will
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Randall, Tom
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
 Richards, Nicola
 Richardson, Angela
 Roberts, Rob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence

Robinson, Mary
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Russell, Dean
 Sambrook, Gary
 Saxby, Selaine
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, rh Alok
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec
 Simmonds, David
 Skidmore, rh Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Solloway, Amanda
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stevenson, Jane
 Stewart, rh Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunderland, James
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Throup, Maggie
 Timpson, Edward
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie
 Trott, Laura
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Vara, Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Vickers, Matt
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Wakeford, Christian
 Walker, Sir Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 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

Tellers for the Noes:
Maria Caulfield and
David Rutley

Question accordingly negated.

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 3 to 7 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

New Clause 3

REVIEW OF REVENUE EFFECTS OF ACT

“(1) The Chancellor of the Exchequer must review the revenue effects of this Act and lay a report before the House of Commons within six months of the passing of this Act and every 12 months thereafter.

(2) Any review under this section must include an assessment of—

- (a) the impact of this Act on revenue derived from—
 - (i) employment, and
 - (ii) self-employment; and
- (b) the impact of the revenues under this Act from employment and self-employment on the revenues derived from taxation on—
 - (i) dividends,
 - (ii) rental income, and
 - (iii) other forms of personal income.”—(*James Murray.*)

This new clause would require the Chancellor to report to the House on the impact of the Act on tax revenue derived from different sources of income.

Brought up, and read the First time.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time.

The Committee divided: Ayes 236, Noes 320.

Division No. 71]

[7.39 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane	Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Abrahams, Debbie	Chamberlain, Wendy
Ali, Rushanara	Champion, Sarah
Ali, Tahir	Charalambous, Bambos
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Cherry, Joanna
Amesbury, Mike	Clark, Feryal (<i>Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore</i>)
Anderson, Fleur	Cooper, rh Yvette
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Ashworth, rh Jonathan	Cowan, Ronnie
Bardell, Hannah	Coyle, Neil
Barker, Paula	Crawley, Angela
Beckett, rh Margaret	Creasy, Stella (<i>Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore</i>)
Begum, Apsana	Cruddas, Jon
Benn, rh Hilary	Cryer, John
Betts, Mr Clive	Cummins, Judith
Blackford, rh Ian	Cunningham, Alex
Blackman, Kirsty	Daby, Janet
Blake, Olivia	David, Wayne
Blomfield, Paul	Davies, Geraint
Bonnar, Steven	Davies-Jones, Alex
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Day, Martyn
Brennan, Kevin	De Cordova, Marsha
Brock, Deidre	Debbonaire, Thangam
Brown, Alan	Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Bryant, Chris	Dodds, Anneliese
Buck, Ms Karen	Doogan, Dave
Burgon, Richard	Dorans, Allan
Butler, Dawn	Doughty, Stephen
Byrne, Ian	Dromey, Jack
Byrne, rh Liam	Duffield, Rosie
Cadbury, Ruth	Eagle, Dame Angela
Cameron, Dr Lisa	Eagle, Maria
Campbell, rh Sir Alan	
Carden, Dan	

Eastwood, Colum
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Elmore, Chris
 Eshalomi, Florence
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farron, Tim
 Farry, Stephen
 Fellows, Marion
 Ferrier, Margaret
 Flynn, Stephen
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Furniss, Gill
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Grady, Patrick
 Green, Kate
 Green, Sarah
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanna, Claire
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hillier, Dame Meg
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Hosie, rh Stewart
 Howarth, rh Sir George
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, rh Dame Diana
 Johnson, Kim
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Ruth
 Jones, Sarah
 Kane, Mike
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Lake, Ben
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 MacAskill, Kenny
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana

Malhotra, Seema
 Maskell, Rachael
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLaughlin, Anne
 McMahon, Jim
 McMorrin, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Mishra, Navendu
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Murray, James
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Nichols, Charlotte
 Nicolson, John
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Olney, Sarah
 Onwurah, Chi
 Oppong-Asare, Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Osborne, Kate
 Oswald, Kirsten
 Owatemi, Taiwo
 Owen, Sarah
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Mr Toby
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Powell, Lucy
 Qaisar-Javed, Anum
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rayner, rh Angela
 Reed, Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Rodda, Matt
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smith, Alyn
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick
 Smyth, Karin
 Sobel, Alex
 Spellar, rh John
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Streeting, Wes
 Stringer, Graham
 Sultana, Zarah

Tami, rh Mark
 Tarry, Sam
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thompson, Owen
 Thomson, Richard
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twist, Liz
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 West, Catherine

Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Whitley, Mick
 Whittome, Nadia
 Williams, Hywel
 Wilson, Munira
 Wishart, Pete
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mary Glindon and
Colleen Fletcher

NOES

Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aiken, Nickie
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Amess, Sir David
 Anderson, Lee
 Anderson, Stuart
 Andrew, rh Stuart
 Argar, Edward
 Atherton, Sarah
 Atkins, Victoria
 Bacon, Gareth
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Kemi
 Bailey, Shaun
 Baillie, Siobhan
 Baker, Duncan
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Steve
 Baynes, Simon
 Bell, Aaron
 Benton, Scott
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Bhatti, Saqib
 Blackman, Bob
 Blunt, Crispin
 Bowie, Andrew
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Brady, Sir Graham
 Braverman, rh Suella
 Brereton, Jack
 Brine, Steve
 Bristow, Paul
 Britcliffe, Sara
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Browne, Anthony
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buchan, Felicity
 Buckland, rh Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, rh Conor
 Butler, Rob
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Carter, Andy
 Smyth, Karin
 Cates, Miriam
 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
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
 Colburn, Elliot
 Collins, Damian
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Coutinho, Claire
 Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crosbie, Virginia
 Crouch, Tracey
 Daly, James
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Gareth
 Davies, Dr James
 Davies, Mims
 Davison, Dehenna
 Dineneage, Caroline
 Dines, Miss Sarah
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 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, rh George
 Evans, Dr Luke
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Everitt, Ben
 Fabricant, Michael
 Farris, Laura
 Fell, Simon
 Fletcher, Katherine
 Fletcher, Mark
 Fletcher, Nick
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Frazer, rh Lucy
 Freeman, George

Freer, Mike
 Fuller, Richard
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Garnier, Mark
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gibson, Peter
 Gideon, Jo
 Glen, John
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Griffith, Andrew
 Griffiths, Kate
 Grundy, James
 Gullis, Jonathan
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 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
 Holden, Mr Richard
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Holmes, Paul
 Howell, John
 Howell, Paul
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hudson, Dr Neil
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, Jane
 Hunt, rh Jeremy
 Hunt, Tom
 Jack, rh Mr Alister
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkinson, Mark
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, rh Robert
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnston, David
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Fay
 Jupp, Simon
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kearns, Alicia
 Keegan, Gillian
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Kruger, Danny
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
 Lamont, John
 Langan, Robert
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Dame Andrea

Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Loder, Chris
 Logan, Mark
 Longhi, Marco
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Mackrory, Cherilyn
 Maclean, Rachel
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mangnall, Anthony
 Mann, Scott
 Marson, Julie
 Mayhew, Jerome
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 Menzies, Mark
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Millar, Robin
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Mills, Nigel
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan
 Moore, Damien
 Moore, Robbie
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morrissey, Joy
 Mortimer, Jill
 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
 Opperman, Guy
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 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
 Quince, Will
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Randall, Tom
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
 Richards, Nicola
 Richardson, Angela
 Roberts, Rob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Mary

Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Russell, Dean
 Sambrook, Gary
 Saxby, Selaine
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, rh Alok
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec
 Simmonds, David
 Skidmore, rh Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Solloway, Amanda
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stevenson, Jane
 Stewart, rh Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunderland, James
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Throup, Maggie
 Timpson, Edward

Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie
 Trott, Laura
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Vara, Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Vickers, Matt
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Wakeford, Christian
 Walker, Sir Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 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:
Maria Caulfield and
David Rutley

Question accordingly negated.

New Clause 5

REVIEW OF EQUALITY IMPACT OF ACT

“(1) The Chancellor of the Exchequer must review the equality impact of this Act and lay a report before the House of Commons within six months of the passing of this Act and every 12 months thereafter.

(2) A review under this section must provide a separate analysis of the equality impact of this Act on—

- (a) income inequality,
- (b) wealth inequality,
- (c) geographical inequality,
- (d) inequality between people with protected characteristics (within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010), and
- (e) socio-economic status.”—(*James Murray.*)

This new clause would require the Chancellor to report to the House on the equality impact of the Act.

Brought up, and read the First time.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time.

The Committee divided: Ayes 240, Noes 320.

Division No. 72]

[7.52 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Ali, Rushanara
 Ali, Tahir
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena

Amesbury, Mike
 Anderson, Fleur
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, rh Jonathan
 Bardell, Hannah

Barker, Paula
Beckett, rh Margaret
Begum, Apsana
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Blackford, rh Ian
Blackman, Kirsty
Blake, Olivia
Blomfield, Paul
Bonnar, Steven
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brennan, Kevin
Brock, Deidre
Brown, Alan
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burgon, Richard
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Carden, Dan
Chamberlain, Wendy
Champion, Sarah
Charalambous, Bambos
Cherry, Joanna
Clark, Feryal
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Cowan, Ronnie
Coyle, Neil
Crawley, Angela
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cummins, Judith
Cunningham, Alex
Daby, Janet
David, Wayne
Davies, Geraint
Davies-Jones, Alex
Day, Martyn
De Cordova, Marsha
Debonnaire, Thangam
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Dodds, Anneliese
Doogan, Dave
Dorans, Allan
Doughty, Stephen
Dromey, Jack
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Dame Angela
Eagle, Maria
Eastwood, Colum
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Elmore, Chris
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farron, Tim
Farry, Stephen
Fellows, Marion
Ferrier, Margaret
Flynn, Stephen
Fovargue, Yvonne

Foxcroft, Vicky
Furniss, Gill
Gardiner, Barry
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Girvan, Paul
Grady, Patrick
Green, Kate
Green, Sarah
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew
Haigh, Louise
Hamilton, Fabian
Hanna, Claire
Hardy, Emma
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harris, Carolyn
Hayes, Helen
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hendry, Drew
Hillier, Dame Meg
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hollern, Kate
Hopkins, Rachel
Hosie, rh Stewart
Howarth, rh Sir George
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Dan
Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Johnson, Kim
Jones, Darren
Jones, Gerald
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Ruth
Jones, Sarah
Kane, Mike
Kendall, Liz
Khan, Afzal
Kinnock, Stephen
Kyle, Peter
Lake, Ben
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Law, Chris
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Clive
Linden, David
Lloyd, Tony
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lynch, Holly
MacAskill, Kenny
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Malhotra, Seema
Maskell, Rachael
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonagh, Siobhain
McDonald, Andy
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
McDonald, Stuart C.
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGovern, Alison
McKinnell, Catherine
McLaughlin, Anne

McMahon, Jim
McMorrin, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Mishra, Navendu
Monaghan, Carol
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen
Murray, James
Nandy, Lisa
Newlands, Gavin
Nichols, Charlotte
Nicolson, John
Norris, Alex
O'Hara, Brendan
Olney, Sarah
Onwurah, Chi
Oppong-Asare, Abena
Osamor, Kate
Osborne, Kate
Oswald, Kirsten
Owatemi, Taiwo
Owen, Sarah
Peacock, Stephanie
Pennycook, Matthew
Perkins, Mr Toby
Phillipson, Bridget
Powell, Lucy
Qaisar-Javed, Anum
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rayner, rh Angela
Reed, Steve
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Jonathan
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Rodda, Matt
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shah, Naz
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry

Sheppard, Tommy
Siddiq, Tulip
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Alyn
Smith, Cat
Smith, Jeff
Smith, Nick
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Spellar, rh John
Stephens, Chris
Stevens, Jo
Streeting, Wes
Stringer, Graham
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Tarry, Sam
Thewliss, Alison
Thomas, Gareth
Thompson, Owen
Thomson, Richard
Thornberry, rh Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Trickett, Jon
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Derek
Twist, Liz
Vaz, rh Valerie
West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Whitley, Mick
Whittome, Nadia
Williams, Hywel
Wilson, Munira
Wilson, rh Sammy
Winter, Beth
Wishart, Pete
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:

Mary Glendon and
Colleen Fletcher

NOES

Adams, Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aiken, Nickie
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Amess, Sir David
Anderson, Lee
Anderson, Stuart
Andrew, rh Stuart
Argar, Edward
Atherton, Sarah
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Gareth
Bacon, Mr Richard
Badenoch, Kemi
Bailey, Shaun
Baillie, Siobhan
Baker, Duncan
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Steve
Baynes, Simon
Bell, Aaron
Benton, Scott
Beresford, Sir Paul
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, Ben
Bradley, rh Karen
Brady, Sir Graham
Braverman, rh Suella
Brereton, Jack
Brine, Steve
Bristow, Paul
Britcliffe, Sara
Brokenshire, rh James
Browne, Anthony
Bruce, Fiona
Buchan, Felicity
Buckland, rh Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, rh Conor
Butler, Rob
Cairns, rh Alun
Carter, Andy
Cartlidge, James

Cates, Miriam
 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
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
 Colburn, Elliot
 Collins, Damian
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Coutinho, Claire
 Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
 Crosbie, Virginia
 Crouch, Tracey
 Daly, James
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Gareth
 Davies, Dr James
 Davies, Mims
 Davison, Dehenna
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Dines, Miss Sarah
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 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, rh George
 Evans, Dr Luke
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Everitt, Ben
 Fabricant, Michael
 Farris, Laura
 Fell, Simon
 Fletcher, Katherine
 Fletcher, Mark
 Fletcher, Nick
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Frazer, rh Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fuller, Richard
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Garnier, Mark
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gibson, Peter
 Gideon, Jo
 Glen, John
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael

Graham, Richard
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Griffith, Andrew
 Griffiths, Kate
 Grundy, James
 Gullis, Jonathan
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Sally-Ann
 Hart, rh Simon
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Henderson, Gordon
 Henry, Darren
 Higginbotham, Antony
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Holden, Mr Richard
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Holmes, Paul
 Howell, John
 Howell, Paul
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hudson, Dr Neil
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, Jane
 Hunt, rh Jeremy
 Hunt, Tom
 Jack, rh Mr Alister
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkinson, Mark
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, rh Robert
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnston, David
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Fay
 Jupp, Simon
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kearns, Alicia
 Keegan, Gillian
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Kruger, Danny
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
 Lamont, John
 Largan, Robert
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Dame Andrea
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Loder, Chris
 Logan, Mark
 Longhi, Marco
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack

Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Mackrory, Cherilyn
 Maclean, Rachel
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mangnall, Anthony
 Mann, Scott
 Marson, Julie
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Mayhew, Jerome
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 Menzies, Mark
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Millar, Robin
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Mills, Nigel
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan
 Moore, Damien
 Moore, Robbie
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morrissey, Joy
 Mortimer, Jill
 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
 Opperman, Guy
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Quince, Will
 Randall, Tom
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
 Richards, Nicola
 Richardson, Angela
 Roberts, Rob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Mary
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Russell, Dean
 Rutley, David
 Sambrook, Gary

Saxby, Selaine
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, rh Alok
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec
 Simmonds, David
 Skidmore, rh Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Solloway, Amanda
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stevenson, Jane
 Stewart, rh Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunderland, James
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Throup, Maggie
 Timpson, Edward
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tracey, Craig
 Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie
 Trott, Laura
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Vara, Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Vickers, Matt
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Wakeford, Christian
 Walker, Sir Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 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:
Michael Tomlinson and
Tom Pursglove

Question accordingly negated.

The Deputy Speaker resumed the Chair.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Third Reading

8.6 pm

Jesse Norman: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I am grateful to all right hon. and hon. Members who have participated in the passage of this landmark legislation. I would like to remind the House, if I may, of the Bill's provisions and its overarching goals. We may talk loosely of it as being based on national insurance contributions, or indeed as being a national insurance contributions Bill, but it is of course a separate Bill to introduce a 1.25% health and social care levy based on national insurance contributions.

The levy will be introduced in 2022. In 2022-23, it will be delivered through a temporary increase in NICs rates of 1.25% for one year only, with all revenues generated being ring-fenced and paid to NHS England, NHS Scotland, NHS Wales and the equivalent in Northern Ireland. Then, from April 2023, a formal legal surcharge of 1.25% will replace the temporary increase in NICs rates, with revenue ring-fenced for health and social care only. The levy will also then apply to those working who are over the state pension age.

The levy will enable the Government to tackle the backlog in the NHS. It will provide a new, permanent way to pay for the Government's reforms to social care and will allow the Government to fund our vision for the future of health and social care in this country over the longer term.

I reiterate my sincere thanks to all Members who have engaged in our series of stimulating debates on the measure. I commend the Bill to the House.

8.7 pm

James Murray: I thank the Clerks for their excellent and particularly rapid help with amendments to the Bill.

Today, the Government have been determined to push through their tax rise on working people and their jobs as quickly as they possibly can. The Bill contains nothing at all—not even a reference or mention—about a plan to fix social care, and it fails to guarantee that a single penny of the new levy will ever go towards the social care sector.

On Second Reading, the Opposition attempted to push for a guarantee that Parliament would vote on a social care plan before spending the money that the Bill raises. The Government rejected our attempt, and I am sure there are many Conservative Members who feel deeply uncomfortable about the position in which they find themselves.

While the Bill lacks a plan for social care or any commitment that a plan will ever be in place, or even that any of the money that the levy raises will ever go to social care, it does include a tax rise—a tax rise that hits working people and businesses creating jobs. We know what that will mean for people across the country: combined with the cut to universal credit and the freeze in personal allowances, hospitality workers, teaching assistants, supermarket workers and social care workers stand to lose more than £1,000 next year.

Members do not have to take my word for it. The Financial Secretary admitted the impact that this tax rise will have in his own tax information and impact note, which set out in no uncertain terms that people

who are just about managing financially will see their disposable incomes fall. The Conservative party has united the Federation of Small Businesses, the British Chambers of Commerce and the CBI against its plans. They all agree that this represents a blow to jobs growth at a crucial point in the UK's economic recovery. Last night, the *Financial Times* published its view that the "Tories must regain trust as the party of business"—which seems to be an understatement, to say the least.

The Government's approach will hit businesses creating jobs, and it will disproportionately hit working families and young people. It will hit those on low and middle incomes. It will hit people in some parts of the country more than others. But when we tried to push Ministers in Committee to come clean about the unequal impact of their tax rise on different people and across the country, or to be transparent about how it would hit social care workers themselves, they refused. The Prime Minister, the Chancellor and the Conservative party simply have their fingers in their ears.

Finally, the Government have refused to accept throughout today's debates, and indeed throughout the last week, that there is any alternative to their tax rise. The Prime Minister and the Chancellor are desperate to pretend that this is the only way to raise the money, and that simply is not true. A fairer approach to funding the NHS, social care and all our public services would see those with the broadest shoulders—including those with incomes from large financial assets and multiple rental properties, and other income from wealth—contributing more. The Government have refused to consider those options, and would prefer to hit workers instead.

The simple truth is that there is no plan to fix the crisis in social care. There is no plan to improve the pay and conditions of care workers, no guarantee that any of the money will go toward social care, no guarantee that people will not have to sell their homes for care, and no plan to clear the NHS waiting list backlog during the present Parliament. All that we have is a tax on working people and their jobs. It tells us everything we need to know about the instincts of the Tories when they are in power, and that is why we will be voting against this Bill.

8.12 pm

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP): Let me first take the opportunity to thank the Clerks, who give us so much support in putting together amendments to the Bill, which arrived at such short notice. I thank Scott Taylor and Salma Saade in our research units, who also helped, and my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen South (Stephen Flynn), who did so much in Committee.

This is a Bill and a tax without a mandate, in Scotland or even in England, since it is a breach of a Tory manifesto pledge—a pledge reiterated by the Chancellor at the time of the Budget. The Health Secretary has said that it is for the Scottish Government ultimately to decide how money is spent, but the Prime Minister said that the UK would direct money raised by this levy to the devolved institutions, and the Chancellor is on record as saying that the UK Government have the right to do this. The truth—the legal truth, because it is in the Bill—is that the Treasury may determine how this money is spent in Scotland. That is a fundamental

undermining of the devolution that we fought so hard to get. Within the Bill, Ministers can even change what they like in regulations later, so even what we agree today may not be the principles that the Government will go by later on.

This is a tax on the people of Scotland to pay for England's social care crisis. It is a tax on young people and lower earners to pay for the wealthy. It is a tax on jobs, undermining recovery at a time when we need to be thinking about getting people into work, not making it harder for businesses to employ them. It is also a tax on the many who have been completely excluded from UK Government support throughout the pandemic and who are now going to be hit by this increase. It is also a power grab. It is another Tory power grab on devolution. This is not a Union dividend; it is a Union dead end, and we on the SNP Benches will not support this new Tory poll tax.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The House divided: Ayes 307, Noes 251.

Division No. 73]

[8.14 pm

AYES

Adams, Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aiken, Nickie
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Amess, Sir David
Anderson, Lee
Anderson, Stuart
Andrew, rh Stuart
Argar, Edward
Atherton, Sarah
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Gareth
Bacon, Mr Richard
Badenoch, Kemi
Bailey, Shaun
Baillie, Siobhan
Baker, Duncan
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Steve
Baynes, Simon
Bell, Aaron
Benton, Scott
Beresford, Sir Paul
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, Ben
Bradley, rh Karen
Brady, Sir Graham
Braverman, rh Suella
Brereton, Jack
Brine, Steve
Bristow, Paul
Britcliffe, Sara
Brokenshire, rh James
Browne, Anthony
Bruce, Fiona
Buckland, rh Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, rh Conor
Butler, Rob
Cairns, rh Alun

Carter, Andy
Cartledge, James
Cates, Miriam
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Churchill, Jo
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, Mr Simon
Clarke, Theo
Clarke-Smith, Brendan
Clarkson, Chris
Cleverly, rh James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
Colburn, Elliot
Collins, Damian
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Coutinho, Claire
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
Crabb, rh Stephen
Crosbie, Virginia
Crouch, Tracey
Daly, James
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Gareth
Davies, Dr James
Davies, Mims
Dinenage, Caroline
Dines, Miss Sarah
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty, Leo
Donelan, Michelle
Dorries, Ms Nadine
Double, Steve
Dowden, rh Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
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, rh George
Evans, Dr Luke
Evennett, rh Sir David
Fabricant, Michael
Farris, Laura
Fell, Simon
Fletcher, Katherine
Fletcher, Mark
Fletcher, Nick
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Frazer, rh Lucy
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
Fuller, Richard
Garnier, Mark
Gibb, rh Nick
Gibson, Peter
Gideon, Jo
Glen, John
Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Gove, rh Michael
Graham, Richard
Grant, Mrs Helen
Gray, James
Green, Chris
Green, rh Damian
Griffith, Andrew
Griffiths, Kate
Grundy, James
Gullis, Jonathan
Halfon, rh Robert
Hall, Luke
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Sally-Ann
Hart, rh Simon
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heapey, James
Heaton-Harris, Chris
Henderson, Gordon
Henry, Darren
Higginbotham, Antony
Hinds, rh Damian
Hoare, Simon
Holden, Mr Richard
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Adam
Holmes, Paul
Howell, John
Howell, Paul
Huddleston, Nigel
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, Jane
Hunt, rh Jeremy
Hunt, Tom
Jack, rh Mr Alister
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkinson, Mark
Jenkyns, Andrea
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnson, Gareth
Johnston, David
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David

Jones, Fay
Jupp, Simon
Kawczynski, Daniel
Kearns, Alicia
Keegan, Gillian
Knight, rh Sir Greg
Kruger, Danny
Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
Lamont, John
Largan, Robert
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Leadsom, rh Dame Andrea
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Brandon
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Loder, Chris
Logan, Mark
Longhi, Marco
Lopez, Julia
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Mackrory, Cherylyn
Maclean, Rachel
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, Kit
Mangnall, Anthony
Mann, Scott
Marson, Julie
May, rh Mrs Theresa
Mayhew, Jerome
Maynard, Paul
McCartney, Jason
McCartney, Karl
Menzies, Mark
Merriman, Huw
Metcalfe, Stephen
Millar, Robin
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Mills, Nigel
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Damien
Moore, Robbie
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morris, David
Morris, James
Morrissey, Joy
Mortimer, Jill
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
Opperman, Guy
Parish, Neil
Patel, rh Priti
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
 Quince, Will
 Randall, Tom
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
 Richards, Nicola
 Richardson, Angela
 Roberts, Rob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Mary
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Russell, Dean
 Sambrook, Gary
 Saxby, Selaine
 Scully, Paul
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, rh Alok
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec
 Simmonds, David
 Skidmore, rh Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Solloway, Amanda
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stevenson, Jane
 Stewart, rh Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Sunderland, James
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Syms, Sir Robert

Thomas, Derek
 Throup, Maggie
 Timpson, Edward
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie
 Trott, Laura
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Vara, 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
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 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 Ayes:
Maria Caulfield and
David Rutley

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Ali, Rushanara
 Ali, Tahir
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Amesbury, Mike
 Anderson, Fleur
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, rh Jonathan
 Bardell, Hannah
 Barker, Paula
 Baron, Mr John
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Begum, Apsana
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Blackford, rh Ian
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Blake, Olivia
 Blomfield, Paul
 Bonnar, Steven
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brock, Deidre
 Brown, Alan
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burgon, Richard
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, Ian

Byrne, rh Liam
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Carden, Dan
 Chamberlain, Wendy
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Cherry, Joanna
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Clark, Feryal (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Coyle, Neil
 Crawley, Angela
 Creasy, Stella (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Daby, Janet
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Geraint
 Davies, Philip
 Davies-Jones, Alex
 Davison, Dehenna

Day, Martyn
 De Cordova, Marsha
 Debbonaire, Thangam
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 Doogan, Dave
 Dorans, Allan
 Doughty, Stephen
 Drax, Richard
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Dame Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Eastwood, Colum
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Elmore, Chris
 Eshalomi, Florence
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Everitt, Ben
 Farron, Tim
 Farry, Stephen
 Fellows, Marion
 Ferrier, Margaret
 Flynn, Stephen
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Furniss, Gill
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Girvan, Paul
 Grady, Patrick
 Green, Kate
 Green, Sarah
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hillier, Dame Meg
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Hosie, rh Stewart
 Howarth, rh Sir George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, rh Dame Diana
 Johnson, Kim
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Ruth
 Jones, Sarah
 Kane, Mike
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal

Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Lake, Ben
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 MacAskill, Kenny
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Maskell, Rachael
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLaughlin, Anne
 McMahan, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 McVey, rh Esther
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Mishra, Navendu
 Monaghan, Carol
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Murray, James
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Nichols, Charlotte
 Nicolson, John
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Olney, Sarah
 Onwurah, Chi
 Oppong-Asare, Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Osborne, Kate
 Oswald, Kirsten
 Owatemi, Taiwo
 Owen, Sarah
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Mr Toby
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Powell, Lucy
 Qaisar-Javed, Anum
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rayner, rh Angela
 Redwood, rh John
 Reed, Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Rodda, Matt
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd

Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Shannon, Jim
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smith, Alyn
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick
 Smyth, Karin
 Sobel, Alex
 Spellar, rh John
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Streeting, Wes
 Stringer, Graham
 Sultana, Zarah
 Tami, rh Mark
 Tarry, Sam
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thompson, Owen

Thomson, Richard
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twist, Liz
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Whitley, Mick
 Whittome, Nadia
 Williams, Hywel
 Wilson, Munira
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Winter, Beth
 Wishart, Pete
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:
Mary Glendon and
Colleen Fletcher

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read the Third time and passed.

Business without Debate

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): With the leave of the House, we shall take motions 4 to 9 together.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)).

PUBLIC HEALTH

That the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Steps etc.) (England) (Revocation and Amendment) Regulations 2021 (SI 2021, No. 848), dated 14 July 2021, a copy of which was laid before this House on 15 July, be approved.

That the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Self-Isolation) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 (SI 2021, No. 851), dated 15 July 2021, a copy of which was laid before this House on 15 July, be approved.

That the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Self-Isolation) (England) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2021 (SI 2021, No. 864), dated 17 July 2021, a copy of which was laid before this House on 19 July, be approved.

INTERNATIONAL IMMUNITIES AND PRIVILEGES

That the draft Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Immunities and Privileges) Order 2021, which was laid before this House on 8 July, be approved.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

That the Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing (Amendment) (No. 2) (High-Risk Countries) Regulations 2021 (SI 2021, No. 827), dated 12 July 2021, a copy of which was laid before this House on 12 July, be approved.

LICENCES AND LICENSING

That the draft Alcohol Licensing (Coronavirus) (Regulatory Easements) (Amendment) Regulations 2021, which were laid before this House on 8 June, be approved.—(*Rebecca Harris.*)

Question agreed to.

PETITIONS

AQUIND Interconnector Project

8.56 pm

Stephen Morgan (Portsmouth South) (Lab): I rise to present a petition on behalf of my constituents concerning the proposed AQUIND interconnector project, which has been signed by more than 6,000 local people. This is a sliding doors moment for the Business Secretary. He has a clear choice: he can either stop this disastrous project, which is mired in cronyism and would be deeply damaging to Portsmouth and our national security, or he can reject my great city's clear and united opposition, and explain why decisions impacting local communities continue to be made behind closed doors in Whitehall. I urge the city council in Portsmouth to take every possible step if the Secretary of State's decision, expected next month, goes against the people of Portsmouth. Tonight, in this House, I present 6,200 reasons why AQUIND must be stopped.

The petition states:

The petition of residents of the United Kingdom,

Declares that the planned AQUIND Interconnector Project should not be allowed to be implemented due to the damage it would cause to the local community without clear benefits, further that the implementation could impact the wider environment; further that ongoing concerns remain surrounding the project company and their Directors.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government not to approve the AQUIND Interconnector Project.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

[P002686]

HAWORTH POST OFFICE

8.58 pm

Robbie Moore (Keighley) (Con): I rise to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in Haworth and the wider Worth valley to save Haworth's much-loved post office. I would also like to draw the House's attention to a separate petition on the same issue, which has been signed by 6,911 people and which I wish also formally to present tonight. I fully endorse these petitions, which state that the Post Office Ltd must not close Haworth post office on Main Street, which provides a service used by thousands of local people.

The petition states:

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to encourage Post Office Ltd to keep Haworth Post Office open.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

Following is the full text of the petition

[The petition of the residents of the constituency of Keighley and Ilkley,

Declares that the Haworth Post Office is a very busy post office and convenience shop needed not only by the elderly in the nearby flats but also by many of the businesses on Main Street itself; further that the elderly cannot walk down to the bottom of Haworth and need this facility; and further that many businesses use Main Street branch for parcels which we understand cannot be taken into the new co-op facility.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to encourage Post Office Ltd to keep Haworth Post Office open.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

[P002688]

Scunthorpe Driving Theory Test Centre

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

8.30 pm

Holly Mumby-Croft (Scunthorpe) (Con): I am thankful for the opportunity to hold this debate and to talk about the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency's decision to close Scunthorpe's theory test centre. This decision affects both my constituency and that of my constituency neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Goole (Andrew Percy). We work together when issues affect our areas and we are as one on this important issue. I thank him for his work, along with the many constituents and businesses that have contacted us both over recent weeks.

Before I start, I declare an interest: like very many others, I have a family member who is about to take their theory test.

Ever since theory tests were made mandatory in 1996, we have had a test centre on Doncaster Road in Scunthorpe, near Berkeley Circle. It has served residents and supported driving instructors and driving schools in Scunthorpe for generations. The staff there have worked incredibly hard to cater for the high demand that we have seen this year in particular. I did my own theory test there almost 20 years ago.

Over the summer, the news that the test centre was closing left residents frankly none too chuffed, and I am in agreement with them. It is absolute nonsense. As my hon. Friend the Minister knows, the service is run by the DVSA, so initially we approached its chief executive. My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Goole and I were both told that the closure was the result of a contractual change following a review of the allocation of centres nationally. I understand that this is an effort to create a more even distribution throughout the country, which is fine in theory, but it turns out not to be that good in practice for people who live in the Scunthorpe constituency.

We were told that the decision was based on the use of sophisticated population-mapping software, and that throughout the UK people will be able to travel to theory test centres within 40 miles if they live in a rural area and within 40 minutes if they live in an urban area. I am sure the Minister will comment further on that when she responds. To put it simply, it seems to me, reading between the lines, that a computer has had a crack at working it out and come up with the idea that my constituents can go to Grimsby, Doncaster or Hull for tests. I have even heard York suggested, which is particularly crackers.

Given that we are talking about residents who are not yet able to drive themselves, travelling to places other than Scunthorpe presents obvious problems. For example, a resident travelling from Scawby would need to take a 38-minute journey on the No. 4 bus into Scunthorpe town centre, then walk for seven minutes to Scunthorpe station, take a 39-minute train journey to Grimsby Town, and then walk for nine minutes to the theory test centre. When waiting times are taken into account, it is a journey of roughly two hours and 20 minutes each way. This means that one of my constituents might have to travel for up to four hours and 40 minutes to get their test—and it takes me only three and a half hours to drive from Scunthorpe all the way to Parliament.

From Howsham to a test centre, it is two hours and 18 minutes each way by bus and train; Cleatham residents will be set back three hours altogether; from Manton, it is a two-hour-and-40-minute journey to the Doncaster test centre; and from East Butterwick, it is 80 minutes via bus and train. I think most people would agree that those are ridiculous journeys for anyone to have to make to access a theory test—and nor is it practical when residents are given limited time slots in which to take their test at a busy test centre.

My constituency is a mix of rural and urban areas and, for us, being able to pass our driving test is a necessity, not a luxury. I have been contacted about this issue by instructors, disabled residents, young people and their parents, all of whom are concerned about the financial costs and wasted time resulting from the DVSA's decision. In particular, a constituent has raised the worries of her partner. He has certain disabilities that she says would make him unable to make the journey to a test centre further away.

Even if residents are able to travel out of the county for a test, I have experimented multiple times trying to book one. You have to queue to get on the website and it repeatedly crashes. After you finally get past that stage, unsurprisingly, there is very little availability.

By taking away our test centre, the DVSA's decision will slow down how quickly people can pass their tests and this will limit access to labour market opportunities. Even if residents are fortunate enough to have someone to drive them to their test appointment, it is not exactly smooth sailing.

One of my constituents got in touch with me just today to share her frustration at the current situation. Her daughter unfortunately failed her first theory test in Scunthorpe earlier in the summer and had to rebook to secure an appointment in Doncaster on 1 September. Having encountered traffic and parking issues on the journey, they ended up being 10 minutes late for the appointment, despite having set off an hour early. Her daughter was turned away, wasting time, fuel and a test slot—not to mention the time off work that mum had to take. Their next appointment—the first one they could get—is booked for the middle of October in Lincoln, 60 miles away. My constituent is planning a “test run” the weekend before to ensure that there is no repeat of the previous situation.

Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes) (Con): I thank my hon. Friend for giving way and for the speech that she is giving, which highlights a growing problem. Being in the neighbouring constituency, many of my residents in Barton-Upon-Humber and the surrounding area want to use the Scunthorpe centre as it is more convenient. Does she agree that, when the Minister replies, we hope to hear the positive outcome that the Scunthorpe centre will be retained?

Holly Mumby-Croft: I wholeheartedly agree. We very much hope to have a positive outcome to this, as it is a genuine problem for residents in my constituency and in my hon. Friend's constituency.

I cannot believe that the system developed by the DVSA has considered these common issues. Even people who can get a lift need a local, reliable option. I hope that the Minister will be sympathetic—I am sure she will be. This Government have spent tens of millions of

pounds on levelling up areas such as Scunthorpe. We have secured £21 million locally in our towns fund deal and £10 million via the future high streets fund. Work has already started on a £50 million improvement to our hospital and, alongside the Humber freeport plans, we have seen huge investment over the past 18 months. I am really proud of the work that is being done with regional and national partners to secure these opportunities for residents in areas such as Scunthorpe. I am sure the Minister will agree that it is important for all residents to have the opportunity to benefit equally from the levelling up that we are seeing in those areas.

The locally elected Conservative councillors in Scunthorpe are also keen to keep this vital local facility. They have not sat around whingeing about the situation; they have put forward a really good solution. The leader of North Lincolnshire Council, Rob Waltham, stepped in and offered to provide an alternative location in Scunthorpe Central Library. When that offer was rejected, he came back with another suggestion, committing council staff to invigilate the tests.

We are doers in North Lincolnshire. If we had the computers and were given the instructions, we would do it ourselves, but, unfortunately, all these sensible suggestions have fallen on deaf ears. Every attempt that we have made to fix this situation has been unsuccessful. There has been no real justification, no meaningful engagement and no effort to understand how this will impact on people's lives. There is a clear local need. The test centre serves 100,000 people at a time of continued and increased demand. Quite frankly, there simply is not any excuse to take our test centre away.

I have always believed in the spirit of working together with colleagues to benefit Scunthorpe. I know that, in all circumstances, Ministers such as my hon. Friend want to do all they can to help. Therefore, after a long day, I thank the Minister for her time and leave her with three clear requests. Please will she look into why all our reasonable attempts to improve the situation have been fobbed off, including North Lincolnshire Council's offer to provide support? Please will she commit her Department to ask the DVSA urgently to review this decision, and meet me and my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Goole to discuss the issue? Lastly, please can she ensure that future decision making on this level will be subject to meaningful consultation and review, and take into account its real-life impact on local people?

8.39 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Rachel Maclean): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Scunthorpe (Holly Mumby-Croft) for securing this important debate. She is ably supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Goole (Andrew Percy), who I understand has been very active on this issue. I also pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Cleethorpes (Martin Vickers), who I am pleased to see in his place.

My hon. Friend the Member for Scunthorpe is right to draw the attention of the House to the real-life impact of these issues, because we are aware that they affect young people, and we all know how much young people have been affected by the dreadful pandemic that we have all been suffering through. She is also right to draw our attention to the Government's levelling-up

agenda and the benefits that it has brought to her constituency. Of course, we all wholeheartedly support that. I will try to answer my hon. Friend's questions and set out some of the detail behind the decision. As she knows, these matters fall under the responsibilities of our noble Friend Baroness Vere, who has written to my hon. Friend, but she would of course be delighted to meet her further to give her yet more details about the issue.

The requirement to undertake a driving theory test before a practical driving test is set out in the Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) Regulations 1999. It is important to assess the learner's knowledge and understanding of the rules of the road. The DVSA's priority remains to deliver a theory test that ensures that candidates have the correct knowledge and understanding to be able to drive safely on our busy modern roads.

As my hon. Friend is aware, what has led to the situation in her constituency is that the DVSA has launched a new driving theory test service for England, Scotland and Wales. This service applies to theory tests taken from 6 September 2021. As she highlighted, in order to remove the dependency on a single contract and supplier, under the new system third-party suppliers will deliver the actual test to the public, so the DVSA has created a new test centre network that is divided into three geographical areas: region A covers Scotland, Northern Ireland, the north-west, the north-east, Yorkshire and the Humber; region B covers Wales, the west midlands, the south-west and the south-east; and region C covers the east midlands, the east of England and London. Under the new system, changes were inevitably made to the theory test centre estate when the contracts were awarded, but the DVSA has ensured that 100% of the population of Great Britain can travel to a theory test centre within 40 minutes or 40 miles.

Holly Mumby-Croft: I was born in Scunthorpe, and I have lived either in Scunthorpe or very locally to it for all of my life, so I can tell my hon. Friend that it is simply not the case that people in some of the further out areas of my constituency are able to access a theory test centre in the times that are being quoted by the DVSA. The on-the-ground situation is simply not in accordance with what the agency is saying.

Rachel Maclean: My hon. Friend is right to make reference to her local knowledge. I obviously do not represent Scunthorpe, so she is the expert on that. I assure her that the geographical criteria were calculated using industry-leading software—the same software that was used to determine the location of the Nightingale hospitals and vaccination centres to ensure that people had access to life-saving treatments.

Holly Mumby-Croft: I thank my hon. Friend for explaining the software. When software gives us information, but on a human level we can see that that information is not appropriate and the software has not worked, is there the possibility that a person could look at the details and perhaps overrule that decision?

Rachel Maclean: I applaud my hon. Friend for her determination in putting forward her constituents' concerns. For the record, we know that Grimsby is 37 minutes or 27.5 miles via the A180 from Scunthorpe, or 38 minutes

[*Rachel Maclean*]

by train. Doncaster is 38 minutes or 25.7 miles away via the M180 or the A636, or 30 minutes by train. There are appointments next week in both Grimsby and Doncaster.

Holly Mumby-Croft: Yesterday I myself attempted to book appointments. I made multiple attempts on the website. There was a queuing system to get in so we watched a little man run across the screen until we got into the website. When we did, it repeatedly crashed. I have also tried previously to book appointments and it was incredibly difficult to find them, because these theory test centres are swamped with people from places like Barton-upon-Humber and my surrounding villages in Scunthorpe who are trying to get those appointments.

Rachel Maclean: Again, I absolutely commend my hon. Friend for raising the practical problems. I am of course sorry to hear that she has experienced that. We keep the whole system under review, because we want to have good availability for people to take these very important tests. If I may proceed with the rest of my remarks, perhaps that will help her to understand some of the context of the decisions.

It is right that we ensure that 100% of the population of Great Britain can travel to a theory test centre. That was the fundamental criterion. However, the contract has been awarded to more than one company, so the DVSA is able to increase accessibility to the theory test. That means that the number of theory test centres is increasing from 180 to 202 across Great Britain. That increased number of test centres has meant that there is a more even distribution of locations, which has made theory tests more accessible, especially to those in remote areas of the country.

However, as my hon. Friend highlighted, increasing a more even distribution made it inevitable that the location of some theory test centres would change. The DVSA appreciates that those who had a local theory test centre under the old arrangements would prefer, naturally, to have kept it under the new ones. However, the DVSA believes—as do I, of course, as a Minister—that the approach of ensuring that the ask is the same of all candidates across Great Britain is the fairest outcome. But I can assure her that as populations and road layouts change over time, the DVSA will continue to review the travel time and distance to understand whether any changes are needed to the test centre network.

My hon. Friend highlighted the test centre in her constituency that has closed. The nearest theory test centres for candidates in Scunthorpe are both within the performance measures. I appreciate that she has some concerns about that, but I set it out for the record. The travel distances to both those test centres are in line with those across Great Britain. There is strong availability for candidates, with over 1,000 test appointments at Grimsby and Doncaster in September, and there are plenty more slots available throughout October and November, so I do hope her constituents can book their tests. Most people only need to travel to the test centre once—hopefully they will pass—and other test centres available to service the area are located in Hull, York and Lincoln, which may suit some people but not all. Candidates can use the “Find a Theory Test Centre” service on gov.uk to locate an alternative centre.

I want to come on to the point that my hon. Friend made about the offer from her council. I very much appreciate that they are doers. I have seen that in all the work that she has done for the local area. She is a fantastic champion and she has got on and done so much already in the short time that she has been here. The council has put forward a suitable location in Scunthorpe. The DVSA appreciates this offer, but as it awarded three regional contracts for the conduct of the theory test some time ago, and testing has now begun under those contracts, it is not possible to change them. That means that the DVSA is unable to accept North Lincolnshire Council’s offer, as it could be challenged as changing the procurement rules under which the DVSA awarded the contracts. There could also be a risk of an allegation that the supplier in that region was effectively receiving state aid because it would potentially have reduced delivery costs—something not available to other suppliers.

I have listened to my hon. Friend’s concerns but I am confident that the new theory test arrangements give a good service for her constituents and a fairer service for everyone. I hope that with some of the engagement that have been able to give her today, and the offer of further engagement from my noble Friend, I have been able to offer some reassurance to address her concerns.

Question put and agreed to.

8.49 pm

House adjourned.

Westminster Hall

Tuesday 14 September 2021

[MR PHILIP HOLLOBONE *in the Chair*]

Black Maternal Health Week

[*Relevant Document: e-petition 301079, Improve Maternal Mortality Rates and Health Care for Black Women in the U.K.*]

9.30 am

Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair): Before we begin, I encourage Members to wear masks when they are not speaking, in line with current Government and House of Commons Commission guidance. Please also give each other and members of staff space when seated and when entering and leaving the room. Members should send their speaking notes by email to hansardnotes@parliament.uk. Similarly, officials should communicate electronically with Ministers. I now call Bell Ribeiro-Addy to move the motion.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy (Streatham) (Lab): I beg to move, That this House has considered Black Maternal Health Week.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone. I am thankful that we are able to have this debate, which follows from an e-petition debate that was held in April after the petition received over 180,000 signatures. MPs were given the opportunity for the first time to debate a petition calling for improvements to maternal mortality rates and healthcare for black women in the UK.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Tinuke and Clo from Five X More, as well as Elsie Gayle, whose tireless campaigning efforts have forced this issue on to the agenda. They have not only provided us with the opportunity to discuss the issue but given a voice to many black women who have experienced a traumatic pregnancy or birth and to those families who have lost loved ones.

For too long the statistics had pointed towards a glaring disparity in black maternal health experiences, and for too long nothing was said. We now have a Black Maternal Health Awareness Week, during which we can highlight the disparities and discuss ways in which we can make pregnancy a safe experience for all, regardless of skin colour.

Members will by now be very familiar with the statistics surrounding black maternal healthcare and mortality, but they bear repeating. In the UK, which is one of the safest countries in the world in which to give birth, black women are still four times more likely to die in pregnancy or childbirth. Black women are up to 83% more likely to suffer a near miss during pregnancy. Black babies have a 121% increased risk of stillbirth and a 50% increased risk of neonatal death. Miscarriage rates are 40% higher in black women, and black ethnicity is regarded as a risk factor for miscarriage. Black mothers are twice as likely to give birth before 37 weeks of pregnancy.

The situation for women and birthing people of mixed heritage and Asian heritage, unfortunately, is not much better, with those of mixed heritage being three times more likely to die in pregnancy and childbirth,

and Asian women two times more likely. Asian babies also have a 55% increased risk of stillbirth and a 66% increased risk of neonatal mortality.

However, we all know that racial disparities in health do not begin, and certainly do not end, there. Despite these statistics, despite the number of reports and studies that have been produced in the last year and before, and despite being aware of the glaring disparities in maternal healthcare, we still have no target to end them.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the hon. Lady for giving way. The statistics are alarming and disconcerting. That black ladies are four times more likely to die in childbirth is shocking. Does she agree that the Government and the Minister now have a responsibility urgently to outline steps to address this? The hon. Lady has outlined the issue, but we want to see what the response will be to make it better.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: The hon. Member is absolutely right. With disparities such as these and no clear way forward, that is what we are hoping to hear from the Government. With all the information that we have, it is clear that the response is not good enough.

In the USA, where there is also a glaring disparity in maternal health outcomes for black and ethnic minority women, the Government have actually begun to take steps to address the problem. In April, the White House issued its first ever proclamation on black maternal health. President Joe Biden declared a Black Maternal Health Week, to take place annually from 11 to 17 April.

Kirsten Oswald (East Renfrewshire) (SNP): The hon. Lady is giving a very powerful and important speech. I wonder whether she is aware that research from the USA shows that when black and Asian women do not have pre-existing medical conditions, do have English as their first language and come from middle-class backgrounds, they still have worse outcomes than comparable white women. Does the hon. Lady agree that there is something more going on here, making it all the more pressing that this Government here understand and act?

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: I thank the hon. Lady for that timely intervention. She is absolutely right; that shows that this is clearly about racism. It is important that we look to what other countries that also clearly have issues with racism are doing to tackle it.

Alongside the Black Maternal Health Week proclaimed by the White House, the Biden-Harris administration has outlined several action plans specifically looking at addressing maternal health issues. Through the American Rescue Plan Act 2021, \$30 million has been reserved for implicit bias training for healthcare providers, as well as a provision that will allow states to expand post-partum Medicaid coverage from 60 days to a full year.

How have our Government responded in comparison? In response to a question I asked one of our equality Ministers, I was told that there was no target because the numbers were not high enough. Our Government have responded with poorly rolled-out plans that actually exacerbate the issue by ignoring the problem altogether. The NHS long-term plan aimed at providing continuity care for women across the country seemed, on paper, like a really good starting point to improve maternal health outcomes. However, a whistleblower at Worcester Royal

[Bell Ribeiro-Addy]

Hospital has said that, in reality, it has created a two-tier system for pregnant women. To create the new team of continuity carers, midwives have had to be pulled from the hospital's core staff, leaving the hospital unit without enough specifically trained staff.

Nickie Aiken (Cities of London and Westminster) (Con): A constituent of mine, Jade Sullivan, has been in touch with me to share her own experiences of disparities in maternity care and outcomes for black women. Her testimony was incredibly powerful, and I hope to be able to meet with the Minister soon to discuss that in more detail. Does my hon. Friend—I am sorry, I should say the hon. Member, although I hope that she is also my friend—agree with me that we need a clear plan with targets to reduce disparities in maternal health outcomes that actually outline the specific actions needed to improve safety for black mothers and their babies?

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: I thank the hon. Member because I absolutely agree that that is what we need, but we also need to make sure that these plans are well thought-out and well resourced. As the whistleblower from Worcester pointed out, with the new plan, the ward could often end up being short of five or six midwives per shift. Meanwhile, those with a continuity midwife who are, according to the whistleblower, actually lower risk, are jumping ahead and delivering their babies because the midwife is available straight away.

A system that is supposed to help reduce the rate of stillbirths and maternal mortality has, through its poor implementation, resulted in a two-tier system whereby higher-risk pregnancies are made to wait for deliveries. For example, a woman in need of an urgent caesarean section may have to wait while women with a planned or elective caesarean section are seen first.

Recently, the Health and Social Care Committee's evaluation of the Government's progress against their policy commitments in the area of maternity services in England rated the Government's continuity care commitment as inadequate and in need of improvement. That is simply not good enough. While figures also suggest that the number of women from disadvantaged backgrounds who are likely to experience a high-risk pregnancy are now receiving continuity care, and those numbers are increasing, it is clear that the Government are not on track to meet the target of rolling out their continuity of carer service model to 75% of the most vulnerable groups by March 2024. Without adequate funding and staffing, the two-tier system that has played out in Worcester will continue.

Other measures introduced by the Government to improve maternity healthcare seem to ignore the racial disparities altogether. On 4 July this year, the Department of Health and Social Care announced that it was committing £2.45 million to improve childbirth care. Of that, £2 million was to be allocated to test the best way to spot early warning signs of babies in distress, and the remaining money was allocated to developing a new workforce planning tool for maternity medics, including helping trusts to tackle other inequalities, taking into account local factors such as birth rates, the age of the population, the socioeconomic status of the area, and geographical factors. Those are all important, but at no

point in this announcement was there any reference to tackling ethnic disparities in maternal healthcare, despite all of the information we have heard over the past few years in particular.

I ask the Minister why the decision was made to omit a reference to ethnic disparities when research clearly highlights ethnicity as a factor in maternal health outcomes, so much so that a series of papers released in *The Lancet* regarded black ethnicity as a risk factor for miscarriage. In fact, the only other intervention I have heard has come from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, which was to recommend inducing black women at 39 weeks—another tone-deaf response. There have been loads of responses from throughout the sector that really drilled down on what the problem was with this. Christine Ekechi, the co-chair of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists' race equality taskforce, said that

“Stratifying risk by race alone is a blunt tool to use, and although highlighting higher risk is important, it does not move our understanding further as to why this group of women are at greater risk... Women should always be able to make informed decisions about their own health and care based on real evidence.”

This suggestion was not based on real evidence.

The Royal College of Midwives warned against “blanket approach recommendations” and argued in favour of “personalised care”, saying that

“Black, Asian, mixed, and ethnic minority women face a constellation of biases when accessing maternity services, often experiencing poorer quality of care and lower satisfaction. Introducing an intervention that is singling out women on ethnicity alone, when there are likely to be large differences in health status and values within the group could itself be considered discriminatory.”

Mars Lord, who is a doula and birth activist and started the Not So NICE campaign with her colleague Leah Lewin, said that the recommendations were already affecting black people's mental health. She said that she had been in contact with

“dozens of black and brown pregnant women and birthing people who are fearful about their birth because they are not seeing any choices”.

Thousands have signed a petition urging the Government to reject the guidance from NICE.

It is clear that without a proper plan to end racial maternity health disparities, the Government are telling black, Asian and ethnic minority women and birthing people right across this country that they do not care: that our pregnancies, our children and our experiences do not matter. If the Government want to show that this is not true—if they want to prove that they care about the experience of every pregnant woman—they have to start, first and foremost, by setting a target to end these maternal health disparities.

When the Minister responds, I want to hear that the Government have set a target to end racial maternal health inequalities. I want to hear that they have a timeframe for when they would like to see these gaps closed and reduced, and exactly how they plan to do this, and I want to hear that the Government have heard what black women have been saying about our experiences of maternal healthcare and how they have often resulted in negative outcomes and traumatic experiences. I also want the Government to say that they will engage with black women to improve our experiences of maternal health services, and that they will be implementing the Joint Committee on Human Rights' recommendations

on black maternal health, as well as those included in the Health and Social Care Committee's report, "Safety of maternity services in England."

Finally, when the Minister responds, I hope to hear that the Government intend to launch an inquiry into institutional racism and racial bias within the NHS, as well as within the medical education field. Stereotypes about the pain tolerance of black people, our cultural beliefs and practices, and our perceived understanding of the medical system all contribute to the negative experiences black women have had in maternal services, and they definitely contributed to mine. It is certainly an uncomfortable view to take that medicine, or our fantastic NHS, may operate within a framework that has institutional racist bias, but if we are going to improve the maternal experiences and outcomes of black women, we have to address the racial stereotypes that cause them. We are not going to get there by burying our head in the sand and pretending that these racial injustices do not exist, or that they are not so bad. The colour of a woman or a birthing person's skin should not impact the experience that they have of maternal healthcare services, their chances of a successful outcome or, in fact, whether they live or die. It is a sad fact that this happens in our country—in the sixth largest economy in the world, in one of the safest places to have a child—so we are calling on the Government to help improve those maternal experiences for all women.

9.44 am

Caroline Nokes (Romsey and Southampton North) (Con): I put on record my appreciation to the hon. Member for Streatham (Bell Ribeiro-Addy) for having led the debate today and for her incredible work on this important and sensitive issue.

Alongside me, she is a member of the Women and Equalities Committee. We have been privileged to listen to the evidence of black and mixed-race mothers about the experiences that they have had in giving birth and in supporting their family members in giving birth. We have heard some real horror stories of lost sisters and lost daughters, because their maternal health outcomes have been worse than the outcomes that my hon. Friends the Minister and the Member for Cities of London and Westminster (Nickie Aiken) and I would have had.

It is wrong that in 21st century Britain we can still expect black and mixed-race women and women from ethnic minorities to have such a massive disparity of experience. The Five X More campaign has done some incredible work. In the Select Committee, we have been lucky enough to do roundtables with them, and to listen to their experiences, their recommendations and the changes that they believe would make a real difference.

Those stories have been difficult but important to listen to. The thing I took away was how fed up those women were about having to repeatedly tell the story. They feel that they are not being listened to, that there is no change and that they are not seeing action, when actually, as the hon. Member for Streatham has pointed out, the statistics are so stark that this should be driving immediate and rapid change.

In November last year, the Joint Committee on Human Rights discussed targets. I can sometimes be a bit sceptical about targets and think they do not necessarily always drive the right outcomes and behaviours, but

this is a clear case where I think that they would and where I want to see the Government have real ambition to set a target and a timeframe, so that we can see that four times more disparity driven down and ended. It is crucial that we try to do that in a very rapid timescale.

There have also been clear recommendations from the Health and Social Care Committee. Indeed, the Government should be responding to them imminently. Can the Minister update us on that in her response and give us an indication about whether the Government will embrace those recommendations?

I am conscious that my hon. Friend the Minister has done good work on the subject and last year set up a forum designed to bring together experts in the field to meet key stakeholders, to consider and to address the inequalities for women and babies from different ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic groups. We cannot shy away from that. We also have to look at some of the intersectional challenges, and ensure we are looking not just at race but at the socioeconomic situation.

Can the Minister outline how that forum is assisting policy making? It is crucial and we want to understand what role those experts are playing in feeding into Government to drive policy change. Can she indicate how often the forum has met and what the key recommendations have been? How quickly will those recommendations be acted upon, if indeed they will be acted upon?

One challenge that we heard at the Women and Equalities Committee roundtables was about research. Many experts felt that there was already a great depth of research that had been done, that the knowledge was there and that perhaps further research was not needed. In April this year, we heard that the Government had commissioned the policy research unit in maternal and neonatal health and care at the University of Oxford to develop an English maternal morbidity outcome indicator, which is not easy to say. That is crucially important. We want to see how that indicator is working and when we expect it to be rolled out. I would like to hear the Minister today update us on that work and give us some indication as to whether she is any closer to committing to a target for reducing the deaths of black women in childbirth.

Towards the end of her contribution, the hon. Member for Streatham spoke about continuity of care, which is crucial. We know very well that if there is continuity of care during pregnancy then the birth outcomes would be better for both mother and child. The NHS long-term plan included targeted support around continuity of care, with an aim that by March this year most women would receive the sort of crucial continuity that we are calling for. That was a target that was set, so I would very much welcome the Minister's updating us on how that is going. We heard from the Health and Social Care Committee that the targets for continuity of care were inadequate and in need of improvement, so perhaps we can have an indication of how the Government will achieve that.

The hon. Member for Streatham finished her speech with a commentary on institutional racism in the national health service. I was really struck—I was going to say this time last year, but perhaps it was a bit earlier—when we took evidence in the Women and Equalities Committee on how much worse the outcomes of covid were for people from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

[*Caroline Nokes*]

One of the messages that we heard from healthcare professionals from black and Asian backgrounds who were working in the NHS was that they were scared to speak up. They were scared to tell their stories to line managers about the pressures that they faced when working in our NHS. In many instances, they felt exposed to racism if they asked for perfectly reasonable adaptations or changes, or for greater levels of personal protective equipment. It is absolutely wrong in the 21st century that we have people working in our health service who are frightened to speak up.

I was struck when we took evidence during the roundtable discussions with black and minority ethnic mothers, and indeed with experts—we heard from Christine Ekechi, who is the most incredible woman, and from the doula Mars Lord, to whom the hon. Member for Streatham referred. They made a really important, shocking and, in many ways, depressing point: too many black women and their partners were not being listened to during childbirth. They were trying to convey how they felt and the worries they had when they felt that things were going wrong. Mothers going through childbirth were scared and instinctively felt that something was going wrong, and they told us repeatedly that they were not listened to. In a 21st-century health service in the sixth largest economy in the world, that is simply not acceptable.

9.52 am

Florence Eshalomi (Vauxhall) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone. I pay tribute to my constituency neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Bell Ribeiro-Addy), for her powerful opening speech and for the work that she has been doing to lead on this really important issue.

The theme for this year's Black Maternal Health Awareness Week is "changing the narrative". We have to change the narrative. There is a call for a sea change in the outcomes for black women during pregnancy, and in finding ways to empower black patients to advocate for their health. We have known for years that women of black, Asian and mixed heritage face significantly higher maternal and prenatal mortality rates, and that women from black and minority ethnic backgrounds discover many conditions during their pregnancy. I discovered that I had fibroids at my first maternal scan during my first pregnancy. As an expectant mother, that brought a level of fear and anxiety—what would happen to me and my baby? In most cases fibroids can be unharmed, but in a small number of cases they can cause complications for the growth of the child and for both mother and baby during labour.

Unfortunately, we know that black and minority ethnic women are sometimes not listened to during the course of their pregnancy, and that there can be unconscious bias as a result of the structural inequality and institutional racism in our healthcare system. As my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham highlighted, Professor Knight suggests in the MBRRACE-UK report that a number of black and ethnic minority people face microaggressions, which means that symptoms can be indicative of complications that are missed, and that they are not given the attention they need. The "changing the narrative" campaign helps to empower black women to make their

voices heard on this issue. It is crucial that their voices are listened to, and that their experiences are heard. I pay tribute to Five X More for the vital work that it has been doing to lead the campaign and, most importantly, to get the Government to listen to the many voices of the black and Asian women who are suffering in this area.

As a mother to two young children, who were born just across the river at St Thomas' Hospital, this issue is close to my heart and those of many of my constituents in Vauxhall. More than 1,000 Vauxhall residents signed the petition urging the Government to pay close attention to this issue and to improve health outcomes and maternal rates for black women in the UK. Compared with white European women, black African women in the UK are 83% more likely to suffer near-misses in childbirth, and black Caribbean women are 80% more likely to do so. My two children were very stubborn and did not want to come out; in the end, they had to be evicted by C-section. My first pregnancy was fine: I was induced, it did not work, so the C-section was the next day. My second pregnancy did not go so well. Having gone through a C-section, I did not want that again. I tried to explain to the doctors that my body did not respond to induction and that if they just gave me time, the baby would eventually come out. Everything did not go to plan and I was rushed to theatre for an emergency C-section.

Panic, fear and the unknown, added to the fact that they had not been able to contact or locate my husband, meant my body froze and rejected the epidural. I heard the doctor's words that I would have to go under general anaesthetic. I asked, "What? I am going to be put to sleep and you are going to deliver this baby. What if I don't wake up?" I was lucky because I did wake up, after many hours. A number of black women are not as lucky; they do not wake up. It is important that we listen to black women and the experiences of all women, because they know their bodies best.

During the debate earlier this year, alongside the petition in April, the Minister would not set a target around black maternal health:

"We cannot set targets until we know what we are trying to achieve through those targets and what we need to address."—[*Official Report*, 19 April 2021; Vol. 692, c. 172WH.]

We know that black women in the UK are four times more likely to die in pregnancy and childbirth; women of mixed heritage are three times more likely; and Asian women twice as likely. Those statistics paint a clear picture of the problem we need to solve. It is now five months since we last discussed this issue in the House. I have one question for the Minister: what research has been done to set the target, so that we can measure the progress to end this disparity? If none, what steps is she taking to gather the data urgently to tackle this problem as soon as possible? One death is far too many. It is important that we listen to those women and address this issue urgently.

9.56 am

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in this important debate on an important subject. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Bell Ribeiro-Addy), who made it possible. In particular, to speak in Black Maternal Health Awareness Week feels right and appropriate.

For all mothers-to-be, pregnancy is a challenging time, as I remember. Pregnant women feel vulnerable as their bodies are changing. For a first-time parent, in particular, the uncertainty of parenting can be daunting. It is very important that all mothers-to-be have access to high-quality services. Many do, thanks to our NHS. Our NHS is staffed by so many dedicated professionals, who provide exemplary support for many new mothers.

I want to make it clear that this debate is not designed to berate or admonish hard-working NHS staff. In fact, many staff in maternity services are black. Nevertheless, as colleagues have said, the extraordinary disparities in black maternal health cannot, and must not, be ignored any longer. I am aware that the Government do not like to talk about racial disparities, but Ministers can scarcely blame black women themselves for the disparities in maternal outcomes for black women.

The time is now for the Government and those in charge of the NHS to take these issues seriously. As Members have said, statistics show that black women in the UK have a fourfold higher increased possibility of dying in pregnancy, compared with their white counterparts. Disparities in mortality rates extend to babies as well as mothers. Mortality rates remain higher for black, black British, Asian or Asian British babies. That must have something to do with the disparities in the whole area of the maternal experience.

As a number of Members have said, these statistics show that there is a major problem in maternal health. So, the question is this: what are we going to do about it? To NHS managers and commissioners who may listen to this debate or read the transcript of it, I would ask: how will you ensure that black women are listened to? A number of Members who have spoken in this debate have made the point that black women, however confident and educated they might be in other circumstances, do not feel that they are listened to when it comes to the maternal experience. How will we close the pain gap, to ensure that black women are not left to suffer without the pain relief that apparently is readily given to white mothers?

The 2019 NHS Long Term Plan is a start, but it lacks concrete steps to address this disparity. It makes no mention of addressing disparities even in the administration of pain relief, among other things. I am hopeful that the Minister will touch on these issues when she responds to the debate.

So I say to the Government: what is the plan to address these disparities? What explanation can be given for them? Ministers have said in the past that we no longer see a Britain where the system is deliberately rigged against ethnic minorities. If they believe that, what will they do about the disparities in maternal outcomes?

If the Government and those managing our NHS wish to close this gap, they have to put black women at the centre of their thinking and listen to what they say about their experience, both after and during childbirth. That means that there must be clear and binding targets, data collection and monitoring to support and judge progress on this issue. It also means funding for new and existing projects to tackle this disparity and to take the measures that I and others have outlined.

I thank campaigners, such as those at Five X More, who have worked so hard to ensure that this matter is not forgotten. Black women and their babies deserve

better. At no point in any woman's life does she feel more vulnerable than in childbirth, and black women should not have to believe or understand that they will have a poorer outcome simply because of the colour of their skin and their babies' skin.

10.2 am

Anne McLaughlin (Glasgow North East) (SNP): It is a pleasure, Mr Hollobone, to serve under your chairmanship today.

I start by paying tribute to the hon. Member for Streatham (Bell Ribeiro-Addy) for securing this debate in Black Maternal Health Week. Clearly, she is determined that something will be done to change this terrible situation, and rightly so. Persistence very often pays off and I am sure that she will persist until change comes. I also know that this is a very personal matter for her and nothing that happens in the future can change what happened to her and her child. The fact that she keeps fighting so that the situation changes for others says much about her and I am more than happy to offer her my support.

Just as the hon. Member and others will keep raising this issue, so should we all keep raising it again and again, as others have today, until it is no longer true that black women are four times more likely to die during pregnancy and childbirth than white women. I repeat that: four times more likely to die. Women from mixed backgrounds are three times—

Kirsten Oswald: To highlight what my hon. Friend is saying, it seems to me that it is inconceivable that the general public know about this issue. If people understood what a huge disparity in maternal health outcomes there is for black women and for mixed race women, I feel sure that there would be a huge outcry. It is really important that the Minister takes that point on board and takes every step possible to deal with this terrible blight.

Anne McLaughlin: I completely agree with my hon. Friend. It is up to the many Members of this House who are not already doing it to do it, and those of us who are doing it must keep repeating over and over again that black women are four times as likely to die during pregnancy and childbirth as white women. For women from mixed backgrounds it is three times as likely, and for Asian women it is twice as likely.

The reason we need to keep saying that is that, despite the fact that the inequality and disparity in maternal and newborn health has been highlighted for many years, we still do not fully understand why it exists, as we have heard, and we do not have the targets that we need to tackle it. The right hon. Member for Romsey and Southampton North (Caroline Nokes), the Chair of the Women and Equalities Committee, of which I recently became a member, said that the statistics are so stark that there should be immediate change. She called on the Government to meet ambitious targets rapidly, and I completely agree.

In the previous debate on this matter, I focused on some of the shocking statistics that MBRRACE-UK highlighted in its confidential inquiry into maternal deaths; I shall repeat some of them. For every 100,000 women who gave birth between 2016 and 2018, 34 black women, 25 mixed ethnicity women and 15 Asian women died, compared with eight white women. Behind

[Anne McLaughlin]

those numbers are people—women and babies. Compared with babies of a white ethnicity, black babies have a 121% increased risk of stillbirth and a 50% increased risk of neonatal death, and the gap has been widening since 2013. So there are these tiny human beings—boys and girls—who never got a chance at life. There are grieving fathers and husbands. There are whole families and whole communities.

In addition to the higher mortality rates, other concerns include the number of near misses and the number of times that women have felt that their voices have not been heard because of their skin colour. The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Florence Eshalomi) described a terrifying experience, when she must have felt completely powerless. That is wrong. I was shocked to hear many stories of mothers denied pain relief or left to suffer with undiagnosed post-partum conditions. I know that these things happen to women who are not black—it is always wrong—but for someone to be treated differently because of their skin colour surely compounds the problem. Just as we would research and address any medical causes of these things, we must research and address this issue. I echo the calls of the hon. Member for Streatham for the Government to address it.

As someone who is white, it took me some time to learn that people who are black just know when someone's behaviour towards them is because of their skin colour. It is hard to explain. It was hard for me to understand at first, and obviously it is harder for me as a white woman to explain it because I do not experience it, but I have no doubt about it. I encourage everyone who does doubt it to really listen to what black and Asian mums are saying and trust that they just know.

NHS GP Dr Adwoa Danso has pointed out that instances of medical mistreatment have impacted on black, Asian and minority ethnic communities' faith in the health services, and we saw that when it came to getting the covid vaccine. There is a further suggestion that, as the majority of migrants are disproportionately black, Asian and mixed ethnicity, the Home Office's hostile environment immigration policy makes public services incredibly difficult to access. The right hon. Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) talked about the hostile environment and has campaigned hard against it for many years.

Women seeking asylum have been blocked or refused by reception staff acting as gatekeepers, often in conjunction with expectations or experiences of prejudice and discrimination. The hostile environment also leads to decisions such as taking women seeking asylum out of supportive communities and into places such as the so-called mother and baby unit in Glasgow, where tiny babies are put in tiny rooms with not even enough room to crawl. The frustrating thing for me as an MP representing Glasgow North East, in a country where we have our own Government, is that our Government can do nothing about it because all the decisions about it are taken down here in Westminster.

Ms Abbott: Does the hon. Lady agree that the hostile environment affects not just the pregnant women themselves but may well affect black staff, who feel, as we have heard, frightened to speak up about what they are seeing?

Anne McLaughlin: Absolutely. The right hon. Member for Romsey and Southampton North mentioned evidence from the Women and Equalities Committee. I was not on the Committee at the time, but NHS staff gave evidence saying that they felt unable to speak up. A number of years ago when I was a Member of the Scottish Parliament, I met with a group of South African nurses, and they were astonished that they were able to meet with a parliamentarian, because they thought it was not their right to be represented. They told me the things that were happening to them in their jobs in the NHS, and they certainly needed someone to support and represent them, so, yes, I do completely agree with the right hon. Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington.

Maternity Action research found that, just like staff who were too afraid to report, black and minority ethnic women tended not to report negative experiences, and they were less likely to be treated with kindness by health professionals or spoken to using terms they could understand. Although data has not been collected recently, a 2007 confidential inquiry into maternal and child health found that between 2003 and 2005 10% of all maternal deaths were women who could not speak English. As we heard earlier in an intervention from my hon. Friend the member for—Eastwood?

Kirsten Oswald: East Renfrewshire.

Anne McLaughlin: It is Eastwood in the Scottish Parliament. Forgive me, Mr Hollobone. As my hon. Friend said, studies in America show that even among women who come from fairly well-off backgrounds and who do speak English, black and Asian women are still disproportionately affected.

If I worked in maternity care in the NHS and heard someone like me saying these things, I would naturally feel defensive. Instead, what I ought to do is think about it, read up on it, question myself—and I do regularly—and really listen to what people are saying. I have no doubt that the vast majority of healthcare workers care deeply about the people they work with. The debate is more about the system itself and the inbuilt structural inequalities. For those who may be watching and do not know this, if we say the health service is structurally racist, it does not mean it is populated by racists: it means the way in which it is structured is for white people from certain backgrounds. It takes into consideration their needs, culture and language, with very little flexibility to take into account anyone else's. Changing the structures makes them more flexible, and that is what the debate is calling for, in addition to addressing the very specific problems that have been talked about. After all, our NHS is not a white person's NHS, it is an NHS for everybody.

I had decided that I was only going to speak for five minutes, and I think if I had not taken interventions then I would have done, but I think it is worth saying why I had decided that. I wanted to give the hon. Member for Streatham longer—and I know she will want to say a few words at the end—because, even though I have ended up taking 10 minutes, I do believe that part of offering support is saying less and listening more.

Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair): We now come to the Health Minister, Nadine Dorries. After the Health Minister has spoken, Bell Ribeiro-Addy will have a few minutes to sum up.

10.13 am

The Minister for Patient Safety, Suicide Prevention and Mental Health (Ms Nadine Dorries): It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship for the first time, Mr Hollobone. I thank all Members who have taken the time to attend the debate, in particular the hon. Member for Streatham (Bell Ribeiro-Addy), who I have heard speak before about her experience on this issue. I think she is incredibly brave to campaign and highlight the issue in the way she does. I thank her for her thoughtful considerations. I know that she is holding my feet to the fire as well as the Department's, and that is a huge assistance in pushing the agenda forward within the Department of Health and Social Care.

I stand responding to the debate as a brand new grandmother of 18 days. The delivery was not uneventful, and the baby arrived early, which is a similar story to that of the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Florence Eshalomi) at St Thomas'. Having given birth myself three times, I understand in a very raw way the pressures that all women experience, and I lived through just two weeks ago how emotional and incredibly frightening it can be when things do not go to plan.

This is the second annual awareness week we have had to highlight the disparities for black women in maternal health outcomes in the UK.

Florence Eshalomi: Congratulations to the Minister, it is always a joy to see more children and grandchildren. I am still getting to grips with motherhood with my four-year-old and six year-old. The statistics clearly show that the maternal death rates, and negative experiences, of black and Asian women are higher, but this does not negate the fact that some white women also go through similar experiences. Does the Minister agree that improving the maternal health outcomes of one group will improve the outcomes for all groups?

Ms Dorries: The hon. Lady is absolutely right. I am very proud of the work that we have done in the Department of Health and Social Care, and in the NHS, to improve maternal outcomes for everyone, particularly over the last few years. The statistics speak for themselves. However, I will focus on the issue of black women and maternal health, because there is a great deal that we have done since the hon. Member for Streatham had the last debate. I am looking forward to informing her about the work that has been undertaken since then. I thank her for instigating this debate, and I hope that she continues to hold our feet to the fire. It is important that people do raise this issue, as she does, as often as possible in Parliament.

In response to the incredibly articulate speech by my right hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Southampton North (Caroline Nokes), it is right to raise the report by the Health and Social Care Committee, which I will respond to next week. A number of the questions that have been asked today will be included in that response, so I will not steal my own thunder—I will wait to provide a response next week.

I thank the co-founders of the Five X More campaign, Clotilde and Tinuke, and all the health care professionals and organisations who campaign to raise awareness of this week. I have visited Tommy's maternity unit three times now, and the hon. Member for Streatham is right to raise the point that the majority of staff, doctors and midwives are black. I am incredibly impressed with the

way that Tommy's addresses this issue; they are pioneers in addressing maternity inequalities and outcomes, and they do fantastic work. I pay tribute to Tommy's, and all hospitals, who I know are putting their weight behind reducing maternity inequalities and outcomes—Tommy's is certainly at the forefront of that work. My granddaughter was born at Chelsea and Westminster hospital, so I thank them too—they are pretty amazing as well.

This debate comes a few days before this year's World Patient Safety Day; the theme this year is safe maternal and newborn care. It provides an opportunity to mark the progress made across the system in improving outcomes and safety, but also to recognise that further work is needed. At its best, NHS care offers some of the safest maternal and neonatal outcomes in the world. However, the disparities that exist between black and white women in pregnancy and childbirth experiences are unacceptable. I am committed to both reducing this disparity in health outcomes, and improving the experience of care.

We cannot beat around the bush any longer on some of the reasons why we experience these inequalities. They are complex, and there is no one answer as to how we can address this subject. Personal, social, economic and environmental factors all play a part; we must address the causes of disparities to improve outcomes and experiences of care. I was delighted that last week NHS England and NHS Improvement published their equity and equality guidance, which responds to findings that maternal and perinatal mortality show worse outcomes for those in black, Asian and mixed ethnic groups. They invested £6.8 million in the guidance to improve equity and equality action plans, and implement targeted and enhanced continuity of care.

We know that pregnancy lasts around 40 weeks. However, when a woman walks into a hospital to give birth, those 24 or 48 hours—however many hours she is in hospital—are not what wholly contributes to her experience of the healthcare sector, or her outcome. A lifetime approach is needed to address some of the reasons why some women are more at risk of poorer outcomes than others. We know that there are many health issues that contribute to poorer outcomes in pregnancy, including alcohol, obesity and smoking. The chief medical officer recently published a report that showed that, in some of our seaside towns, 25% of women are smoking at the beginning of pregnancy. I think the figure was that 22% were still smoking by the end of their pregnancy. There are inequalities and health disparities that we really need to address.

For that reason, we have established the newly formed Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, which launches on 1 October, to target those health disparities, including racial and ethnic disparities in health, and to improve pre-conception health to support women to be in their best health throughout pregnancy.

Ms Abbott *rose*—

Ms Dorries: I will just finish the point on the office of disparities, because it is quite important. It is a huge step to establish an office that will actually deal with this particular issue. It will tackle inequalities across the country, and will be co-led by the newly-appointed deputy chief medical officer, Dr Jeannelle de Gruchy.

The office will be a vital part of the Department of Health and Social Care, and will drive the prevention agenda across Government to reduce health disparities.

[Ms Dorries]

I hope the hon. Member for Streatham welcomes the establishment of this new body to tackle the top preventable risk factors for poor health, which include obesity, unhealthy diets, lack of physical activity, smoking and alcohol consumption. Equity and equality guidance will also be issued.

It is a huge step to look at those lifetime health experiences that contribute to what happens at the point of delivery and throughout pregnancy. Until we improve, and look at what happens before, using a lifetime view of health that includes women's experiences of health throughout, then tackling what happens when they walk through a labour ward door will continue to be very difficult.

Ms Abbott: I think everyone present welcomes the establishment of the new office. The Minister has mentioned obesity, alcohol and smoking as risk factors in pregnancy; I take it she is not suggesting that the disproportionate outcomes we have for black women are because we are more likely to be obese, smoke or drink.

Ms Dorries: No.

Ms Abbott: I just wanted to get that clear.

Ms Dorries: Absolutely. The office will look at all pregnancies, and the negative contributing factors. I believe that one in four women—black and white women—who present in labour are obese. That has an incredibly high risk factor during labour, so it is to address inequalities across the board. My right hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Southampton North mentioned socio-economic groups, and the disparities they experience: smoking, alcohol and other negative factors that contribute during pregnancy are across the board, and they need to be addressed. That is the reason why the office has been established.

The cessation of smoking during pregnancy was something we campaigned on a lot in the past. I have noticed, probably since we passed the legislation to ban smoking in many places, the emphasis has almost come off the importance of not smoking during pregnancy. The CMO's report highlights that, in some areas of low socio-economic grouping, 25% of women are starting pregnancy smoking. That highlights the fact that we need to put more emphasis on, and focus on, those health disparities.

Anne McLaughlin: Maybe I am misunderstanding, but this Office for Health Improvement and Disparities is going to look at things like smoking—you can stop smoking and can be supported in that, and you can stop drinking and can be supported in that—and I think all this is really good, but people cannot change their skin colour. Will it be looking at how ethnicity impacts on women's and babies' chances?

Ms Dorries: Absolutely—across black, Asian and mixed ethnic minority groups as well. The point has been made today that black women do not feel listened to. We hear stories of complaints about pain, prolonged labour and other issues, and black women just do not feel as though they are being listened to in that environment. The core finding of the Cumberlege report, which addressed mesh, sodium valproate and Primodos, was that women

are not being listened to, and black women probably even more so in the maternity setting. That issue for women, black women, Asian women and women from mixed ethnic backgrounds needs to be addressed. Women have to be listened to.

Turning to covid-19 and vaccinations, covid-19 has further exposed some of the health and wider inequalities that persist within our society. While considering disparities in the context of the pandemic, initial data suggests that vaccine uptake among ethnic minorities is lower than for other groups. Covid-19 vaccines are recommended in pregnancy. Vaccination is the best way to protect against the known risks of covid-19 for women and babies, including admission of the woman to intensive care and premature birth of the baby.

New findings from a National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit-led study showed that of the 742 women admitted to hospital since vaccination data has been collected, only four had received a single dose of the vaccine and none had received both doses. That means more than 99% of pregnant women admitted to hospital with symptomatic covid-19 are unvaccinated. That is quite stark.

Caroline Nokes: On that point, will my hon. Friend reassure me and all Members that the Government will keep pushing the crucial message that the vaccine does not affect fertility or pregnancy, and that it is important for pregnant women and women of childbearing age to get the vaccine?

Ms Dorries: Absolutely. My right hon. Friend has done it for me, but I absolutely encourage women to get the vaccine because 99% is a huge figure. There is a basis of mistrust. The reason why many black women do not access some of the health services they should do before pregnancy is because they do not feel listened to and they do not feel they can trust their practitioner. The message of "Take the vaccine" must be pushed.

I will finish by taking the opportunity to urge women to continue to access maternity care and to stress that pregnant women should never hesitate to contact their midwife, maternity team or GP, or to call NHS 111 if they have any concerns. That also applies if parents are worried about their health or the health of their newborn baby. I urge expectant mothers to have their covid-19 vaccination as soon as possible. I do not think we can give out that message often enough.

10.28 am

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: I will try not to take up too much time. I am pleased we have had such a full discussion this morning. I know many Members across the House wanted to participate, but were unable to attend. I take confidence in knowing there are many Members in the House who are committed to reducing racial disparities in maternal healthcare.

I want to start by thanking Members who have contributed to the debate and I apologise for any mispronunciations of constituency names. Starting with some simple ones, I thank the hon. Member for Cities of London and Westminster (Nickie Aiken) and the right hon. Member for Romsey and Southampton North (Caroline Nokes) for pointing out how much black women do not feel listened to. The fact about socioeconomic groups was key. I also thank them for pointing out that,

because of racism that exists in our society, 70% of black people in this country live in the poorest areas. That definitely has an impact.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Florence Eshalomi) for sharing her experiences. It will be of great encouragement to her to know that St Thomas' Hospital where she had her two wonderful children—they are my mates—has undergone five times more training than others and many of the midwives have done it, which is great. There are other NHS trusts like Croydon Health Services NHS Trust, which has put together a campaign called HEARD that is meeting these needs, taking steps and training in the gap where it has not been asked to train, and it should be congratulated for that.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) made the point that we cannot blame black women for the situations that they find themselves in. Sadly, that is what happens, regardless of confidence, education and socioeconomics. As my right hon. Friend rightly pointed out, this does not always change outcomes, something which the hon. Member for East Renfrewshire (Kirsten Oswald) also pointed out.

I thank the hon. Member for Glasgow North East (Anne McLaughlin) for her frank comments about race and the articulate way in which she described exactly what institutional racism is. If only we had that level of understanding right across the House, I believe that this country would be a different place.

I also thank the Minister for her response and congratulate her on the birth of her grandchild. I thank her for committing to ending racial disparities. I think that this new body sounds like a positive thing, but I am concerned that, despite the new body and what it is going to tackle, it is still unclear whether the Government have understood that institutional racism is a serious factor affecting these outcomes and have made a direct commitment to changing that, especially in the light of the race report.

Ms Dorries: I have intervened, Mr Hollobone, because I think we have time. I probably should have also mentioned the Maternity Inequalities Oversight Forum, which is due to meet again next week. I do not want to give the impression that the new office which we are launching on 1 October will replace all the other work and everything else that we are doing. The Maternity Inequalities Oversight Forum still meets and, on the question about how it informs policy, it works hand in hand with the board of equalities and disparities. As the hon. Lady knows, we also have the patient safety board.

I can assure her that at all meetings, when we talk about maternal inequalities, the situation is something which has to be addressed and turned around in whatever way we can. This is why the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities is being established. We have to turn around the dreadful, appalling figures which pertain solely and uniquely to black women's experience of maternity. I want her to understand that all the rest of the work is still going on, because this remains a focus in the Department. I urge her to keep calling her debates and to keep raising the issue, because it helps to drive things forward and helps us to develop acceptable and

welcomed policies. I thank her for recognising the work of the disparities and inequalities board; it is just another tool that we put into the box to help fight a much bigger problem that we have to solve.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: I thank the Minister, but my main point was that while the work is ongoing, given what has been said in the past about institutional racism, will it be with a recognition of how it affects our various bodies, not least the NHS? Accepting that point, which many of us do not believe has been done before, is key to making sure that we get the outcomes that we need overall.

As many Members know, this topic is particularly close to me and is not always easy for me to talk about. Many of those engaged in the campaign to end racial disparity in maternal health care experienced the same thing. When we detail our past events and the experiences, we do not do so to gain sympathy. We do so to give a voice to the hundreds of black women each year who have similar experiences, and in the hope that our stories will help to spur the change needed so that black women no longer face negative outcomes and the negative treatment we so often face. Bringing children into this world should not be a matter of life or death. We have a duty here, particularly with what we are tasked to do every day in our work, not just for the mothers who do not survive the dangerous birth experiences but for the many who go on to experience trauma.

I hope that the Government have been spurred into further action. I will continue to hold the Minister's feet to the fire, since she sounds as if she enjoys it. I call on the Government to do a lot more: to ensure that we have proper data collection; to increase the support available for at-risk women; to implement the recommendations of the Joint Committee on Human Rights report "Black people, racism and human rights"; to identify those barriers to accessing maternal mental healthcare services and increasing the accessibility of mental health services after miscarriage and traumatic maternal experiences; to engage with black women in improving their experiences of maternal health services; and to commission a review of institutional racism and racial bias in the NHS and medical education to address the learned stereotypes about black and ethnic minority women that impact us so much.

By committing to those steps, the Government can demonstrate that they are serious about tackling racial disparities. Members have heard me say it before, and I will say it again: the colour of woman's or a birthing person's skin should not have an impact on their health or the health of their baby. The sad reality is that in this country it does, and while the Government appear to hear and are making some headway, I really want them to listen. I believe that they will truly have listened only when we have those targets and those very clear mechanisms to end institutional racism in our health service.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered Black Maternal Health Week.

10.36 am

Sitting suspended.

High Rise Social Housing: Reducing Fire Risk

[CHRISTINA REES *IN THE CHAIR*]

2.30 pm

Christina Rees (in the Chair): Before we begin, I encourage Members to wear masks when they are not speaking, in line with Government guidance and that of the House of Commons Commission. Please give each other and members of staff space when seated and when entering and leaving the room. Members should send their speaking notes by email to hansardnotes@parliament.uk. Similarly, officials should communicate electronically with Ministers.

Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered reducing fire risk in high rise social housing.

It is a pleasure to be here under your chairship, Ms Rees, and to speak about the subject at last, because I have been trying to obtain this debate for some time. It is a shame it clashes with the Building Safety Bill evidence session, but that shows how important these issues are to the House, and they will remain so for a considerable time.

The human tragedy of the Grenfell Tower fire was apparent from the morning of 14 June 2017 as the world woke up to the horrifying images of people killed in their own homes in a particularly savage manner. Four years later, the scale and depth of that tragedy are only now being explored. The Grenfell inquiry is still years from resolution, however, interim investigations, such as the Hackitt report, have provided some clue to the comprehensive failures in the building industry. The Government have been slow to legislate, but earlier this year the Fire Safety Act 2021 was passed and Parliament is currently considering the Building Safety Bill.

Much focus has rightly been on the priorities for action, such as the removal of flammable cladding from the exterior of tall buildings and who will pay for the huge remedial costs, in particular whether the costs should fall on leaseholders given they had no knowledge of the risks they were taking on and do not have the means to meet bills that, in some cases, are higher than the price they paid for their homes. Members may wish to raise these issues and others today, but my purpose in requesting the debate was to highlight two aspects of the crisis exposed by Grenfell that have not received sufficient attention. It is not by coincidence that they both relate to social housing.

Anyone who watched Daniel Hewitt's distressing documentary, "Surviving Squalor: Britain's Housing Shame", on ITV on Sunday night and saw some of the conditions social housing tenants are living in in 2021 would have been sickened by how far the sector has fallen from its post-war pride and ambition. I am sure every Member present has horror stories of neglect, under-investment and poor service to relate, but Grenfell has exposed how the failure of some Governments to invest and of some landlords to show a duty of care has become a threat not only to the quality of life of millions of tenants and leaseholders, but to life itself.

In the second part of my speech, I want to deal with the causes of fire in social housing, especially electrical fires, and why more is not being done to prevent them.

First, I want to comment on the consequences for social housing landlords and tenants of the costs of undertaking fire safety works. This morning, *Inside Housing*—all of us, particularly the Government, should be grateful for its investigative work throughout this crisis—published a story that One Housing, one of the G15's supersized housing associations, recorded a deficit of £25 million for the last financial year. In the same year, it spent £27.3 million on fire safety work to its stock.

Over the next five years, One Housing expects to spend £200 million on such works. Clarion, another of the G15, estimates it will spend £150 million in the next four years, and in total the 12 biggest housing associations will spend an estimated £3 billion over the next decade. Yes, that is right: 12 housing associations will spend £3 billion when the Government's total building safety fund stands at £5 billion, and the National Housing Federation says the total bill for the sector will be £10 billion. Clarion told me that it expects to receive £5.4 million from the BSF of the £150 million it will spend. That shortfall is significant, not only for the association as a housebuilder and landlord, as we shall see, but for its leaseholders. Like most associations, it will try every other source of revenue, including builders, developers and the BSF. If all else fails, it will bill the leaseholders. Tenants lack even that mitigation; there is no BSF for them. The majority of the costs social landlords must bear will come from their existing income streams—mainly rents—or from diverting funds from other services, from repairs to new developments. Expect more Daniel Hewitt documentaries in the years ahead.

I contacted the main social landlords operating in my constituency that are tackling significant remedial works with a series of questions, including how much they were spending on remediation. The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham said it will apply to the BSF but

"the remainder is from the Housing Revenue Account."

To its credit, it added that

"leaseholders are not being charged".

Catalyst says that

"overall, we expect to invest over £109m remediating our high-rise portfolio".

It has secured £22 million from the BSF, but will charge leaseholders where grants are not available. Shepherds Bush Housing says that

"the total cost of our building safety programme is estimated to be over £40m".

For buildings under 18 metres, or where grant is not forthcoming, it is concerned that it may have to pass on costs to leaseholders. Notting Hill Genesis estimates a bill of £41 million for the last financial year, and will pass on costs where third-party funding is not forthcoming.

Almost every landlord said the unrecovered costs of fire safety works will impact significantly on core functions and other duties. That means fewer, slower repairs and fewer staff to manage properties and to liaise with residents. Members who already have a full inbox of housing casework will groan, as will tenants and leaseholders, at the prospect of a continued rapid decline in the resources and services available.

The most shocking effect will be on development programmes and new home building. Shelter estimates the need for 90,000 new social homes a year. Last year, 6,000 were built. Earlier this year, the *Financial Times*

carried a report based on evidence from Clarion, Peabody, Network Homes and the L&Q group—four of the biggest landlords—that the number of affordable homes built over the next five years would fall by 40% as a direct consequence of fire safety works. Small and medium-sized associations have even less room for manoeuvre. Shepherds Bush Housing estimates a 50% cut in the development budget and less planned maintenance spend.

Ms Karen Buck (Westminster North) (Lab): My hon. Friend is quite right to focus on the implications of these costs and how they will affect the repairs and development programmes. Does he also recognise an additional issue that the Government have not addressed over a number of years? Local authority housing contains a high proportion of leaseholders within that stock. Even where a local authority wishes to carry out fire safety works, as was the case in mine, the fact that there is no clarity about the right to go into leasehold properties and to require leaseholders to have the works done means that it does not even get the fire safety works carried out, and many tenants are left at risk as a consequence.

Andy Slaughter: As always, my hon. Friend is on top of her brief. That is a very important point that the Minister and shadow Minister may wish to address. Many people who looked at the Building Safety Bill think that the provisions for access are inadequate or overly bureaucratic, and simply will not work. We have already seen that happen with the problems that Wandsworth Council has had with retrofitting of sprinklers, where there is resistance from leaseholders. There has to be a way, as with gas safety and so on, of ensuring that where the safety of the occupants of a block as a whole is at risk, it is possible to carry out works in a comprehensive way.

Tulip Siddiq (Hampstead and Kilburn) (Lab): I want to make a point about mental health and the impact of the cladding scandal. I would like to read something from one of my constituents who lives in a dangerously clad building:

“When I look outside my window, I see Grenfell Tower on the horizon. I have lived in this area for years and what happened on that night pains me very much to this day...And now to think that I, like them, live in an unsafe building and that I face an unknown but certainly very high bill to fix it gives me great anxiety.”

Does my hon. Friend agree that this is a hell that no one should go through?

Andy Slaughter: That is absolutely right. It is a triple whammy. There is the fear of living in an unsafe building with one's life potentially at risk; there are the huge, unaffordable costs I have already mentioned; and there is the extra feeling of being trapped because one's property may have a nil value, so it is impossible to move on with one's life, start a family and so on. It is difficult to imagine a previous crisis with such an impact on so many people, and frankly that is why the Government's response so far has been inadequate.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): As usual, my hon. Friend is making some excellent points, and I totally concur with the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead

and Kilburn (Tulip Siddiq) about the mental health impact—I have heard similar things from my own constituents. In that regard, I praise the work done by Cardiff Council, particularly Councillor Lynda Thorne, in responding very quickly to the crisis in the council-owned blocks by taking action and carrying out the additional tests necessary to identify the problem; I also praise the Welsh Government for making £10.5 million available for social housing, which has benefited 12 blocks, including some in my constituency. But the problem remains, in that the Welsh Government still do not have clarity from the UK Government on the available funding for consequential. As a result, they are unable to move forward with the wider building safety and fire safety funds that would operate for other social clients and those in the private sector affected by the same mental health difficulties as those social clients.

Andy Slaughter: That is another excellent point. I realise I am being quite critical of social landlords. We have to be, because sometimes they fall down on their duty quite spectacularly, as the documentary showed. However, I am glad that my hon. Friend has reminded us that most social landlords—councils and housing associations—are trying their best for their tenants and leaseholders, some of whom are very poor or have particular vulnerabilities. Whoever their tenants are, those landlords can only work with the tools at their disposal. The systematic cut in the housing subsidy over the last 10 years and the additional pressures that will continue, not just from fire safety, but from retrofitting in relation to carbon reduction, mean that we are often asking them to do the impossible—you cannot get a quart into a pint pot.

It is very easy for the Government to pass the buck, and that is exactly what the Housing Secretary did in the Hewitt documentary. “Nothing to do with me, guv”, he said, when asked about the fact that he, or his Government, had cut the budget of local authorities by 40% over the past 10 years.

Sir George Howarth (Knowsley) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this important debate. Does he agree that the sources of anxiety that others have referred to inevitably lead to mental health problems? And does he agree that it is time to bring this to an end by introducing a scheme to address all of the concerns people have as comprehensively as possible?

Andy Slaughter: I agree with my hon. Friend. We are talking about very large sums of public money, but we are also talking about both a moral duty and resolving a practical problem, which we seem to be very bad at in this country; look at the contaminated blood scandal, and how it took decades for the inquiry to take place and, hopefully, to reach an outcome. The Grenfell inquiry is under way. I hope that the Government will accept its recommendations and that they will provide a full response not only to that individual tragedy, but to the problems we are talking about today. However, there is a lot that the Government can do in the meantime. The Building Safety Bill is supposed to be a major tool in that respect, yet there are major gaps in it.

I said I would have very few questions for the Minister. The deal is that he answers them, but we will wait and see what happens. I have just one question in closing the

[*Andy Slaughter*]

first part of my speech. What will the Government do to prevent the effective collapse of the social housing sector as a provider of new homes? That is what we are looking at over the next five to 10 years if the full costs, apart from the small amounts that are payable from the current building safety fund, fall on to social landlords, tenants and leaseholders.

Electrical safety is an issue that has particularly concerned me for some years. Grenfell Tower, Lakanal House, Shirley Towers and Shepherd's Court—the last in my constituency—were among the worst fires in high-rise buildings in the past 12 years. All were social housing, and the first three led to the deaths of residents or firefighters. They had something else in common: they were all caused by electrical appliances—a fridge freezer, a television, a light fitting and a tumble-dryer. That should not be a surprise. Each year in England, 54% of all household fires are caused by an electrical source of ignition. This is not unique to social housing. Private sector rental property also has a poor history of providing and maintaining safe electrical items. Fires in the home can be fatal for the people who live there, but they can quickly turn into a catastrophe when they happen in high-rise blocks.

Increasingly, hard-pressed families across the UK rely on cheap or second-hand electrical items in their homes. They seek out deals for electrical goods online. Retailers such as Amazon, eBay and Wish host independent sellers, some of which have been found to be selling fake or faulty electrical goods. Just as Grenfell exposed the poor standards of building regulation and inspection, events such as the recall of more than 5 million Whirlpool tumble-dryers have shown that consumer safety in this country is in a parlous state.

With trading standards services cut to the bone and almost no national co-ordination, in 2018, mainly as a result of the Whirlpool fiasco, the Government set up the Office for Product Safety and Standards. However, that body has a budget of only £14 million a year. In the words of the recent National Audit Office report,

“There are gaps in regulators’ powers over products sold online, local and national regulation is not well coordinated despite improvements, and the OPSS does not yet have adequate data and intelligence... Until it establishes a clear vision and plan for how to overcome the challenges facing product safety regulation and the tools and data needed to facilitate this, it will not be able to ensure the regime is sustainable and effective at protecting consumers from harm.”

That simply is not good enough. Consumers are put at risk at every point by unsafe electrical goods, and less well-off people suffer the most as they rely on cheaper models and second-hand or reconditioned equipment.

The Shepherd's Court fire on Shepherd's Bush Green on 19 August 2016 was caused by a Whirlpool tumble-dryer being used according to the manufacturers' instructions, despite a serious known fault. We need better standards of manufacture. Plastic-backed fridges like the one that started the Grenfell fire had long been banned in countries such as the United States. We need registration of electrical goods to allow effective recall when faults are discovered. Typically, only about 20% of goods are recalled in that way. In the absence of those policy changes, which I am afraid the Government show no sign of making, we need regular inspection of electrical appliances.

Private tenants are protected by a legal requirement that landlords ensure all electrical items are tested for safety every five years, but social tenants are not. That needs to change. Given what I said earlier, I am not advocating inflicting additional costs on social landlords. I know from its brief for this debate that the Local Government Association is concerned about that, and thinks that the onus should lie on manufacturers. I do not disagree with that—if we manufactured safer products, we would not have so many failing inspections and so many recalls—but in the absence of that happening, the Government must support social housing providers to carry out these essential tests. They must make that a legal requirement and recognise the costs involved.

I am pleased to say that there are some positive signs here. The Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee recommended five-yearly checks in its prelegislative scrutiny of the Building Safety Bill, and the Government's social housing White Paper last November conceded that,

“Safety measures in the social sector should be in line with the legal protections afforded to private sector tenants.”

That is all we asked, but the Government did not accept amendments to the Fire Safety Act 2021 on those lines when I proposed them in Committee. Undaunted, I introduced a presentation Bill earlier this summer—the High-rise Properties (Electrical Safety) Bill—and no doubt we will try again in the Building Safety Bill. When I say “we”, I mean in particular Electrical Safety First, which has led on this issue, but I should add my thanks more generally to the London Fire Brigade, *Which?*, Leigh Day Solicitors, and the all-party parliamentary groups on fire safety and rescue and on online and home electrical safety, which have also been active and vocal on many of these issues.

All I ask from the Minister today is an indication of the Government's intent, or otherwise, on introducing electrical checks in social housing to prevent future Shepherd's Courts or, indeed, future Grenfells.

Much more could be said about the type of modifications needed for social homes that go beyond cladding. Many tower blocks were built in the 1960s and 1970s. Social housing providers recognise that those homes must be brought up to current standards, but they need support to do that. Fire doors need to be replaced, sprinklers installed, windows inspected, fire alarm systems updated and new evacuation routes for disabled people established.

It is also important to think about the people who live in social homes across the UK. Due to the stability that social housing can provide, along with affordable rents and adaptable properties, elderly and disabled people make up a large proportion of social tenants. Evacuating a burning building is difficult enough, but for tenants across the UK who are elderly or disabled, it can become impossible.

Much social housing is overcrowded, especially in London, which is also the location of 55% of buildings over 11 metres in height. Where someone lives and who their landlord is should not be risk factors when it comes to fire safety. If the Government do not increase the building safety fund to include funding for all necessary remediations, including to social housing, the cost of such remediations will primarily fall on leaseholders and tenants, and social housing providers will be forced to use money that would have been ring-fenced for the building of new social homes.

At a time when the housing crisis is growing, it is scary to think that some of our biggest providers of social housing may not be able to afford to build homes in the future. It is clear, therefore, that the issue of fire safety in social housing is not an isolated one; it will have far-reaching consequences if we do not get this matter right.

On behalf of the tenants and leaseholders of Factory Quarter, Sharp House, Ainsworth Court, Oaklands Court, Invermead Close, Fraser Court, Kelway House, Sulgrave Gardens and many other blocks in my own constituency and many, many more around the country, I ask the Minister, and indeed the Government as a whole because this issue goes across several Departments, to ensure that we are at least moving in the right direction—that is to say, to ensure that social housing provides good quality, affordable and safe housing for people across the UK.

Christina Rees (in the Chair): I do not think we need concern ourselves at the moment with time limits for speeches.

2.53 pm

Dr Kieran Mullan (Crewe and Nantwich) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Rees, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Andy Slaughter) on securing this debate.

In my constituency in 2019, we experienced a terrible fire at the Beechmere retirement complex, which destroyed the building and left more than 150 people without their homes and with their belongings ruined. I pay tribute to Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service for its work in tackling the blaze and to the local residents who stepped in to help evacuate people. We still do not know the cause of the fire and I regularly meet Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service to push it to conclude its investigation, but I also understand why it wants to take the time to make sure that if anybody needs to be held to account, they are.

Although the debates about fire safety have rightly focused on high-rise buildings and cladding, we must not miss opportunities to improve fire safety more widely, and I will focus on two things today: the use of timber in buildings and going further with building safety in certain types of building.

The use of timber in buildings has increased enormously in popularity in recent decades, because it is seen as being more eco-friendly than other materials, and certainly there will be social housing developments that are made from timber-framed buildings. The building that burnt down in my constituency—the Beechmere retirement complex—was a timber-frame building and what happened seemed to reflect what has happened in many other fires in similar buildings made of timber.

There is a wealth of long-standing concerns about the use of timber, and not just in relation to external frames. In 2002, the newly built Yarl's Wood prison was half burnt to the ground after a small fire started by rioters spread out of control. In their submission to the inquiry into the fire, representatives of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service made it clear that they thought the timber-framed nature of the building made the fire difficult to control. That same inquiry found that the decision not to install sprinklers at Yarl's Wood was wrong, specifically because of the wooden frame.

Blazes in Croydon and Peckham in 2007 and 2009 caused severe damage to blocks of flats with wooden frames. In 2010, a London Assembly report recommended tighter regulations on timber-framed buildings. A 2012 Department for Communities and Local Government review identified clearly that fires in timber-framed buildings result in more fire damage, and an insurance industry review claimed that fires were more likely to occur in such buildings.

In 2014, the Health and Safety Executive released an open letter to everyone involved in timber-framed construction after a spate of fires, including at the University of Nottingham, where a £20-million laboratory burned down mid-construction. The HSE is clear that fire risk for timber-framed buildings is particularly high during construction and during any post-construction work.

Where are we now? When it was built in 2008, the Beechmere retirement complex held the record for the largest timber-framed construction in Europe. This country now holds the record for the world's largest timber-framed building: a 10-storey, 121-unit development in Hackney. There are particular concerns about how post-completion works and modifications in timber buildings can easily destroy fire safety measures. We must ensure that that risk is properly managed.

I urge the Government to go further by mandating additional safety measures for timber buildings, beyond those that apply just to buildings of a certain height and to buildings with timber in external walls: a wider use of sprinklers, extra precautions at even lower heights, more prescriptive measures for safety checks after any work is carried out on a building, and any further measures that we should be taking.

We have to think more carefully about restrictions based on building use. It is proportionate to make specific mandated additional requirements for buildings such as schools, care homes and social housing complexes that house vulnerable people, when we know that people will struggle to evacuate. One such requirement would be for sprinklers. I and my colleagues on the all-party parliamentary group on fire safety and rescue have highlighted that automatic fire sprinklers are compulsory in new care homes in Wales and Scotland but not in England, and the same is true of schools.

Research conducted by the National Fire Chiefs Council found that, in almost 1,000 fires over five years in buildings where sprinklers were fitted, the sprinklers controlled or extinguished blazes in 99% of cases. When it comes to schools, it is not just about the loss of life; it is about the loss of time in a classroom that occurs when fire damage means that repairs have to be made or new facilities installed.

Finally, I would like to make a brief point about the work of the APPG. It has advised me that the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 states that the premises' risk assessment should adapt to technical progress and reduce the overall risk within buildings. However, we have much simpler non-worsening conditions under regulation 4(3) of the Buildings Regulations 2010, which states that, when the work is complete, it should be

“no more unsatisfactory in relation to that requirement than before the work was carried out.”

Those two measures are contradictory. I am of the opinion that the Building Safety Bill and the Regulatory

[Dr Kieran Mullan]

Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 need to be harmonised, so that the principle of risk assessment adaptation over time is incorporated.

I know that the Secretary of State wants a dynamic, responsive system that is not overly prescriptive. However, at this stage, when we cannot yet know what the new regime is going to deliver in terms of better decision making on a building-by-building basis, we should be more cautious and risk averse. We should have an approach that mandates specific measures, such as sprinklers, for certain building types and additional measures for certain building materials, such as timber, regardless of building height. High-rise social housing is one area where that can apply, but there are many others. I look forward to hearing the Minister's response.

2.59 pm

Florence Eshalomi (Vauxhall) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Rees. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Andy Slaughter) for securing this important debate on fire safety in social housing—a vital but often overlooked element of the building safety crisis.

It is hard to know where to start my reflections this afternoon, other than with the tragedy of Grenfell Tower. The images of the fire are seared into our national consciousness, and they serve as a painful reminder of the decades of negligence towards social housing in this country. My thoughts are with all those who lost their lives.

As somebody who grew up on a council estate in Brixton, I know how important it is that safe and good quality accommodation is considered a basic human right. Yet for years, too many social housing residents have been expected to live in substandard housing and buildings that fall into gradual disrepair, while their pleas for improvements go unheard. The fire at Grenfell, in which 72 people lost their lives, was a direct result of callous inaction. That must never be allowed to happen again, yet more than four years on, I still fear that it could.

My constituency of Vauxhall is one of the most densely populated in the country. It has many similar high-rise tower blocks with social tenants. Just since being elected in 2019, I have been approached by residents in over 32 separate developments who have been told that their block poses a fire risk. The scale of this fire safety crisis remains enormous. With every passing week, more and more people are plagued with the uncertainty of finding out that their home is potentially unsafe. Imagine having to live in a home like that. However, the Government's refusal to take control of identifying unsafe buildings means that we still do not know how many there are in this country, or where they are.

The current building safety crisis, which goes far beyond the cladding system, is a consequence of decades of regulatory failure under Governments of different political compositions. Figures from Electrical Safety First highlight that electricity caused 14,000 house fires in England alone, accounting for more than half of all accidental dwelling fires. Every year, thousands of people are injured in their homes due to electrical accidents or incidents, which, in some tragic incidents, mean that people lose their lives. The Building Safety Bill is a

welcome opportunity for the Government to strengthen electricity safety protections for social tenants in high-rise buildings.

I hope that the Minister will agree that, in order to reduce the risk of fires in high-rise residential buildings, it is essential for all those properties to undertake mandatory electrical safety checks. Currently, private tenants in high-rise buildings benefit from this check, whereas social tenants do not receive the same legal protections. That is a scandal. Electrical safety requirements should not be based on someone's tenure.

The LGA has been calling for councils and the fire service to be given effective powers, with meaningful sanctions, to ensure that all residents are safe, including those in social housing. The first duty of any Government is to keep their citizens safe. I therefore urge Ministers to lay out a plan to ensure that, as a national priority, every potentially dangerous building is identified and fixed. We are the sixth-richest nation on Earth, and there can be no more excuses. We cannot sit by as people continue to live in unsafe buildings. We must end the scourge of unsafe housing once and for all.

3.3 pm

Jonathan Gullis (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Rees. I commend the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Andy Slaughter) for securing this especially important debate.

Like many others, I want to briefly reflect on Grenfell Tower. My partner has recounted to me, very emotionally, the impact that the fire had on her, on her colleagues and on the pupils who she taught at a nearby secondary school. I want to put on record a declaration of interest because of personal friendships that I have with David Benson, the principal of Kensington Aldridge Academy, which is at the foot of Grenfell Tower, and with Adam Whitlock, its head of sixth form.

Fire safety in high-rise buildings is also incredibly important in places such as Stoke-on-Trent. We have 18,000 properties on the council books, of which 3,200 are apartments. I am very lucky in Stoke-on-Trent to have a council led by Councillor Abi Brown and one of the very best fire services in the country—Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service, led by our fantastic chief fire officer, Becci Bryant—due to their forward thinking and dynamic work. Staffordshire fire service and Stoke-on-Trent City Council have been working hand-in-glove to retrofit sprinklers in all the high-rise blocks of flats managed by Uitas, the council's housing company. I was delighted to host a delegation of MPs from the all-party parliamentary fire safety and rescue group in Stoke-on-Trent just last week, to show them what they have been working on.

It all kicked off in 2016, when Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service launched its community sprinkler project. Its end goal is to see sprinklers fitted in all five-storey blocks of flats across Staffordshire. Working with councils, social housing providers and charities that provide accommodation, such as the YMCA, the project has been going full steam ahead: 15 high-rise blocks have been retrofitted so far across Staffordshire, with a commitment to install sprinklers in a further 16 buildings.

That is great progress when we consider that in 2017, only one high-rise block had been retrofitted with sprinklers. Obviously, the impact of the tragedy we saw at Grenfell Tower, which, as the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Florence

Eshalomi) said, is burned into all our memories across the country, meant that charities and other partners came forward to push ahead with the scheme.

In the Potteries so far, seven of the high-rise buildings that Unitas manages have had sprinklers retrofitted, and the council has committed to installing sprinklers in the other 11 high-rise properties that it manages. I am pleased to say that Stoke-on-Trent City Council is already looking ahead to the medium and low-rise blocks of flats across its area. Encouragingly, because some of the groups that Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service has been working with own properties around the country, such as the housing association Bromford, the best practice adopted in Staffordshire is being copied elsewhere and enhanced fire safety is being spread around the United Kingdom.

Of course, fire safety is not just about sprinklers, but they are an effective and low-cost option. I understand from Becci that on average it costs £3,000 to £5,000 per flat to retrofit a sprinkler, and research done by the National Fire Chiefs Council and the National Fire Sprinkler Network also showed that they are incredibly effective. In 99% of cases, they were able to control or extinguish fires.

Sprinklers save lives. People are only half as likely to be injured in a dwelling fire where sprinklers are present, and sprinklers greatly reduce the chance of serious injury, with the data showing that people are 22% less likely to require hospital treatment if they are in a fire that is controlled by a sprinkler system.

The case for getting sprinklers installed could not be clearer. I urge councils and fire services around the country to follow what Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service and Unitas have been doing in Stoke-on-Trent.

3.7 pm

Margaret Ferrier (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Ind): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Ms Rees. I congratulate the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Andy Slaughter) on securing this important debate. I know the amount of work he has done in this area, as well as on electrical and white goods safety.

When we speak about the Building Safety Bill, we often focus on ensuring that no unfair costs are passed on to leaseholders. I am grateful that this debate shifts the spotlight back on to residents in social housing, such as those in Grenfell Tower whose tragic loss of life is the reason we are debating this matter today.

Like many of us, last week I watched the Channel 4 documentary “Grenfell: The Untold Story”, and found myself struck by how preventable the tragedy was. To see it unfold, immortalised by film, as residents’ concerns were waved away was heartbreaking with the benefit of hindsight. One resident tells us that we cannot describe what happened as an accident, and he could not have been more right. Sheila, who lived on the 16th floor of the tower and sadly perished in the fire, had confronted the tenant management organisation, telling them she was so exhausted from fighting with them that she had collapsed in the hallway.

Sheila’s words truly struck home with me when she said:

“Whoever runs this place, you never see them; they become faceless. But never ever once have you heard them mention a human being who lives there. It’s all about the building.”

How could we have ever allowed anyone to feel that pieces of brick and mortar were valued more than the human lives within them? Grenfell showed us that these tower blocks are more than just a collection of people living nearby each other. They are communities: neighbours who know each other and look out for one another, who have built meaningful friendships and who care deeply for those friendships.

Most overwhelmingly, there was a clear feeling that this had happened because the tenants lived in social housing. They were unseen, less important, less valuable because of their tenancy arrangements. Social housing is a great privilege in the UK, and who is anyone to judge a life based on their home?

It is undeniable that Grenfell happened because corners were cut to keep costs down. How do you put a monetary value on a human life? But Rydon did just that when it chose the cladding by Celotex, which as we now know was on the market as a result of a fraudulent fire safety test. I would like to know what steps the Government are taking to ensure that future tests of products can never be bypassed or rigged.

The documentary tells us that Rydon was saving about £375,000. If we break that down by the 72 lives lost, we arrive at a little over £5,000. Rydon valued those people’s lives at £5,000. Even worse, we now know that the actual saving was much higher and Rydon intended to pocket the rest. It is the most horrific case of profit before people.

Grenfell was a case of failure after failure—a failure to ensure that safe materials were used, a failure to ensure that the building was properly compartmentalised and a failure to put the residents at the heart of the project. What is imperative now is that the lessons are learned and absorbed into the consciousness of every person with fire safety responsibilities, be that architects, builders, construction product manufacturers, developers—anyone with a part in building and refurbishing these homes. It is important that the Government fund the removal of cladding on all high-risk buildings. Crucially, that funding must be provided to social housing landlords. Not doing so risks unfairly pushing the cost of remediation on to social tenants or, worse still, it could take so long for remediation to happen that we see another tragedy. Regardless of what the monetary cost might be, it will never be as high as the value of the people living in these high-rise blocks to their families, friends and neighbours.

3.11 pm

Tony Lloyd (Rochdale) (Lab): May I say what a real pleasure it is to serve under you in the Chair today, Ms Rees? I also thank my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Andy Slaughter) for a genuinely excellent speech, both in its range and its detail. I do hope that the Minister—I say this kindly to him—will dwell on every word, even if he cannot respond to every word today.

I want first to pick up on the important point that my hon. Friend made about the impact of this new generation of costs on social landlords and, indeed, on landlords more generally, because these extra costs were unanticipated. Whether rightly or wrongly, they were unanticipated; they are not built into any cost programme. And certainly at the margins they would make a material difference in terms of the capacity for social landlords to make a decision, as is the case at the moment with tower blocks

[Tony Lloyd]

in my constituency, between demolition, which the social landlord would like, and retention and improvement, which the tenants of those tower blocks would want. If the extra cost is of such a nature that it causes these things to tick over, it is the wrong kind of financial matrix for housing policy. Equally, my hon. Friend is right when he says that if now we see huge tranches of money having to be devoted to remediation and that then is at the cost of improvement and new build, we simply exacerbate what is already a housing crisis in my constituency and across the country.

I shall take a couple of moments to discuss the Seven Sisters tower blocks in Rochdale. Sometime in the early part of last year the housing association discovered, because it was able to do work or investigation not previously available to it, that unlike Grenfell and equivalent types of cladding, there was a problem in the nature of work that had been done, probably in the late 1990s, that meant that any fire in any individual flat risked spreading to flats on the same floor. That kind of risk was, again, unanticipated, but it is qualitatively different from the situation at Grenfell and other places.

I have a very specific question for the Minister. Is any information available about the range of such challenges to our housing stock? Do we have that analysis—that national picture? I ask because of course that must inform any debate about what is available in terms of funding the remediation work necessary. Equally, because this is qualitatively different, as we look at remediation for cladding solutions—and, post Grenfell, we must look at that—will that also cover problems of the type that arose in Rochdale with the Seven Sisters? Again, that is different; nevertheless, the work is equally vital, if we are to ensure that tenants and residents feel safe in their homes.

When that was discovered, the social landlord quite rightly introduced a waking watch scheme, in negotiation with the fire and rescue service in Greater Manchester. That is a system whereby people tour the estate to ensure an evacuation if a fire is identified, and to enable the fire and rescue service to take the necessary action. That did happen: a fire broke out in the tower blocks, sometime after 2 o'clock one morning. The fire service was there within four minutes of being informed by the waking watch, which is excellent. The system worked, leading to the evacuation of a small number of tenants, and it put people's safety first, which is the right and proper way.

Since then, the social landlord has installed an alarm system in every flat, which again is the right way forward. However, in the end, this is about evacuation in the event of fire rather than prevention of fire. I endorse the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith and others about the need to maintain or improve electrical standards. Certainly, the operation of sprinklers is one demand that people would inevitably have, but fires will take place. My own mother, rather sadly, caused her own house to catch fire. She was a heavy smoker, she dropped her cigarette, and the result was a house fire—in her case, not with the kind of results that we would fear. Nevertheless, that kind of action will take place in the future. We cannot guarantee that we can stop fires; we have to make sure, though, that the homes that our residents live in are safe, because safety is paramount.

My final question to the Minister is simply this. Four years on from Grenfell, what progress can we expect in the coming months that will make a material difference, so that the residents in my tower blocks and those up and down the country can see their homes as a place of safety? That is what they expect, it is what I expect for them, and it is what every Member of this House should believe is right and proper.

3.17 pm

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): May I say what a real pleasure it is to serve for the first time under your chairpersonship, Ms Rees? I congratulate the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Andy Slaughter) on securing this important debate, on his usual thoughtful and thorough contribution, and on raising the real concerns of his constituents with his usual passion and commitment.

Before I say a bit more about what the hon. Member had to say, I would like to start by paying my respects to all the victims and bereaved of the Grenfell fire, and also paying tribute to the doughty campaigners for justice that have grown up from that bereaved community. I was very moved by the various contributions by hon. Members about the impact on mental health of living in substandard social housing. It is something that most of us have probably not experienced, but most of us have constituents who have, and that is most unfortunate.

The hon. Member also raised the issue of electrical safety and left us very much with the message that where someone lives and who their landlord is should not determine their safety from fire. That point was picked up on by the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Florence Eshalomi), who is my MP when I am living in London—I do not think I could hope for a more assiduous MP. She said that Grenfell was a result of callous inaction and should never be allowed to happen again, but she fears that it will.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Dr Mullan) made a thoughtful speech about various risks, including from the increasing use of timber in properties, and how we counter that. He also mentioned the importance of sprinklers, as did his colleague, the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent North (Jonathan Gullis), who spoke movingly of the impact of the Grenfell fire on people he actually knows, as well as the importance of sprinkler installation.

The hon. Member for Rutherglen and Hamilton West (Margaret Ferrier), who I know is a hard-working constituency MP, spoke of the careful attention she has given to the rights of her constituents who are tenants of social housing. I know she will bring to their cause the energy and vigour that she brings to fighting for all her constituents.

Margaret Ferrier: I had a constituent case recently that has raised some questions about how the Scottish Government are dealing with this across the border. My constituent is trying to sell a flat. As we know, Scotland does not have a leasehold system. Non-ACM cladding has left the property in limbo with disagreement from all involved parties about its safety and, therefore, the need for remediation. I do not doubt that this is a widespread issue in private and socially-owned properties, but will the hon. and learned Lady shed some light on the Scottish Government's plan for funding remediation for such buildings?

Joanna Cherry: I will come to that and am grateful to the hon. Lady for raising that issue, because I will address the position in Scotland. Before I do, I would lastly like to refer to the speech by the hon. Member for Rochdale (Tony Lloyd) and say what a pleasure it is to see him back, fully restored to health and making his usual thoughtful contribution on how we avoid exacerbating the housing crisis—again, mentioning the importance of sprinklers.

I now turn to the position in Scotland, where housing and local government are a devolved matter. Decisions on building materials, the removal of cladding and fire safety are the remit of the Scottish Government. This has enabled Scotland to require that buildings are constructed in a certain way that will aid the prevention of fires, which has contributed to Scotland's having fewer properties with Grenfell-style cladding. Nevertheless, the Scottish Government are not complacent around the issue of cladding and have recently made a series of announcements in that regard.

On 19 March, before the general election in Scotland, the Scottish Government announced that subject to winning the election, which, of course, they did, homeowners whose flats had external cladding would be offered free safety assessments to determine which properties had material needing to be removed. This proposal, which was intended to pave the way for public funding for remediation, was a key recommendation in a report published last March. All the recommendations in that report were accepted by the Scottish Government, who are committed to invest all the funding received so far in consequentials from the UK Government to address cladding problems. Future consequentials are yet to be clarified and I would like to raise that with the Minister, but they will also be put to this work.

The single building assessment programme in Scotland was launched in August and safety assessments are commencing on a number of properties. It has been welcome across the board, particularly because the cost for the assessments is to be borne by the Scottish Government, not homeowners. The assessments will be undertaken by suitably qualified professionals working to a common standard and will encourage collaboration between individual owners, residents and factors.

On 19 August, the current Scottish Government Housing Secretary, Shona Robison, explained that 25 buildings deemed to be most at risk have been identified for the assessment scheme, which will be delivered free, as I said. Physical inspections are under way to identify buildings that may need dangerous cladding removed or highlight other potential issues, such as flammable insulation or missing fire barriers. The Scottish Government have said they are fulfilling their commitment to support homeowners and improve building safety. Their priority is to ensure the safety of people in their homes.

These assessments are available for all buildings, regardless of tenure. That includes local authority and registered social landlord buildings, although the remediation of local authority buildings is a matter for each individual council. Clearly, this assessment procedure and the funding available will cover the social sector. As I said, the Scottish Government have not yet been given clarity about how much or when they will receive further funding promised by the UK Government. I would like to press the Minister for any clarity that he can give on that today.

Finally, before I leave the floor to other speakers, as we have heard there is far more to fire risk than cladding alone. We must have a holistic approach to address the overall issue of fire safety, particularly in high-rise buildings. That is an approach that my colleagues in the Scottish Government have endeavoured to follow.

In October 2019, the Scottish Government introduced new regulations that lowered the height at which combustible cladding could be used from 18 metres to 11 metres, to align with firefighting from the ground. They tightened controls over the combustibility of cladding systems on hospitals, residential care buildings and entertainment and assembly buildings, regardless of building height. They introduced a regulation requiring two escape stairs, evacuation alert systems and floor-level indicator signs in all new high-rise domestic buildings.

They have also recognised the importance of the installation of sprinkler systems. A requirement to install sprinkler systems in all new-build flats, new social housing and certain multi-occupancy dwellings was introduced from 1 March 2021. Funding was put in place to assist social landlords in meeting the new standards for fire and carbon monoxide protectors in Scotland by February 2022. The Scottish Government have provided an interest-free loan fund, repayable over five years, which has paid out over £15 million.

Andy Slaughter: The hon. and learned Lady is coming to the end of her speech, but she is making a very strong point about the factors that are missing—the lacunae—in what the Government are proposing at the moment. Maintaining the height at 18 metres allows new buildings to be constructed that are already potentially dangerous. I have 20-storey buildings being constructed in my constituency that have a single staircase. We must get all these things right. As she correctly says, this is not just about cladding.

Joanna Cherry: I entirely agree. We must get these things right and we must base new regulations on evidence. In particular, the Government need to liaise closely with the fire service, which has happened in Scotland. The Scottish Government have provided funding of £870,000 per year for the last two years to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to support its home safety visits to ensure that vulnerable and high-risk people can get the necessary alarms installed at no cost to them, so that they are safe in their homes.

To draw to a close, it is grossly unfair and unjust for any tenant or leaseholder to be left with the burden of removing cladding that they were not responsible for installing and to be left with the weight of fear and worry, and the impact on mental health that hon. Members have described, particularly since the horrors of the Grenfell fire. The UK must deliver the necessary funds for the remediation of cladding for all, and not leave tenants and leaseholders responsible for paying for the removal of this dangerous cladding. I look forward to hearing from the Minister in his summing up about the consequentials of funding that will be available for the devolved Governments.

3.28 pm

Lucy Powell (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op): It is a real pleasure to serve under your chairpersonship today, Ms Rees. I congratulate my hon. Friend the

[Lucy Powell]

Member for Hammersmith (Andy Slaughter) on securing this important and timely debate. As ever, he gave an excellent, knowledgeable, forensic and right speech.

We heard some other excellent contributions. The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Dr Mullan) made some important points, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Florence Eshalomi), the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent North (Jonathan Gullis), my hon. Friend the Member for Rochdale (Tony Lloyd), the hon. Member for Rutherglen and Hamilton West (Margaret Ferrier) and the Scottish National party spokesperson, the hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry). Given her excellent speech, I look forward to working with the hon. and learned Lady on the Building Safety Bill, and I hope that the SNP will play a full and active role in that Bill.

It is timely because we are very much in the midst of the building safety crisis post the terrible events at Grenfell Tower four years ago, and timely because, as mentioned, we are in the Committee stage of the Building Safety Bill, which has come about because of that tragedy. This week Parliament will be lobbied by leaseholders and others calling for justice for leaseholders and to end the building safety scandal. I want to put on the record my admiration for those campaigners and their tireless work while suffering from mental health and financial anxiety and worry that has a life-defining toll.

Stephen Doughty: I praise my hon. Friend for her work on this topic in the months since her appointment. I, too, will be meeting leaseholders from my constituency of Cardiff South and Penarth on Thursday. There are huge concerns about mental health and finance. One of their great frustrations is the lack of clarity on the money from the UK Government to the Welsh Government and the lack of clarity on the consequential. Is it not right that the UK Government now explain what is going to the devolved Administrations so that they can move forward with their plans?

Lucy Powell: Absolutely. As I will come on to say, the Government's handling of the crisis has been characterised by delay, a lack of clarity and uncertainty.

I also want to put on the record my thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith for his campaigning on fire safety in social housing blocks. He has campaigned tirelessly for many years—before the tragedy at Grenfell Tower and following the fire at Shepherd's Court. I hope that the Minister and the wider housing sector will take on board many of his proposals for the inspection of electrical goods by social landlords and will look further at the regulatory regime. I will come on to some of his wider questions about the impact on the social housing sector.

What began as a cladding scandal after Grenfell, as we have heard, has now led to a total breakdown in confidence in most tall and multi-storey buildings in this country. The building safety crisis, as it has now become, affects hundreds of thousands of people. Buyers and tenants who dreamt of a safe, stable home to live in, who often spent their lives working towards that, are now living in a waking nightmare.

I am sorry to say that the Government's approach has been characterised by dither and delay. They are leaving it to the market, which caused the mess in the first place,

rather than intervening strongly to get a grip of the crisis and resolve it. They have managed to get a £5 billion fund from the Treasury, which I applaud them for because that is not a small amount of money by any means, but they are not giving effect to the money as they stand back and watch costs soar while the remediation works required get out of control. They limit the scope and the timetables, and they are not doing anything to ensure certification and assurance. Leaving it to the market and those that created the crisis in the first place will not resolve anything. As we have heard, social landlords are inexplicably excluded from the fund.

We now face a total breakdown in the approach to risk. What are reasonable risks? Who decides that? Who will certify risk proportionately, and who can ensure that insurers will insure reasonably and that lenders lend? Nobody is standing by to do that at the moment. What are the appropriate policies to mitigate the risks, such as evacuation plans, sprinklers, and the capacity of fire services and so on? Is waking watch worth the costs that people pay for it?

Florence Eshalomi: Does my hon. Friend agree that there has to be an evacuation plan for disabled residents, who feel that their voices have not been heard on this really important issue?

Lucy Powell: Absolutely. I was going to mention that later in my speech, but I will say it now. Evacuation plans for disabled people are pretty poor in most cases, leaving them especially vulnerable, as others have said.

At the moment, there is an absence of clear and reasonable guidance, process and professionally indemnified experts. The result is that people are standing back and letting others pay the price and take responsibility for the risk. Ultimately, that leaves leaseholders, social landlords, those in shared ownership and others with the financial responsibility and risk. It leaves them living in fear, as we have heard.

More could be done on prevention, as many hon. Members have said. We have heard that waking watch patrols have been necessary in some cases, but they are extremely expensive. The Government's own data estimates that they cost £130,000 a year for just one building. They are supposed to be a temporary measure, but many are still trapped with them. The Government keep talking about the problems with the lack of proportionate risk and the lack of confidence in the system, but what are they actually doing about it? Perhaps we will hear a little more on that today.

There are similar issues when it comes to regulation, accountability and oversight. The Building Safety Bill, which is in Committee, will set up a new building safety regulator. That is a long-overdue and much-needed step, but there are a number of areas where it falls short. The Government have stuck to their crude height limit of 18 metres to define higher-risk buildings. They are right to say that, for buildings over 18 metres, the choice over which building control body to use leads to serious conflicts of interest. That is one of the key issues that has got us here, so why is that not the case for buildings under 18 metres, for which developers can still choose their own building control bodies?

The fire service, which we have heard much about today, used to play a much greater role in inspecting buildings. The Fire Brigades Union has raised the alarm about the fact that the building safety regulator

will still be able to contract out that advice to the private sector. What are the Government proposing to do about that?

As many leaseholders and tenants have discovered in recent years, since Grenfell and before, the bodies that exist supposedly to provide recourse and accountability very rarely do, and are largely toothless and totally inadequate. Fire safety issues have shone a light on that, but yet again the Government seem incapable or unwilling to act with the necessary true leaseholder reform, and are not giving voice to tenants.

We have heard about some particular issues affecting social housing. In contrast to many private developers and freeholders, social and council housing providers were the quickest to react post Grenfell. Analysis has shown that housing associations have paid six times more than developers to remediate dangerous cladding. Given the huge profits in the private sector, it is a scandal that it is not doing more to pay for the faults it created. The Government have been incredibly slow in using the stick they kept threatening, leaving many to disappear before they are made to pay.

According to the G15—an umbrella group of the biggest housing associations in London—associations have set aside nearly £3 billion for historical remediation costs. In contrast, the UK's largest developers have collectively set aside half a billion pounds—the difference is stark. Housing associations have warned that building safety costs will put at risk their ability to build much-needed affordable housing. With an estimated required subsidy per affordable home of £50,000, nearly £3 billion for remediation costs could mean 58,000 fewer affordable homes over the next 10 years. That is a huge number, and that is before we even get to the impact on quality and much-needed investment in existing stock and things such as the zero carbon agenda.

Housing associations and local authorities have been all but excluded from the Government's building safety fund. To be approved, they must demonstrate that the costs would otherwise have been borne by leaseholders, which they have not been able to do in many cases. This approach is wrong, and it ultimately falls on the shoulders of tenants and potential future tenants, who will no longer be able to get social housing because the stock will diminish. We have called for a building works agency to fix this problem. Our mantra has been “assess, fix, fund and certify”; that is what needs to be done, and we need a team of experts who are given the power to do all of those things. What will the Government say about that?

Leaseholders and tenants will be shouting from the rooftops about building safety on Thursday. However, as we have seen from the excellent reporting of Dan Hewitt and “ITV News”, social tenants are often not listened to by housing providers. “Surviving Squalor” was a shocking reminder of the conditions that some people are forced to live in, their pleas for action ignored by social housing providers. It is just not acceptable. It is a mark of shame on the sector, which should be putting tenants' experiences first, not ignoring them. If the past few months have taught us anything, it is the importance of home, and that housing is a public health issue, a mental health issue, and an economic issue, as well as a bedrock of success.

It is a shocking indictment of our country's housing system, and the blame should be laid at the doors of some of these providers, as well as the Government.

They have diminished and defunded social housing, and they have reneged on the promises made after Grenfell to bring forward legislation to provide a real voice and teeth to the views and needs of social housing tenants. When is that coming forward? We still do not know. We have been tabling amendments on this matter in the Building Safety Bill.

The building safety crisis is having a profound impact on the lives of so many, and the impact on social housing providers worsens the measly number of social homes already being built. The building safety crisis requires the serious leadership and intervention that it is not getting, and we need major reform to give tenants and leaseholders trapped in these situations a real voice, recourse and accountability. It really is about time the Government got a grip on this.

Christina Rees (in the Chair): This is where I usually ask the Minister to leave a couple of minutes at the end for Andy Slaughter to wind up.

3.42 pm

The Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government (Luke Hall): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairpersonship and to be back in Westminster Hall, Ms Rees. I thank the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Andy Slaughter) for securing this important debate; he gave an incredibly thoughtful, forensic and detailed speech that really showed his passion for the issue. I also thank the other Members who have spoken—there have been some really thoughtful, important contributions.

This issue impacts so many of our constituents. That is why we are taking action, as has been described, by providing that £5 billion of grant funding for the remediation of unsafe cladding, to support building safety. The hon. Gentleman noted at the start that the Minister for Housing, my right hon. Friend the Member for Tamworth (Christopher Pincher), and the Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing, my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall North (Eddie Hughes), are currently on the Building Safety Bill Committee. I know that they would like to be here to respond to his points, but it is my pleasure to respond on their behalf. I want to give an overview of the work the Government have been doing, but I will try to come to the points he has raised and give him satisfactory answers.

The £5 billion of grant funding specifically supports the remediation of unsafe cladding on high-rise buildings. This means that we will fund the cost of replacing unsafe cladding for leaseholders in residential buildings 18 metres and over in England. Work to remediate unsafe aluminium composite material cladding has progressed: 100% of high-rise buildings in the social housing sector identified as having that unsafe cladding at the start of last year have already been made safer or have remedial work under way. To date, the social sector ACM cladding remediation fund has approved £277 million of funding for the removal and replacement of unsafe ACM in England.

Tony Lloyd: The tragedy of Grenfell was as a result of a specific type of remediation of those buildings. Other types of work have had a similar but different effect, such as the example I gave in my constituency. Is the Minister telling us that they will not be covered by the £5 billion fund—that they will be outwith—and that there will be no funding available for other types of necessary fire prevention work?

Luke Hall: If the hon. Gentleman could be slightly patient, I will address the points raised today, including that one. For social sector buildings with unsafe, non-ACM cladding, we will meet the cost of remediation where a registered provider of social housing becomes financially unviable due to the cost of remediation. We will provide funding equivalent to the amounts that providers would otherwise have been entitled to pass on to leaseholders, including shared owners.

I heard the point made by the shadow spokesperson, the hon. Member for Manchester Central (Lucy Powell), about local authorities approving some of the burdens placed upon them. I am happy to take away any examples she wants to investigate and raise with my colleague the Housing Minister, or I will speak to them myself as the Minister for Local Government Finance.

Social housing owners, with private sector leaseholders, may also be able to benefit from the finance scheme, which the Government have announced for all buildings from 11 metres to 18 metres in height. In the small number of cases where unsafe remediation may be necessary on buildings of that height, the scheme will protect leaseholders from unaffordable costs, by ensuring that no leaseholder will pay more than £50 a month towards the cost of cladding remediation.

Of course, in all of those cases, Government funding does not absolve building owners of their responsibility to ensure that their buildings are safe. They should consider all routes to meet costs, protecting leaseholders where they can. It is also right that the industry that caused this legacy of unsafe buildings contributes to setting things right. That is why we have consulted on a new residential property developer tax, which aims to raise around £2 billion over the next 10 years. We will also introduce a building safety levy on developers of high-rise buildings, which we plan to introduce at the gateway 2 stage of the new building safety regime.

Stephen Doughty: Will the Minister be clear about when the Welsh Government will get clarity? The fund was announced in February and, more than eight months since, there is still no clarity on the funding consequential, nor has there been adequate co-operation on the tax and levy he refers to, as I understand it. When is that going to happen? They want to work in co-operation, as this is affecting leaseholders across the UK, but they are not getting that co-operation.

Luke Hall: Regarding consequential, I was coming on to answer the hon. Gentleman's point and that made by the hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry) later in my speech. On co-operation, I am always happy to meet with them on finance matters and to raise the issue with my relevant colleague in Government, if that is helpful to the hon. Gentleman and to colleagues in the devolved Administrations.

Looking forward, the package of changes that we are making through the Building Safety Bill will help to ensure that the problems identified with the current building and fire-safety regimes are rectified. Those responsible for buildings where they are occupied, will be required actively to manage building safety risks, evidenced through a safety-case regime. The new regime will allow fire and structural hazards to be effectively and proportionately managed, mitigated and remedied, through effective steps that consider both safety and costs.

Building owners, including local authorities and social housing providers, will need to appoint a building safety manager, who will be responsible for the day-to-day management of fire and structural safety in the building, and must have the relevant competence to perform the role for that specific building. Residents of high-rise buildings will no longer be ignored when they raise safety concerns about their building, and the Bill will make securing resident and building safety a critical objective of the accountable person. The new building safety regulator will give residents a strong voice through a statutory residents' panel.

We will also use the powers in the Bill to make regulations that place duties on those who procure, plan and manage to undertake building work. That will ensure that the designs, as well as the building work, comply with building regulation requirements. That more stringent regulatory regime will apply to the design and construction of high-rise residential properties that are at least 18 metres in height or have seven storeys. It also applies to hospitals and care homes. The new regulator will also have new powers to ensure that those who are responsible for building safety are held to account if they fail to do the right thing.

We take electrical safety extremely seriously. We have introduced electrical safety regulations, where it is proportionate and practical to do so. The building regulations require work to the fixed electrical installation in homes, regardless of tenure, and to be carried out safely to protect people from fire or injury. The accountable person for occupied high-risk buildings that come under the scope of the Building Safety Bill must take all reasonable steps to mitigate or control building safety risks, the spread of fire and structural failure, regardless of the cause.

All landlords must ensure that electrical installations and any electrical equipment provided are safe at the outset of a tenancy, and kept in good working order. Last year, as the hon. Member for Hammersmith highlighted, we introduced regulations requiring private landlords to ensure that electrical installations in their properties are inspected every five years.

The social housing White Paper that we published last year sets out the actions that we will take to ensure that residents in social housing are safe, are listened to, live in good-quality homes and have access to redress when things go wrong. In the White Paper, we committed to consulting on measures to keep social housing residents safe from electrical harm; subsequently, we formed a working group to help develop proposals for the consultation. Clearly, it is too early at this stage to say what the outcome of that consultation will be, but I am happy to confirm that we will consider introducing the five yearly checks to bring about parity with the private rented sector. I will ensure that the views of the hon. Member for Hammersmith and of the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Florence Eshalomi), who raised this in a very powerful way, are fed into that thought process and raised with the Housing Minister.

Alongside the social housing White Paper, we published a consultation on smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. The proposed changes would make smoke alarms mandatory in all social rented homes and extend requirements for carbon monoxide alarms in both the private and socially rented sectors. The reforms that we have set out will drive real cultural change throughout

the social housing sector. Everyone, from board members and councillors to senior officers and contractors, who has direct contact with residents will listen to what they say and treat them with the courtesy, dignity and respect that they deserve. The regulatory proposals will help to create a culture of accountability and compliance on health and safety requirements.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith asked for assurance that we are moving in the right direction, and I believe that we are. We will consider the point that he made extremely carefully. I hope that he feels that we are moving in the direction, and with the intention, that he suggests. The hon. Gentleman also asked what actions the Government are taking to deliver affordable housing. We will be delivering the £12 billion affordable housing programme over five years, the largest investment in social housing in a decade. It will provide over 180,000 new homes, and 32,000 of those will be for social rent. That is more than double the current programme. We do think that we are making progress there.

My hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Dr Mullan) spoke movingly about his own constituency and the experiences of his constituents. We recognise that timber has some environmental benefits, but we have always tried to be clear that the material should be used only when it is safe to do so. We have commissioned some work on this particular point, so perhaps I can suggest that he and I meet and discuss that in more detail. It would be interesting to hear the views of his constituents on the issue.

The hon. Member for Rochdale (Tony Lloyd) raised the issue of a forum to bring all of this together and make sure it is available. Perhaps I can write to him after the debate to try to bring that together in the most appropriate way, so that he can share it with his local authority, constituents, housing associations and others. I am afraid that I have to say to him and the hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh South West, on the point about consequentials, that I will raise it today with the Housing Minister and get back to them as soon as I can.

I know that there is a united desire to ensure that those living in high-rise social housing feel safe in their homes. We will restore the right for everyone in our country to live somewhere that is safe, decent and secure—a place that they are proud to call home. We want to drive meaningful change in the building industry and ensure that residents know that they are being properly supported and listened to. We can do that, and help drive the biggest improvements to building safety for decades: improvements that restore public confidence in our housing sector and that together create a robust, strengthened building safety system that has the welfare of residents at its heart.

3.54 pm

Andy Slaughter: I genuinely thank everybody who has contributed today, including the Front-Bench spokespeople, for the thoughtful, measured way in which these issues have been addressed. We are not going to agree on everything, but I hope we can find some common ground. Perhaps, in the few minutes I have left

to wind up, I will say, politely, where the areas are that still need some work and that are currently not being addressed by the Building Safety Bill, whose consideration is running in parallel with this debate.

I will just mention three areas. First, we need a more holistic approach to building safety, very much as the SNP spokesperson, the hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry) said. This is not just about cladding or about buildings over 18 metres; we must look at medium-rise buildings as well. Responsible landlords, which includes most social landlords, are looking at those and making no distinction in relation to them, and it is artificial for the Government to continue to make that distinction for no other reason than additional costs.

The same is true for other defects. It is about not just cladding but, as we have heard, the way buildings are constructed, escape mechanisms, alarms, compartmentalisation, sprinkler systems and other things. There is a whole range of defects, and fixing those must be funded in some way. This is not even just about residential buildings; it is about schools, care homes, hotels and other places where people, for one reason or another, will find themselves vulnerable.

Secondly, we do not have, and neither has there been proposed, adequate law or enforcement of that law, whether we are talking about building safety or electrical safety. This is the opportunity to get those things right so that people can feel safe and secure in their homes. The most poignant thing that came out of the documentary on Sunday that we have all been talking about was people feeling that they were vulnerable in their own home, whether through extreme disrepair or lack of fire safety.

Finally—I hope everybody would share this view, including those on the Government side, but I noted it particularly in the speeches of my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Florence Eshalomi) and the hon. Member for Rutherglen and Hamilton West (Margaret Ferrier)—we should really champion social housing. Let us no longer have the Conservative party as the party that bashes social housing. If the Conservatives genuinely care about levelling up, they have to care about social housing.

That means housing conditions, planned maintenance and housing development cannot be the victims here. It cannot be that they have to fail in order for fire safety to be addressed. That is vital for millions of our fellow citizens. I hope the Minister understands that; from the tone in which he has addressed the debate today, he appears to understand it, and I hope that is true of him and his colleagues. If so, we will not have wasted an hour and a half in Westminster Hall today—although in any case, Ms Rees, it has been a real pleasure to be here under your chairship.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered reducing fire risk in high rise social housing.

3.58 pm

Sitting suspended.

Decarbonising the UK: Role of Shipping Emissions

4 pm

Christina Rees (in the Chair): Before we begin, I encourage Members to wear masks when they are not speaking, in line with Government guidance and that of the House of Commons Commission. Please give each other and members of staff space when seated and when entering and leaving the room. Members should send their speaking notes by email to hansardnotes@parliament.uk. Similarly, officials should communicate electronically with Ministers.

Alexander Stafford (Rother Valley) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the role of shipping emissions in decarbonising the UK.

I refer the Chamber to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests. It is a pleasure to speak in this important debate with my fellow MPs from across the House, and I hope my position reflects their views that decarbonisation is an issue where we need to be truly united in our approach. In truth, the title of the debate is a misnomer, as I wish to discuss the positive contribution that the shipping industry and our excellent port infrastructure across the UK can make to achieving a low-carbon future. In particular, in the year of COP26, I wish to highlight the role that shipping carbon dioxide and hydrogen can play in ensuring a prosperous and environmentally sustainable future for British industry.

In the year of COP26, when the United Kingdom will be placed on the global stage, we must make significant progress towards our collective net zero targets. While we know that great strides are being made to decarbonise our electricity networks, with arrays of wind farms and solar panels covering our countryside, we must also pay attention to industry, where hundreds of thousands of jobs and significant segments of our economy are deployed. These sectors, such as our world-leading cement, glass, steel and petrochemicals, are not easy to switch to electrical power and will need to utilise carbon capture, utilisation and storage technologies—CCUS—to decarbonise.

The North sea has been the bedrock of our economy for decades, providing an economic shot in the arm to UK plc and delivering a world-leading expertise base that has been exported globally. Now is the time to turn our attention to putting the skills and infrastructure of this valuable national industry into the ports developing carbon capture and storage, which is essential in helping hard-to-abate sectors to decarbonise and in ensuring that natural gas supports the development of the emerging hydrogen economy. In essence, it is putting the upstream industry in reverse to develop CCUS.

We must recognise the support the Government have already placed behind this emerging sector, with a significant programme to support four industrial clusters. However, we should also recognise the guidance from the Committee on Climate Change, which calls for more ambition and the need to support as many potential CCUS industrial clusters as possible, whether that is in the Acorn Project in Scotland or projects in Teesside, Humberside or the north-west. These clusters are blessed with some of the best sub-surface geology to support permanent carbon dioxide storage. The projects are relatively simple to

understand, whether they are reforming hydrogen from natural gas coming onshore and then pumping the CO₂ captured back into depleted reservoirs, or perhaps CCUS-enabled power stations, such as the innovative net zero Whitetail clean energy NET power station planned for Teesside.

The UK is also seeking to become a global leader, with Europe's first at-scale direct air capture facility being developed by the UK-based Storegga in north-east Scotland, sucking CO₂ from the air and storing it underground. Whether we seek to reuse existing oil and gas infrastructure or to deploy new pipelines, CCUS has the potential to support communities and regional economies around the North-sea coastline for decades to come, as well as places further inland like Rother Valley.

Climate change is not an issue that is confined to the North sea or the Irish sea. The United Kingdom must come together to develop a net zero future. In Scotland, we see the UK's first hydrogen-powered community, but equally the Thames estuary and the Solent are embracing the potential for transitioning to a hydrogen-fuelled grid and energy generation. That presents a challenge. Without suitable geological storage, these hard-to-abate emissions are not able to sequester the carbon and prevent it from reaching the atmosphere. This is where our proud island nation is able to respond to the challenge and work collaboratively to provide a vibrant, low-carbon shipping and transportation network, connecting industrial clusters, such as refineries on the south coast, the south Wales emitters and the Thames estuary, to regions such as north-east Scotland. The latter possesses a world-leading geological storage resource, with more than a third of the UK's identified storage resource located within 50 km of existing gas pipeline infrastructure, which can be repurposed to take CO₂ offshore.

The Scottish cluster is a superb example, with the Acorn Project one of the most mature UK CCUS and hydrogen projects, with the backing of both the UK and Scottish Governments and even, dare I say it, the European Union. It will enable carbon capture deployment across a diverse set of emitters, capturing at least 6.2 megatonnes per annum of carbon dioxide by 2030. That represents around 60% of the ambition set out in the Government's great 10-point plan and is a vital part of it. To make that a reality, emitters from across the UK are seeking to make use of that national resource, along with storage locations along the east coast and the north west. The UK's port network needs to stand ready to respond to that demand and needs to invest in the significant infrastructure required to create a UK port network capable of handling large volumes of CO₂ and hydrogen shipping. Shipyards from Appledore to the Clyde will also need to mobilise to build the shipping tonnage needed to support this nascent industry.

From Peterhead port, Europe's largest fishing port, to Grangemouth, Scotland is readying itself to make investments to ensure that it can support the transition to a low-carbon economy. Existing jetties can be repurposed to support the berthing of ships bringing CO₂ for storage, and proximity to the network of existing oil and gas pipelines offers the possibility of easy access to eventual storage sites. For example, with the conversion of Peterhead power station to gas, which will be delivered by pipe from St Fergus, the jetty can be repurposed for handling both bulk CO₂ imports and hydrogen exports. That will allow shipping to commence on a more cost

and time-efficient basis than would have been the case for a cold start, and that would save up to about £50 million in up-front investment and three years for consenting and construction. We are already on the way and that provides a natural advantage.

Supported by associated infrastructure, pipe routes and with nearby land suitable for development, Peterhead port can play a strategically important role in the emerging energy transition, especially in handling CO₂ for eventual storage and hydrogen for eventual export. That is important. We want to export the hydrogen. We do not just want to make it for the UK; we want to be a world leader and export the technology and the resource abroad. As the sector evolves, and to take maximum advantage of the opportunities available for national and international trade, it is likely that a second berth will be required in the port within a few years to handle the volumes of potential CO₂ and hydrogen shipments, requiring further investment of up to £30 million.

Similar infrastructure and expertise can be used to support the import or export of hydrogen at other ports around the UK, such as the Forth ports. Given the proximity of the Forth ports to proposed blue hydrogen projects and to the UK's biggest source of offshore wind, that could be vital for the deployment of the UK's hydrogen sector, although it is worth saying that we should be aiming for green hydrogen, rather than blue. Blue is only the journey to get to where we want with green hydrogen. I want to make that perfectly clear: blue hydrogen is not the ultimate answer.

That port infrastructure and the shipping industry can also play a central role in supporting other areas of the UK to reduce emissions. The south Wales industrial cluster is the second largest CO₂ emitting cluster in the UK. It contains several key UK assets, including the UK's largest steelworks, where my father-in-law used to work, and the UK's largest combined-cycle gas turbine, the UK's largest energy port, the UK's only nickel refinery and the Royal Mint, as well as several key and core manufacturing industries. Around 20% to 30% of the UK's natural gas supply is imported into the UK through south Wales. With steel, cement, chemicals, refining and natural gas supplies all present in the region, CCUS will be essential for delivering net zero in south Wales. However, south Wales does not have any known local geological storage of CO₂ available, which means the development of a CO₂ shipping fleet would be essential for its decarbonisation. The south Wales industrial cluster includes several deep-water harbours and ports that could accommodate CO₂ shipping, and with the right investment, can develop a shipping network that can effectively ship and store CO₂ from this cluster at the Acorn Project and other sites.

On Teesside, meanwhile, innovative net zero power stations will also need access to resilient geological storage of CO₂. The Whitetail clean energy plant itself uses the highly innovative NET power technology, which combusts natural gas with oxygen, rather than with air, and uses supercritical CO₂ as a working fluid to drive a turbine instead of steam. As a result, nearly all air emissions, including traditional pollutants and CO₂, are eliminated and pipeline-quality CO₂ is produced, so that it can be captured and sent by ship from Teesside to storage locations. That is further proof of the UK being a global science and technology powerhouse. It is critical that this plant and further plants have optionality to send CO₂ to distributed stores.

Similarly, the Cavendish project in the Thames estuary is a large-scale, low-carbon hydrogen generation project. Based on the Isle of Grain, the hydrogen production facility will be near gas and electricity networks, power stations and a liquefied natural gas facility. It is expected to meet the large energy demand of London and the south-east for power, heating and transport. Again, this project will need the ability to capture and sequester its CO₂ emissions, but there is no suitable geological storage nearby, so shipping infrastructure will be essential for the project to sequester its CO₂ in suitable storage locations.

These are just a few examples of vital low-carbon projects for which access to port infrastructure and a shipping network capable of transporting CO₂ and hydrogen is not just nice to have but absolutely business-critical if we are to hit our ambitious targets. They are ambitious targets, but I know we will get there. However, we can only get there as one country—one country of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland combined—and if we can move around the CO₂, which is to say the “bad” CO₂. We need that shipping infrastructure to help us do that.

We are an island nation; we are Nelson's nation. We are a nation of sailors, and that is what we should do with our CO₂. We should embrace our former fleets; we should have the same clarion cry that we had with the merchant fleets of old, to move our CO₂ around and defeat the enemy that is climate change.

In this year of COP26, I am sure that the Minister and colleagues across the House will recognise the importance of shipping's role in reducing CO₂ emissions and I hope that we can work together to ensure that policy supports the development of the shipping infrastructure we must successfully transport CO₂ emissions and hydrogen, as needed, to achieve a net zero future for the whole of the UK. That will bolster the economy, lower our emissions and really turbocharge UK plc into the next millennium. I know that will happen and I also know that, although ports are important, Rother Valley will still be at the heart of hydrogen production in the future.

4.12 pm

The Lord Commissioner of Her Majesty's Treasury (Michael Tomlinson): First of all, may I apologise on behalf of the Minister who was going to respond to the debate, as both she and I were detained?

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Alexander Stafford) on securing this important debate. Not only in this debate but throughout his time in Parliament, he has championed this issue and similar issues, and I congratulate him, once again, on being at the forefront of the debate on these issues.

It is indeed London International Shipping Week and, as my hon. Friend has said, we are “Nelson's nation”, so this debate is incredibly timely. The shipping of carbon dioxide and hydrogen can play an important role in ensuring a prosperous and sustainable future for British industry, and in supporting efforts to meet our domestic net zero targets.

We have already made huge progress in decarbonising the electricity sector. In 2019, greenhouse gas emissions were down by 13% on 2018 levels. However, it is right to say that, in order to reach net zero emissions by 2050, we must go further. That is why in March we published the UK's industrial decarbonisation strategy. This document

[*Michael Tomlinson*]

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is the first to be published by a major economy and it sets out how industry can decarbonise in line with net zero while remaining competitive. Carbon capture, utilisation and storage, or CCUS, is one key abatement technology and it will be vital as we make this transition.

In May, we launched phase 1 CCUS cluster sequencing process. Its aim is to provisionally sequence those clusters that are most suited to deployment in the mid-2020s. This summer, we also published the UK's first ever hydrogen strategy, which will put the UK at the forefront of the race to develop low-carbon hydrogen, driving innovation, jobs and investment to scale up the technology. CCUS and low-carbon hydrogen are vital to transform sectors such as steel, cement and chemicals, which lack viable alternatives to achieve deep decarbonisation. The UK can become a world leader in CCUS and low-carbon hydrogen, helping to create world-leading low-carbon manufacturing clusters. Connecting industrial clusters, such as those in south Wales, the south coast of England, the Thames estuary and the firth of Forth in the northeast of Scotland will be critical to enabling the decarbonisation of our steel, chemical and refining industries. That is where the shipping sector can be crucial in realising that vast potential. In our business model update, published in May, we indicated our desire to accommodate the shipping and the non-pipeline transportation of carbon dioxide and, as part of the cluster sequencing process, we asked clusters to include details of future carbon dioxide shipping capability in their cluster sequencing proposals.

Turning to the future direction, we recognise the importance of non-pipeline transportation and shipping for decarbonisation of the broader economy and allowing deep decarbonisation. We are currently working with industry and the devolved Administrations to understand how best to incorporate non-pipeline transportation and shipping within a UK carbon dioxide network.

This is an extremely important issue for the sector, but more importantly, for the planet. I apologise for missing the beginning of the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley, and I make a commitment that if there is any point that he raised in my absence, the Minister will address it directly in writing and leave a copy in the Libraries of both Houses. This is an extremely important issue, and I endorse my hon. Friend's view that shipping will play an important role in reducing carbon dioxide emissions. I look forward to working across the House, and with the Minister, to ensure that the UK develops the appropriate infrastructure to enable new low-carbon technologies such as low-carbon hydrogen, and meet the challenges that we face.

Question put and agreed to.

4.17 pm

Sitting suspended.

4.30 pm

Christina Rees (in the Chair): Before we begin, I encourage Members to wear masks when they are not speaking, in line with current Government guidance and that of the House of Commons Commission. Please also give each other and members of staff space when seated and when entering and leaving the room. Members should send their speaking notes by email to hansardnotes@parliament.uk. Similarly, officials should communicate electronically with Ministers.

Christian Wakeford (Bury South) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered real fur sales in the UK.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Rees. Banning fur is increasingly an issue of public concern, reflected in the decision that the vast majority of consumers now make to avoid buying fur products and the huge support for the Fur Free Britain campaign—try saying that five times fast—led by the Humane Society International UK. In 2000, this House set an example for the world by banning fur farming in England and Wales, and Scotland and Northern Ireland enacted bans in 2002. We are clearly a nation of animal lovers, yet our existing legislation on the fur trade contradicts that fundamental aspect of being British.

Pressure for change is growing both inside Parliament and among the broader public. More than 1 million people have signed Fur Free Britain's petition to ban fur sales, and a group of more than 100 MPs and peers signed my cross-party letter to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs just last month, which called on the Government to ban the import and sale of animal fur. A similar number of MPs signed the live early-day motion on the same issue, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch), and the hon. Member for Coventry North West (Taiwo Owatemi) tabled a ten-minute rule Bill on this matter in April, so it is clear that Members want the animal fur trade to end.

Tracey Crouch (Chatham and Aylesford) (Con): I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend not just for securing this debate but for being kind enough to mention the early-day motion in my name, which is currently live and has been signed by the highest number of MPs in this Session. In the previous Session, 140 MPs signed the early-day motion. Does he agree that that shows that there is huge cross-party support on this issue, reflecting public opinion? There is really only one outcome, which is to ban fur sales, full stop.

Christian Wakeford: How could I not agree with my hon. Friend, given that I name-dropped her in my speech? That shows that there is clear support not only in this Chamber but in the main Chamber and both Houses.

I invite hon. Members to imagine a scene—I apologise in advance for the picture that this will paint. A nearby neighbour is keeping two dogs outside the house in a wire cage. The cage measures not more than 1 square metre and has a wire floor and a wire ceiling. The dogs are never allowed to leave the cage, and over time exhibit signs of mental distress. They take their frustration out on one another and repeatedly pace. Over time, one

dog's legs become deformed and have open sores from standing on the wire floor. The other has untreated diseased eyes. They have no escape from the intense summer sun or the freezing winter nights. One day, the neighbour forces electrical probes into either end of each dog and ends their pitiful lives.

That scene would be utterly intolerable for any right-thinking person. I imagine that in witnessing such treatment of animals, a great many, if not all, of my colleagues, friends and the great British public would have called either the police or the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and would have rightly expected that individual to be prosecuted for animal cruelty. But in all important ways, the scene I describe is not hypothetical. If we simply switch the animals in the cages from dogs to foxes and move the location to Finland, Poland, China or another in a decreasing list of nations still permitting fur farming, that animal cruelty is a daily reality for far too many animals. More than 100 million animals—foxes, mink, raccoon dogs, chinchillas and others—are kept like that daily.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): The hon. Gentleman is making an excellent speech. As well as being cruel, is it not utterly illogical that Britain, having rightly taken the decision to ban fur farming here, continues to be willing to allow the products of cruel fur farming to be imported into the country? Does that not strengthen the case, supported by so many right hon. and hon. Members, for banning its sale in this country?

Christian Wakeford: I completely agree. It is a cruel irony that we have illegalised the practice in this country but offshored cruelty. It is not something that I am particularly happy about, and hopefully we will see change.

The 5 million or so animals caught for their fur in barbaric traps that are banned in the UK fare no better. Sometimes they are left languishing in traps for days, and often chew off their own limbs to escape.

Our debate today should allow us to discuss whether the UK should be playing any part in an industry that we find so unconscionable in our own country. Despite our previous world-leading progress in banning this outdated and cruel practice, we have since continued to allow the import and sale of fur from abroad, effectively outsourcing animal suffering. Since 2003, we have imported—

Emma Hardy (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab): The hon. Gentleman is making an excellent speech. On wanting to ban imports, we know that at the moment the Government are interested in doing trade deals with other countries. Could it not be a condition that we do not wish to do trade deals with countries that continue to exploit animals in this way?

Christian Wakeford: I completely agree; in fact, it is almost as if the hon. Member has read part of my speech in advance. If we are exporting and importing cruelty, it is fundamentally wrong. Any sane, normal-minded person would find it absolutely intolerable.

Since 2003, we have imported more than £800 million of animal fur from countries including China, Finland, France and Poland. HSIS estimates that this equates to some 20 million animals—to let that sink in, 20 million animals have gone through this cruelty.

Margaret Ferrier (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Ind): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing this important debate. Does he agree that the health risk presented by the fur trade needs to be better publicised so that consumers may make more informed decisions? The intensive breeding conditions in these fur farms lead to poor hygiene, stress and low genetic diversity, creating a perfect breeding ground for disease.

Christian Wakeford: I completely agree with the hon. Lady. The fact that we have to advertise where our food is coming from but not where our clothes are coming from is wrong on so many levels.

We must now be strong enough to eradicate our involvement—I hope any involvement—in the perpetuation of these animals suffering for such a completely unnecessary, frivolous purpose as to be turned into a pompom on a hat or a trim on a collar. If we can legislate to say that the practice is too cruel in our country, we must take the next step and legislate to say that it is too cruel for us, in effect, to underwrite it in other countries as well.

John Spellar (Warley) (Lab): From his representations to Ministers, has the hon. Gentleman had any indication as to the reasons for their reluctance to do something that would be so popular—justifiably so—with the public, in order to prevent this cruel trade and make a major contribution to eliminating it not only in the United Kingdom but across the planet? Would this not only be a major exercise, but one that is fairly simple and straightforward to do?

Christian Wakeford: Again, I completely agree. I hope I am not putting words in the Minister's mouth when she responds, but it is the right, fair and humane thing to do. There is overwhelming public—

Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): I thank the hon. Gentleman, who is making an excellent speech and being so kind in taking so many interventions, for bringing this debate to the Chamber today. Does he agree that it is not just the humane thing to do, but that there is also a public health interest in making sure this happens? Humane Society International has reported that there are covid-19 outbreaks on more than 400 mink farms in 12 countries to date. While we are all grappling with the pandemic, surely we must also have the public health interest at the forefront of our concerns.

Christian Wakeford: That is not a matter I was going to cover in this speech, but the hon. Lady makes a very educated and well-informed point. Certainly, in pandemic Britain, we need to think about this. If we allow more people to be infected across the globe, it is obviously going to come back to our shores as well.

As I said, there is overwhelming public support for a fur ban. A recent Yonder poll in May found that more than seven in 10 members of the public would support a ban on the import or sale of fur in the UK, including more than 50% who stated their strong support.

Kirsten Oswald (East Renfrewshire) (SNP): The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. Does he agree that, while there are goods with fur attached—for pompoms, for instance, as he indicated—that level of public supports

[Kirsten Oswald]

suggests that perhaps the public neither know nor wish to be purchasing real fur? If the Government here took steps to prevent that from happening, the public would be very grateful.

Christian Wakeford: I completely agree. People's shopping habits have fundamentally changed in recent years, and there has been a growth in the import of faux fur, but again this comes down to a labelling issue. Far too often, people who buy faux fur end up wearing real fur, so there needs to be a wider conversation around that.

A YouGov poll from 2020 revealed that the public consider fashion brands selling real fur to be "unethical", "outdated", "cruel" and "out of touch". Is it not time to bring our legislation in line with public feeling and sever our ties with this inhumane industry for good?

We also have a duty to protect this nation of animal lovers from unwittingly funding this industry, which they so despise. In recent years, scores of British retailers have been found to be mis-selling real fur products as faux fur, leading unsuspecting customers to prop up the industry. It is essential that we take action to ban this duplicitous practice. Banning fur imports and sales could create appropriate penalties for retailers found to be selling real fur, and could be a significant step forward in this regard.

Jason McCartney (Colne Valley) (Con): I thank my hon. Friend for giving way and add my voice to the cross-party support for banning the import of fur sales. Does he agree that when we set the standard, some 20 years ago, by banning fur farming here in the UK, other countries followed our lead? If we can set the example here, not only will we help animal welfare in this country, but other countries will follow. Does he agree that we should take the lead?

Christian Wakeford: I completely agree. As I have said in the Chamber in other debates on different topics, we are global Britain. We have a proud reputation across the globe and when we speak, people should listen. Other countries have followed, and we need only look at Israel, which has a complete fur ban across the country already.

British high streets generally mirror public opinion on fur. The vast majority of our stores are now fur free, including Marks & Spencer, Selfridges and Next, as well as high-end fashion and designers, such as Stella McCartney, Burberry and Chanel. Businesses are moving away from using fur of their own accord, driven by the most profound moral argument for doing so and by changing customer spending habits, proving that a ban would only have a limited impact on businesses.

There are a relatively small number of organisations still working in the fur industry. A managed period to phase them out should ensure that they can transition to alternative humane materials and products.

Sir Roger Gale (North Thanet) (Con): We agree, first of all, that in this day and age there is no justification whatsoever for using real fur, because so many good synthetic alternatives are available. I do not want to broaden the debate too far, but is this not also yet another form of trophy hunting? This kind of trophy, whether a fur coat on somebody's back or an animal mat on a floor, has no place in a civilised society.

Christian Wakeford: I would disagree slightly, because some out there would try to picture hunting with some degree of romanticism, but that is just not true of the fur trade, which is barbaric and cruel. It is not hunting, but catching animals in traps and leaving them to bleed out or even worse, so although I disagree on that point, I completely agree with my right hon. Friend's sentiment.

Brexit has given us a unique opportunity to forge a new standard for animal welfare and protection, in keeping with our values as a country. Previously, 80% of animal welfare legislation came from the European Union, and last year the Minister of State, Lord Goldsmith, confirmed that following the end of the Brexit transition period we will be able to properly consider raising our standards on the fur trade even further. We must now move forward from those words and legislate for real change.

Leaving the European Union has started a new chapter in our trading relationship with the rest of the world, and banning fur will send a strong message that our trading principles will be synonymous with our high standards of animal welfare. Cities, states and countries around the world are implementing their own versions of this legislation, with Israel recently becoming the first country in the world to ban the sale of fur. Our new trading freedoms are ours to become an integral part of the global movement against this outdated industry, and we must not let this opportunity pass us by.

Supporters of the fur industry—unfortunately there are a few, and I have been trolled by many of them in the last few days—claim that it should be left purely to the market and consumer choice. Yet despite the unpopularity of fur and its almost complete absence from the high street, the UK is still responsible for importing a large amount of animal fur and online sales are persistent.

We already have laws in place banning the sale of cat, dog and seal fur. We do not leave the fate of these species to market forces, nor should we, but we do for other fur-bearing animals. A ban on both imports and sales of fur can guarantee an end to the UK's status as a global trading hub for fur.

Backers of fur have also claimed that an import and sales ban could jeopardise the UK's effort to strike new trade deals around the world. This claim is little more than hyperbole and fearmongering. A ban not only would be consistent with our World Trade Organisation obligations but would be unlikely to be a red-line negotiation issue in any trade deal, because trade in fur is not economically significant enough.

I would also take this moment to pre-empt any suggestion that such a thing as humane fur farming exists. That is a fallacy and a downright lie, but do not take it from me alone. I would like to read a brief quote from a former CEO of the British Fur Trade Association, who recently, of his own volition, left the industry after 10 years and now supports a fur ban. He said:

"Over time I realised that whatever soundbites we devised to reassure consumers, retailers and politicians, neither welfare regulations nor any industry certification scheme, would ever change the reality of these animals being stuck in tiny wire cages for their entire lives."

It is now time that we end the double standard of having a ban on fur farming while importing the same cruelty from overseas. The fur industry is outmoded and out of touch with the modern values and principles

of the humane treatment of animals. I implore my parliamentary colleagues to join me in condemning it to the history books, as we have so many other cruel and archaic treatments of animals.

In conclusion, following the Government's call for evidence on the fur trade over the summer, given the strong public and parliamentary support for this measure and noting the Government's commitment and ambition to be a world leader on animal welfare standards, I ask the Minister to use her response to today's debate to reassure me and everyone in this room that legislative action to end the UK's involvement in the global fur trade will be imminently forthcoming. It is not just a popular thing to do; it is the right thing to do.

Christina Rees (in the Chair): We will put an informal time limit on of about four or five minutes, and we should get everyone in.

4.47 pm

Steven Bonnar (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Rees.

Historically, the UK was the foremost leader when it came to animal welfare—the first island of nations in the world to implement legislation protecting animal rights. Fur farming has rightly been banned in the UK since 2003, yet we continue to import tens of millions of pounds of animal fur each year. If it is too cruel an industry to have on our shores, how can we justify importing fur that is farmed using the same inhumane methods that are illegal in the UK? As the hon. Member for Bury South (Christian Wakeford) said, all we have managed to do is outsource our animal cruelty overseas.

The slaughter methods used on fur farms are horrendously cruel. Before an animal reaches its first birthday, it will be slaughtered using one of the following methods: by electrocution, with probes inserted into the animal's mouth; by gassing, slowly starving the animal of oxygen; or by brutally beating the animal to death. Alternatively, many animals have their necks broken or are poisoned with noxious chemicals that result in organ failure. In some particularly horrific cases, animals may even be skinned alive. How can we really, truly call ourselves a progressive and caring society when we allow such actions to take place, purely for commercial purposes?

The fur trade not only has a devastating impact on innocent animals but also creates a risk to human welfare from zoonotic diseases. Last year, we witnessed a devastating cull of mink in Europe because of large outbreaks of covid-19. Dangerous viruses thrive when animals are kept in filthy, crowded conditions. By allowing the sale of fur in Britain, we are inadvertently supporting a reservoir of deadly viruses. The UK public overwhelmingly reject these barbaric and entirely outdated practices. One YouGov poll shows that 72% of our population want to see a ban on the importation and sale of fur.

Alex Davies-Jones (Pontypridd) (Lab): The hon. Gentleman mentioned that 72% of people want to see a ban. In Wales, the number is actually higher: 82% of people in Wales want to see a ban on the UK fur industry. It is vital that the Minister works with all nations of the United Kingdom and all devolved Administrations to tackle this problem head-on.

Steven Bonnar: I absolutely agree with that sentiment. I know that people in Wales are very conscious when it comes to farming and other sentient animals. I take that fully on board, and I hope that the Minister will do the same.

According to the Humane Society International, around 100 million animals are bred each year to be slaughtered in intensive fur farms, including foxes, chinchillas, mink, raccoons, dogs and rabbits. The majority of this fur—around 85%—is produced by intensively farming animals in callous, claustrophobic battery cage systems to specifically supply the fashion industry. The ban on the sale of real fur is long overdue. Subjecting animals to extreme cruelty in the name of fashion is an abhorrence in direct opposition to animal welfare standards, and the values we hold dearly in Scotland—and of course in Wales and across the devolved nations.

While the farming of animals for fur has been illegal in the United Kingdom since January 2003, and the sale and importation of cat and dog fur has been illegal since December 2008, each year the UK still imports around £75 million-worth of fur sourced from other animals. That is roughly 3 million dead animals. It is undoubtedly clear that the Government cannot be trusted on animal welfare. In response to an open petition calling for an end to the fur trade, the UK Government stated that

“national bans are less effective than working at an international level on animal welfare standards.”

They went on to say that they were helping to phase out cruel practices, as well as encouraging an outright ban on fur from species such as cats and dogs.

The answer from the UK Government is a total cop out. In Scotland we see all fur production as cruel and inhumane; there is no need to differentiate between species in such a way. No animal is more or less important than the other. Once again, this proves that Scotland is leading the UK on the issues that matter, not for the first time and not just in this area. There is no more important a step that we can take towards ending this cruelty than to simply end our participation with it. If this Government continue to allow the sale of fur from overseas, then we will remain complicit in an industry that causes immense animal suffering and environmental harm. The sale of fur is simply not aligned with the ethical trajectory of Scotland. This is what Scotland wants and has asked for from this Tory Government from day one.

Animal welfare is an area that the Scottish National party takes extremely seriously, and I would urge the UK Government to follow the Scottish Government's leading example on these issues. We have created new legislation to further protect animals and wildlife, with the Animals and Wildlife (Penalties, Protections and Powers) (Scotland) Bill, which enforces tougher penalties on perpetrators of animal abuse, increases sentences from a maximum of 12 months in prison and a £20,000 fine to five years in prison and an unlimited fine, and also enshrines animal sentience into law. Nevertheless, regulation of international trade remains a reserved matter, and as such, it is a decision for this Government. We are imploring them to make the right decision. I urge the UK Government to listen to the people, listen to the morality of the argument, and prohibit the import of new fur products.

Christina Rees (in the Chair): I remind Members to indicate that they wish to speak by standing between speakers.

4.53 pm

Emma Hardy (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab): It is a pleasure to be part of this debate, Ms Rees, and I thank the hon. Member for Bury South (Christian Wakeford) for securing it. I will be quite brief, as the UK can be proud of its extremely high animal welfare standards and the fact that we have banned fur farms. I intervened on the hon. Member for Bury South to talk about the opportunity we have with the trade deals coming up to not just stop the importation of fur, but to maintain those animal standards in all our imports. I would press on the Minister the need when making these trade deals to say that we should not have any reduction in animal welfare standards—be that in fur, in meat production or in any way whatsoever.

I am pleased that the hon. Member for Bury South mentioned that consumer choice is very important. However, sometimes consumers mistakenly buy fur products because they are incorrectly labelled, and because they cannot clearly identify where the products come from. He made the point that we know the country that our meat has come from, but we do not have the same knowledge with fur products; that is something else I would encourage the Government to look at. There are really high-quality synthetic alternatives, and if they were clearly labelled and made available, I think consumers would certainly want to choose them.

The evidence suggests that the great British public are overwhelmingly against fur farming and that they want to see high standards of animal welfare maintained. The opinion polls show that they think that fur farming is absolutely unacceptable. I conclude by saying to the Minister that I would like to see this commitment to animal welfare reflected in the trade deals the Government reach with other countries.

4.55 pm

Patricia Gibson (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP): I am delighted to speak in the debate, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Bury South (Christian Wakeford) on securing it. I recall participating in a debate on this very issue on 4 June 2018—that date is important because it was the same day that Scotland became the first country in the United Kingdom to enact legislation banning the use of wild animals in circuses. The same week, a similar ban was imposed in Slovakia, and yet the UK Government insisted that we could not impose such a ban unilaterally as a member of the EU. Another day, another EU membership myth busted.

The fact is that the farming of animals for fur is not permitted in the UK. As we have heard, the next logical step is to ban the sale of animal fur products. Anything else is sheer hypocrisy—outsourcing our poor fashion choices. The contradiction suggests that although our law recognises the cruelty and barbarism of farming animals for their fur, as long as these animals are not farmed here, we are content for their fur to be imported into the UK. That position is illogical and hypocritical, and we must take the next step of banning the importation of animal fur products. It is quite a simple choice.

The demand for fur products in the UK has been in steady decline for decades, as consumers increasingly find them unethical and unacceptable. The inboxes of the people in this room are testament that our constituents continue to be concerned about this matter. Where consumers lead, businesses will follow.

Margaret Ferrier: Many large retailers such as Marks & Spencer and John Lewis are already proactively moving away from fur sales and, as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle (Emma Hardy) said, public opinion is overwhelmingly in support of a ban on the importation and sale of fur. Would the hon. Member for North Ayrshire and Arran (Patricia Gibson) agree that there is no need for a regulated industry and that, instead, an outright ban is the only viable way forward?

Patricia Gibson: The hon. Lady makes an excellent point. It is true that shops such as Marks & Spencer, Adidas and H&M have now rejected the fur industry, and designers such as Stella McCartney and Vivienne Westwood have supported calls for Britain to become the first European nation to ban fur sales. Of course, businesses are in the business of making money, and they are following where customers are taking them. It is about time that instead of continually playing catch-up, the UK Government responded to consumers and constituents in the UK. Israel is leading on the issue, and its ban on the sale of fur will come into force by the end of this year. For the UK to do the same would be a very logical next step given that the sale of cat, dog and seal fur is already banned. What are we waiting for?

I hope that the Minister is listening, and that we do not have to come back in another couple of years to repeat the same calls for something so humane, which has both widespread public support and firm cross-party support. Let us just get on and do it. There is no reason to hang about and not get it done.

4.58 pm

Taiwo Owatemi (Coventry North West) (Lab): Thank you, Ms Rees. I am grateful to be able to speak in this important debate, although I am frustrated that we need it in the first place.

In April, I introduced a Bill to the House that called for the fur trade to be banned once and for all in Britain. I called on colleagues across the House to step up and make history, making the UK the first country in the world to prohibit the sale of fur in full. I am therefore extremely disappointed that this cruel practice continues to be an issue in the United Kingdom. Twenty-two years ago, my hon. Friend the Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle) introduced a Bill to ban fur farming. She said it was time to

“put an end to a cruel barbaric practice”.—[*Official Report*, 5 March 1999; Vol. 326, c. 1339.]

That Bill was taken up by the last Labour Government and a year later it became law, making Britain the first country in the world to ban fur farming outright.

Despite that decision, the products of fur farming have continued for the past 20 years to be imported into our country and sold in our shops. We do, however, have the option of eliminating that double standard and once again making history by becoming the first country in the world to ban the importation and sale of fur. The Government have shown some willingness and

stated that they want to drive up animal welfare standards in the United Kingdom. Banning the fur trade in its entirety, including fur imports, would be a bold step toward reaching these aims.

We need actions, not just warm words from the Government. In banning the fur trade, we will have the overwhelming support of the animal-loving British public. Many Members have spoken about the YouGov poll commissioned by the Humane Society International, which showed that 72% of the British public support a complete ban and that only 3% of people even wear animal fur. This year alone, over 60 of my constituents have reached out and asked me to take action against ongoing fur sales. I am sure every Member participating in the debate has received similar correspondence. My constituents have made it clear that they have had enough of this cruel and often violent industry. Fur stoles in the UK are often taken from animals that are killed by electrocution after having spent their short, unhappy lives inside crowded cages.

John Spellar: Given that there is such overwhelming support in this House and among the public for taking this measure, can anyone understand why the Government are so reluctant to do something that might, for once, make them popular?

Taiwo Owatemi: I am hoping the Minister will be able to answer that. We all hope that the Government will be able to provide some clarity on when they hope to ban the sale of fur.

Fur is regularly imported from the EU and several other countries. This is completely unacceptable. It is once again up to this House to set the highest standard possible, deciding what trade we believe to be ethical and wish to permit. I urge colleagues across the House to join me in saying that Britain no longer wishes to permit the barbaric trade in animal fur, instead choosing to make history instead by being the first country in the world to ban the trade in full. I call on the Government to step up and support tough legislation that would see the fur trade consigned to history. I thank the hon. Member for Bury South (Christian Wakeford) for securing the debate. We must all continue to speak out against the terrible practice.

Christina Rees (in the Chair): I want to call Front Benchers at 5.08 pm, so will the remaining two speakers be wary of that?

5.2 pm

Sir Roger Gale (North Thanet) (Con): Thank you, Ms Rees; I can be very brief. I had not intended to intervene at all, but I want to reinforce the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury South (Christian Wakeford) and congratulate him on securing the debate.

It is many years since I went out on the ice with the International Fund for Animal Welfare and watched baby seals being clubbed to death and then skinned—either alive or dead—in the interest of what I believe is known as fashion. I do not think the animal knows very much whether it is a caged animal bred for fur or whether it is a wild animal slaughtered for fur. The fact of the matter is that neither of these practices should be acceptable in civilised society. Neither is necessary, because, as I said earlier, the synthetics are so good.

We know that a considerable amount of material is imported, very often as trim. Half the time, the people that are buying a pair of kids' slippers or something with a fur trim on it do not actually know that it is real fur, and they would be horrified if they did know. There is only one way around this. My friend the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) said very correctly that it is completely anomalous that we should abandon fur farming in the UK and then allow the product to be imported from other countries. It has got to stop. It can stop now. The Government have a good track record of bringing forward animal welfare legislation, and I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to make sure that this is added to that portfolio. Let us stop it now.

5.4 pm

Allan Dorans (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (SNP): It is a pleasure, as always to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Rees. Sometimes, we—*[Interruption.]*

Christina Rees (in the Chair): Order.

Sitting suspended for Divisions in the House.

5.28 pm

On resuming—

Christina Rees (in the Chair): The debate may now continue until 5.54 pm, and I intend to call the Front Benchers at 5.32 pm.

Allan Dorans: Sometimes we imagine that our concern for the wellbeing of other species is very modern, but in 1783—nearly a quarter of a millennium ago—a young ploughboy, Rabbie Burns, Scotland's bard, who was born in my constituency, wrote of the feelings of animals in his famous poems "To a Mouse", "On Glenriddell's Fox Breaking His Chain" and many others, clearly displaying his understanding that animals have feelings and suffer pain. By 2021, we have so much evidence of animal sentience that we must reconsider all our behaviour towards them.

In my short time as an MP, I have found myself writing to Ministers and speaking in the House, urging them to act on a wide range of animal welfare-related matters, including the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill, an end to lab testing with animals, stiffer penalties for cruelty to animals, a ban on the use of cages, traps and puppy farms, and of course an end to the fur trade. As the RSPCA put it:

"Evidence from multiple scientific studies has helped us to understand that a wide range of animals are sentient beings. This means they have the capacity to experience positive and negative feelings such as pleasure, joy, pain and distress that matter to the individual."

As many as 2,500 scientific studies have proven the existence of animal sentience across a dizzying array of species. To put it simply, like us they know what it is to experience the horror of what we do to them, to live in agonising fear of it and—if they survive—to have to live with the memory of it.

The fur trade also means terror for sentient creatures. As one of my constituents put it to me:

"I don't wear fur because I think it's cruel. Every year around the world millions of animals are kept in small wire cages or caught in metal leghold traps before being brutally killed, all for a product no one needs, a frivolous piece of fur trim. The practice

[Allan Dorans]

of keeping and rearing animals in cages unfit for purpose and to kill them for their fur for profit is barbaric, cruel and inhumane and for any country to condone and allow such fur to be imported and sold is equally as barbaric.”

The message is clear; the call for evidence is complete. A total ban on fur imports and sales is required, and it is required now.

5.30 pm

Martyn Day (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP): It is a pleasure to take part in the debate, and I am grateful to the hon. Member for Bury South (Christian Wakeford) for securing it, for the way in which he opened it and for his activity on this issue to date, leading up to it.

This has been a genuinely positive debate, with speakers from all parties in the House in common cause on banning fur imports. With regard to fur sales, my own attitude can quite simply be summed up as, “I just dinnae like it”, and I wholeheartedly agree that fur sales should be banned.

The process of fur farming can too often lead to unacceptable and cruel conditions for far too many animals. As fur imports in the UK are currently a reserved matter, it is incumbent on the UK Government to introduce a ban on the import of fur products. I know that view is shared by many of my constituents and indeed by many people throughout these isles. Indeed, several opinion polls in recent years have shown that a ban on fur imports would be overwhelmingly supported by the public.

So it will come as no surprise that I was delighted to be one of more than 100 MPs and peers to have signed the cross-party letter to the Environment Secretary organised by the hon. Member for Bury South, and to have been a signatory both to early-day motion 193, on “The fur trade in the UK”, which was tabled on 14 June 2021, and early-day motion 267, on “Real fur imports”, which was tabled on 9 March 2020. Indeed, many of my colleagues in the Scottish National party have also supported these calls. Animal welfare is an issue that we take extremely seriously and we support the steps to strengthen animal welfare legislation in the Scottish Government’s programme for government. As I have said, international trade is a reserved matter, and until we have the power to determine this matter for ourselves in Scotland we will continue to urge the UK Government to make the right decision, to listen to the people and to morally end the import of new fur products.

As we have heard, fur farming across the UK was banned in 2003 because of the related cruelty and suffering, and the importation of cat and dog fur has been illegal since December 2008. The import, export and sale of cat and dog fur, and of seal pelts, is already banned in the European Union. However, the UK Government continue to be guilty by proxy of that cruelty and suffering, with the equivalent of fur from around two million animals being imported to the UK each year.

Investigations show that the physical and mental abuse suffered by animals kept in barbaric conditions, which the industry professes to be humane, include the use of leghold traps and keeping animals for their entire lives in cages that are 1 metre square. Their deaths are

equally horrific, with animals being beaten to death or even skinned alive, as we have heard from a number of speakers today.

Banning fur farming across the UK was world-leading and, with almost 20 European countries following suit, it showed what good leadership can achieve. The UK Government’s response to an e-petition calling for a fur import ban back in 2018 said that such a ban would be unlikely while Britain was a member of the EU. Now, it will not have escaped anyone’s attention that we are no longer a member of the EU, so I wonder whether the Minister can tell us what excuse the UK Government have now. Even the former chief executive of the British Fur Trade Association and director of standards at the International Fur Federation accepts that nothing “would ever change the reality of these animals being stuck in tiny wire cages”.

In conclusion, although we have missed the chance to lead the world by banning the sale of fur across the UK—Israel has passed an amendment to its wildlife protection law to ban the sale of wild animal fur from any source and so has the state of California—can we not at least be among the front-runners in bringing an end to this brutal and inhumane industry?

I look forward to hearing the Minister’s response.

5.34 pm

Olivia Blake (Sheffield, Hallam) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Ms Rees. I thank the hon. Member for Bury South (Christian Wakeford) for calling this debate on an issue of great importance for so many of our constituents around the UK. The hon. Member referred to us as a nation of animal lovers and he painted a picture of an intolerable situation that the Government have the power to solve easily. We have had a good debate and we have heard a lot of support for action from across the Chamber.

It has been great to hear the different arguments made by many Members from different parties. We heard about how good synthetic fur quality is from the right hon. Member for North Thanet (Sir Roger Gale). We heard about the brutal treatment of animals and an upsetting description of the conditions they live in from the hon. Member for Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill (Steven Bonnar). We also heard that this issue matters to people across the UK. As my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Alex Davies-Jones) pointed out, in Wales a greater proportion of people—82%—back a ban.

I wanted to make some remarks about how long this journey has been. I am proud that my hon. Friend the Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle) introduced a Bill to ban fur farming in the UK that was turned into reality and made law over 20 years ago by a Labour Government. Britain was the first country to enact a ban on this cruel industry and I am pleased to see countries across Europe have since followed suit.

The ban was a huge step forward and as my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner) eloquently said almost four years ago, while it halted the production of fur in the UK, fur farming was outsourced—a comment that was echoed today by my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn). It was also pointed out that we have a huge opportunity and things have changed since then.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle (Emma Hardy) raised the point that trade deals could help halt the trade and could hold countries to account to stop these practices. We know that other countries have less stringent animal welfare regulations, and that should be pursued. Although the public mood against the fur trade is overwhelming, we have yet to cut our economic ties to the trade completely and the UK continues to import and export tens of millions of pounds of fur products each year. This must stop. As long as we are trading these products, we are complicit in their production. It is right that we support a ban on trading fur in the UK and part of that must involve addressing the scandal of real fur being passed off as fake, as was mentioned today.

Some argue against a ban by claiming the need for fur to be ethically sourced instead, but it is well known that these so-called ethically sourced schemes unfortunately fall short. It is difficult to understand what best practice could mean as regards the conditions these animals are kept in. We know best practice in animal welfare can be so poor that it means very little. How could best practice be anything but poor? It is impossible to keep wild animals in captivity in the conditions we have heard about and to tend to their welfare.

Perhaps the most damaging examples to advocates of ethical sourcing are places like Germany and Sweden where the fur industry is being phased out. That is because the rules in those countries for the welfare of foxes and mink in captivity are so high that businesses are simply not profitable. We heard about the impact on public health and those examples demonstrate that cruelty cannot be regulated out of the industry and that it poses extra risks—unfortunately, it is a requirement for the industry to function successfully.

There is a direct contradiction between the ethical treatment of animals and the commercial viability of the fur trade, so I welcome the Government's consultation on the sale of fur in the UK. I wonder why it has not come sooner. When I was preparing for this debate, I read through the robust Westminster Hall debate on the issue almost four years ago. My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge concluded by praising the standard of the contributions just as I have, but warned:

“My worry is that they will think that all we have had is a debate. That is the challenge for the Minister to go away to think about.”—[*Official Report*, 4 June 2018; Vol. 642, c. 32WH.]

The Minister has been thinking about it for a long time now. What is the timetable for the consultation, and when does the Government hope to legislate?

My hon. Friend the Member for Coventry North West (Taiwo Owatemi) was right in her recent speech in the House that our moral objection to the fur trade should not be bargained away in any future trade deals. There really is no time to lose. I was so pleased to hear her excellent contribution today. I hope the Minister can provide us with more answers on timescales and where we want to get to. Clearly, the whole House is behind this.

Christina Rees (in the Chair): Would the Minister be so kind as to leave a couple of minutes at the end for summing up?

5.40 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Rebecca Pow): Of course I will, Ms Rees. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Bury South (Christian Wakeford) for bringing this debate, and all other hon. Members who have spoken today. It is obvious from the speeches and all those interventions that there is great strength of feeling on this topic. I spoke on it myself as a Back Bencher when I was in the all-party parliamentary group for animal welfare. Similarly, the support for the early-day motion that my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) has tabled shows the strength of feeling.

We know that we are a nation of animal lovers. We were the first country in the world to pass legislation to protect animals, and we have developed a lasting legacy of improving and enhancing animal health and welfare. I do not think anyone in this room would deny that. Since 2010 we have banned the use of conventional battery cages for laying hens, made CCTV mandatory in slaughterhouses, modernised our licensing system for dog breeding and pet sales, introduced the popular Finn's Law, banned the commercial third-party sales of puppies and kittens and led work to implement humane trapping standards. However, we do have the opportunity to do more and go further. Animal welfare is an absolute priority of the Government, as I think that raft of measures demonstrates.

We have outlined our aims and ambitions for improving animal welfare in our action plan, published on 12 May. We have introduced landmark legislation in this Session that will recognise animals as sentient beings in UK law, and we are establishing an expert committee to ensure that animal sentience is considered as part of policy making. We have launched the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill, which will introduce new powers to crack down on puppy smuggling, a ban on the live export of animals for fattening and slaughter, a ban on keeping primates as pets, and new powers for police to provide greater protection to livestock from dangerous and out of control dogs. I think Members will agree that it is an impressive list.

As Members know, fur farming has been banned in England and Wales since 2000 and in Scotland and Northern Ireland since 2002. There are also restrictions on some skin and fur products that cannot be legally imported into the UK. Those include fur and products from cats and dogs and sealskin products from commercial hunts. There is a small exemption there for subsistence seal farming by individual groups. We have established controls on fur from endangered species protected by the convention on international trade in endangered species—CITES—and we do not allow imports of fur from wild animals caught using methods that are not compliant with international humane trapping standards.

However, it is still possible to import other types of fur from abroad. In our action plan for animal welfare, the Government committed to exploring further action in this area, which we are free to do now that we have left the EU. I wanted to stress that point particularly, and it has been mentioned by a number of Members today. Bear in mind, as well, that some nations in the EU still have fur and mink farming and so on. We are building a strong evidence base on which to inform any future policy, noting information from a range of sources,

[Rebecca Pow]

including industry associated with the fur trade and notable retailers who have recently gone fur free. A list was mentioned just now, but they include the likes of Adidas, H&M, Lacoste, Mango, Marks & Spencer, charities and other organisations, as well as a range of fashion designers including Stella McCartney, Vivienne Westwood, Prada, Armani, Burberry and Chanel. I am sure lots of hon. Members and hon. Friends are wearing some of those brands today, because it is Second Hand September; I am.

Alex Davies-Jones: The Minister makes the important point that high street retailers and consumers want to do the most ethical thing by buying items marketed as faux fur or synthetic fur, but when tests are carried out unfortunately it turns out they are real fur, because it is cheaper to use real fur than faux fur. Can the Minister outline what she is doing to counteract this? Consumers think they are doing the right thing, but we need to make sure that they really are.

Rebecca Pow: That point was raised by a number of Members today, including the hon. Members for Rutherglen and Hamilton West (Margaret Ferrier), for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow (Dr Cameron), who is no longer in her place, and for Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle (Emma Hardy). It is a good point and the Government recognise the moral concern that some consumers have about whether the fur is real and whether labels are correct.

Information has been given to businesses requiring them to be accurate and not misleading. Labelling that contains false or misleading information, or omits material information that consumers need to make an informed decision, is prohibited. The textile labelling regulations require that the presence of fur and other non-textile parts of animal origin, such as leather and pearls, are labelled. We have a clear system and if anyone feels there is a breach it should be reported to the Citizens Advice consumer service.

Tracey Crouch: The Minister may well be aware that a Humane Society International and YouGov poll has shown that 93% of the British population do not want to wear fur. While I press her to ban the import of fur, will she also please sit down with the British fashion industry and encourage it to take a lead on this issue across the world as well?

Rebecca Pow: I thank my hon. Friend for that; it is a good point. I work with the fashion industry on a range of issues, not least recycling and fast fashion. When I speak to them about those issues I will be pleased to make reference to that point as well.

I was asked about faux fur. I have a faux fur jacket, but I am now afraid to wear it in case anybody thinks it is real. It is clearly faux fur and has all the labelling, but I have steered away from it.

Moving on, we are building a strong evidence base. We published our formal call for evidence on the fur trade on 31 May. That was a key step in helping us to improve our understanding of the sector and we have received an incredible 30,000 responses from businesses,

representative bodies and individuals, demonstrating the strong feeling in this area, as many have suggested today.

Officials have been analysing the responses that we have received and we have been engaging directly with stakeholders in order to further the Government's understanding of the sector. That has included meeting with industry representatives and the British Fur Trade Association, as well as animal welfare groups, such as the Humane Society International. We will use all the evidence to inform any future action on the fur trade. A summary of responses to the call for evidence, setting out the results and any next steps in the policy, will be published at a later date.

As ever, we will work closely with the devolved Administrations, and the formal call for evidence on the fur sector in Great Britain was published jointly with Scotland and Wales. As was pointed out earlier on the international front, the matter is devolved, but the call was published together.

Olivia Blake: It sounds as though the Minister has a collection of information to inform her, but it is unclear when the matter will be considered again. Is there a timeline for when a law could be brought forward?

Rebecca Pow: As I just said, we received an awful lot of data—30,000 responses that must be ploughed through in the correct manner—so we will publish the results at a later date.

Touching on the disease issue raised by several hon. Members, the emergence of covid and its global impact reminds us of the importance of interactions between humans, animals and the environment. That is another reason why we need to work together to understand better how our behaviour, supply chains and cultures can change those interactions and create risks. The Government are committed to building a clear body of evidence on that, because it is really important.

To wind up, I hope that Members here will understand that I am not in a position to announce any next steps on the fur trade, and it is vital that any future policies are based on robust evidence. I hope that past action and recently introduced legislation demonstrate this Government's clear commitment to treat our animals in the right way. I listed the many measures that we have brought in recently, many of which also address unacceptable practices abroad. We have an opportunity to set a clear global sense of direction, including on international conservation and trade. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Bury South for securing today's debate.

5.1 pm

Christian Wakeford: I now face the audacious task of trying to read my own writing. Parliament is truly at its best when there is clear cross-party support, although I hope the hon. Member for Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill (Steven Bonnar) will forgive me for disagreeing slightly about this being a reason to push further for Scottish independence.

I thank the Minister for her response. There were certainly some very warm words, and it looks like the start of us heading in a certain direction. However, I urge haste because for every day we delay, millions of

animals face these conditions, which is clearly incorrect. I invite the Minister to my fur-banning reception in the Palace on 16 November. Indeed, if she wants to hear more, I am also speaking at the Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation during the party conference.

In closing, Gandhi said that the “greatness of a nation...can be judged by the way its animals are treated.”

Let us be a fair, humane and compassionate Britain but, more importantly, let us be a great Britain.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered real fur sales in the UK.

5.52 pm

Sitting adjourned.

Written Statements

Tuesday 14 September 2021

CABINET OFFICE

Controls on Incoming Goods from EU

The Paymaster General (Penny Mordaunt): My noble Friend the Minister of State in the Cabinet Office, the right hon. Lord Frost CMG, has today made the following written statement:

On 31 December 2020, the UK left the EU's Single Market and Customs Union. The Government put in place the staffing, infrastructure, and IT to ensure a smooth transition. Thanks to the hard work of traders and hauliers, we did not see disruption at our ports; and, despite dips in trade value with the EU in the early months, the monthly value of exports to the EU has recovered strongly.

Now the UK is an independent trading country, our intention is to introduce the same controls on incoming goods from the EU as on goods from the rest of the world.

The Government initially announced a timetable for the introduction of the final stages of those controls on 11 March. The Government's own preparations, in terms of systems, infrastructure and resourcing, remain on track to meet that timetable.

However, the pandemic has had longer-lasting impacts on businesses, both in the UK and in the European Union, than many observers expected in March. There are also pressures on global supply chains, caused by a wide range of factors including the pandemic and the increased costs of global freight transport. These pressures are being especially felt in the agri-food sector.

In these circumstances, the Government have decided to delay further some elements of the new controls, especially those relating to sanitary and phytosanitary goods. Accordingly:

The requirement for pre-notification of agri-food imports will be introduced on 1 January 2022 as opposed to 1 October 2021.

The new requirements for export health certificates, which were due to be introduced on 1 October 2021, will now be introduced on 1 July 2022.

Phytosanitary certificates and physical checks on SPS goods at Border Control Posts, due to be introduced on 1 January 2022, will now be introduced on 1 July 2022.

The requirement for safety and security declarations on imports will be introduced as of 1 July 2022 as opposed to 1 January 2022.

The timetable for the removal of the current easements in relation to full customs controls and the introduction of customs checks remains unchanged from the planned 1 January 2022.

The Government will work closely with the Devolved Administrations on the implementation of this new timetable, given their devolved responsibilities for agri-food controls.

Full guidance to stakeholders will be provided on www.gov.uk shortly.

[HCWS285]

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

AQUIND Interconnector: Application for Development Consent

The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Kwasi Kwarteng): This statement concerns an application for development consent made under the Planning Act 2008 by AQUIND Ltd for the construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of the

UK elements of a 2,000MW bi-directional subsea electrical power interconnector between Normandy in France and Lovedean in Hampshire.

Under section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make a decision on an application within three months of the receipt of the examining authority's report unless exercising the power under section 107(3) of the Act to set a new deadline. Where a new deadline is set, the Secretary of State must make a statement to Parliament to announce it. The deadline for the decision on the AQUIND interconnector application was 8 September 2021.

I have decided to set a new deadline of no later than 21 October 2021 for deciding this application to allow an opportunity for further information in respect of compulsory purchase powers to be provided and considered.

The decision to set the new deadline for this application is without prejudice to the decision on whether to grant or refuse development consent.

[HCWS286]

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Covid-19: Booster Programme

The Minister for Covid Vaccine Deployment (Nadhim Zahawi): The UK's covid-19 vaccination programme is a recognised success. As of 12 September 2021, 89% of people aged 16 and over in the UK have received one dose of a covid-19 vaccine, and 80% have had their second dose. Public Health England estimate over 143,600 hospitalisations and 108,600-116,200 deaths have been prevented to date by the vaccination programme in England to date^[1].

The independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has published its advice on covid-19 booster vaccinations. Her Majesty's Government (HMG) have accepted this advice and all four parts of the UK intend to follow the JCVI's advice.

In JCVI's view, the primary objective of a 2021 covid-19 booster programme is to maintain protection against severe covid-19 disease, specifically hospitalisation and deaths, over winter 2021-22. They have noted that this is exceptional advice aimed at maintaining protection in those most vulnerable, and to protect the NHS.

The JCVI's advice is based on evidence from a number of sources, including UK data on the duration of vaccine-induced protection against severe covid-19. The Committee note that, as not enough time has passed to enable a clear understanding of the level of protection six months after completion of the primary vaccine course in all persons, extrapolation of some data has been required. Taking a precautionary position, JCVI considers that on balance, it is preferable to ensure protection is maintained at a high level throughout the winter months in adults who are more vulnerable to severe covid-19, rather than implement a booster programme too late to prevent large increases of severe covid-19 in previously double vaccinated individuals.

JCVI advises that for the 2021 covid-19 booster vaccine programme individuals who received vaccination in phase 1 of the covid-19 vaccination programme—priority groups 1-9—should be offered a third dose covid-19 booster vaccine. This includes:

Those living in residential care homes for older adults.

All adults aged 50 years or over.

Frontline health and social care workers.

All those aged 16 to 49 years with underlying health conditions that put them at higher risk of severe covid-19—as set out in the Green Book—and adult carers.

Adult household contacts of immunosuppressed individuals.

As most younger adults will only have received their second covid-19 vaccine dose in late summer or early autumn, the benefits of booster vaccination in this group will be considered at a later time when more information is available. In general, younger, healthy individuals may be expected to generate stronger vaccine-induced immune responses from primary course vaccination compared to older individuals. Pending further evidence otherwise, booster doses in this population may not be required in the near term. JCVI will review data as they emerge and consider further advice at the appropriate time on booster vaccinations in younger adult age groups, children aged 12-16 years with underlying health conditions, and women who are pregnant.

JCVI advises that the booster vaccine dose is offered no earlier than six months after completion of the primary vaccine course, and that the booster programme should be deployed in the same order as during phase 1, with operational flexibility exercised where appropriate to maximise delivery. Persons vaccinated early during phase 1 will have completed their primary course approximately six months ago. Therefore, it would be appropriate for the booster vaccine programme to begin in September 2021, as soon as is operationally practicable.

JCVI advises a preference for the Pfizer vaccine to be offered as the third booster dose irrespective of which product was used in the primary schedule. There is good evidence that the Pfizer vaccine is well tolerated as a third dose and will provide a strong booster response.

Alternatively, individuals may be offered a half dose (50pg) of the Moderna vaccine, which should be well tolerated and is also likely to provide a strong booster response. A half dose (50pg) of Moderna vaccine is advised over a full dose due to the levels of reactogenicity seen following boosting with a full dose within the CoV-Boost trial.

Where mRNA vaccines cannot be offered e.g. due to contraindication, vaccination with AstraZeneca vaccine may be considered for those who received AstraZeneca vaccine in the primary course.

With deployment of booster vaccines imminent, I am now updating the House on the liabilities HMG has taken on in relation to further vaccine supply via this statement and a Departmental Minute containing a description of the liability undertaken. The agreement to provide indemnity with deployment of further doses to the population increases the statutory contingent liability of the covid-19 vaccination programme.

Given the proximity between receiving JCVI advice and deployment, we regret that it has not been possible to provide 14 sitting days' notice to consider these issues in advance of the planned booster vaccination in the UK.

Deployment of effective vaccines to eligible groups has been and remains a key part of the Government's strategy to manage covid-19. Willingness to accept the need for appropriate indemnities to be given to vaccine suppliers has helped to secure access to vaccines with the expected benefits to public health and the economy alike much sooner than may have been the case otherwise.

Given the exceptional circumstances we are in, and the terms on which developers have been willing to supply a covid-19 vaccine, we along with other nations have taken a broad approach to indemnification proportionate to the situation we are in.

Even though the covid-19 vaccines have been developed at pace, at no point and at no stage of development has safety been bypassed. The MHRA approval for use of the currently deployed vaccines clearly demonstrates that these vaccines have satisfied, in full, all the necessary requirements for safety, effectiveness, and quality. We are providing indemnities in the very unexpected event of any adverse reactions that could not have been foreseen through the robust checks and procedures that have been put in place.

I will update the House in a similar manner as and when other covid-19 vaccines or additional doses of vaccines already in use in the UK are deployed.

HM Treasury has approved the proposal.

A Departmental Minute will be laid in the House of Commons providing more detail on this contingent liability.

[¹] PHE covid-19 vaccine surveillance report: 9 September 2021: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccine-surveillance-report>

[HCWS288]

Covid-19 Vaccine: 12-15 Year Olds

The Minister for Covid Vaccine Deployment (Nadhim Zahawi): Her Majesty's Government (HMG) have decided, based on advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) and further advice from the UK Chief Medical Officers (CMOs), that a first dose of Pfizer-BioNTech covid-19 vaccine should be offered to all children and young people aged 12-15. This is the remaining group not already eligible for vaccination under earlier JCVI advice on 12-15 year olds at risk of serious outcomes from covid-19.

The JCVI advised on 3 September that for healthy 12-15 year olds the health benefits from vaccination were marginally greater than the potential known harms but that the margin of benefit, based primarily on a health perspective, was too small for the Committee to advise a universal programme of vaccination. The JCVI suggested that the Government might wish to seek further views on the wider societal and educational impacts from the CMOs of the four nations.

The CMOs worked with a range of experts including representation from the JCVI looking at this wider picture. The advice, received on 13 September, sets out that overall the view of the UK CMOs is that the additional likely benefits of reducing educational disruption, and the consequent reduction in public health harm from educational disruption, on balance provide sufficient extra advantage in addition to the marginal advantage at an individual level identified by the JCVI to recommend in favour of vaccinating this group. The CMOs recommend that on public health grounds that Ministers extend the offer of universal vaccination with a first dose of Pfizer-BioNTech covid-19 vaccine to all children and young people aged 12-15 not already covered by existing JCVI advice.

HMG has accepted this advice and all four parts of the UK expect to follow the advice and align their deployment in each nation.

For children and young people, the risk of serious outcomes from covid-19 is much lower than for older people and we recognise that decisions on vaccination for this group are therefore much more finely balanced than for adults.

All 12 to 15-year-olds will now be offered a first dose of Pfizer-BNT162b2 vaccine. The JCVI will be asked to consider in due course whether a second dose is appropriate taking into account emerging international evidence. This is in addition to the existing offer of two doses of vaccine to 12 to 15 year-olds who are in 'at-risk' groups as described in Public Health England's Green Book, last updated on 3 September 2021.

I am now updating the House on the liabilities HMG has taken on in relation to further vaccine deployment to this group via this statement and a Departmental Minute containing a description of the liability undertaken. The agreement to provide indemnity with deployment of further doses to the population increases the statutory contingent liability of the covid-19 vaccination programme for the vaccine the JCVI has recommended should be used in those aged under 18, the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine.

Deployment of effective vaccines to eligible groups has been and remains a key part of the Government's strategy to manage covid-19. Willingness to accept the need for appropriate indemnities to be given to vaccine suppliers has helped to secure access to vaccines with

the expected benefits to public health and the economy alike much sooner than may have been the case otherwise.

Given the exceptional circumstances we are in, and the terms on which developers have been willing to supply a covid-19 vaccine, we along with other nations have taken a broad approach to indemnification proportionate to the situation we are in.

Even though the covid-19 vaccines have been developed at pace, at no point and at no stage of development has safety been bypassed. The MHRA approval for use of the currently deployed vaccines clearly demonstrates that this vaccine has satisfied, in full, all the necessary requirements for safety, effectiveness, and quality. We are providing indemnities in the very unexpected event of any adverse reactions that could not have been foreseen through the robust checks and procedures that have been put in place.

Given the proximity between the announcement and deployment to this group, we regret that it has not been possible to provide 14 sitting days' notice to consider these issues in advance of the planned vaccination of these groups in the UK.

I will update the House in a similar manner as and when other covid-19 vaccines or additional doses of vaccines already in use in the UK are deployed.

HM Treasury has approved the proposal.

A Departmental Minute will be laid in the House of Commons providing more detail on this contingent liability.

[HCWS287]

Ministerial Corrections

Tuesday 14 September 2021

EDUCATION

GCSE and A-level Examinations

The following is an extract from oral questions on 6 September 2021:

Sam Tarry: I wonder whether the Secretary of State and the Minister could aim higher in their grades next year. Last year we saw U-turns, not just on teacher assessments, but on the broken algorithm. Residents and teachers in Ilford South would really like some assurances in the year ahead that instead of dithering and delaying—like almost every other decision over the last 18 months—we will actually get clarity from the Education Secretary and his team, and that they will learn from their mistakes and provide a contingency plan in case exams cannot go ahead as normal in 2022.

Nick Gibb: It is, of course, our intention that exams will go ahead in 2022. They are the fairest method of assessing young people. As I have said, we have already announced the details of adaptations to those exams to ensure that they are fair. We are also working with Ofqual, as the hon. Gentleman would expect, on contingency plans in case it does not prove possible for exams to go ahead safely or fairly, and those plans will be published shortly.

[Official Report, 6 September 2021, Vol. 700, c. 6.]

Letter of correction from the Minister for School Standards, the right hon. Member for Bognor Regis and Littlehampton (Nick Gibb):

An error has been identified in my answer to the hon. Member for Ilford South (Sam Tarry).

The correct answer should have been:

Nick Gibb: It is, of course, our intention that exams will go ahead in 2022. They are the fairest method of assessing young people. As I have said, we have already **consulted on** the details of adaptations to those exams to ensure that they are fair. We are also working with Ofqual, as the hon. Gentleman would expect, on contingency plans in case it does not prove possible for exams to go ahead safely or fairly, and those plans will be published shortly.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Covid-19 Vaccinations: 12 to 15-year-olds

The following is an extract from a statement on 13 September 2021:

Mr Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con): I listened carefully to the Minister's answer to the Chair of the Health and Social Committee, and perhaps I may press him a little. He said that the Government have received only interim advice from the JCVI about the adult booster campaign, but this morning outside the House the Prime Minister said that the booster campaign would be going ahead and had already been approved. Have the Government received the final advice from the JCVI about the adult booster campaign, which it said could be different from its initial advice? Have the Government made a decision about the details of the adult booster campaign and whether it is indeed going ahead?

Nadhim Zahawi: I am grateful for my right hon. Friend's important question. We have received interim advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, which we have published, and it has now received the Cov-Boost data. The interim advice was about vaccinating the most vulnerable with a booster for covid and for flu. It is advising a two-stage process, and stage one is to offer the booster vaccines to those in the old 1 to 4 cohorts plus the immunocompromised, and then to groups 5 to 9. That is the right way to proceed. We have not yet received its final advice. It could be different to the interim advice, but boosting preparations are well under way. Clearly that final advice is predicated on which vaccine delivers the highest level of protection and durability.

[Official Report, 13 September 2021, Vol. 700, c. 768.]

Letter of correction from the Minister for Covid Vaccine Deployment, the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi):

An error has been identified in my response to my right hon. Friend the Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper).

The correct response should have been:

Nadhim Zahawi: I am grateful for my right hon. Friend's important question. We have received interim advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, which we have published, and it has now received the Cov-Boost data. The interim advice was about vaccinating the most vulnerable with a booster for covid and for flu. It is advising a two-stage process, and stage one is to offer the booster vaccines to those in the old 1 to 4 cohorts plus the immunocompromised, and then to groups 5 to 9. That is the right way to proceed. **As far as I am aware, we** have not yet received its final advice. It could be different to the interim advice, but boosting preparations are well under way. Clearly that final advice is predicated on which vaccine delivers the highest level of protection and durability.

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