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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
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HOUSE OF LORDS

OFFICIAL REPORT

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Abbreviation	Party/Group
CB	Cross Bench
Con	Conservative
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
GP	Green Party
Ind Lab	Independent Labour
Ind LD	Independent Liberal Democrat
Ind SD	Independent Social Democrat
Ind UU	Independent Ulster Unionist
Lab	Labour
LD	Liberal Democrat
LD Ind	Liberal Democrat Independent
Non-afl	Non-affiliated
PC	Plaid Cymru
UKIP	UK Independence Party
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party

No party affiliation is given for Members serving the House in a formal capacity, the Lords spiritual, Members on leave of absence or Members who are otherwise disqualified from sitting in the House.

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House of Lords

Thursday 19 May 2016

11 am

Prayers—read by the Lord Bishop of Birmingham.

Cessation of Membership Announcement

11.06 am

The Lord Speaker (Baroness D'Souza): My Lords, I have to notify the House that the noble Lords, Lord Bridges, Lord Neill of Bladen and Lord Thomas of Macclesfield, and the noble Baroness, Lady Thomas of Walliswood, yesterday ceased to be Members of the House under Section 2 of the House of Lords Reform Act 2014 by virtue of not attending any proceedings of the House during the Session 2015-16. On behalf of the House I thank the noble Lords for their much-valued service to the House.

Children and Social Work Bill [HL] First Reading

11.06 am

A Bill to make provision about looked-after children; to make other provision in relation to the welfare of children; and to make provision about the regulation of social workers.

The Bill was introduced by Lord Nash, read a first time and ordered to be printed.

Bus Services Bill [HL] First Reading

11.07 am

A Bill to make provision about bus services; and for connected purposes.

The Bill was introduced by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, read a first time and ordered to be printed.

Cultural Property (Armed Conflicts) Bill [HL] First Reading

11.07 am

A Bill to enable the United Kingdom to implement the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict of 1954 and the Protocols to that Convention of 1954 and 1999.

The Bill was introduced by Baroness Neville-Rolfe, read a first time and ordered to be printed.

Intellectual Property (Unjustified Threats) Bill [HL] First Reading

11.08 am

A Bill to amend the law relating to unjustified threats to bring proceedings for infringement of patents, registered trade marks, rights in registered designs, design right or Community designs.

The Bill was introduced by Baroness Neville-Rolfe, read a first time and ordered to be printed.

Committee of Selection Membership Motion

11.08 am

Moved by Lord Laming

That in accordance with Standing Order 63 a Committee of Selection be appointed to select and propose to the House the names of the members to form each select committee of the House (except the Committee of Selection itself and any committee otherwise provided for by statute or by order of the House) or any other body not being a select committee referred to it by the Chairman of Committees, and the panel of Deputy Chairmen of Committees; and that the following members together with the Chairman of Committees be appointed to the Committee:

L Bassam of Brighton, L Craig of Radley, L Faulkner of Worcester, L Hope of Craighead, L Newby, B Smith of Basildon, B Stowell of Beeston, L Taylor of Holbeach, V Ullswater, L Wallace of Tankerness.

Motion agreed.

Queen's Speech Debate (2nd Day)

11.08 am

Moved on Wednesday 18 May by Lord King of Bridgwater

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty as follows:

“Most Gracious Sovereign—We, Your Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament assembled, beg leave to thank Your Majesty for the most gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament”.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education (Lord Nash) (Con): My Lords, it is an honour to be asked to open this debate on Her Majesty’s gracious Speech today. I look forward to the many valuable contributions that I know noble Lords will

[LORD NASH]

make during the course of this debate. I also thank my noble friend Lady Neville-Rolfe, who will be winding up today.

As the Prime Minister said in his address, this Queen's Speech uses strong economic foundations to make a series of bold choices that will deliver opportunity for all at every stage of life as part of our aim to bring social justice to everybody. Today we will consider the Government's priorities for education, welfare, health, culture and business for the year ahead. All are vital to a strong economy and a secure future for our country.

I turn first to the Government's education business. Over the past six years, our education reforms have led to 1.4 million more children being taught in good and outstanding schools, but we are not content to stop there as 1.4 million children is a start but is not enough. There are many more competent young readers thanks to our phonics programme and many more pupils are leaving primary school with the necessary literacy and numeracy to succeed at secondary school. In 2010, one in three pupils left primary school without this. This is now one in five, but we need to do much better. In 2010, only one in five pupils took a core suite of academic subjects at secondary school, which we now call the EBacc. That figure is now 39%, and we are determined to see it far higher as it is so fundamental and is particularly important for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We are committed to building on these improvements by moving towards a system where all schools are academies, as set out in the White Paper. The vision for an academies-led system where autonomous schools are free of local authority control is built on international evidence that clearly shows that autonomy is linked to improved performance. We have seen these improvements being realised. In sponsored primary academies, those open for just one year have seen their results improve by five percentage points, from 66% to 71%. On average, those schools that have chosen to convert, at both primary and secondary, have built on their existing success with further improvements in standards, and, importantly, are delivering better results for free school meal pupils than their local authority-controlled counterparts.

An academy-led system is the best way to tackle underperformance and ensure that every child gets the education they deserve. It will allow the best schools to expand their reach and give excellent leaders and teachers the freedom to run their schools. We will therefore introduce a Bill to convert schools in the lowest-performing and unviable local authorities to academy status. These local authorities either will have failed to help their schools to succeed or will struggle to support the remaining proportion of local schools that remain under their control. We do not want to risk the standard of education that young people in these schools receive.

I assure noble Lords that we will consult fully on how such local authorities will be identified and that Parliament will be able to consider our proposals. We understand the concerns that have been raised about a hard deadline and legislating for blanket powers to issue academy orders. This is why we have decided that

it is not necessary to take blanket powers to convert good schools in strong local authorities to academies at this time. However, these schools will still be able to convert at a time that suits them best, and more and more good schools are embracing the benefits of academy status. In fact, in March this year a record number of schools chose to apply for academy status. We are committed to the vision of a dynamic, high-performing school system where every school is an academy by 2022. This will ensure that we achieve educational excellence everywhere, so that all children and young people are able to fulfil their potential, regardless of location, prior attainment or background. That is why this Bill also brings forward fundamental reforms for how children excluded from school are educated and reforms to technical education to give clear routes through to skilled employment. Noble Lords will hear much more about these proposals in coming months.

The Children and Social Work Bill will make a major contribution to improving the life chances of our most vulnerable young people. It represents the next stage in our commitment to making sure that those children in our care get the start in life they deserve. It will ensure that there is a proper framework of support around looked-after children and those leaving care, whether to adoption, to placement with another family member or to make the transition to adulthood. For the first time, we are setting out a clear statement of the principles governing the state's role as corporate parent to these children, making sure that local authorities think and act in those children's best interests in the same way that any other parent would.

Through the Bill we are also making sure that support and help do not stop simply because a child has left care. There will be designated people at local authority and school level to promote the educational attainment of previously looked-after children, and a "local offer" to care leavers, setting out clearly the support to which they are entitled. This will include the provision of advice and guidance up to the age of 25. The Bill also focuses on the key professionals working with these children, enabling the establishment of a specialist regulator for social work to drive up standards of both practice and training.

Lastly, the Bill will promote more effective learning at national level from incidences of serious harm. It will help to foster innovation at the local level, enabling forward-thinking local authorities to test new and more effective approaches to delivering social care and to set the direction themselves for future reform and improvement.

I turn to welfare. As the Prime Minister has previously said, this Government are committed to giving,

"the highest priority to improving the life chances of the poorest in our country".—[*Official Report*, Commons, 21/3/16; col. 1246.]

This means a relentless focus on tackling the root causes of poverty and disadvantage. That is why in the forthcoming life chances strategy we are introducing life chances indicators that will look at family stability, drug and alcohol addiction and problem debt. This will drive action across the Government so that no one is held back or prevented from making the most of their lives.

We plan to introduce a private pensions Bill. This Government have continued pension reforms to provide greater security, choice and dignity for people in retirement while ensuring that the system is sustainable for the future. It is crucial that people and their employers can have confidence that they are protected when they are putting money into a scheme and when they are ready to retire. Our private pensions Bill will correct the current gap in the regulatory landscape for master trust pension schemes, and will cap excessive exit fees for trust-based schemes. The Bill will allow the reform of the financial guidance landscape, announced at the time of the Budget, to ensure that consumers can access the debt and money guidance they need and have access to straightforward pensions guidance at all stages of their lives.

I turn to health matters. The Government greatly welcome the agreement between the BMA and the NHS, and very much hope that the BMA will support it in its ballot. Noble Lords will have heard of our intention to introduce legislation that would ensure that overseas visitors paid for healthcare received at the public's expense. To achieve that, the Bill would reduce the number of overseas visitors and migrants automatically eligible for free NHS care while increasing the number of NHS services for which charges would apply. Collectively, these measures would see us take a significant step towards delivering the Government's commitment to recover up to £500 million a year for the NHS, and would mean that only those living in the UK lawfully and making a fair financial contribution were eligible for free care. We also intend to bring forward measures that would make the cost recovery process more effective and efficient at all points in the health system, meaning that the full cost of care was recovered at every stage, with those funds directed straight back into the NHS. Further details will be brought forward when the Bill is published.

I shall now address the Government's business on culture and media. Our country is a leader in the development and use of technology. The pace of change is relentless, and our economy, society and government must continue to evolve to keep ahead. The digital economy Bill will build the foundations for the digital future. It will support telecommunications businesses to build infrastructure to provide the connectivity that we all increasingly depend on. The Bill will help people to participate in this new economy and close the digital divide, ensuring that everyone can access communication services for the best value and best service wherever they live. The Bill will also provide important protections, protecting children from online pornography and protecting consumers from spam email and nuisance calls. As the world goes online, we must protect against new harms and we must not allow the social and economic exclusion that would result if we left people behind during our country's digital transformation.

I know that many noble Lords have waited a long time—12 years, in fact—to hear that the Government will finally bring forward the legislation that will enable the United Kingdom to ratify the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two protocols. I hope that the announcement of the Cultural Property

(Armed Conflicts) Bill will therefore be welcome news. The Bill was introduced to the House today, so noble Lords will not have to wait long to debate and scrutinise the Government's proposals.

The remaining subject of discussion in today's debate is business, innovation and skills. The first Bill is the Higher Education and Research Bill. Our universities rank among our most valuable national assets, underpinning both a strong economy and a flourishing society. By lifting the cap on student numbers, we have ensured that participation in higher education can be a reality for more people than ever before. However, there is considerable unfinished business. If we are to continue to succeed as a knowledge economy, we cannot stand still. We must ensure that the system is also fulfilling its potential and delivering good value for students, for employers and for the taxpayers who underwrite it.

Through the Higher Education and Research Bill we will ensure that everyone with the potential to succeed in higher education, irrespective of their background, can choose from a wide range of high-quality universities, access relevant information to make the right choices, and benefit from excellent teaching that helps to prepare them for the future. The UK is a world leader in science and innovation, and through the measures in this Bill we will maintain and build on this reputation and ensure that we maximise the Government's £6 billion annual investment in research and innovation.

We plan to introduce a better markets Bill. Strong competition is the key to a healthy economy, boosting our nation's productivity. The UK's regime is already world-class and highly respected internationally. We want the regime to remain an exemplar, keeping pace with dynamic and innovative markets. We also want to empower consumers further to ensure that they fully reap the rewards of vibrant competition. The better markets Bill will help to improve competitiveness in the UK.

To help innovative businesses to negotiate over disputes and avoid litigation, this Government will bring forward legislation to reform the law relating to unjustified threats of intellectual property infringement. The Intellectual Property (Unjustified Threats) Bill will deliver detailed recommendations from the Law Commission in this complex area of intellectual property law.

The gracious Speech sets out a clear programme for taking this country forward. As a whole, the legislative programme contains some highly topical and important issues. It will be here in your Lordships' House where much of the detailed scrutiny will take place. I appreciate that, in the speeches that follow, a range of issues will be raised by speakers. Those issues, whether they are concerned directly with the Queen's Speech or not, are likely to set much of the agenda for this Session. I look forward greatly to the contributions to the debate from all around the House.

11.22 am

Lord Mendelsohn (Lab): My Lords, first, I humbly apologise for arriving late in the Chamber. I apologise in particular to the Minister, and I extend my appreciation to my Front-Bench colleagues, who I think were experiencing various forms of nervousness and other

[LORD MENDELSON]

deeper medical states. I am pleased to be here today to respond to the Queen's Speech on our first day of debate.

Many people have been slightly unkind to the Queen's Speech. There have been suggestions that this is the product of a Government with no real governing strategy and no consistent economic policy, a divided party, a weakened Prime Minister, and a self-inflicted moment of political paralysis. Some have drawn the conclusion that it is no surprise that we have such a limited Queen's Speech and with so little ambition, designed to cause no turbulence to the European vote and to reunite a party that awaits with bated breath the outcome of the referendum.

There are, of course, well-known virtues in doing nothing, or in doing very little. Limited ambition can sometimes be very powerful, and some systems of government are designed to do almost nothing. Incrementalism can always be a very effective way of governing, and there can, of course, be some amusement in making small things appear big. There is an oft-quoted maxim that it is not just the size that matters. Some of the Bills, especially in relation to transport and science, seem to be very small measures, but they underline some very big changes in our country and where we play most strongly.

There are three particular points to make about the overall context of the Queen's Speech. First—this is especially relevant today—some measures appear to be the start of a legacy for the current Prime Minister and are in areas on which we can praise the Government for deciding to look at them. It may be a little late to establish a firm legacy, but tackling prison reform has been much delayed and is certainly very worthy.

As regards today's debate, the Children and Social Work Bill, which is designed to get children out of the care system and permanently adopted and to ensure that those who leave care are properly supported, addresses these people's huge diminution in life chances and is especially welcome. Both these measures have our broad support; there will be challenges in implementation, but they are none the less extremely important. There will be issues such as costs for providers, but certainly the House will take these matters very seriously.

Secondly, there will always be problems with a package of Bills such as this—with the objectives, the evidence, the ability of the proposed remedies to deliver, and managing their consequences. Delivery is of huge importance to a lot of these measures. It is true to say that the best plan is not as good as the plan that can be delivered best. Within these measures there is scope for further ambition from Ministers and civil servants as regards their drafting, and in their response to the debates that will take place in this House and the other place. The value of scrutiny and the role of this House are extremely important in this regard. Certainly, the Strathclyde review and the proposed increase in the membership of this House may not assist those debates. As evidenced in not just the performance of this House but the Minister's systematic unravelling of the entire work of his predecessor, greater care and attention in listening to the deliberations of this House would have been useful.

I worry that the Government seem to be set again on looking to the private sector for solutions and massively overplaying its benefits and the public sector's failures. Governments have frequently miscalculated the benefits of the private sector and should look at other forms of provision, allowing the private and public sectors greater flexibility to work together in other ways, and certainly investing more in public sector capability, particularly management capability. We have to reform the way the Civil Service looks at the delivery of these measures. We cannot go on with a system that was designed for a previous era. The asymmetry of responsibility and authority in the public sector ensure chronic delivery problems.

Academic research on public sector management emphasises the importance of managing people over adherence to systems, whereas in the private sector, systems are much more implementable due to money being the central measurable focus, and the competitive advantage of human relations. It seems remarkable that we have not learned how to move on from the maxim, "If you can't measure it, you can't manage it". Especially with regard to some of these Bills, we need to use more effective business intelligence and better understand economic behaviour. Putting that into impact assessments would be extremely useful.

Thirdly, this Queen's Speech does not meet the requirements of the time, although one should not underplay the potential of some of the measures, especially those on business and the economy and on productivity. We do need this—our productivity crisis is worsening. The latest data show the worst productivity slowdown since the financial crisis, the UK's performance is the worst among our peers, and our workers are now 14% less productive than they were pre-crisis. We have huge weaknesses in professional services, telecoms and communications, and banking and finance, and due to the slowdown in investment caused by the financial crisis and in recent times by the possibility of Brexit, there are also problems in manufacturing.

We strongly support the plan to deal with this by promoting competition across the economy, and in this context we welcome the better markets Bill, which represents a huge opportunity to address some of these issues, and which can be applied more widely. The European Union referendum is crucial to this. It is an economic fact that our productivity gains, modest though they have been, are largely a result of our entry into Europe in 1973. Those who advocate withdrawal are not coming clean about the scope of the impact, and the centrally planned economic and skills transformation that will be necessary if we leave.

More generally, the department for Business, Innovation and Skills needs to step up to the challenge. There is certainly a case for promoting the Minister, or at least for providing additional support to deal with the large number of Bills she is responsible for. We are conscious of her Herculean efforts in the last Session. It is important that the department grasps the nettle of having an active industrial policy; much more energy is needed. Even decisions such as on the location and functions of staff seem to have very little utility or sound evaluation, apart from the most London-centric and simplistic cost-cutting functions.

The crisis is not just in the private sector. The public sector too has acute productivity problems. Take the health service. Recent figures demonstrate that productivity has fallen in NHS hospitals for the third year running. I pay tribute to the excellent report by my noble friend Lord Carter, but a strong cadre of managers is needed to deliver any real changes. Certainly, the Secretary of State needs to address what is now a clear funding gap. After his most recent agreement with the NHS, there was a definable figure of what money was needed but it depended on productivity benefits. The current productivity decline probably means that the funding requirement is moving nearer to £30 billion than £20 billion. However, even the attempt to develop a seven-day health service seems to be challenging. The changes to junior doctors' contracts are there but no other staff have had any changes. Therefore, an effective operational plan still seems immensely elusive, as my discussions with health professionals have made clear. Much more attention needs to be paid to public sector management and strategic skills, especially given the nature of this Queen's Speech.

We are strongly supportive of some of the measures and look forward to engaging very constructively with the Government on them. The better markets Bill is a very important step towards establishing stronger responsiveness to consumer demands. It is true that this also has an impact on a number of smaller businesses and microbusinesses, which we should consider. We should ensure that the entrenched advantages and anti-competitive processes that many of our industries have developed are opened up. We should increase transparency and we can even address further measures, such as late payments, by using much more effective mechanisms. That could certainly be covered in this Bill. We look forward to seeing the detail of the Bill and establishing how we can take it forward to address the challenges and transform the prospects for the different sectors in our economy. For example, the service sector, which makes up between 75% and 80% of our economy, still requires massive opening up to competition.

On the digital economy Bill, we support many of the Government's measures, such as on nuisance calls. However, we have to get serious about our objectives, a feeling that I know is shared by many on the other side of the House. Currently, we do not have as good a rollout of broadband across our country as we need. The speeds are limited and our targets are from yesterday: they should not be anywhere near as low as they are; we should be looking at much more significant targets. I have to make one confession. I possess in my house broadband from three separate providers. Not one of them achieves the advertised speeds and not one of them provides an uninterrupted service. Even by having three providers—the main three players in the market—we have had interrupted service in a relatively straightforward part of London. I cannot imagine the stresses and challenges that people in other parts of the country face. Enough is enough: this has gone on for far too long. This Bill will also, I hope, address some of the weaknesses in Ofcom's approach to this issue, which I believe has been utterly inadequate—I am sure that many in this House will have a similar view.

On the Higher Education and Research Bill, we have many challenges. We have a fantastic science base and I have spent a lot of time recently, as a private investor, looking at some of the achievements of our research and science base. It is utterly outstanding, world-class and world-leading. We should do much more to encourage that and I wish that the department was much more active in that regard.

We have to be very careful that we do not end up saddling our students with greater debt by allowing huge freedom to increase fees without any consideration. We have to be absolutely clear about what we are measuring. Universities are one thing, but university departments may be another. I have a daughter who has just started a course at a university that I will not name, to spare its blushes. She did international history and politics in her first year and believes that she has spent £9,000 to be self-taught. In some university departments, that is the case. However, she shares a flat with a number of people who have had outstanding teaching support. It is wrong to say that that is a factor of the university; it could be more to do with departments. We must first consider the particular context, and we look forward to hearing the detail. While opening up the market to private providers is not inherently wrong, it would be wrong to do it in a way that is hugely detrimental to our overall university reputation. I do not like the idea that we will castigate a series of universities. The most recent figures on university approval worldwide show a huge rise for universities in the Far East, and a lowering of the position of some of the main UK universities.

Across this Queen's Speech, in measures such as private pensions and the criminal finances Bill, business has an important role that should not be underplayed. On health, there are many measures that do not address the principal crisis but are important in their own right, and we would do well to scrutinise those here. This Queen's Speech is limited in scope and nature, but that does not mean that our deliberations here cannot achieve more and cannot, in tandem with the Government's objectives and values, which are broadly supported across this House, find ways to enhance the passage of these Bills and the other measures available to the people of our country.

11.35 am

Baroness Walmsley (LD): My Lords, before turning to the gracious Speech, I first echo the thanks of the Lord Speaker to the noble Baroness, Lady Thomas of Walliswood, and the other three colleagues who have ceased to be Members of this House today. To my personal knowledge, the noble Baroness was an excellent and very hard-working Peer in this House when she was in full health. She made an enormous contribution to the work of these Benches, and I am quite sure that the other noble Lords mentioned had a similar track record. I would not have felt it necessary to make these remarks had it not been for the rather unfortunate laughter after the announcement earlier, which our ex-colleagues and their families may have found somewhat hurtful. I am sure that the House did not mean any disrespect.

On these Benches, we welcome much of what was in the gracious Speech, especially those items that have been Liberal Democrat policy for some time. Of course,

[BARONESS WALMSLEY]

we will scrutinise the measures very carefully when they are put before us. Noble Lords will hear from my noble friends on these Benches about various topics today. My own remarks will be addressed to health and social care, although my noble friend Lady Brinton will say more about the latter.

When I heard the gracious Speech, I did not know whether to be astonished that there was hardly a mention of the NHS or glad that the Government were not planning another disruptive top-down reorganisation. This morning, there is a Statement in the other place about progress at last with the junior doctors' contracts but we have no Health Minister in this debate in your Lordships' House. I asked for the Statement to be taken in this House, but I was refused by the Chief Whip. The noble Lord, Lord Prior, has been such a trooper, patiently standing at that Dispatch Box week after week reporting that there was nothing to report. Then, on the very day when there actually is something to report, the noble Lord is not allowed to answer our questions. That is treating your Lordships' House with contempt and it is treating the health service with contempt.

I hope that the Minister, when winding up, tells us what will happen next and why, when it is now possible to make arrangements to protect women doctors who wish to take maternity leave or take time out for training or research, it was not possible to do that a long time ago. Why, if it is possible now to make some small concessions to the quality of life of doctors and their families, was it not possible to do that before? Why, if it is not just about money, did we have the Secretary of State telling us this morning on the BBC that it will cost hospitals one-third less to roster doctors at the weekend? At least the gracious Speech contained a further commitment to mental health, but my noble friend Lady Tyler of Enfield will express our concerns that the commitments made during the coalition Government have not been followed through.

As to the proposals to charge non-resident visitors to the UK for health services, we will wait for the details before we comment further. However, our main concern will be that no one in the UK should go without the healthcare they need.

It has to be said that the past 12 months have not been the NHS's finest hour, and certainly not the finest hour of the Secretary of State. This is not because NHS staff are not working hard or because they are not working at weekends, because they have been, but rather it is the failure on the part of the Government to be realistic about the legitimate health and social care needs of our population and the right of those who work in these services to be properly paid and have a reasonable work-life balance. While I accept Jeremy Hunt's personal commitment to patient safety, he has not gone about it in the best way. The industrial action taken by junior doctors over the past year is only one, although a very serious one, of the indications that health and social care services are at full stretch. The whole debacle has been damaging to the morale of the health workforce, and the Government will have to work hard to regain its confidence.

It never was just about money, it was about being constantly asked to do more with less, or at least the same amount. While I do not deny the right of the

Government to make a commitment in their manifesto and then try to implement it, I believe that the way they have gone about it has been a disaster. Governments should be very careful about the factual basis on which to build their policies. There have been several expert reports, including a recent one by a health economist in Manchester, which have questioned the weekend death rates quoted by the Government as being the basis for what they are trying to do. We shall see how the members of the BMA vote, but I hope very much that this matter can now be settled in the interests of patients and doctors.

The pressure does not apply only to junior doctors in hospitals. GPs are also hard pressed. I shall quote from an email I received recently from a GP known to a friend of mine: "I was working from home last Sunday night going through results, patient records and letters. Tim was also on the system from home and Dan was in the surgery doing administration. We are working 12-hour days in the surgery as it is and we really do not have the capacity to do seven days on top of what we are doing now and remain healthy. We are also working on our frailty project, plus looking to see if we can expand the premises. As you can see, I am juggling lots in addition to the daily seeing of patients. These other bits do not get registered: talking to social services, carers, families and patients, looking at the systems in place for clinical safety, multi-disciplinary meetings, emails, keeping up to date and more". That could be echoed by GPs all over the country. I am lucky that I live in an area where my GP is able to give me a good service, but in some places, especially in London, patients have to wait weeks to get an appointment.

This is the result of bad planning. It takes eight years to train a GP, so today's needs should have been planned for years ago. Unfortunately, the planning of training for health professionals has been fragmented and everyone blames everyone else for shortages. Now the Government even want to charge a £1,000 skills levy on visas for health workers from overseas. That is crazy and it certainly is not joined-up government. Sadly, the system is playing catch-up all the time. Targets are being missed, deficits have skyrocketed and will swallow up most of the new money announced last year. The Government will not recognise the real black hole in funding and believe that the hard-pressed workforce can make £22 billion of savings in the next few years when it is struggling just to stay afloat.

Then, of course, there is the equally serious shortfall in social care funding. The recent NHS ombudsman's report on unsafe discharges from hospital with non-existent or inadequate social care packages made for very sad reading. Frail, elderly people are being discharged to cold homes, left alone at night and their families not informed. This should not be happening in this country in this century, and it is no good saying that guidelines were not followed. No one in the NHS would do something like that deliberately, but the pressure on beds through delayed discharges sometimes causes people to make mistakes—fatal mistakes in some cases.

The pressure on the NHS could, of course, be lessened in future if we paid more attention to prevention, yet the Government had to be led kicking and screaming into agreeing some kind of sugar tax to reduce child

obesity. The measures announced lack ambition. They should be broader and introduced sooner, but at least they are something. But where is the long-promised child obesity strategy? And what about putting fluoride in all our drinking water to prevent children getting tooth decay and having to go into hospital for extraction? What about fortifying flour with vitamin B to prevent neural tube disease? What is being done about the quality of the air we breathe? Why did Boris Johnson suppress the report about the terrible state of air pollution in London? We need to be told. Then there was the further cut in public health spending, attacking the very local services that help people to stop smoking, get active, avoid unwanted pregnancy and all the other things that local authorities try to do for their residents. This is all so short-sighted, but, if it were reversed, what a difference all these measures would make to rates of heart disease, stroke, diabetes and the sustainability of the NHS.

Savings could also be made on the drugs Bill. I wonder whether the Minister will tell us what progress is being made with the recommendations of the noble Lord, Lord Carter, on that. Will she also assure us that the Government will take notice of the recommendations in the report from the noble Lord, Lord O'Neill, published today, on the actions that must be taken nationally and internationally to combat the over-prescribing of antibiotics and the consequent rise of antibiotic-resistant micro-organisms—a global disaster waiting to happen?

What else should happen? We need some straight talking about the funding and capacity challenges our NHS faces and the steps needed for positive change. So although much of what needs to be done in health does not require the signature of Her Majesty, the Liberal Democrats propose a future of healthcare Bill to find solutions to these challenges, independent of interference from political parties, so that the NHS can continue to deliver health and care for future generations without detriment to its hard-working staff.

11.47 am

The Earl of Kinnoull (CB): My Lords, I speak as a member of the Select Committee on Social Mobility, so expertly and energetically chaired by the noble Baroness, Lady Corston. It was indeed heartening to hear so much about social mobility yesterday in the gracious Speech. Then I got home and I heard a lot more from Liz Truss on “Newsnight”, and we have heard more encouraging words from the Minister. I summarise the theme as being that it is not only to improve life chances, but, importantly, to include measurements of that. I add that our report has not yet been responded to by the Government, which is perfectly fair as it was settled only on 8 April, and therefore not debated. I will make two points to the House today concerning social mobility in the gracious Speech.

The first is in respect of data. I will briefly read out our recommendation on data in our report:

“Transitions from school to work should be supported by publicly available data, compiled by the relevant Government departments. This data should be made available to researchers so

that they have access to earnings data, study patterns, and different demographic patterns, brought about by legislative change if necessary”.

That is an important “if necessary”. Over the year we sat, we heard a lot of evidence about data and a lot of evidence about the fact that they are being kept in many different places—the Department for Education, local authorities, BIS, HMRC. Often when academics want to investigate those data, they are told that the Data Protection Act applies and there is a problem, or that the Education and Skills Act applies and there is a problem there. We were often dubious about the existence of those problems.

The thing about analysing data is that it is free; it does not cost the Government any extra money. Putting any obstacle in the way of academics and others analysing those data to drive improvement for social mobility seems to me very much an own goal. The good thing about the gracious Speech is that the education for all Bill could be a Bill where suitable changes, such as the ones we referred to in our recommendation, could be made. I therefore invite the Minister to indicate whether she agrees that that was an important thought and whether the Government would be happy at least to hear argument on this point as these Bills go forward.

My second and final point is about careers advice. This was another area that the Social Mobility Select Committee spent a lot of time on, and we heard many very disappointing stories from a lot of people about the wide differences in the quality of careers advice up and down the land at the moment. Our recommendation there was:

“We therefore recommend that the Government should commission a cost benefit analysis of increasing funding for careers education in school and independent careers guidance external to the school in the context of social mobility”.

In this country, academic and vocational paths still have very different social standing among our fellow citizens. Very often, people who are probably well-suited for the vocational path are sent off on the academic path. Of course, if there are more universities, that tendency could easily be exacerbated.

We heard in many evidence sessions that there was no discrete budget for careers advice in schools, that there was no specific gold standard around the country to which schools could aspire and that, when Ofsted went to look at a school, although it would comment on careers advice in its report, it was not a core part of the report but just a comment which did not matter in that school's score. We felt that it is very likely that the cost to the country of allowing people who should go down the vocational route to go down the academic route could be very great, not only for that person, who will be paying £9,000 for a year or two of wasted time at university, but also for us in loss of opportunity and in people not feeling good about themselves. I feel that that, too, is an element to be captured from our report, and I would very much like the Minister to comment on it.

I repeat that it was very encouraging to hear that social mobility is at the core of what the Government want to do in the next year. I hope that the encouraging

[THE EARL OF KINNOULL]

words that we heard in the gracious Speech can be turned into carefully crafted legislation by this House in our next Session.

11.53 am

The Lord Bishop of Durham: My Lords, the gracious Speech makes several commitments to improving life chances for the most disadvantaged. There is also a renewed commitment,

“to support the development of a Northern Powerhouse”.

It is in welcoming these that I shall make most of my remarks.

Children need the best possible start in life. They need to be loved and cared for above all else. Where this is best found in an adoptive family, seeing this established as well and as quickly as possible is important, so I welcome the proposed measures here and look forward to the details. For some, care ends up as the best loving option. We need to ensure that life chances for those in residential or foster care are as good as for all other children. When the time comes to leave care, it is often traumatic. A move to provide care leavers with a personal adviser until they are 25 is therefore a very welcome proposal.

With the passing of the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016, the focus for the rest of this Parliament will be on the implementation of these reforms, including the wider rollout of universal credit. I have always been a strong supporter of the aims behind universal credit: to simplify an overly complex system and to incentivise work. Work is usually the best route out of poverty. It also helps combat isolation and gives purpose and meaning to people's lives.

Unfortunately, there is a real danger that recent changes to universal credit are undermining its original intent. Substantial reductions in the work allowance mean that the returns from working will be much lower than was anticipated when the scheme was first enacted in 2012. According to the Resolution Foundation's recent report, universal credit will now, on balance, be less generous to low-income working families than the tax credit system it replaces. I hope that the new Secretary of State for Work and Pensions will take the opportunity to revisit this policy and look for ways to strengthen work incentives and support progression in work. This could be the difference between building on the early success of universal credit in boosting employment rates among claimants and sacrificing all the hard work that has gone into developing this programme for the sake of short-term savings to the Exchequer. I also look forward to seeing the Government's White Paper on narrowing the disability employment gap.

The welfare system can and should be used to promote work and other virtuous behaviours that reduce the need for welfare in the long term. The Government's new Help to Save scheme is a very good example of this, incentivising low-income working families to save and reducing the likelihood that they will get into problem debt. We strongly support this initiative, which complements the work we are doing in primary schools with Young Enterprise. We are grateful for the extra government funding for the LifeSavers programme.

However, we must not lose sight of the welfare system's role in alleviating suffering in the short term. There is growing evidence that large numbers of people are falling through holes in the welfare safety net. According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, at least 185,000 households in the UK are destitute at any given point in time, unable to afford even the basic essentials of life—food, clothing, housing and heating. It is estimated that 668,000 households experienced destitution at some point over the course of the last year—affecting around 1.3 million people, including more than 300,000 children. The routes into destitution are complex, but problems with the benefits system feature prominently in this and other studies. We need to take these findings seriously, by starting to measure levels of destitution and food insecurity more systematically. There is an urgent need to fill the gaps in the welfare system caused by delays and errors in administering benefits and the uneven access to crisis payments.

In the north-east, there is currently little evidence of any slow-down in the need for food banks. The holiday hunger programmes run last year through Communities Together Durham look like doubling this coming summer because of the need that exists in many of our communities. I recently spent eight days walking around Darlington and Stockton in the Tees Valley. These are areas in which levels of poverty are high. They are also potentially key players at the heart of any northern powerhouse. There are some encouraging signs in relation to manufacturing and employment, although there is much more work to be done to ensure that apprenticeships grow and turn into real long-term jobs. Concerns remain that any recovery is slow and fragile.

Alongside the manufacturing and service industries, there is immensely impressive work through a wide range of charities. Among those which stand out are the Daisy Chain Project's work with autism; A Way Out's work with sex workers and preventive work among young people; Mind with dementia support; Billingham Environmental Link Project with local gardens and community centres and Love Stockton, which involves 84 churches together offering a wide range of care and support to the very neediest. The One Darlington partnership awards evening was truly inspiring. All this work—whether business or voluntary—needs decent infrastructure and good local services. Local authorities have had their funding cut by 50% over the last few years. They are now stretched to the limit, arguably beyond it. Those are not their words but those of the businesses and charities that I met.

It is therefore not surprising that from all quarters I hear scepticism and concern about turning the rhetoric of a northern powerhouse into real significant development and growth. We face the ironic possibility that the cradle of the railway industry—the Stockton to Darlington line and the home of Hitachi's excellent new train-making facility—provides the trains for new infrastructure developments but is excluded from benefiting any further by inadequate investment in railways in the north-east itself. Newcastle, Sunderland, Hartlepool and Stockton could all lose out because there is such an emphasis on the Leeds-Manchester-Liverpool axis that the far north, both east and west,

is not properly included. If we are to have HS2, I suggest that we start building from Newcastle at the same time as we do from London.

I support having elected mayors for the north-east and Teesside, but they and the local authorities need adequate funding. The reforms to business rates do not work well for our local authorities. To be really significant in improving the life chances of children, young people, adults and the elderly in the north, the northern powerhouse must work for the whole of the north and must take seriously our region's brilliance in manufacturing for the 21st century. We in the north-east are the leaders in the nation.

In conclusion, we need a vision of life chances which is bigger than that in the coming new measures. We need a vision which is about the fullness of life, where all are valued—a life marked out above all else by love, for which, of course, we cannot legislate.

12.01 pm

Lord Fowler (Con): My Lords, it is a great pleasure to follow the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Durham. We should all listen very carefully to what he said, particularly on universal credit and welfare generally—which I still prefer to call “social security”.

It may well be that the most significant words in the Queen's Speech yesterday were that, “other measures will be laid before you”.

We will see whether that is the case. Sensibly, the Government are proceeding cautiously. In this respect I very much welcome the fact that the Department for Culture's White Paper on the BBC charter was not what we were led to expect. The Secretary of State drew back from some of the more extravagant ideas that had been floated, which undoubtedly would have damaged the corporation.

I will raise one concern about the language that the Government use. They can claim that this is a consensual White Paper trying to achieve the maximum agreement—I agree with that—but they cannot at the same time refer to the concerns that had been expressed, as I fear the Secretary of State did in his Statement, as, “hysterical speculation by left-wing luvvies”.—[*Official Report*, Commons, 12/5/16; col. 736.]

As much of the concern came from ministerial speeches, that does not totally add up, in particular when a recently departed Minister—Iain Duncan Smith—said only yesterday that the Government had “watered down” their proposals on the BBC charter.

I will make two points on broadcasting. First, although the White Paper is a great improvement on what we had been led to believe, it would be wrong to say that there are not still matters of concern. For example, there are fears that the new board will be insufficiently independent. Having at last got rid of the BBC Trust, we do not want to see a board on which government appointments overinfluence the running of the corporation. I also remain to be convinced that the five-year review is necessary. I would have thought that between charter reviews we could leave this to the board, provided that it is strong and independent. Equally, the last thing I want to see is the Government interfering in the programming of the BBC. Frankly, I can think of very little that would be worse. So the debate on the BBC will continue.

I have a second concern on broadcasting that relates not to the BBC but to Channel 4, and arises from a detailed report in the business section of the *Daily Telegraph*—a newspaper with strong links particularly to the Treasury, as I know to my cost. I remember that when I was trying to abolish the state earnings-related pension scheme, this radical step first appeared there and totally inconveniently. The story in the *Daily Telegraph* is basically that the Government have stepped back on full privatisation but may still sell a minority stake in Channel 4, and that the Treasury may take a dividend from the broadcaster. Perhaps I can remind the House that Channel 4 was created by a Conservative Government, and in particular by two people whom not even the wildest special adviser would describe as “left-wing luvvies”: Margaret Thatcher and Willie Whitelaw.

Since that time, Channel 4 has had substantial success. It is a not-for-profit corporation and its surplus goes back into content. This year, a surplus of something like £26 million has been achieved, with £1 billion in terms of revenue. Channel 4 has done what we asked it to do and, on that basis, I think that it deserves support. So I would be grateful if the Minister, when she winds up, could tell the House what exactly the position is with Channel 4 as seen from the perspective of the Department for Culture?

The point that continues to trouble me the most in the broadcasting area is the power of the Executive. Channel 4 is a statutory corporation, so a major change such as privatisation would have to come to Parliament. The BBC is different; it is governed by the royal charter, which is another way of saying that, ultimately, it is Ministers who take the final decision. The Executive decide. That is how we got the BBC Trust. Many of us, including one or two colleagues here in the House today, argued—strongly argued—against this 10 years ago, but it was the Government who decided that they would go ahead in any event. That is why there is now a search for some kind of check, either to make the BBC into a statutory corporation or to do what the noble Lord, Lord Lester, has proposed in his Private Member's Bill, which is to keep a charter but to make any changes to that charter subject to parliamentary scrutiny.

Underlying all this, it seems to me, is the question of the balance between Parliament and the Executive. That is one of the issues of the Queen's Speech, particularly that the Government, “will uphold ... the primacy of the House of Commons”.

I have absolutely no quarrel with that as a general principle. The Commons is the elected House and that gives it authority, but I would say that it is not quite as simple as that statement suggests. We do not want the primacy of the House of Commons translated into the primacy of the Executive—the primacy of the Government unchecked. That question affects every subject that we are debating today. We know what can happen in practice, under any Government: the legislation that arrives here has been pushed through without proper scrutiny in the other place and, unless one is careful, it becomes the law of the land.

We should be concerned about the relationship between the Lords and the Commons but also the relationship between Parliament and the Executive.

[LORD FOWLER]

We should guard against giving the Executive too much power at the expense of Parliament. The starting point is that Governments—any Government—simply want to get their measures through. Chief Whips, in my experience, do not stay awake at night worrying about such niceties as balance and the good arguments of the House of Lords. They want their legislation—we all know that that is the case. I remember Margaret Thatcher saying after one defeat in the House, “What has happened to all those people I sent to the Lords?”—and, after another defeat, exclaiming: “What we should do is just send them there for one Parliament”. The subtext to both is, “Just you remember who the boss is”—and do not believe for a moment Margaret Thatcher is the only Prime Minister who has held that particular view.

In this Session we will doubtless come to the position of statutory instruments. Again, we need to recognise that, from the Government's point of view, delegated legislation has the potential of a get-out-of-jail-free card. It cannot be amended and far less time is spent on scrutiny. The trouble is that matters of policy such as tax credits are much more profound than putting simple changes before the House. In the 1980s I was defeated three times in this House on social security. I went to see the Leader of the House, Lord Whitelaw, who said, “We'll put back two but you'll have to give them one”. I am not sure that that is a blueprint for advancing but it does at least illustrate that there is a certain amount of give and take on this basis.

My conclusion is that we should proceed with care. We are in a position now where all Governments are likely to be in a minority. The days of Governments with majorities of 200 have gone for ever. I hope that it will be recognised that the Lords is doing an invaluable job, particularly in improving legislation and in giving warning that some proposals raise serious issues of principle and practice. By all means let us examine the issues concerned with statutory instruments and the other issues, but let us also be vigilant and ensure that the power of the Executive is not increased at the expense of Parliament.

12.11 pm

Lord Macdonald of Tradeston (Lab): My Lords, I welcome this early opportunity to comment on the White Paper published last week, *A BBC for the Future: A Broadcaster of Distinction*. An 11-year term for the new BBC charter is in line with past practice of 10 years, with the extra year designed to delay partisan pressure until after the general election fixed for 2025. However, the proposed “health check” review of the BBC after just five years will inevitably be politicised and should be dropped. The uncertainty and disruption will distract management from the task of creating the broadcaster of distinction promised in the title of the White Paper, and anyway is it not Ofcom's new role to do such so-called health checks?

The BBC should indeed try to be more distinctive and to occupy the high ground more often rather than churn out formulaic series, particularly in daytime schedules, that might sit just as easily on commercial channels. A former governor and chairman of the BBC, Gavyn Davies, said a few years back that BBC executives paid too much attention to ratings. With the

licence fee to be inflation linked and extended to include on-demand iPlayers, and with the lucrative BBC Worldwide subsidiary secured and its subscription options being opened up, it seems reasonable that the BBC should be more mindful of its market impact on other media companies, which depend on ratings or readership for advertising revenue or on niche markets for sales or subscriptions.

Since the launch of Channel 4 in 1982, independent production has had a huge, positive impact on British television. The independent sector has a turnover close to £3 billion a year, with 259 companies making programmes for public service broadcasters. The BBC presently commissions 25% of its output from independent producers, which are also able to bid against in-house BBC competition across a further contestable 25%, with 50% of the programme output reserved for in-house BBC production. The White Paper proposes that by the end of the next 11-year charter period, all television output apart from news and news-related current affairs should be open to competition. This positive approach is related to another major White Paper proposal, to which the Government give their support in principle; namely, the creation of a new commercial subsidiary, BBC Studios, which will offer its production facilities on the open market and which, to ensure fairness and avoidance of conflict of interest, must be very closely monitored.

Devolving and outsourcing on this scale should allow the core BBC to reduce its layers of management and staff levels, especially in London. The devolution of programme-making to the three smaller nations of the UK now matches, or indeed sometimes exceeds, their proportion of licence fee payers—a considerable advance on past practice.

However, the fine-tuning of the commissioning process to ensure that programming from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland reflects the distinctive characteristics of each nation while enhancing the diversity of the BBC network schedules will be a very big creative challenge. Diversity is now to be enshrined in the new charter, to reflect the changing nature of the United Kingdom, in particular its growing numbers of black, Asian and minority-ethnic citizens, and to give more proportionate employment to those with disabilities and to the LGBT communities and of course better gender balance. A diversity unit will be based in Birmingham, alongside the English regions headquarters, local news partnerships, BBC Three online initiatives and the drama village at Selly Oak. All that will at least strengthen the BBC's still meagre presence in the Midlands. Let us hope that after many previous failed initiatives, the diversity unit can now set hard targets, be underpinned by dedicated funding and have ready access to the centres of power in Broadcasting House.

The most controversial issue now in charter review is probably how best to ensure the independence of the new unitary board which replaces the BBC Trust. It is already decreed by the Government that the current chair of the trust will chair the unitary board, at least until the expiry of her present contract. The Government also intend to appoint the deputy chair and the non-executive “national” member for England. There are also non-executive directors from the three other nations of the United Kingdom, to be appointed

through established protocols by the UK Government in consultation with the Government of Scotland and the Executives governing Wales and Northern Ireland—a delicate process, bearing in mind the need for these four “national” appointees to balance their representative role with a legal duty under the charter to serve the BBC as a whole. That adds up to six government appointees as non-executive directors.

Of course, the director-general will be on the board and, crucially, will be nominated as editor-in-chief and be an executive director. If the board has, as expected, 14 members, that would leave five further non-executives and two more executive directors to be appointed, as I read and understand it, by the BBC itself. Does that mean a board nominations committee will be set up by the chair, to include perhaps the deputy chair—also chosen by the Government of course—and the director-general? Will the Commissioner for Public Appointments be involved in the appointment process, to help ensure the promised independence from Government? Perhaps the Minister, in replying, can clarify that.

The appointment process obviously cannot involve Ofcom, which already has a board appointed by Government and would surely not want a role in appointing those it must then regulate. The new unitary BBC board will set strategy, deliver services, oversee operational delivery, measure performance and engage with the public—all important areas of governance, to be sure. For context, it may reassure noble Lords concerned about political interference to note the importance of the remit given to Ofcom in regulating the BBC: monitoring and reviewing performance; establishing a licensing regime; regulating editorial standards; holding the BBC to account; and acting as the appeal body. That is a daunting list, even for a super-regulator as well regarded as Ofcom. There is plenty of scope there too for regulatory clash if the BBC board overreaches its governance remit. I trust the Government will ensure that Ofcom has the resources to take on this very big job.

Through further clarification and debate in both Houses of Parliament, the potentially positive aspects of the White Paper could deliver the licence fee payers of Britain an even better BBC than the one they now support so strongly. I therefore join the noble Lord, Lord Hall, and the BBC in giving the White Paper a cautious welcome.

12.20 pm

Baroness Burt of Solihull (LD): My Lords, in the minutes available to me, I want to concentrate on those aspects that relate to my own portfolio for the Liberal Democrats: business, innovation and skills. Having said that, noble Lords might be relieved to know that I do not expect to be speaking for too long. In all, the Government have made 30 announcements and 28 of those, by my reckoning, have already been made before. However, there is no mention of the deficit or how the Government are going to address the black hole of £7.5 billion they left themselves in the Budget this year. As we approach the referendum, the business world is holding its breath, and so, apparently, are the Government, by failing to look forward to the medium and long-term future of business and the economy of this country.

The gracious Speech starts with a claim that the economy is strengthening. This is patently not the case—economic growth slowed in the first quarter of this year, with the economy growing by only 0.4%. Construction output fell by 0.9%: so much for the party of the builders. Just this week, the CBI downgraded its growth forecast to 2% for 2016, down from 2.3%. The Speech asserts that there will be legislation,

“to ensure Britain has the infrastructure that businesses need to grow”.

However, legislation is not going to solve our infrastructure crisis. The Government’s own spending plans, which require no public borrowing by 2020, are what is putting the constraint on our ability to invest in housing, road, rail and digital infrastructure.

Speaking of digital, the Government’s lack of ambition on broadband is staggering. The universal service obligation for broadband being proposed is for 10 megabytes per second by 2020. That is not close to what we need to be world leaders in the digital economy. The Government’s idea of ultrafast broadband is 25 megabytes per second. South Korea already has speeds of 1 gigabyte per second and rising. The reason why our speeds are so poor is that the Government refuse to invest in new technology. They, and BT, are relying on out-of-date copper-wire technology because they refuse to make the money available for the rollout of fibre-optic cabling to homes. We cannot compete on the world market relying on copper cables. It is like trying to win a Grand Prix on a sit-down lawnmower. If the Government were serious about being a world leader in the digital economy, they would support fibre-to-home broadband, spending money on vital infrastructure, support business to invest in new technology, such as 3D printing, and offer solutions to problems such as the collapse of our retail sector in the face of changing technology, which risks putting 900,000 people out of work by 2025.

We support the objective of being at the forefront of new forms of transport, including autonomous and electric vehicles; we welcome the trialling of autonomous vehicles in the UK. It is important, however, that vehicles are built to run electronically in order to improve air quality. It is also essential that insurance issues are ironed out to determine accountability and that any software vulnerabilities are eradicated.

Time is short, and I know that other colleagues want to talk about this, so I will just briefly mention the support given to the northern powerhouse. The infrastructure announcements are welcome, but although the Government continue to use the rhetoric that featured in March’s Budget, there is actually underinvestment in the north. It accounts for only 1% of currently planned or in-operation infrastructure projects in terms of transport linkage. Moreover, why should Liverpool be ignored as part of the northern powerhouse? Nor is there any mention at all of the so-called “Midlands engine”. Is that now stalled in the Government’s eyes? It certainly needs a bit of revving up.

The announcement on business rates—allowing local authorities to retain business rates—has already been announced in last year’s Autumn Statement. Devolution of business rates has long been a Liberal Democrat

[BARONESS BURT OF SOLIHULL]

policy, but we hope that the Government do not use it as an excuse to cut funding further to local authorities. Proof of this will be shown in which local authorities lose out in the settlement.

I welcome the better markets Bill, even though most of the details have been expressed before. I welcome the objectives expressed, and we look forward to receiving more detail. I hope that we can work together to make sure that those details and objectives can become a reality.

Lastly, I touch on the universities Bill. Noble Lords may recall the Browne report of 2010, which recommended a total free market on fees. These proposals mean that many people would need to make the decision about where to study based on cost and not on academic standards. It is no secret that the Liberal Democrats have struggled on fees, but this is something that we succeeded in holding back the Conservatives from implementing when we were in coalition. We will oppose these measures as bad for students and unnecessary for the long-term finances of universities.

That is all that I have to say on the Queen's Speech, other than that it is a missed opportunity to look at the medium and long-term future of Britain and bring forward new, innovative plans instead of just rehashing the old ones.

12.26 pm

The Earl of Listowel (CB): My Lords, on listening to the eloquent words of my noble friend Lord Kinnoull on statistics and the transition from education to employment, I was reminded of the life of Florence Nightingale, broadcast last night on that national treasure, the BBC. Florence Nightingale was, I think, the first female fellow of the Royal Statistical Society and highlighted to Parliament and the public the plight of soldiers in Crimea, particularly in the barracks at Scutari, through the use of statistics. I am sure that she would have strongly supported my noble friend's concerns. It is thanks to the BBC that I fully understand the importance of my noble friend's words, and I am so grateful to the BBC for what it has done for me in my education throughout my life. I hope that it will continue to be an institution that inspires and educates our public and the public of the world for many years to come.

I declare my interests in the register as the trustee of two child mental health charities, the Brent Centre for Young People, dealing with adolescents, and the Child and Family Practice Charitable Foundation, assessing children with autism, and a child welfare charity, the Michael Sieff Foundation, as well as being vice-chair of the parliamentary group for children in the care of local authorities. There is very much to welcome in the Queen's Speech, from my point of view. I hope that the British public choose to remain in Europe and that there will be the opportunity to take these humane and enlightened measures forward.

Outwith the Speech, I particularly welcome the Government's increasing awareness of the unaddressed mental health needs of many children and young people in the care system. I stress to the Minister, the noble Lord, Lord Nash, and his colleague, the Minister for Health, Lord Prior, the importance to the mental

health of those children that those who care for them—the foster carers, teachers, social workers and residential childcare workers—have clinical supervision and the very best support from the health service. Such supervision by a mental health professional is vital if we are to be more effective in improving the lives of these young people and help them to give their own children happier childhoods, most importantly.

I hope I may offer the warmest of welcomes to the Children and Social Work Bill, whose First Reading took place in your Lordships' House today. I would like to focus on the new duty to provide mentors to all young people leaving care to the age of 25, and the introduction of a new regulatory body for social work. Given the imminence of the Bill, I hope that your Lordships will forgive me if I speak for longer than I might otherwise have done. It was your Lordships who persuaded the Labour Government to extend their care leavers Bill to those care leavers in education to the age of 25. Children are not removed lightly into the care of the state; most will have experienced abuse in their families. The removal process is itself very troubling for many children. While there have been significant improvements in the quality of local authority care and while evidence shows that those children taken into care do better academically than those of their peers who are not removed, young people in the care of local authorities can still experience much further upheaval, and the quality of foster carers, social workers and residential childcare workers can still be variable.

It is unsurprising that young people in care often experience what is called developmental delay. In the short term, this can mean they struggle academically and in finding and keeping employment and are open to exploitation by others, but often they will blossom in their late twenties. That has often been my experience. For instance, Mark Kerr, a care leaver and a graduate of a young offender institution with no educational qualifications, began his studies while in the criminal justice system and recently attained his doctorate. The number of care leavers entering university immediately after leaving care remains troublingly low, at about 7%, and that figure is declining. Dr Kerr conducted a survey of care leavers and found that more than a third had gone on to higher education but, critically, a large number did so as mature students, meaning they do not show up in official statistics, highlighting the delay in their attainment.

It is important to have continuity of care until the age of 25 for all these young people. I pay tribute to the Government for their humanity and engagement in introducing this. On average, children in this country leave home at 24. I hope your Lordships may wish to join me in consideration of the appropriate qualifications, support and caseloads for these mentors. The think tank, the Centre for Social Justice, has been critical of the current arrangements for personal advisers, the mentors for such young people. We need to ensure that this new legislation works for these young people.

Equally welcome is a new social work regulator to focus on training and professional standards. There can be no more exacting job than that of a child and family social worker. With them lies the decision about

whether to take a child away from his family or leave him there. That literally is the judgment of Solomon, yet social work has often been neglected. It is a profession that would never have been permitted to decline in the way it once did if its customers, its clients, had been middle class, educated and articulate. It is a great tribute to the Government that they are taking the profession so seriously. I know many Members of your Lordships' House have campaigned to improve the status of social workers over many years. The noble Lord, Lord Adonis, has played an important role recently in that regard.

There are several other welcome measures which will improve the life chances of children and families on the margins of society, and I wish there was time to speak to them now. However, before closing, I shall say a few words about the Government's work to improve the mental health of all children, with special attention to children in local authority care. At the end of the last coalition Government, £1.25 billion was pledged for child and adolescent mental health services over five years. The Government commissioned the *Future in Mind* report on CAMHS and reports focusing on looked-after children have come from the NSPCC, the Education Select Committee in the other place and the Alliance for Child-Centred Care. Edward Timpson, the Minister of State for Children, has been consulting widely on the mental health needs of looked-after young people. The interest of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge in mental health and their campaigning have been of immense encouragement to those working in the sector.

Those focusing on the mental health of looked-after children have particularly campaigned for improved initial mental health assessments for these children. Most of these children have very complex mental health needs but currently their assessment is being undertaken by generalists, perhaps a GP, which is not sufficient. In future, children should have a mental health assessment undertaken by a mental health professional when they come into care because the current assessment process is, in practice, not effectively identifying their mental health needs and ensuring that they receive the support they need. We know that 60% of children first enter care due to abuse or severe neglect and that almost half of all children in care have a mental health problem. We are missing a huge opportunity to provide better support at an earlier time in their care journey, which ultimately would ease the pressure of support needed when they leave care. That is the view of the NSPCC, the Alliance for Child-Centred Care and the Education Select Committee. It is a view that I share and I hope that it is becoming the Government's.

For many of us with experience of working with these young people, of equal importance will be a move to clinical supervision for the foster carers, social workers, teachers and residential childcare workers. This need not be financially perilous. Clinical supervision by an appropriate mental health professional can take place during the normal group discussions with children that take place in social care, but would mark a sea change in how we met the mental health needs of these children. With clinical supervision for staff dealing with these children, better and timelier referrals would

be made to higher-level mental health services. This in turn would allow a far more efficient use of scant mental health resources. With clinical supervision, the all-important relationship between carer and young person would be better managed. That relationship is the most important tool for recovery from their early shattered and shattering relationships. With clinical supervision, we can avoid the real risk of the escalation of difficult behaviour from young people into violence or of carers themselves resorting to violence, as they have done at times in the past, or simply withdrawing from their young people by either leaving the job or emotionally withdrawing from them.

It was encouraging to hear the Health Minister say last year at a meeting of the Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers that he was looking at the expansion of the clinical supervision of residential care homes to children's homes. Clinical supervision would finally move us to a model of social care for young people that was integrated with mental health, and that would be a major step forward in our care for those young people. What further thought are the Government giving to the recommendations set out by the Education Select Committee, including the development of clinical supervision in social care for looked-after children and the improvement of initial mental health assessments?

I look forward to the noble Baroness's response—perhaps she might like to write me if that is more convenient—and I am grateful to the Government for this important programme of social reform in the gracious Speech.

12.36 pm

Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury (LD): My Lords, I remember a time when culture did not make it at all as a subject for Queen's Speech debates, so it is a cause for celebration today that we are now top billing.

As a country, we have always been blessed with a wealth of creative talents. This creativity has formed industries that are a significant contributor to our economy. The creative industries are fed by the talent, ideas and innovation of Britain's culture and its arts, and they are the fastest-growing sector of our economy. What has been missing has been a clear sense of what exactly investment in this area provides: the real value of investing in culture, and how to ensure that this value is properly woven into government policy. So this Government are to be congratulated on recognising this and publishing a culture White Paper—the first since Jennie Lee's, 50 years ago. I also congratulate them on the ratification of the Hague convention, which was signed over 60 years ago.

Now to today. Last week we saw the much-anticipated BBC White Paper. The consultation process leading up to it confirmed that the British public overwhelmingly cherish and support their BBC—so, despite the huffing and puffing of the Secretary of State and the threats delivered via anti-BBC competitors in the printed press, he did not blow the house down. We welcome the fact that there will be an 11-year charter and no top-slicing of BBC revenue, and that the index linking of the licence fee will stay and will cover people using catch-up on iPlayer. We also welcome very much the

[BARONESS BONHAM-CARTER OF YARNBURY] requirement to improve diversity, and the fact that alongside on-screen targets there are to be workforce targets. These must be delivered.

But, while the edifice still stands, this White Paper messes with its foundations and there are major causes for concern. Let us start with the crucial matter of BBC independence. The BBC, let us be reminded, is a public broadcaster, not a state broadcaster. It must be independent in order to do its job, and it must be seen to be independent, so it is wrong, as the noble Lord, Lord Fowler, has said, that six members of the new governing board are to be made up of government appointees. This body will oversee day-to-day editorial and strategic decisions, including issues around political programming and contentious investigations. Peter Kosminsky, director of "Wolf Hall", said:

"Think about that for a moment. The editorial board—the body charged with safeguarding the editorial independence of the BBC from, amongst other things, government interference—will be appointed by the Government".

As the noble Lords, Lord Macdonald and Lord Fowler, mentioned, the BBC charter is to be reviewed every five years—always, by the way, coinciding with a general election. It is,

"an opportunity to check the reforms are working as we intend",—[*Official Report*, Commons, 12/5/16; col. 731.]

said John Whittingdale in his Oral Statement. "We intend" are chilling words, whoever is in government, and they surely hand that Government the opportunity to usurp the 11-year charter. Both these measures introduce controls that attack the BBC's independence. There should be no five-yearly review and all members of the new unitary board should be appointed by an independent appointments committee.

Then there is the matter of "distinctiveness", which seems to have replaced "scale and scope". The Secretary of State was clear that,

"we will place a requirement to provide distinctive content and services at the heart of the BBC's overall core mission", and the new licensing and governance regime,

"will ensure its services are clearly differentiated from the rest of the market".—[*Official Report*, Commons, 12/5/16; col. 730.]

In short, the BBC's creative freedom to make popular entertainment will be gradually curtailed.

I fear that there is a Trojan horse element here. It was anticipated by actor and writer David Mitchell in an article a couple of weeks ago in which he wrote:

"An overt challenge to the corporation's existence remains politically unfeasible—the public would miss it too much. The first step, then, is to turn it into something that fewer people would miss—and eventually, over time, to make it so distinctive that hardly anyone likes it at all".

Then there is the matter of how to justify the licence fee. On the matter of the licence fee, it is not public money but the public's money—and there must be no more raids. Using the public's money to pay for government policies such as free licences for the over-75s is double dipping. The licence fee income is for the use of the BBC and the BBC alone. Does the Minister not agree that the process of setting the licence fee should in future be transparent and that the level should be recommended by the new regulatory body?

We believe in an independent BBC, and in a BBC that belongs to the licence fee payer, who wants it to continue to educate, inform and, yes, entertain in the brilliant way it does today—and to provide recipes. Whatever was wrong with the trust, it represented the licence fee payer. Who does that now?

I wish to echo rather than repeat the words of the noble Lord, Lord Fowler, on Channel 4, and await with interest the Minister's answer.

Finally, our creative industries benefit massively from our being a member of the European Union. The British music industry contributes £3.8 billion to the UK economy, and Europe is its second-largest market. The UK is the second-largest exporter of television in the world. Membership of the EU means that these music and television producers and retailers can export and import freely across the continent. It means that they have unrestricted access to the world's largest free trade area; and the free movement of people to work and travel across Europe without the need for visas both facilitates and fuels the exchange of culture, creativity and expertise, and generates better commercial and artistic opportunities.

Alexandra Shulman, editor of *Vogue*, said about Brexit's likely effect on the fashion industry:

"It would make everybody's job much harder because they all operate internationally ... Of course it is going to impact on companies ... many of our fashion students when they graduate get great jobs working abroad. That would be much harder for them. Versace, Prada, Yves Saint Laurent—they use our designers".

There is also the Creative Europe programme, which has a budget of £1.1 billion. UK applicants for this funding have a success rate almost double that of the EU average, and this year the programme is introducing a new bank guarantee, the Cultural and Creative Sectors Guarantee Fund, which will underwrite bank loans to creative businesses.

Across the country there are examples of the EU enhancing UK culture. York's Pilot Theatre is leading the £1.6 million PLATFORM shift+ project to help young theatre-makers in nine countries develop productions and skills for young audiences in the digital age. Tate Liverpool is participating in the Collaborative Arts Partnership Programme, which has secured more than £1 million in EU funding to support the training and development of artists working in local communities. No fewer than seven British films that received Oscar nominations this year were EU-funded. The EU provides a continuing stable and mutually beneficial partnership. Materially, it adds value. Culturally, everyone benefits—practitioners, consumers, communities and individuals—and there is the unquantifiable added value of furthering mutual understanding.

As I said at the beginning, we are a creative nation, and so far as the creative industries are concerned we are ahead of the game. Let us make sure that we stay there. That means a properly funded cultural sector, a truly independent BBC, an unprivatised Channel 4 and a positive, progressive future within Europe.

12.46 pm

Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts (Con): My Lords, the noble Baroness is an experienced commentator on and watcher of the BBC, and she has made a distinguished

speech, one of several we have heard on the topic today, including from my noble friend Lord Fowler. I am not an experienced BBC-watcher—they will have forgotten more about the BBC than I will ever know—so if they will forgive me, I do not propose to follow them. I reassure my noble friend on the Front Bench who will wind up, and the noble Lord, Lord Mendelsohn, that neither will I talk about pubs. That is not for today but for another day, probably in the Moses Room. Today I will focus my remarks on the sentence in the gracious Speech:

“My Government will continue to work to bring communities together and strengthen society”.

I do so because I fear that our social cohesion—the glue that binds our society together—will face some special challenges over the next few years.

The first major challenge will be the further hollowing-out of our society as the result of the widening impact of robotics and artificial intelligence on top of the information revolution we have already experienced. That first wave primarily impacted blue-collar, less-skilled jobs. Outsourcing, first to eastern Europe and then to India and the Far East, has reduced inflation but has also reduced—some would say has stopped—the rate of the rise in blue-collar living standards. The frustration and anger that this has caused has fuelled the rise of political parties espousing more unconventional policies. These include, for example, Donald Trump's US presidential election campaign.

However, a second and potentially far more serious wave is about to hit us. Over the next five to 10 years, wide swathes of jobs in offices and administrative functions will disappear. *The Future of Jobs*, published earlier this year by the World Economic Forum, the McKinsey report on disruptive technologies, and Martin Ford's book *Rise of the Robots* all explain this event. However, this revolution will be different from previous revolutions in one crucial sense. In the earlier phases, revolutions created more jobs than they destroyed, but this time it will be different: they will destroy far more jobs than they create. Therefore members of middle or lower middle-income families, accustomed to a reasonably secure future for themselves and their children, will see those futures disappear. We, and the Government, need to think about ways to adapt our economy and our society to face such volatility if our social cohesion is not to be imperilled.

The second area of challenge is a declining public readiness to accept compromise and is a by-product of the social media revolution. Some noble Lords may be aware that I have just completed a year-long review for the Government of the legislation covering third-party campaigning—that is, campaigning by non-political parties. This gave me some very valuable insights into the way that campaigning methods are developing.

It is well known, even by an average technophobe like me, that increasingly people—especially younger people—get their information online. Less well appreciated is the extent to which that information is delivered in short bites: single articles, blogs or tweets. Even less well appreciated is the extent to which website operators, who have a keen interest in keeping individuals on their website since average usage numbers drive advertising spend, have become very sophisticated in analysing

our individual likes and dislikes by trawling through our past data usage. We all like to be told that we are right. We are all flattered to be told that our view is the one that should prevail. So what better way can there be for a website operator to keep us on his particular website than to analyse our likes and dislikes and make sure that we are fed a diet of articles and blogs that is 100% supportive of our individual points of view? Therefore, I fear that an increasing proportion of our population may hear only one side of the arguments about the many complex problems that our society faces. However, in a liberal democracy, and a country of more than 60 million people, an absolutist point of view does not offer sufficient room for the compromise, pragmatism and indeed the disappointment necessary to enable our society to function. An absolutist point of view puts at risk the web of delicate balances that lies at the heart of our democracy, and so may threaten our social cohesion. Addressing this conundrum is going to require some far-sighted, innovative thinking.

Lastly, I turn to an issue about which some Members of your Lordships' House may have heard me talk in the past: the present and projected rate of increase in the population of the country. As always when I speak about this, I make it clear that this is not a speech about immigration under another name, and it is not about race, colour or creed. When I refer to the settled population of the country, I mean just that. My concern is about the absolute numbers, and the numbers are stark. In the year to September 2014, the population of this country increased by an average of 1,436 people a day. Roughly half of that was from a natural increase, an excess of births over deaths, with the other half from immigration. That is equivalent to a large village or a small town being put on the map of Britain every week of the year. This rate of increase must be expected to cause stresses to our society.

Let me give the House just one example of those stresses: housing, an issue that has been much in your Lordships' minds these past few weeks. We currently live 2.4 people per dwelling. If we want to house our new arrivals to the same standard, and I assume that we do, we need 598 new dwellings per day. That is 25 per hour, or one every two and a half minutes. That is before any attempt to try to improve our existing housing stock. This is in a country, England, that has already become the most densely populated in Europe, having recently overtaken the Netherlands. The outlook for the next 25 years is no less challenging. The mid-projection for 2039 by the Office for National Statistics is that our population will grow by 15%. That is an increase of 9.7 million people. On the same housing metric that I have just given the House, we will need to build four and a quarter million more dwellings by 2039 or one every three minutes for the next 25 years. To put it another way, Greater Manchester's population currently is 2.7 million, so we are going to have to build the equivalent of more than three Greater Manchesters over the next 25 years.

I urge the Government, all political parties and every Member of your Lordships' House to consider the implications for social cohesion of 9 million more people and four and a quarter million more dwellings in a country that is already three times more densely populated than France. Governments and all political

[LORD HODGSON OF ASTLEY ABBOTTS]
parties have found this issue hedged about with landmines. Given the long-term nature and impact of demographic policies, they have taken refuge in Einstein's famous dictum:

"I never think of the future. It comes soon enough".

By 2039, at the end of the 25-year period, the best I can hope is that I will be dribbling into my cornflakes. However, our successors will be entitled to ask why, when the evidence of these growing challenges was so stark, we looked the other way.

12.54 pm

Lord Murphy of Torfaen (Lab): I rise as a Welsh Peer. If I were still a Member of the other place, as a Welsh MP, I could not vote on education matters but I could speak on them. Happily, I am regarded as a full Member of this House of Parliament and I can do both.

The first issue I want to raise with the Minister, who will undoubtedly refer to it in her winding-up speech, is higher education. I know that the Bill applies only to England, but there is no question that the nations and regions of our United Kingdom interact with each other very significantly when it comes to where our students go to university. For example, about 50% of Welsh students study at Welsh universities. The other 50% go to universities in England and Scotland and some to Northern Ireland. My plea to the Minister is to talk to her ministerial counterparts in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales about the implications of this new legislation on our devolved Administrations. After all, that covers nearly 11 million people in the United Kingdom.

I also want to touch on the Government's U-turn on academies. Not long ago, the Minister's ministerial colleague—the noble Lord, Lord Nash, who has now left the Chamber—was talking about the policy to ensure that every place in England had academies. He said that squabbling local politicians were one reason why it was important to have academies. That did not in any sense fit well with the Government's avowed policy on localism. The Government have said over the years that it is important to devolve powers, whether to the northern cities or to local authorities and local education authorities. The enforced academisation of schools in England would have completely gone against that idea and policy, so I welcome the change.

It is also important to understand that academies are not the only way that educational excellence can be achieved. I was a member of the Labour Government who introduced the academy system, and I have nothing against that system. Academies do very well in certain places—but not everywhere. A headline in the *Times* last week, for example, revealed a huge gulf in academy standards. After all, only 15% of primary schools in England and 60% of secondary schools are academies.

I also want to mention the effect of legislation on faith schools in our country. These schools play an extremely important role in the education of our young people, and they are significant in various parts of the country. However, of the 2,100 Roman Catholic schools, only 450 are academies. I urge the Government, when introducing this legislation, to involve themselves with

the diocesan authorities of both the Anglican and the Roman Catholic Churches in England to ensure that there is proper consultation, particularly regarding the role of regional commissioners. There is a great need for a memorandum of understanding between the Church education authorities and the regional commissioners on coming to certain decisions.

The other issue that I want to touch on is the way in which Governments take their decisions on legislation. The noble Lord, Lord Fowler, said some wise things about the relationship between the legislature and Executive. Over the past year there have been at least nine U-turns by the Government—all of which I completely applaud, by the way—including, of course, today's decision on junior doctors. However, when we look at tax credits, disability benefits, VAT on tampons, Sunday trading, child refugees and others all in one year, we have to think about how the Government are taking decisions. Last week the *Guardian* said in a leading article that,

"this government prefers to charge into controversy, citing the authority of manifesto commitments approved by a little more than a third of those who voted, and when forced to backtrack on ill-planned proposals, blames parliament as undemocratic".

You might think, "That's the *Guardian*—they would say that, wouldn't they?". But a few days later the *Sunday Times*, not a supporter of my party, said that, "this is a parliament of pulled punches, abandoned initiatives, and U-turns. A Government that cannot risk making enemies—even of the Labour Party—has U-turned on tax credits, disability benefits, academy schools and the trade union political levy".

The Government should reflect on and rethink the way in which legislation is introduced. The humility which is required by Governments does not come easily to them after five or six years. The Labour Government of whom I was a part had large majorities, and even they were wrong and became arrogant as the years went by. But if a Government have a majority of fewer than 20 in the House of Commons and a House of Lords which is quite rightly flexing its muscles, it seems not only wrong but daft that they should deal with matters in such a way that they end up having to make U-turns almost on a monthly basis.

The Government's decisions to change their mind were based not on some sort of Damascene conversion to the cause but on parliamentary arithmetic. Would it not be better if, at the end of the day, or perhaps at the beginning of the day, Ministers thought about the implications of their policies before they decided to set them in stone? Then all they would have to do is come to this place—which rightly scrutinises Bills with great energy and verve—and then go back and change their mind, or they could go to the other place where they might be defeated because they do not have a majority, particularly given the divisions at the moment in the government party.

My plea to the Minister who is to wind up the debate is to persuade the Chancellor of the Exchequer not to pull too many rabbits out of the hat; to persuade the Prime Minister and the Chancellor that government departments should control their own policies; and to persuade members of the Cabinet that the way we deal with things politically is not the same these days. The landscape has changed dramatically over the 30 years

that I have been a Member of Parliament in one House or other. People vote differently and I think that we will end up with more minority Governments, or certainly Governments with small majorities, during the remainder of my political lifetime than we have had in the past. The Government should think about these issues when dealing with their legislation and when considering the relationship between the Executive on the one hand and the legislature on the other.

1.03 pm

Lord Kirkwood of Kirkhope (LD): My Lords, it is a real pleasure to follow the noble Lord, Lord Murphy of Torfaen, and I absolutely concur with the approach he has taken in directing the Government's attention to the fact that the landscape constitutionally has changed across and throughout the United Kingdom. It affects not only devolution and some of the important policy areas he mentioned such as higher education, but all the decentralisation measures which both in principle and philosophically are probably right to contemplate. That is because if anything, the United Kingdom is an over-centralised state. We must be careful about "powerhouses", private prisons and private schools, all of which individually and on a freestanding basis might make sense, but do not necessarily all fit together. The House should be mindful of that during the rest of this year, as we consider the content of the Queen's Speech. The Government therefore have a responsibility to pay attention to the speech of the noble Lord, Lord Murphy.

The Government should also make it clear that they will not totally ignore local authorities. Local government is part of the constitutional warp and weft of all parts of the United Kingdom, and there is a sense that things are being done over the heads of duly elected members of local authorities. We on these Benches pay a lot more than lip service to the crucial work that councillors do for their communities. I am therefore pleased to support the main contention set out in the noble Lord's speech.

This Queen's Speech has no real edge to it. I have been reading Queen's Speeches for many years, and in my judgment this one is limited in scope and is a rehash of previous plans. I hope that the Minister, in her reply—it is a tough task to respond to a debate of this range and depth; I would not have her job but I am sure she will make a fine fist of it—will take note of the three powerful speeches made from our Front Bench. They were all, in their different ways about investment and pressures in the system—whether in the health service, the business world or our cultural and media spheres—and they were all mindful of the ever-present austerity as we go through the rest of this Parliament. A worry that we all share on these Benches is that people think the economy is better, the job has been done, the Chancellor is going to get his big prize of a balanced budget some time soon and everything is going to be fine. That is not the reality in the country, and the House needs to bear that in mind when it considers the detail of the legislative programme that has been laid before it.

Infrastructure will be a crucial issue for the country over the next couple of years. There may not be any primary legislation to deal with it, but we need to note

that infrastructure is not just about roads and railways; it is also about broadband. I would like housing and the capital work necessary to deal with climate change issues to be adequately considered as part of the infrastructure plan. The noble Lord, Lord Adonis, has been listening intently to the debate until just now. We are lucky that the noble Lord is playing such a key role for the Government. I applaud that because he is an excellent person, and I hope the Government will take proper account of anything he says.

At the same time, I hope the Government are realistic about what they can do. There are many examples of claims and counter-claims being made in press releases that the public do not actually believe any more. Government departments—or perhaps spads—always overclaim and underdeliver when it should be the other way around. I am sure that the Minister knows that, because she has a lot of experience in business. I hope she can help on that issue.

I want to say a word of support for the comments of the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Durham and the noble Earl, Lord Listowel. We have often been in the same camp during many campaigns over the months and years. The right reverend Prelate was absolutely right to say that austerity is getting worse because of the reductions in the social security budget, which are creating adversity for many low-income families. As he rightly said, universal credit is being stripped out. I support everything he said, and I will work shoulder to shoulder with him to make sure that the Government take account of these issues.

A lot of statistics fly around, and people talk about a few billions here and a few billions there, but to reinforce the point made by the right reverend Prelate, as recently as this Monday the Office for National Statistics published some information about persistent poverty rates in the United Kingdom and the European Union. In 2014, 6.5% of the UK population was in persistent poverty, equivalent to approximately 3.9 million people. Colleagues will remember that persistent poverty is defined as experiencing relative low income in the current year and in at least two out of the three preceding years. That is a serious situation for a country such as ours. Interestingly, the ONS figures also point out that persistent poverty bears down unduly on women and single-person households. We do not do that well in comparison with our European sister countries on the issue of experiencing poverty at least once in the past three or four years. We have work to do.

Austerity is still with us. That will play into the Government's life chances strategy, which the right reverend Prelate also mentioned. I am certainly prepared to work with this strategy. The troubled families issues are important and the strategy is effective, but mentoring and early years assistance cannot put food on the table and pay rent. If people in low-income households cannot put food on the table and pay rent, they are under stress, which causes heartache and marriage breakdown. I know that that is not in the Government's long-term interests or plans.

Finally, the disability employment gap, which I think the right reverend Prelate also mentioned, is a key measure for the rest of the Parliament. I am sure that that view is shared across the House. It is a very ambitious target but no reference is made to it in the

[LORD KIRKWOOD OF KIRKHOPE]

Queen's Speech. There is the White Paper, expected later in the summer, which some of us will look at very carefully. Innovation and sensitivity will be required, and we will need to avoid the kind of mistakes we made in reassessing the PIP 50-metre test to 20 metres, for example. But even if the new Secretary of State for Work and Pensions uses the time between now and the summer to come up with a plan to address that point, it cannot possibly be done without extra investment. We certainly wait with anticipation to see what he comes up with in the summer. I hope that that will lead to legislation—the “other measures” that the noble Lord, Lord Fowler, referred to.

The Speech is not mindful enough of the continuing pressure on low-income families and deprived and persistent poverty groups. In the coming weeks and months, the House would do well to recognise that in considering the detail of the Bills in the Queen's Speech.

1.12 pm

The Lord Bishop of Ely: My Lords, I join the noble Lord, Lord Kirkwood, in thanking my fellow right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Durham for his speech. I join my right reverend friend in reminding the House that, in particular with children and young people, we are about ensuring their experience of love and the fullness of life. If you like, we are interested in human flourishing and community. That is the prism through which I will look at some of the direct provisions from the gracious Speech and the implications for future policy.

Research done already on the implications of what has been said by Ministers shows that academisation will proceed very fully. The think tank CentreForum suggests that only about 3,000 free-standing schools might be left that are not academised in the future. I am concerned that we do not end up with thousands of outstanding schools going it alone. We need to ensure that all strong schools, in MATs or otherwise, support schools that are struggling. There is no way of flourishing that does not take in support for others.

Another thing relating to structural change as it continues is that it is very important that this change, however important it may be, does not distract us from the business of front-line support for children and young people in school. In that regard, I am thrilled that the Government intend to sustain the pupil premium, and I am very pleased that one of my right reverend friend's schools, the Northern Saints Church of England primary school in Sunderland, was a joint winner of the DfE's pupil premium award very recently. It won that award because it used the pupil premium to establish a reader-in-residence scheme. This funds a reader for two days each week, transforming the children's early reading experience. It set this up following research that says that successful adults have a love and enjoyment of reading. Northern Saints works with national and community groups using evidence-based strategies and a knowledge of their pupils' needs to give them access to a broad and varied curriculum.

But funding on its own does not solve the challenges faced by schools. It requires good stewardship of those resources, an interest in what actually works

and a commitment to the children that they serve. Collaboration, aspiration and creative thinking are as important for schools as the funding that they receive. I assume that the proposed legislation on fairer funding for schools will make good the White Paper's commitment to support isolated rural and small schools with additional funding, but we hope it will also encourage them to collaborate and find sustainable ways of working for the future, sharing CPD and ensuring that children have access to a breadth of educational opportunities.

I note the intention of the digital economy Bill to improve access to broadband. In the Fen country the architecture for broadband and mobile access has hardly got beyond early English, let alone to Gothic. Although I will offer every available spire and tower to improve this, the main concern is about connectivity and how this directly facilitates the delivery of education across remote rural areas. Lack of connectivity is not just a nuisance for us adults; it is a genuine deprivation for our children and young people. We must also be mindful in these straitened times that adjustment to the funding formula for schools will mean losers as well as winners. There is a need to support education in any disadvantaged community, whether rural or urban, if this Bill is truly to benefit all.

I also wish to raise a question of religious literacy. We live in an age characterised by globalisation, social media manipulation, and concerns about religious extremism and the limits of pluralism. In this febrile as well as fertile context, religious literacy is more and more vital. This is never neutral, but it should be reasoned and generous. As the Church of England's chief education officer recently said:

“Religious education is about giving people the critical skills they need to recognise deep differences in religion, belief and worldview, to understand our history and to take the diversity of voices seriously ... This means much more than simply accumulating knowledge about religion and belief. It's about enabling children and young people to encounter and wrestle with fundamental questions about God”.

This should never involve coercion or violence, but should ally passionate faith with a deep honouring of the other. Our Church schools are not proselytising communities, but they are places where we are sufficiently confident in ourselves and in our faithful witness that we are even more confidently inclusive and diverse.

In the past, local authorities have been a key link in ensuring that children have access to high-quality religious education and collective worship in schools that do not have a religious designation. This has enabled engagement with local faith communities and given children access to information about religion that dispels fear and promotes understanding. Currently, local authorities are statutorily obliged to maintain a standing advisory council on religious education. I ask the Minister: will this be lost as the role of local authorities in education changes? If so, how will we be able to monitor and assure the quality and provision of religious education in areas that have become fully academised? This is an issue of great concern to all those of us who believe in the importance of religious education and see the need for improved religious literacy.

In response to the noble Lord, Lord Murphy, I say that the implication of closer working between the RSCs and the dioceses is very important. In the case

of the diocese of Ely and our RSC it is working well, but it continues to need further development.

Moving on to FE and higher education, I note the intention of the Higher Education and Research Bill to link the quality of university teaching to the level of fees that institutions can charge. It would be unfortunate if this were to lead to a situation where only the wealthiest could attend the best universities, and I hope that the legislation will seek to avoid this. In our Anglican foundation universities we are clear that the best education goes beyond simply serving the knowledge economy or providing a ready supply of well-trained employees, important as these things are. Indeed, without a wider perspective it is difficult to do those things in any case.

I look forward to finding out more about the Government's skills plan and reforms to technical education. The further education and skills sector, which already educates more than 3.5 million learners every year, including a large number of those studying HE-level programmes, is worthy of greater recognition. It would be a great shame if HE and FE provision were separated like sheep and goats. This would, I fear, further reduce the prestige given to vocational education, a long-standing problem in our system.

Whatever the shape of the future it is clear that a key factor in implementing this legislation is leadership. Great leaders not only set out a bold vision of what educating for flourishing should look like, but equip their teams to deliver it. This is why the Church of England is establishing a foundation for educational leadership, offering the kind of networks, training and research to potential leaders which will enable them to make manifest in our systems a vision of education which sees its purpose as human flourishing for teachers and learners together.

The Church of England will soon make public its renewed vision for education, at the heart of which is the teaching of Jesus himself that he has come that people,

"may have life, and have it abundantly".

This is not theological code for coasting. Life in all its fullness means being exacting, rigorous, ambitious and having appetite for all that excellence demands. Any school which accepts underperformance from children is failing those children. Academic rigour and progress are vital components of school life lived to the full. The Lord who promises us fullness of life tells us in John's gospel that he is the good shepherd who is not going to lose even one of his sheep. No child is ever to be written off and we must do all we can to ensure that they receive fullness of life.

1.22 pm

Viscount Trenchard (Con): My Lords, I thank the Minister for introducing this debate on the gracious Speech. I am sure I am not alone among your Lordships in finding yesterday's colourful ceremony inspiring and refreshing. It brought home to me, as it always does, just how great a privilege it is to be a Member of your Lordships' House and to be able to play a role in improving legislation using the vast and diverse experience possessed by so many Members.

I congratulate my noble friend Lord King on his entertaining and interesting speech yesterday. As he recognised, the elephant in the room is the looming referendum on our membership of the European Union. I wish I could agree with him that, like Mr Larry Adler with his mouth organ, if we go on and on playing the same tune eventually we will get it right and our partners will come to appreciate us. I cannot see any evidence from the pronouncements of European leaders, either during or after the Government's negotiations, that they want to hear us again, so I cannot be confident that the much more fundamental reforms that are clearly needed in the EU are going to happen anytime soon.

What we do know is that the five presidents' report, published in June last year, reveals the European Commission's intentions that fiscal union will be developed within the framework of the European Union, meaning that the UK will be dragged in. I do not buy the arguments of those who believe that we must remain in order to maintain our influence on the world stage. The five presidents' report also proposes abolishing the UK's representation on key international bodies, where global regulations and standards are increasingly set. It states that,

"in the international financial institutions, the EU and the euro area are still not represented as one".

It singles out the IMF as one example.

In visits within the last month to Holland and France, I found that almost every banker and businessperson I met wanted to discuss the likelihood of a British vote to leave. Many of them, perhaps surprisingly, expressed the view that the only way to persuade the leaders of the EU to abandon their aspirations to deepen the structures of the Union to the extent that it becomes effectively a federal state will be if we vote to leave. The Swiss people voted last year to end the free movement of people, which their current arrangements with the EU require, and therefore they are now preparing to renegotiate their trading arrangements with the EU. Switzerland, as your Lordships are well aware, is the second-largest financial services market in Europe, so we would be in good company if we were to be engaged in similar talks at the same time.

I believe that a vote to leave will provide the best chance that Europe will morph into a looser community of nations while perpetuating free or nearly free trading arrangements that are so essential to our prosperity, the growth of new businesses and the creation of jobs. We would, of course, remain able and free to collaborate with our European partners in many areas on a bilateral or multilateral basis, in programmes such as Horizon 2020 for scientific research and other programmes.

I welcome the Government's commitment to continue work to deliver NHS services over seven days of the week. There are other excellent proposals in the gracious Speech, including the focus on improving children's life chances through the Children and Social Work Bill. I also welcome yesterday's agreement between the Government and the BMA and I congratulate the Secretary of State.

I find myself in full agreement with the views of the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Durham on HS2 and the northern powerhouse. It is welcome that the Government have committed to continue to support

[VISCOUNT TRENCHARD]

its development and, as a director of a company that manufactures plastics on Teesside, I am well aware of the crucial need for further investment and job creation in that region, building on the very welcome establishment by Hitachi of its new rolling stock factory at Newton Aycliffe. I have read recent newspaper articles suggesting that the costs of HS2 are escalating rapidly and that this may lead to the truncation of this project, possibly as far south as Crewe. I hope that the Minister will be able to assure the House that there is no truth in these rumours.

1.28 pm

Lord Cashman (Lab): My Lords, I am pleased to follow the noble Viscount, though I have to say, having spent 15 years working and legislating in the European Union, that I do not share his views of the Union or how it functions. I am reminded that one tends to get the answers one wants when one questions only the people that one chooses to target. Like others in this House, I am deeply concerned about the shadow that the European Union referendum casts across not only this country but the rest of Europe.

I remind noble Lords of my interests in the register, in particular as a rights holder of TV programmes. It is a pity that the noble Lord, Lord Fowler, is not here to hear me say that I agree with his every word—it is just as well, because it would probably worry him more than it worries me—particularly in relation to the BBC. Regarding his statement that the Government and both Houses should really be in the realms of a certain amount of give and take, I want to give by saying to the Government that there is much that I commend in the Queen's Speech—much indeed—but the issue is how it is woven together. I may even stray into certain areas which we are not due to discuss today, because I think there is an interconnection between rights and responsibilities, between communities and the way in which we provide housing and health, for example. So there is much here and I commend the Queen's Speech. As ever, the delight and the challenge will be in the detail.

If your Lordships will allow me, I will address something that is crucial for me and, I hope, for others, and that is the Bill of Rights. The Government are, perhaps, thinking twice on how to approach this issue. I welcome this. I note that there will be a proposal on which, I presume, there will be consultation. I urge the Government to publish online the responses to any such proposal and consultation. It is vital that we have the utmost transparency, especially when we are dealing with issues of fundamental human rights. We also need to be very careful about a disconnection with the universality of human rights. Arguably, as soon as we have a British Bill of Rights, those rights will only kick in when you enter Britain; you will lose them when you leave.

Equally, we must be extremely careful about the language that we use when referring to the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. The defamation of judgments undermines the very principle of the universality of human rights. When we selectively endorse certain judgments that please

us in government, we undermine the very ones that we selectively grab by denouncing the others. I wholly endorse anything that improves, enhances and reinforces the universality of human rights.

Turning to culture, I agree with the noble Baroness, Lady Bonham-Carter, my noble friend Lord Macdonald and the noble Lord, Lord Fowler. The White Paper on the BBC charter review is to be welcomed, but I have some serious concerns, not least about the make-up of the board. Will it be sufficiently independent? I think that the mid-term review will prevent the BBC from having a long-term strategy. I believe that there is an intention to stress the BBC to work in other areas, much wider than those in which it currently operates. This is in order that, in five years' time, the board—and certainly the Government—will turn round to the BBC and say, "Well, you are no longer a world-class leader; you are not matching exactly what we want you to do, so you need to do less". This is a big worry for me. Equally, regarding the concept of distinctiveness, are we going to say, "Why are you doing popular programmes, because they are being done by the other channels? That is not distinctive; do something different"? How do we make programmes in the public interest? Who defines the public interest? We should also celebrate and support what the BBC does and encourage it further. The same goes for Channel 4. Channel 4 is a beacon of diversity, not only in the programmes it makes but in the people who work within and for it. The £26 million surplus is to be welcomed. It is another example of broadcasting success.

I turn now to education and particularly to education and the arts. My life was, arguably, changed by arts in education. I failed my 11-plus and I remember when I went to my secondary modern school they gave up on me. You could see it in the eyes of teachers who did not know what to do with this energetic rebel. Yet, a drama teacher—Bill Everett—saw something. It was because of him that I spent a lifetime in the arts and creative industries. And we are in the creative industries. Here in both Houses, we use our creative talents to imagine something better. We pool them to bring forward solutions to problems that other generations have tussled with for thousands of years. One of our brilliant policemen came up to me and said, "It is nice to see you still performing, my Lord". I said, "Actually I gave up performing some years ago". "No, you haven't", he said, "I have seen you in the Chamber".

As the noble Baroness, Lady Bonham-Carter, said, let us celebrate the enormous talent base in this country. Let us celebrate it around the world. It has not happened by chance; it is because we have invested in talent and education which changes people's lives, hearts and minds. This is why I believe that all students should have access to drama as a subject in schools, taught by specialist-trained drama teachers with qualified teacher status. Drama is a distinct art form and should have its own subject status, separate to English, in both primary and secondary schools. For drama to be engaging before GCSE level requires trained and qualified drama teachers in secondary schools. In primary schools it requires high-quality, in-service drama training as a minimum. English teachers are not usually drama trained and drama should not be seen just as a method of English teaching.

I hope that the Government will seize this opportunity to review their narrative around the English Baccalaureate, against which the arts community fought so valiantly. It sent a damaging signal to downgrade the arts in education. This has happened. The number of children sitting arts GCSEs is declining steadily. It is down in music and drama, and film is excluded from the curriculum altogether. Teacher training places in arts education have been cut by 35% and the numbers of specialist arts teachers have fallen. This makes no sense for the arts and our creative industries. It makes no sense in wider educational terms either. We must reject the binary choice between science and arts. We need our young people to grow up to be problem solvers—to be creative and analytical, innovative and inquiring in their chosen profession. We do not need them to live their lives in closed silos, shut off from the possibilities of imagining other approaches and other ways.

I believe that, in the end, it is art that defines us as human beings. We underinvest in this and future generations at our cultural and economic peril. We need a curriculum that embraces arts in all its forms and places it at the centre of how we all explore the world.

1.37 pm

Lord Addington (LD): My Lords, having listened to much of this debate, I feel it is right to comment on one or two of the previous speeches. One in particular sums it up. The BBC is going to be an incredibly hot topic during the next few months, as is the whole public sector broadcasting system, regardless of the result of the referendum. I hope that we will be able to get some form of cross-party unity on this.

Any further comments from me have been rendered superfluous by the speech of my noble friend Lady Bonham-Carter, so I shall restrict myself to the substitutes' bench and cheering duties thereafter. Having listened to and thought about that speech, I believe that the House and I would be much happier if I take this role.

The rest of my speech will be directed towards education. I must make another small confession. This is something of a continuum from the last Queen's Speech debate, when I said that, in dealing with education, if you do not know how to teach somebody with specific problems and are then expected to achieve success with people who have those specific problems, you are going to fail or underachieve. I described it as "the bleedin' obvious". Whether that is unparliamentary language or not, I have not changed my mind. Since then, I decided to go away and do something positive about it and have spent much of the last year speaking to people about how we change this. I have spoken to people in virtually all the pressure groups and in academia and have looked at government responses on this issue. I looked at about four government responses on special educational needs or aspects of them, which said that we needed people who were better trained to deal with this. A volunteer researcher working for me got through 39 other documents written by learned people which recommended this. At that point I told him to stop. I am still flirting with the idea of holding a publicity event with all the documents piled up on a very sturdy table. I have put a Private Member's Bill into the mix to suggest that we should take action to

ensure that teachers are given at least some awareness training in dealing with those with the most commonly occurring special educational needs.

It is absurd to expect somebody who has a different learning pattern to get the best out of a standardised one. I draw attention to my declared interests, particularly my role as president of the British Dyslexia Association. The difficulty with a "talk and chalk" method of teaching—that is, talk, write something on the blackboard, pupils write it down—is that some pupils may find it incredibly difficult to write things down. Their short-term memory means that they cannot remember things. They look up and down and do not take in what is said because it is difficult for them to do that. However, that is the main method of classroom teaching. In addition, those with dyscalculia interpret maths as being funny symbols and somebody talking in a foreign language. My knowledge of this, of course, is not good. Those with dyspraxia who have problems with vision and writing need to be taught in a different way. Autism may also be added to the mix. Unless teachers are aware that some pupils have different learning patterns and teach them in a different way, those pupils will achieve poorer results or fail. Twenty per cent of the population come into these categories.

There is probably no definitive example of any of the spectrum disorders. For some bizarre reason they all overlap, which makes the situation even more complicated. The classic stereotypes of somebody with Asperger's and somebody with dyslexia are almost totally contradictory. However, these conditions overlap and can both occur in the same person. People with these needs will always struggle in the classroom. One also needs to counter certain perceptions. Having talked to people in the teaching unions and the professions, I know that a certain perception is declining but nevertheless still exists—namely, that you can be taught to teach anybody if you can be taught to teach well. That is not the case.

Teachers need to understand what conditions exist and how to adapt their teaching style accordingly. They also need to understand that a pupil who struggles in the classroom will also struggle in the playground. All these conditions come together. In addition, some pupils may have speech and language problems. Teachers need a basic awareness of these conditions. However, there is no guarantee that teacher training courses will supply this awareness. Some people receive as little as two hours' training in this area. I have told this joke before: a friend of mine, in discussing the two-hour timeframe, ran through various conditions such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia and a few others. He then said, "I could not learn to spell those words in that time but you are supposed to carry out a classroom intervention to help pupils with those conditions. That is not going to happen". As I say, 20% of the population come into these categories.

Regardless of what is said about education structures, unless we get this right we are guaranteed to have a higher wastage rate than is necessary if we are talking just about statistics. If we are talking about individuals, they will not fulfil their potential. In terms of personal happiness, wealth—you name it—they will have problems. Making sure that we change this would be a major step forward. I have spoken to people from all parties

[LORD ADDINGTON]

and bodies and hope that over the next year we can take a major step to ensure that the education system is more responsive to this issue. Somebody may say, "We have taken up phonics now, and that is how you teach dyslexics". That is right but those with dyslexia still learn more slowly with the aid of phonics than those without dyslexia. If a teacher sets his teaching pace based on the conventional classroom, those who have the conditions I have described will be left behind. This is not about working harder but working smarter and accepting that these disabilities will be with people for life. The response tends to be to provide extra lessons. That is like asking a very small man to carry sacks of coal. He will break down. If you ask a person to do something that they find incredibly difficult to do and overload them, they will break down. Instances of such pupils failing and shutting off from the other children in the classroom have been recorded ad infinitum. We must make teachers more aware of "smarter" working to tackle this situation.

My dream is that in future these conditions will be identified by teachers telling parents, "Your child has condition X", rather than parents, having endured several years of their child's failure and unhappiness, telling the teacher, "Don't you think he might have such and such a condition?". We should at least seek to achieve that over the next few years.

1.46 pm

The Earl of Clancarty (CB): My Lords, I want to make a few observations on the arts, culture, education and the media. I would like to start on a high note, so first, I very much congratulate the Government on introducing a Bill finally to ratify the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. This is great news. There should also be a special mention of the UK's Peter Stone of Newcastle University, who since the beginning of the year has held the first ever UNESCO chair in Cultural Property Protection and Peace and has campaigned for this legislation for the past 13 years.

Bringing broadband to every household that wishes to have it is an excellent idea and I hope that project works well. I echo what others have said about speeds. In other areas I have some concerns. I am anxious about how the intention to allow local councils to retain 100% of business rates will affect charitable bodies, including art centres, orchestras and theatres large and small, which currently are allowed 80% mandatory relief, on which many organisations depend. If this is to be left up to already cash-strapped councils, it simply will not work. Can the Minister allay my fears on this?

In a wider cultural sense, there should be some concern about the neighbourhood planning and infrastructure Bill. I am probably one of the few in this House who are a little sceptical about housing-led development, and who feel that we may be in danger of sacrificing what ought to be a sensitive, balanced and inclusive approach to urban design. One of the crises in the arts is the shortage of studio work spaces. Of course, this is only one kind of demand among many others. Nevertheless, this and other uses to which space might or should be put are increasingly

likely to be shut out, not just by spiralling rents but by the not unrelated issue of the increased muscle of developers.

A different topic—arts education—was not in the Queen's Speech. However, I want to make this point because it is timely. The petition to include arts subjects in the EBacc reached well over 100,000 signatures last month. Consequently, there will be a debate on this in the Commons on 4 July, as the Minister will be aware. I hope the Government will take into consideration the views expressed in this debate before they respond to the EBacc consultation.

I want to say a couple of things about the BBC. The way I think about the BBC—as do others—is as a public space. Public space is under threat in this country at present. Indeed, in the geographical sense of buildings and land, too much is being sold off. In respect of arts and cultural services, libraries and museums, particularly in the north, are under increasing threat from continuing cuts to local government funding—cuts which many now believe are unnecessary.

The BBC is a special kind of public space and, in this sense, the distinction that some have recently drawn between a state broadcaster and a public broadcaster is apposite. A public space should contain within it, by definition, a range of public interests, from the most popular to the specialist, but all accessible within this one space. That is why the term "distinctiveness", as used by the Secretary of State, is the wrong language. In this context, it is about distinctiveness of product: that is to say—I think wrongly—about programme content. It is the language of the marketplace. This term is being used to do down the BBC at the same time as misrepresenting it. The BBC's distinctiveness is already determined by its inherent shape, not primarily—and I emphasise the word primarily—by its programme content. Its shape, therefore, as a non-commercial broadcaster with programmes uninterrupted by commercials, is part of its character which should not be underestimated. If you remove the popular, the BBC would be destroyed as a public space, which would be a great tragedy.

My second point concerns the constant pressure to prove both independence and impartiality. Again, the BBC is, by definition, already both independent and impartial, because it is a public broadcaster and a public space. But with appointees to the new board accountable only to the Government, the BBC would—again, by definition alone—lose that independence. As an illustration of the current pressures, last month in the *Guardian*, Timothy Garton Ash, in the context of the EU debate, said that by,

"bending over backwards to be impartial ... The danger ... is that it reduces everything to claim and counterclaim".

Facts then become hard to come by, and it becomes too easy to exclude other, more nuanced voices. Given the current uncertainties and the pressures on the BBC—some obvious, some less so—the terms of the charter review need to be scrutinised, and I would support this being debated and voted upon in Parliament.

1.51 pm

Baroness Sharp of Guildford (LD): My Lords, I am delighted to be participating today in this debate on the gracious Speech. I will restrict my remarks to

issues of education, and in particular the need to help those who come from more disadvantaged sections of our community. I should also declare my interests as a governor of a primary school which is now an academy and as an honorary fellow of both the City & Guilds Institute and Birkbeck College.

I will start by saying how pleased I am that the Government have seen fit to drop their original proposals for the forced academisation of all local authority schools that have not so far become academies. I am thoroughly with the Government in terms of wishing to improve the quality and the performance of schools and, in particular—as mentioned by the Minister in his introduction—in the wish to change the appalling statistic of how many children leave primary school unable to cope with the fundamentals of reading, writing and arithmetic. As the Minister mentioned, despite the improvement, one in five children leaves primary school without really being able to cope with the secondary school curriculum. This is, I think, a very difficult issue to deal with and one that as a nation we have failed to grapple with over time.

The reason why I am pleased that we are not forcing academisation is that the evidence does not indicate, as the Minister seemed to imply, that academisation leads to improvements in the quality of teaching. Academisation, which the school that I am a governor of went through, costs a fair amount in legal fees because land and assets are transferred from the local authority—roughly £50,000 to £60,000 per school. We have something like 15,000 primary schools still to be converted, so it is a big issue. We are talking about a lot of money—between £300 million and £500 million—to convert them.

The key issue in terms of improving the performance of schools is the quality of the teachers concerned. We could spend that money on improving CPD for teachers and training more teaching assistants. A higher-level teaching assistant is paid something like £20,000 a year, so for the £60,000 that one might be spending on legal fees, one could in fact employ three higher-level teaching assistants and make an important contribution to the quality of teaching in our classrooms.

We should look at countries such as Finland, which has traditionally topped the PISA tables and which insists that people should have five years' training to become a teacher. One problem that we face in the classroom is the degree of stress that the current system imposes on teachers, and for that matter on pupils. I pick up the point that was made by both my noble friend Lady Bonham-Carter and the noble Lord, Lord Cashman, about the importance of creativity within the classroom and the inclusion within the broader curriculum of subjects such as drama, dance and sports—I know that this something that my noble friend Lord Addington talks about a great deal. There is undoubtedly too much emphasis today on testing and league tables. Testing for diagnostic purposes is very important—but, equally, it has created far too much stress. Two in five teachers in this country leave teaching within the first five years. If we want to improve the quality of teaching it is vital that we have a stable workforce. At the moment we face very real problems in both recruiting and retaining teachers.

Like the noble Earl, Lord Kinnoull, I am a member of the Select Committee on Social Mobility. Our report concentrated on the transitions to work for 16 to 24 year-olds. We felt very strongly that too much emphasis was placed on what might be called the “golden route”, when in fact the majority of young people—between 55% and 60%—do not go through the golden route of GCSEs, A-levels and on to university. We called our report *Overlooked and Left Behind*. The reasons why these young people are left behind are extremely complex, but one issue is undoubtedly that many are demotivated by the secondary school curriculum that they face, which has long been—and continues to be—too academic. There has been a failure to have a broader curriculum and to include the creativity of the arts subjects. Subjects such as design and technology, home economics, sports, drama and dance have largely been dropped from the curriculum these days; it is all narrowly academic and demotivates a great many pupils.

I will make a number of points on the proposals relating to universities. Major changes are suggested to structures in relation to both teaching and research. There are considerable worries about both sets of reforms. In many senses, it is almost reform for the sake of reform and one wonders sometimes why, if it ain't broke, we are wishing to fix it. The Government seem to have ignored many of the responses to the Green Paper consultation and pushed ahead with their proposals to link the ability to raise fees with the performance in the teaching excellence framework. The proposal is to allow three years for the system to bed down, but there are real doubts as to how adequate the teaching excellence framework will be and whether its reliance upon the National Student Survey and jobs data is really justified. In particular, there are fears that the latter will create a two-tier system, because all the evidence indicates that those from wealthy homes go into the higher-paying jobs.

The second issue is that of encouraging new entrants into the university sector by changing the procedures and requirements for degree-awarding powers. This has been very much welcomed by the further education sector, which has traditionally provided a considerable number of higher education courses, including the well-known HNC and HND courses, which have now largely been overtaken—rather sadly, I think—by foundation degrees. The problem has been that since 2012 the universities that accredit these courses have tended to take them in-house because they wish to keep the fee income. We have seen a huge drop in the number of part-time students on these courses. I have raised this issue in the House before; it is a huge issue, which none of the Government's proposals have really addressed.

If we look at the demographics, we can see perfectly well that this country is going to have to use older workers more intensively. People are going to have to carry on working longer than they used to, and we are going to have to rely on older workers more than we used to. When this is combined with technology, their skills and capabilities will get increasingly out of date. It is therefore essential that we have institutions such as further education colleges that can provide part-time degree courses—often disproportionately for those who

[BARONESS SHARP OF GUILDFORD]

come from poorer homes. The problem is that many of these people already have debts of one sort or another—mortgages, bank overdrafts, car loans and so forth—and they are loath to take on any more. Yet the only answer the Government have provided is more loans, which do not seem to have provided the answer.

I will finish with one further observation. To my mind, what is lacking in the education system in this country today is not competition but joined-up strategic system thinking. Collaboration, not competition, should be the name of the game, and none of the reforms envisaged in the gracious Speech will give us this.

2.02 pm

Lord Shinkwin (Con): My Lords, I apologise to the House for missing a few of the opening words of my noble friend the Minister.

I am excited about the commitment in the gracious Speech to tackling the barriers to opportunity and to laying the,

“foundations for educational excellence in all schools, giving every child the best start in life”.

Communicating the message that it is possible to be young, gifted and disabled is fundamental to building a one-nation society in which disability discrimination is consigned to history. That does not mean tokenistic excellence just for disabled pupils and students. It means expecting and demanding more of them so that intellectually talented disabled children are singled out, encouraged and supported to excel. As the Prime Minister said in his inspiring speech on life chances in January, it means a new way of thinking. Surely, as the Government seek to halve the disability employment gap—a worthy goal—building employers' confidence in disabled people means ensuring that when they want to recruit the best, they can be confident that talented disabled job applicants are more than equal to the challenge.

For me, a one-nation society is one that does not discriminate on account of disability—a society in which disability equality is a consistent reality. My commitment to disability equality and my appreciation of the remarkable record of your Lordships' House in advancing disability equality have informed my introduction of a Private Member's Bill on the issue. It concerns an area where, unbelievably, the diagnosis of disability carries a death sentence. Partly because of your Lordships' House, discrimination on the grounds of disability after birth is outlawed. Yet today legal and lethal discrimination on the grounds of disability is allowed up to birth by law. It is illegal for an unborn human being to have their life ended by abortion beyond 24 weeks, but if they have a disability their life can be ended right up to birth by law. Where is the consistency, the justice or the equality in that? If anyone thinks such obvious discrimination is acceptable, I respectfully invite them to imagine the outcry if the same were applied to skin colour or sexual orientation. Such discrimination would rightly be regarded as outrageous.

To be a Member of your Lordships' House is to be a Peer, an equal. Yet, for as long as this discrimination is allowed by law and remains on the statute book,

how can I, as a severely disabled person, reasonably be expected to regard myself as an equal? The recent excellent report on the Equality Act 2010 and disability produced by an ad hoc Select Committee of your Lordships' House shows that this House is equal to the challenge—equal to the noble task of righting this wrong, of advancing disability equality once more and of building one nation in which disability discrimination is consigned to history. Surely if life chances are to have meaning, if every child is to have the “best start in life”, as the Prime Minister quite rightly wishes, disabled children must first be given an equal chance to live.

2.08 pm

Lord Harrison (Lab): My Lords, in the absence of the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, who chaired the very committee on disability and the Equality Act 2010 mentioned by the noble Lord, Lord Shinkwin—I was a member of it—I thank him for his words. It was of great interest for me to do something so out of my natural habitat but I learned a lot indeed.

When I came into the Chamber I was going to direct my words principally to some old chestnuts concerning business, with which the noble Baroness, Lady Neville-Rolfe, will be thoroughly acquainted, but I cannot resist the opportunity to say to the noble Lord, Lord Nash, on his education brief that I am a fanatic for the single market, about which I will speak later, but it seems to me that we have never asked the crucial questions. What are the challenges? What are the skills required by our young people to face that single market of 28 member countries and growing? We have never asked the question—never mind getting the answer.

My first old chestnut is one which my noble friend Lord Mendelsohn mentioned from our Front Bench, on late payment of commercial debt. I ask again whether any progress has been made there. ABFA, the Asset Based Finance Association, is the most recent organisation to say that smaller UK manufacturers wait twice as long as their larger competitors for invoices to be paid. Indeed, those SMEs with turnover below £1 million face waits of up to 14 weeks. Disappointingly, ABFA goes on to say that poor payment practices have become,

“increasingly ingrained in business practice”,

and are “endemic” in many sectors. Can the noble Baroness, Lady Neville-Rolfe, update us on this challenge, which goes back 25 years? I remember leading on this in the European Parliament.

The noble Lord, Lord Nash, mentioned the better markets Bill. I am a fanatic for markets, but competitiveness is not something that the present Government have fulfilled expectations on, and I encourage them to do so. Another enthusiasm of mine is the tourism and hospitality industries. I talked to representatives from them this morning, who tell me that, according to the World Economic Forum, the United Kingdom is the second-least competitive of 141 countries in terms of drawing in inbound tourists. It is things such as the air passenger duty that affect our ability to be competitive.

Another old chestnut is productivity. The ONS says that productivity is worse now than before the recession, which set in in 2007. The UK's productivity gap has widened, with competitors doing better than us in France, Germany and even Romania, which I visited last year. Why we have the second-worst productivity of the G7 leading western industrial nations requires an answer. Sometimes people talk of a productivity puzzle. I do not think it is a puzzle: we have failed to invest in people, plant and modernisation and to promote long-term investment. Perhaps the Minister should look at the Investment Association's report, *Supporting UK Productivity with Long-Term Investment*.

In respect of small businesses' access to finance, I invite the Minister to give a report on the very hard work of the noble Lord, Lord Hill, in Brussels, on our behalf and on behalf of the European Union, to develop a capital markets union. Where have we got with that? It is important that we enable small businesses in particular to have access to finance.

My last old chestnut is the trade imbalance. There is still a yawning gap, which is getting wider. Some of us are yawning to hear it repeated so often in your Lordships' House, but I wonder whether we could do something about that. The noble Lord, Lord Nash, also suggested that the digital economy Bill was on its way. It really is time that the Government pulled their finger out on this one. Connectivity is dreadful, and we heard from my noble friend Lord Mendelsohn about the patchiness of broadband. How different it is in Estonia, which I visited last week. The Estonians now have a paperless Parliament. They now have an e-economy, which they celebrate. Indeed, on the Radio 4 business report this morning, we heard from Starship Technologies, which we visited in Tallinn.

One example of how you can use e-technology impressed me. We were driving towards the Russian border when the British ambassador pointed out all the trees—the forests of fir trees in northern Estonia, on the Baltic coast—and said, “With e-technology you can do the co-ordinates and get your Christmas tree for Christmas for €5. You can identify it, choose it and get it sent home”. We have to make a real and greater effort on the e-economy. I would be grateful for a reply from the Minister—she can even send it by email if she likes—as to what we are doing with our Estonian colleagues, who follow us in the EU presidency after our forthcoming one in 2017. We have a common cause in developing the digital economy. Are we actually talking to our friends—those who have beaten the path already before us? I hope we are, but please let us know that it is the case.

I conclude by saying that, as I mentioned, I am a fanatic for the single market. It promotes wealth and opportunity in the United Kingdom, but we too often fail to make the effort on something that was created here in the United Kingdom by Lord Arthur Cockfield—a former Member of this House, who in his time, in the last century, was Margaret Thatcher's Commissioner for developing the internal or single market. It is something we should celebrate and do with the other 27 member states for the benefit not only of the United Kingdom but of the European Union as a whole.

2.17 pm

Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne (LD): It is an honour to join your Lordships' debate on the humble Address. My remarks will focus on culture, education and health, with special reference to children in UK schools.

Like many of your Lordships, I was alarmed recently to see the latest NICE press release on standards in care, which focused on statistics published by YoungMinds recently on the mental health of children and young people in our schools. I notice that one in 10 of children in class have diagnosable mental health disorders. In over a decade, there has been a 68% increase in young people's hospital admissions due to self-harm, while 80% of those under 16 and 8,000 children aged under 10 suffer from severe depression. Of course, as we know, depression is commonly treated with antidepressants and with psychotherapy—as Hale 1997 tells us. Both tricyclic anti-depressants and the more recent selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors—the SSRIs—have been found to be effective in treating depression, according to studies by Paykel and Edwards respectively in 1992.

The Minister may be aware of the recent Cochrane review by Moncrieff in 2003, which found small differences only between anti-depressants and active placebos, with the lowest effects being shown in in-patient trials. In consequence, the advice is to prescribe SSRIs to moderately and severely depressed adolescents only quite rarely. But I wonder whether the Minister has spotted a parallel finding, which is reliant only on small sampling so far and which I believe is well worth further research. It gives remarkably good outcomes—considerably better than those I have just quoted—on depression for passive and participative music therapy and for active music in classes. Of course, music therapy for depression is a well-known support system. The National Health Service has published reports on it over the last decade or so. As recently as a couple of weeks ago, some later findings showed that singing in a choir for 60 minutes scientifically proved to be good for mental and physical health in a very large proportion indeed.

I doubt whether it is any surprise to the Minister to recall that the overall education of children and young people—and, indeed, adults—is vastly enhanced by music, mathematics and speech. The very recent findings on the Broca's area of the brain—which has been known for quite some years to be the area where we develop speech—have shown something hugely exciting: as that area is activated for speech, it is activated at exactly the same time and in the same way for music and, alongside that, for mathematics. That is the very recent finding by the Max Planck Society, which is enormously important. The new findings teach us that when you are learning to communicate through language, it is majestically enhanced through the learning and practice of music and mathematics, which, in the modern world, lead one immediately into being an IT expert.

It is therefore a credible argument that there is immense value to many classes of our society—many children and many adults—to be learning and practising music. It helps the physically disabled immensely, as I see,

[BARONESS NICHOLSON OF WINTERBOURNE]

for example, when working with physically disabled children in Romania. The difference of a year working with children in music and dancing—however handicapped you may be; whether you are a quadriplegic and in a wheelchair—is astounding in terms of physical health. But we can now tell why—because of the recent findings on the Broca's area—it is of such enormous importance for mental health as well.

I recall that, in the case of so many prisoners in the UK—socially disadvantaged, yes, but also innumerate and illiterate to a very high degree—if they begin on music, it triggers, as we now know, the linguistic competence that is inherent in the brain. Music is enormously effective in developing emotional IQ. As we now know from the recent findings, 90% of high performances in the workplace have very high levels of emotional intelligence; 58% of success in all jobs can be explained, according to the latest statistics, in terms of high emotional intelligence. That, again, is vastly enhanced by music. It helps the deaf as well; and the academic elite, of course, will need great challenges in order to forge ahead. Music provides social cohesion of a huge capacity. We can look at the Trojan horse schools, particularly Saltley Academy and others in Birmingham, which are now twinning up with Tower Hamlets children in a huge set of musical performances for the Water City Festival in the Tower of London this year. It is enormously helpful.

Nevertheless, the national plan that the Government put in place in 2011, following the Henley review on music in schools, has by all accounts not been delivered. The music hubs that it proposed—composed of local music services, voluntary groups and private firms—simply do not work. The money invested in them—£171 million—has been ineffective. As the Ofsted report said, there was “little discernible difference” to three-quarters of the schools it inspected after the Henley review was put in place and the national plan. It is hard not to conclude that somehow the Government have washed their hands of the provision of music because of the cuts in musical budgets of up to 25%, yet the national music plan was to ensure that every child was offered an opportunity to learn an instrument. The First Access programme was to offer instruments in groups for a short time. What has emerged is that, between the ages of 5 and 18, a child might—if they are fortunate, through the First Access programme—have only five hours of shared instruments.

That is simply not enough to tackle the enormously high level of depression in children and the other socially excluded groups that I have mentioned—and there are many more—and it does not take account of the tremendous findings put forward to us all by the National Health Service, which tells us a different story. I wonder if, somehow, the famous joined-up government thinking should be brought into play, because, as we know, the theory and practice of music, the performance and the active participation with instruments and with others give the most extraordinarily good results. We have the findings. I ask the Minister to give me a meeting, perhaps, to discuss all of this. It is not good enough that, when our children were polled—the eight, nine and 10 year-olds—on their own happiness, as happened recently, we should be so

low down the scale. Romanian children were at the top—three-quarters or two-thirds of them offering happiness—while British children were very near the bottom. I have the evidence, and I seek a meeting with the Ministers. I think that this is a topic of true importance.

2.26 pm

Lord Rees of Ludlow (CB): My Lords, my remarks all relate to higher education and research. I declare an interest as a member of Cambridge University. The backdrop, of course, is that higher education enrolment has risen over recent decades to around 40% of each age cohort. This expansion is surely welcome, but it has not led to greater variety among universities. They nearly all still focus on three or four-year degrees and nearly all offer some postgraduate degrees. They all try to rise in the same distorting and misleading league table.

The system needs a more diverse ecology, a blurring of higher and further education, and an expansion of distance learning and lifelong learning. There is scope for new teaching institutions, including high-quality liberal arts colleges, but it is not clear that degree-giving powers should be so widely dispersed. Surely it is fairer to students that their qualifications should be accredited by a respected institution—in the spirit of the old London external degrees—rather than by, “a provider that may exit the market”,

to quote the inelegant phrase in the White Paper.

Despite energetic access initiatives by universities such as mine, 18 year-olds unlucky in their school-age experiences are challenged to reach the bar for entry to a demanding degree course. Sadly, the present system gives them no second chance. The most selective universities could enhance social mobility by reserving a fraction of their places for mature students who have not come directly from school but who have caught up later by obtaining credits or doing foundation courses elsewhere, perhaps via the Open University. Transferable credits, even if they are not sufficient for graduation, should be accepted as worthwhile qualifications in themselves. Those who do not complete degrees should not be typecast as failures or wastage. An American will say, “I had two years of college”, and will regard the experience as positive.

Another feature of the American system is that PhD-level education and research are concentrated in only about 5% of the institutions that give bachelor's degrees. At the top of the research league, Harvard, MIT and Berkeley are major national assets through the worldwide pull they exert on mobile talent, the collective expertise of their faculty and the consequent quality of the graduates they feed into all walks of life. Each is embedded in a cluster of research labs, small companies, NGOs and so forth, to symbiotic benefit.

We should cherish the UK's counterparts to these great research universities. But it is also crucial to foster and fund the translation of research findings into social or commercial benefits; that is the rationale for Innovate UK, the Catapults, and so on. But there are misperceptions about what is actually needed. Even though the UK punches above its weight in producing research, more than 90% of the world's

research is still done elsewhere, so most UK innovations and start-ups are unlikely to be based directly on discoveries made here. That is why the research universities are doubly valuable—because their faculty and graduates are plugged in to global networks. They can seize on good ideas from anywhere in the world and run with them.

The system depends on the dual support system for research, which is something that our universities value, and which Americans envy. For it to operate, some kind of research excellence framework, or REF, is a necessary evil. But at the moment it looms far too large; it offers perverse constraints and incentives. In so far as teaching is under-prioritised, the over-focus on the REF must take some of the blame. It is welcome news that the noble Lord, Lord Stern, is undertaking a review; it is also welcome that the introduction of the new teaching assessment in universities will be gradual and can be adjusted in the light of experience.

In contrast, the White Paper proposes a major one-off reorganisation of research funding. There are widely-voiced anxieties that the changes are needlessly drastic. It is proposed that all seven research councils will lose their royal charter—even the Medical Research Council, which has a global reputation and a century-old history. The executive chairs of the councils will be subordinate to the CEO of a single merged organisation called UKRI. Moreover, UKRI will also, more controversially, include Innovate UK, a body with an important but distinct role in promoting innovation. UKRI will report to civil servants in BIS, where there will no longer be a senior independent scientist analogous to the former director-general for the research councils.

After any reorganisation, there are transitional hassles before the new structure beds down. This was manifest when research councils were established or closed down and when a separate ministry, DIUS, was set up, and then closed down within two or three years. When the research councils set up the so-called shared research service in 2008, the overheads went up, not down.

The Government's proposals are based on a review by Sir Paul Nurse, who accepted that the current research support system worked fairly well but aspired to improve it. It is seductive to believe that reshuffling the administrative structure will achieve this, but it may not prove either necessary or sufficient and may indeed be counterproductive. Moreover, it is already proving hard to attract people with the stature expected as heads of research councils. That may be harder still if the posts are downgraded.

It is plainly important that the existing research councils mesh together and collaborate when necessary. Ministers need advice on how to apportion funding between different councils, on the balance between responsive mode grants and strategic initiatives, and so on. But these aims can surely be achieved with good will and capable management within the present structure by strengthening high-level input from the CST and reviving a body resembling the old advisory board for the research councils to play the role envisaged for UKRI's board. When there are so many distracting pressures in the educational and research world, surely we should avoid risky upheaval in a system that is working reasonably well and which really needs no more than some fine-tuning.

2.34 pm

Baroness Benjamin (LD): My Lords, I rise to speak in the debate on the humble Address. I am delighted to see that children's welfare and well-being is being addressed in some of the proposed Bills, especially the issues of online protection for children, adoption, education and care leavers. The gracious Speech contains some welcome proposals for improving life chances for the most disadvantaged. The Children and Social Work Bill is a fantastic opportunity to do so, but we must make sure it lives up to its promise.

I have long backed calls from Barnardo's—I declare an interest as a vice president—for care leavers up to the age of 25 to have access to a personal adviser. So progress here is very welcome, but perhaps the Minister can say how the Government will make sure that these young people know what they are entitled to, and how to get it. To have a sustainable outcome, there is a great need for a holistic, joined-up strategy for children's health and well-being that is embedded in all government departments, not just the Health and Education departments. It is vital that we get it right.

I am privileged to co-chair the All-Party Parliamentary Group on a Fit and Healthy Childhood, set up to address the obesity epidemic, which is causing type 2 diabetes, heart conditions and cancer. Obesity is the biggest single cause of preventable cancers after smoking. This epidemic is affecting very young children. Slimming World has reported that 10 and 11 year-olds are already attending its sessions, suffering from depression and anxiety due to being overweight. This is why we must focus on children—most importantly, even before birth, on the ante-natal and pre-pregnancy stage. Our APPG makes those points strongly in our fifth report, *The National Obesity Framework*, and we hope the Government's own national obesity strategy will also adopt this approach as indicated in the gracious Speech.

In all our five APPG reports, we have stressed the importance of supporting individual families, whatever their make-up, in enabling children to grow up in a safe, healthy and stimulating environment. So there is a real need for joining up the dots. That is what the Government must do, and what I hope we will see when the national obesity strategy is unveiled. However, there is already an example of not joining up the dots—the announcement of the eye-catching tax on sugary drinks. This may prove beneficial but it is not a silver bullet; it can be only a single element in the type of co-ordinated strategy that will benefit our children. Sugar in our food and drink is a key factor in obesity and overweight, but its contribution to tooth decay in young children is perhaps not as much in the public eye as it should be. Thousands of children have been admitted to hospital in the last four years to have teeth removed because of advanced decay. Tooth extraction is the number one reason why children aged five to nine are admitted to hospital—more than 8,300 in London alone. But interestingly, Professor Nigel Hunt at the Royal College of Surgeons has reported that 90% of tooth decay is preventable. The Government propose to address this problem by paying dentists to keep children's teeth healthy, instead of just dealing with problems as they arise. But 40% of children do not go to the dentist to take advantage of this proposal.

[BARONESS BENJAMIN]

Five year-old children cannot take themselves to the dentist. So what is needed is an holistic approach, rolling out strategies and partnership working to make hard-to-reach families understand the importance of tooth care to halt this unnecessary problem. Policies across all departments should be assessed for their impact on children by someone at Cabinet level to ensure that policy for children is co-ordinated and coherent.

A fit and healthy childhood is not just about the physical aspect of children's lives. The media, especially television, have a huge impact on children's well-being and even on their mental health, so they should be exposed to content that reflects their lives and their world in order for them to grow up knowing how they fit into society and, most importantly, that they belong. This gives them the confidence they need, so I welcome the prominence children's content gets in the White Paper on the future of the BBC, published last week. The BBC's children's programmes are a distinctive and precious resource that needs supporting and protecting. However, I have some specific concerns about areas in the White Paper that need addressing. To the major concerns that other noble Lords have expressed, which I support, I add concerns about children. First, it is hard to know whether the creation of a contestable fund aimed at PSB children's content is a positive thing, because there are too many unanswered questions and some big risks are signalled. For example, what percentage of the fund will be ring-fenced for children's content? Who will commission content and on what criteria? Who will administer the fund? What will be the cost of doing so? What happens when the money runs out at the end of the initial three-year period? There should be no suggestion that money will be top-sliced from the BBC licence fee to bankroll the fund in later years.

Another grave concern is the proposal to remove the children's BBC in-house production guarantee. This will create a significant risk that may not be obvious to the casual observer, because children's BBC in-house production teams are asked to do things that independent producers are not asked to do. They are asked to locate their shows out of London. This keeps creative economies afloat, especially in our northern cities. For example, £5 million is spent each year on children's drama in the north-east of England, all thanks to the underlying stability offered by the in-house guarantee. So I hope the Government will think very carefully before they decide how to proceed, and do not inadvertently hurt our precious and celebrated BBC children's output. The digital economy Bill is an opportunity to address the provision of children's PSB content through primary legislation and make children a tier 2, rather than tier 3, requirement for broadcasters. That will address the contestable fund proposal. I hope the Minister will give this some consideration.

We all believe that children are our future, so let us put them first by putting in place long-term, joined-up strategies. I hope that in this new Session, it will become abundantly clear that this is the direction the Government will take because, as I always say, childhood lasts a lifetime. I declare an interest when I speak about the BBC.

2.44 pm

Lord Colwyn (Con): My Lords, I declare my interest as a retired dental surgeon and a fellow of the British Dental Association. I am sure that noble Lords will not be surprised to hear that in my remarks I am keen to turn the attention of the House towards the important but too often overlooked field of dentistry and oral health. As noble Lords will probably realise, the noble Baroness, Lady Benjamin, virtually made my speech word for word, but that is the problem with getting briefs from the same source.

Yesterday, I was disappointed to discover that the Government have yet again continued to kick the badly-needed reform of health regulation into the long grass. In the wake of the Francis inquiry back in 2013, the Prime Minister pledged to sweep away the outdated and inflexible legislation governing health regulators. Yet, despite repeated commitments to reform of the regulation of health professionals, three Queen's Speeches later parliamentary time has still not been found to introduce a Bill which would simplify and modernise the regulatory framework for dentists and more than a million of their fellow healthcare workers in Britain. The complex, burdensome and frankly antiquated laws we currently have in place hurt patients and practitioners and cost time and money. Will the Minister set out a clear timetable for action in this area?

While there was no mention of improving health outcomes in the gracious Speech, statistics clearly show why oral health deserves much more attention this Parliament. One in four five year-olds in England has tooth decay, and the number of children facing hospital admission for tooth extractions under general anaesthesia went up by a quarter between 2010-11 and 2014-15. While data published last week by Public Health England show modest improvements in the oral health of English children, the pace of progress is significantly slower than in Scotland and Wales, where devolved Governments have introduced innovative preventive dental health programmes. Data also show that despite the small overall improvement, regional and social inequalities in oral health continue to persist. I welcome the proposed measures to establish a soft drinks industry levy to help tackle childhood obesity, and I support the noble Baroness, Lady Walmsley, in the use of fluoridation, which should be much more widespread than it is at the moment. I urge the Minister to show the same ambition and appetite for innovation as her colleagues in Holyrood and in the Senedd. The Childsmile and Designed to Smile schemes have cut NHS treatment bills and shown that dental disease and deprivation do not have to go hand in hand. Will the Minister consider learning from their success and investing in a similar national oral health programme to drive improvements in children's oral health in England?

I am pleased to see that access to NHS dentistry continues to increase, with the latest data showing that more than 30 million patients were seen by a dentist in the 24 months. However, there are still many areas where access to a dentist remains a significant challenge and there is anecdotal evidence of constituencies where not a single practice accepts new NHS patients. I am sure the Minister will agree that this is largely due to the way NHS dentistry is currently commissioned,

with the current dental contract putting a cap on how many patients each dentist can see in a year. This April marked the 10th anniversary of the introduction of the current contract, and to mark the occasion the British Dental Association conducted a survey of more than 1,200 dentists. Seven out of 10 said that the current contract prevented them being able to take on more national health patients.

Noble Lords will agree with me that a shift in focus from treatment to prevention is crucial if we are to ensure the long-term sustainability of the NHS, and this is as true in the area of dentistry as it is elsewhere in our health system. It is crucial that the new contract for NHS dentistry improves access and rewards dentists for keeping their patients healthy rather than for carrying out interventions, as is currently the case. Dentists and patients were promised a new contract back in 2010, but the Government are dragging their feet and the new arrangements are not expected to be rolled out earlier than 2018-19.

With a second round of pilots going live this spring, this time labelled "prototypes", it seems increasingly likely that we might end up with little more than a watered-down version of the current system. The prototypes contain the tarnished structure of payment per unit of dental activity alongside payments for capitation and quality. That is a step back from the previously tested pilots, which moved away completely from rewards for activity. The BDA feels strongly that the options currently on offer are decidedly unambitious and thinks that all reward should be based on keeping local communities healthy, not on the number of procedures performed. How can a system improve oral health, deliver prevention and provide continuing quality care when the proposed contract continues to offer perverse incentives to treat instead of rewarding dentists for improvement in oral health? Both dentists and their patients deserve a contract with a square focus on prevention, and neither of the options being tested goes far enough in meeting that objective.

Lastly, I want to reflect on the recent hike in charges for NHS dental services. As many noble Lords will have heard, fees for treatment are going up above inflation, by 5% this year and a further 5% next year. I fear that this unprecedented increase will discourage patients who most need to see the dentist from going to see one, and will undermine the relationship between patients and practitioners. One in five patients already says that they had delayed dental treatment because of its cost, and this will only go up as the cost of NHS dental treatment continues to rise much faster than people's earnings.

I am also concerned that the money raised this way is not ring-fenced to be spent on improving dental care or access to dental services. Dentists are being asked in practice to play the role of tax collector while their patients are singled out to subsidise the wider health service. Expenditure on primary-care NHS dentistry as a proportion of the total NHS England budget has gone down by 13% in cash terms over the past four years, while proceeds from dental charges were going up even before this latest surge in prices. Treating dental patients as a source of easy money is not fair and, as the increasing sums spent on hospital extractions show, it is also a false economy.

Much progress has been made in the field of oral health over the past few decades and that momentum cannot be allowed to falter. Adequate funding for NHS dentistry, investment in reducing oral health inequalities, a new regulatory framework and an improved, truly preventive contract are all essential components of not only delivering quality cost-effective dentistry but improving health outcomes for the British people.

2.53 pm

Lord Griffiths of Burry Port (Lab): My Lords, I want to pluck one bloom—education—from the bouquet brought forward on this first full day's debate on the gracious Speech. I suspect that education underlies the consideration of all the other areas of concern today. I listened carefully to the opening speech by the noble Lord the Minister and have read the Government's outline description of the education measures to be presented in due time to your Lordships' House. It is from the impressions that I have gathered from those sources that I am left with two areas of concern, which I want to express.

The first arises from the way in which we intend to pay for the proposed new measures. As noble Lords will be aware, a consultative exercise on school funding was held earlier this year, and we await the Government's response to it. The driving force behind the exercise is to achieve a fairer system of support for pupils in every part of the land, which is very noble and worth while. There are so many variables to consider in agreeing a formula to apply across the board—some regional, others economic and yet others relating to special needs. These should help to shape such a formula, which can then be applied to all schools and authorities in an effort to iron out the huge funding discrepancies that are to be found in our system. This is greatly needed. The coalition Government, to their credit, allocated an extra £390 million to the 2015-16 school fund grant. That covered 69 of the least-funded authorities and more or less brought them up to par. However, that action also clarified the need to go further and look at the funding arrangements more broadly in the round. All this is to be honoured, and we await with great interest the Government's response to the consultation.

A great deal has been achieved, so where then is my concern? I speak on the basis of my experience in London. There is a feeling here in London that the response to the consultative exercise will see a top-slicing of funds from London schools to schools in other parts of the land. A first glance at the figures might seem to support such a proposal. Eighteen of the 20 most disadvantaged boroughs in the land are London boroughs; only Birmingham and Nottingham get a look in on that league. Arsenal came second in the Premier League to Leicester, trailing by a massive 10-point gap, but with education it is exactly the other way around. Islington schools are allocated £6,220 per pupil, while Leicestershire pupils received £4,238—a massive gap of around £2,000, or over 30%.

So should London happily concede the point and let the redistribution take place? Heaven forbid. It is the investment in London schools over the last 10 years that has completely turned them around. Failing schools have become good, outstanding and outstandingly

[LORD GRIFFITHS OF BURRY PORT]

good schools. I shall take as an example the two schools where I have some responsibility, the Central Foundation schools of London. They are inner-city local authority schools that are both ethnically very mixed and single-sex. They have hugely outperformed the national average for five GCSEs. For English and maths, A* to C grade, the boys' school got a massive 82%; when I joined the governing board, it was down to 12% or 13%. So those schools are riding high.

If the funding cuts, together with other costs related to pensions, the living wage, special programmes like Prevent and others are applied as anticipated, each of our schools, with others throughout London, will need to cut its budget by 14% in the three years beginning 2017. Add to that the fact that existing grants per pupil have remained cash flat—they have not risen with the cost of inflation since 2010—and noble Lords will have no difficulty in recognising the looming crisis lying ahead if, as feared, that top-slicing of money going to London schools takes place. All this is at a time when London has been experiencing the fastest pupil population growth and the severest school-places shortfall—a trend set to continue, they say, until at least 2020.

The commendable injection of new money for the most deprived authorities in this current year must surely point the way to achieving justice and fairness in funding across the board. More money needs to be found. It cannot be right to make radical inroads into the successes of those schools that have found the road to success. “Boom and bust” cannot be a phrase that can ever be applied to education. We cannot risk the recurrence of some of the educational problems that London has known in the too recent past. Even at a time of austerity, money spent on education should be viewed as an investment. Sustainability must be built into the system. What assurance can the noble Baroness give me on this point?

I shall deal with the second concern only briefly, although I feel just as passionately about it. The drive towards academies, the one-size-fits-all approach to education, sounds more ideological every time I hear it. The whole country—certainly the world of education—heaved a sigh of relief when the Secretary of State seemed to draw back from forcibly imposing such a model on the country a few short weeks ago. But here it comes again in the note supporting yesterday's Speech: “a system where all schools are academies”—

a phrase that kept coming up. I am not unfamiliar with the world of dogma; I have spent the whole of my professional life fighting it. I bring my innate sympathies to this kind of suspicion, and I am as fearful of formulae that would convert schools into academies as I am of those who seek to convert Catholics into Protestants or Baptists into Methodists. Respect, variety, humility, diversity: these things must be at the heart of our educational policy. I honestly see the strong points of academies, and I am pleased that they are part of the mix. Bring them on, say I.

I was glad to see that the noble Lord, Lord Bichard, is down to speak in a few minutes' time, because he chaired a forum recently on *Multi-Academy Trusts: Governance, Growth and Accountability*. The virtues of

academies are well-rehearsed in that report: innovation, entrepreneurialism, independence, good leadership, economies of scale, value for money, academic success. What could be more desirable? However, that same report had other, counter-indicative, things to say. There are challenges; governance can prove “unhelpfully complex”. There will be dilemmas; a successful school that takes on a less successful school might find its own dynamism reduced. Regarding leadership, it seems that,

“Headship was as unattractive as it ever had been. ... There was also a danger that, with the imposition of rules and regulations across the chain, MATs”—

multi-academy trusts—

“might increasingly reproduce the bureaucracy of local authorities”.

I will leave things there. I could go on.

All this reinforces the point that we ought to let this road towards academisation unfold at its own pace. We have yet to accumulate the data to make sound judgments. If more and more schools choose to become academies, indeed if all schools choose to become academies, I could live with that outcome, but forced change is too risky. We should opt for the age-old formula of “*solvitur ambulando*”: let things work themselves out. There are enough academies in the system now for the case to be made on the basis of their performance.

I hope that the Minister will feel able to assure me that schools will be allowed to make their own choices rather than be lured with financial goodies or frog-marched into doing what they would never otherwise have chosen to do.

3.02 pm

Lord Foster of Bath (LD): My Lords, I am delighted to follow the noble Lord, Lord Griffiths. I share many of his concerns about the Government's plans for academies, but I noted that he described the gracious Speech as a bouquet. Sadly, it is a bouquet with relatively few flowers, very many of them quite old, for relatively little is new in the gracious Speech. The soft-drinks sugar tax and plans to allow local councils to retain business rates were in the Autumn Statement. The British Bill of Rights first appeared a year ago in last year's Queen's Speech—incidentally, I believe that it was a wrong idea then and it is wrong idea now.

One has to go back even further for the first mention of the creation of a criminal offence for assisting in tax evasion—that was first announced by my right honourable friend Danny Alexander during the coalition—and further back still, to two years ago, for the first mention of the better markets Bill, which was announced by my other right honourable friend Ed Davey. Much of the Queen's Speech has been heard before, but sadly, and rather bizarrely, lots of things were not mentioned, not least the deficit.

Not even small but important matters got a look-in. There was no mention, for example, of any plans to tackle the crack cocaine of gambling, the fixed-odds betting terminals. Perhaps when the Minister winds up she can tell us when the Government will carry out the much-delayed triennial review of stakes and prizes for gaming machines so that they can consider reducing the stake for FOBTs to £2 to help to protect young

unemployed men in particular from the misery that they bring. I hope that your Lordships' House will support the Private Member's Bill on this matter, which is proposed by the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of St Albans, although I note that he came 43rd out of 51 in the Private Member's Bill ballot today. I came only 48th out of 51.

There are, of course, some genuinely new measures in the Queen's Speech. Some of them, such as plans to speed up adoption, are very welcome, but, sadly, many lack ambition. Legislation to provide the infrastructure that business needs in order to grow must, of course, be accompanied by serious investment, yet realistic levels of investment in housing, roads, rail and digital infrastructure are constrained by the Government's own spending plans. No wonder the OECD has urged increases in infrastructure spending.

Nowhere is this need more apparent than in the lack of ambition for broadband. We have some of the best creative industries in the world. They create jobs and help to drive exports. As a proportion of GDP, we have the largest digital economy of the G20 countries, but that position will be put at risk unless we have ambitious plans for broadband. To be world leaders, we surely have to have more than a universal service obligation of just 10 megabits per second. As my noble friend Lady Burt pointed out, if we are going to do this, we have to stop relying on out-of-date copper-wire technology and invest in the rollout of fibre-optic cabling to our homes.

We should also pay much more attention to demand stimulation. If more people and more businesses see the benefits of truly high-speed broadband, the higher take-up will reduce unit costs. The BBC iPlayer has already played a critical role in demand stimulation. Forty-three per cent of broadband users claim that it was one of the reasons why they got broadband in the first place. Certainly if we are going to drive up high-speed broadband demand in our homes, more needs to be done to help content creators such as the public service broadcasters, and more needs to be done to provide greater protection for legal online content.

Notwithstanding the fact that, after the US and Germany, the UK ranks third in the world in the number of legal digital music services available, it is still estimated that 26% of UK users have accessed music content illegally. I therefore hope that the Minister will assure us that the digital economy Bill will include domestic measures to act against illegal sites and that we will work with our EU partners to take effective cross-border action to block such sites, including by replacing notice and take down with notice and stay down, which is technologically easy for hosting sites to implement and reduces the need for copyright owners to keep checking to see whether an illegal site has re-emerged.

The digital economy Bill will occupy a great deal of time for the already busy Mr Whittingdale and the Minister, so I hope they will not waste time seeking to part-privatise Channel 4, which would be economic and creative madness, but I do hope they will have time to address the concerns of many in your Lordships' House about the future of the BBC, following the White Paper. My noble friend Lady Bonham-Carter,

the noble Lords, Lord Fowler and Lord Cashman, and others have already expressed their concerns, and I will not repeat in detail what I said in your Lordships' House last Thursday, but having carefully studied the White Paper I remain firmly of the view that the independence of the BBC is now threatened.

It is threatened because, despite the possibility that the proposed unitary BBC board could influence editorial scheduling and creative decisions, the Government are insisting on appointing six members to it—creating the impression of a state, and not a public, broadcaster. Like my noble friend on the Front Bench, I believe that all non-executives should be appointed by an independent body. It is threatened because of the mid-term so-called health check, which I believe could lead to the unpicking of bits of the charter itself, which would undermine the security of planning and investment for the BBC, and the creative industries allied to it, which was meant to be the purpose of an 11-year charter period. It is threatened because so far, the Minister has not answered the question I asked her last Thursday, which was raised again by my noble friend Lady Benjamin. Can she therefore give a categorical assurance that the licence fee will not be raided to pay for the continuation of the proposed contestable fund when the £20 million runs out? Unless she can, the financial independence of the BBC is put at risk.

Finally, BBC independence could be at risk because of the intention, as the Secretary of State put it, to ensure that the BBC's,

"services are clearly differentiated from the rest of the market".—
[*Official Report*, Commons, 12/5/16; col. 730.]

Despite assurances, that increasingly looks like the Government want gradually to curtail the BBC's creative freedom to make popular programmes. The BBC is the best and most trusted broadcaster in the world. Threatening its independence will put that at risk. Trust in the BBC will evaporate, and I hope many in your Lordships' House will resist any attempts by the Government to do so.

Rather like that spaghetti western, the gracious Speech has the good, the bad and the ugly, some of which, like the movie, is oft repeated. However, whatever we think of the measures included in, and those omitted from the gracious Speech, the biggest threat to our nation will come, not from this Queen's Speech, but from a leave vote in the referendum. Resisting that is surely our biggest challenge.

3.11 pm

Lord Bichard (CB): My Lords, I will talk about social care and will share my disappointment that the gracious Speech did nothing meaningful to address the problem—some might say the crisis—that faces social care and therefore millions of some of the most disadvantaged people in this country. I declare an interest as the chair of the Social Care Institute for Excellence.

I do not think that many people would deny that these are challenging times for social care. Too many users are critical of the services they receive, too many providers struggle to survive, too many commissioners feel disempowered by a lack of resource, and too few people see social care as an attractive career option. For those clients who experience the consequences of

[LORD BICHARD]

this, arguments which we often hear in this House about who should be blamed, debates about budget numbers and discussions about pioneers, vanguards and better care funds feel a world away from the reality of their lives. Of course, those lives cannot be put on hold, awaiting the end of austerity or the next new pilot initiative or organisational restructuring. They have to be lived now, and we all have a responsibility not just to offer promises for the future but to look at ways in which we can improve the quality of lives that are being lived now.

How might we do it? We could start with money. For me, resources are never the complete answer, but social care has suffered disproportionately from recent cuts, and some urgent investment is needed—some urgent reordering of investment, not necessarily new money. We could, for example, revisit the criteria for free prescriptions, 91% of which are now not paid for. We could look again at winter fuel payments paid to well-off pensioners, review free public transport for well-off pensioners, look again at free TV licences for all over-85s, and taper the currently free national insurance for over-65s. There are ways in which, by reordering our resources, we could liberate money for those most in need.

But, as I say, it is not just about money. Users—I meet quite a lot of them—often tell me that they do not get what they need in the form they need it because they were not sufficiently involved in prioritising and shaping services at the outset. I become increasingly passionate about what in the jargon is known as co-design, which is about giving users a real say in shaping services at a point when they can make a difference. Providing services that people do not regard as a priority in a period of austerity is an affront, so let us give users much more control over how reduced budgets are spent.

While we are on the subject of design, I would like to see government, local and central, building its capacity to design services around clients. If that seems a bit esoteric, look at the practical consequences of us not understanding design. Look at the way in which we currently deliver care support. It involves three separate departments, countless assessment regimes and a mix of benefits—some means-tested, some not, and some delivered nationally and others locally. This system was never designed—it just happened, and in ways that made sense to bureaucrats but not to users or their families. We have reorganised much of the benefit system, but not this confused, stress-laden mess. We should and we could do so.

Of course, people will receive whole-person care only if we, the bureaucrats and the politicians, learn to work better across organisational boundaries. The rhetoric of integration has certainly taken root—but, again, the reality is often very different. That is because we talk as if integrating organisations will inevitably deliver better services to people. It will not. People in residential homes want free, convenient access to GP services. Old people who leave hospital need to be able to access domiciliary services. They do not need ambitious promises about how primary healthcare and commissioned healthcare will integrate better at some time in the future.

We have talked a lot today about digital. We could do more to realise the digital dividend. But, again, it is about delivering practical improvements. I will give describe one. The Airedale vanguard enhanced health in care homes will introduce telemedicine links in all 248 care homes this year. So, for example, staff supporting a care home resident with Parkinson's disease will be able to access clinical advice and support 24 hours a day, every day of the week, through secure video conference. It is not rocket science—they probably would not even bother to mention it in Estonia. There are of course similar examples in this country, but they are not uniform good practice. They should be. Digital technology is not a silver bullet but we could do better and we have been slow to exploit its potential in telecare and telemedicine.

In the same way, we have been slow to come to the aid of and support providers, who currently struggle with increased regulation, increased fees for regulation—I am not sure how that one happened—the living wage and clients with increasingly complex conditions. I know that Governments have always shied away from appearing to support private sector companies, but in this unique situation, maybe we should consider an improvement fund for smaller providers in particular so that they can get better access to the best practice in their industry.

What about the crisis in the workforce? Social care should be seen as the noblest of professions, but in reality it is often seen as a last-resort career. Could we do more? Could we encourage former clients, care leavers perhaps, to join the profession? Can we extend initiatives such as Teach First and Frontline to social care? Do we know enough about why people leave the profession? Should we revisit the excellent report of the noble Baroness, Lady Kingsmill? Too often—it is not just the case in social care—Governments prefer to blame and restructure rather than invest in improving the workforce. But, at the end of the day, whether it is education or social care, it is the workforce that matters and will deliver quality.

Maybe we could do more to reinforce quality and good practice through the inspection process. I am pleased with the work that the CQC is doing; I was pleased to see it moving into area-based assessments. But maybe we should shift our focus away from always looking at the institutions and start asking questions such as, "What does a good life look like in Doncaster?"—I just plucked Doncaster out of the air. Maybe we should look at what happens between the institutions, not always at what happens within them.

Finally, despite all the problems, let us be prepared to innovate in social care. We have talked quite a lot today about the arts and culture. I have become increasingly involved and interested in how the arts and culture can contribute to improved health and well-being. The noble Lord, Lord Howarth, is chairing an APPG at the moment which is uncovering countless wonderful examples of how visual and performing arts, music and dance, are helping to address loneliness, mental illness, stress and pain.

So yes, we can improve social care, even in the time of austerity in which we live—and we must. But I am not seeing much evidence that this is receiving the attention it deserves.

3.20 pm

Lord Clement-Jones (LD): My Lords, I am pleased today that the noble Baroness, Lady Neville-Rolfe, is responding to the debate, as I want to focus on the tech and creative industries, which are increasingly interdependent and important to us. I welcome the new cross-departmental role that the Minister herself plays, across both the DCMS and BIS. The Minister is a champion of intellectual property. She also recognises the massive adverse impact that Brexit would have on the tech and creative industries, including our software industry. I so much agree with my noble friend Lady Bonham-Carter in her rallying cry on the dangers of Brexit, and indeed with my noble friend Lord Foster. This is, of course, particularly in respect of the digital single market, but many other issues impact on the future prosperity of these industries.

I share the concern of my noble friends and the noble Lord, Lord Fowler, that the Government need to go much further in allaying our fears for the BBC's future. As the Minister heard during last week's Statement on the White Paper, we believe that the BBC's independence will be eroded by having direct government appointees on the new unitary board: chairman, vice-chairman and four other members of the board. Given the Culture Secretary's form on appointments to the board of the National Portrait Gallery, we have little confidence on this side of the House in his impartiality.

We also have the inclusion of "distinctive" in the BBC's remit. Once created, does a programme have to remain distinctive for ever? What is the correct level of risk-taking and innovation? All this will be judged by Ofcom, with some rather sinister government guidance in the background, as on page 55 of the White Paper:

"The government will provide guidance to the regulator on content requirements and performance metrics to set clear policy parameters for the creation of this new regime".

This spells future trouble, as my noble friends and the noble Lord, Lord Fowler, pointed out, and could lay the ground for reasons to deprive the BBC of the licence fee. The Government are warned: we will scrutinise the charter extremely carefully when it appears and we will demand a vote on it. Despite Channel 4's continuing success as a public service broadcaster, we see from its recent annual report that there is still uncertainty about its future, with the Secretary of State seemingly keen on at least part-privatising it with no benefit to the public. These two institutions are vital pillars of the creative industries and we must not put them at risk.

Then we have the new digital economy Bill, the rollout of so-called high-speed broadband and the universal service obligation. Let us be clear: the USO will not be superfast or a minimum of 25 megabits per second. Instead, it will be a miserable 10 megabits per second, when the average in the UK is already 29 megabits per second. This is a huge disappointment, particularly to rural households and businesses. The Government should be far more ambitious. Superfast broadband of at least 25 megabits per second is a utility. It should be universal and the Government should invest in it. There will be long-anticipated proposals to clarify and improve the electronic communications code to ensure we have the infrastructure that the

UK needs. The ECC and planning rules must now, at the very least, ensure improved access for operators to BT's ducts and poles.

A range of IP issues will be covered in this Session—not only in the Intellectual Property (Unjustified Threats) Bill, as part of the new digital economy Bill will cover that. The Government will make changes to the penalties for online copyright infringement. I welcome that in principle but look forward to debating the details of the definitions in both cases. I also welcome the provisions in the Bill which, it seems, will result in improvements for small businesses in protecting their design rights after the Trunki case. I welcome the IPO's recent strategy paper on IP enforcement, especially the section on strengthening the legal framework. But how will this be put into practice? Will the digital economy Bill enshrine the necessary backstop powers, as my noble friend Lord Foster mentioned, to ensure that platforms take proper responsibility for preventing piracy if voluntary persuasion does not work? Will it contain provisions against illegal streaming? What is clear from the paper is that the EU IP enforcement directive will be of real benefit to UK IP creators. I hope that the Minister will be arguing for a pan-European enforcement agency at the same time as for the retention of vital territorial licensing.

Finally, a word on finance for the tech and creative industries. Where is the funding for scale-up, follow-on and growth? Where is the understanding that IP can be used as collateral? The Business Growth Fund backed by the major banks is a good start, and I commend the London Stock Exchange's ELITE programme. However, we still have a gap in the market. We need to ensure that companies can put long-term skilled jobs on their payroll. What are BIS and the Treasury doing to ensure this? There is great concern that changes made in the Finance (No. 2) Act 2015 have significantly restricted the number and range of companies that venture capital trusts can invest in. Can the Minister assure us that the Treasury and BIS are going to amend the rules to ensure the availability of growth finance?

The agenda in these sectors is huge and often underplayed. I could mention digital skills and arts education. I could mention the sore need to deregulate commercial radio. I could bemoan the Home Office legislation which is oppressively restricting that mainstay of street artistic life: busking. I could expand on how artists are being driven out of much-needed studio space by rising property prices. I could inquire what has happened to the secondary ticketing review, which is of great importance to live music. I could even argue with the arts White Paper. Like my noble friend Lord Foster, I am gravely disappointed that there appears to be no intention to lower the stakes on FOBTs or even hold a triennial review of stakes and prizes. I hope that the Minister will be able to give a comprehensive reply to all our questions in this respect.

3.26 pm

Lord Suri (Con): My Lords, I have lived in three different continents. Having been involved in Asian, African and European societies, I see a plethora of differences between the cultures and communities that inhabit those places. However, in all three of those

[LORD SURI]

countries, Kenya, India and the UK, we were bound by a common respect and shared institution. That is, of course, the monarchy, spread all over the world via the Commonwealth. Sitting in this House yesterday, listening to Her Majesty's speech, I marvelled at the extraordinary longevity and perseverance that she has gifted not just to this country but to the numerous other nations and territories around the world that are proud to call her their head of state. I was only 17 when she said her famous words:

"I declare that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service".

It is often said that politicians do not keep their promises. No one can dispute that in the case of Her Majesty, in 63 years on the Throne, she has kept herself wholly removed from the political fray, no matter what some of the less reputable tabloids would suggest. In doing so, she has ensured tremendous stability in these islands and kept us moving on steadily and happily.

I was pleased to see a substantial shake-up of prison legislation in the Queen's Speech. I have served as a magistrate and was a member of the board of visitors of Her Majesty's Prison Pentonville. I have seen into the real heart of our criminal justice and prison system. Reform has been long overdue. Significant manifesto changes have been postponed or cut down by successive Governments worried of being seen as soft on crime. The Prime Minister is right when he says that we should not "tolerate persistent failure", and I wholeheartedly agree. We should never accept mediocrity in any institution that receives vast amounts of public money, and, furthermore, is essential for holding together the fabric of our society.

As a businessman, I think that the best way for shareholders to see the problems in a company is to open up the books. The Lord Chancellor appears to have taken a similar approach in requiring prisons to release their data on education, reoffending and inmates' employment on release. From what we already know, we have some of the worst records of any major developed country and we need to get it right, not just from a societal perspective but from a hard-headed perspective. We cannot afford to waste the hidden talent that lies in many of the young people that our prison system breaks. The people that know best how to make offenders into happy, productive members of society again are those who work with them every day.

I eagerly anticipate the results of the six prisons that are to be devolved a huge amount of power. I hope that they will manage to improve some of the more dire statistics on reoffending and self-harm, but they will need robust and strategic oversight, given the delicate nature of the work they are doing. I look forward to getting the actual Bill so that I can scrutinise the provisions made for effective oversight.

The Coates review into prison education was also published yesterday, and it was good to see an embrace of new technologies to lower reoffending rates. One of the biggest issues that I saw at Pentonville and that I took into account as a magistrate was the effect of prison time on the family lives of young men. There is an intriguing section in the report that recommends

that prisoners be allowed to use video calls to stay in touch with their friends and family. When I suggested this, many said that if it was that important their family and friends could come to visit them in person. However, that does not take into account the immense inconvenience and personal anxiety that comes to many people when they enter prison on visits. The technology is there. It is cheap, easy to oversee and represents a positive forward step. I hope that the trial is successful and rolled out across the UK. I am sure that the Minister will look into it and see further improved results.

There were noticeable omissions from the Queen's Speech yesterday. Apart from an announcement of superfast broadband for rural areas, which will help some small businesses, the offering to business was not as significant as it has been in the past. However, the biggest thing that the Government and the Prime Minister can do right now is to campaign heart and soul to stay in the EU. We send 45% of all our exports, about 12% of our entire economy, into the EU. I am not prepared to sit by and see the institution which has brought enormous prosperity to Britain and secured peace on the continent after two terrible wars be brought down by populist politicians. Leaving the EU would be an act of economic self-harm. Those who want us to leave keep saying that we would have a fantastic deal, with no guarantee. Our closest neighbours and allies have our interests at heart and we theirs, and, in this increasingly macho world, collaboration will be required to maintain European and western influence in the world. How will we deal with air pollution and with multinationals that do not pay tax, if not with our European allies? I have been told that we can go and engage with the Anglosphere, with NATO and the WTO, but not a single friendly country has recommended a vote to leave—not one.

The Queen's Speech contained measures intended to help working people to succeed and improve their lot. The worst thing that we could do to them, as a country, is to hammer them with Brexit, just as we crawl out of the recession.

3.34 pm

Lord Hunt of Chesterton (Lab): My Lords, I am honoured to speak in the Queen's Speech debate and join others in congratulating Her Majesty on her 90 years. It was a pleasure to follow the noble Lord, Lord Suri, who was born in India, as I was. We also obviously share the same belief in the importance of remaining in the European Union.

The Queen's Speech outlined an ambitious programme, but curiously does not emphasise perhaps the greatest achievement of this Government—that of restoring full employment after the banking crisis in 2008. Indeed, that is why we have so many migrants, who have contributed to the dynamism in every aspect of UK life. But this growth has not been accompanied by adequate growth in our infrastructure, nor in industrial productivity. I shall return to that. Fortunately, the Government and the coalition Government inherited the successful infrastructure projects of the last Labour Government—first with the Olympic Games, then Crossrail and the beginnings of HS2. But they have

failed to initiate the important project begun about the third London airport. We look forward to hearing the Minister's reply about that and about what progress there is on HS2, which the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Durham referred to.

It is very important of course that our infrastructure enables the UK to catch up with other countries. All countries also need a strong and respected institutional infrastructure. One expects any government, but especially a Conservative government, to preserve and maintain successful institutions. But what do we see except undermining of the National Health Service, successful schools and the BBC? As a former head of the Met Office, I worry that we are also undermining the collaboration between the BBC and the Met Office to provide what was a world-class weather forecasting service, which we understand is to be given to a New Zealand company, still not determined. The Table Office would not enable me to ask a Question about that, so I mention it now. Equally important, the legal institutions of the public are being undermined, which are extremely important to the law. The Government have emphasised that they want a UK that is responsive to the needs of the most disadvantaged, but one of the most important of those is access to the law.

The Minister and other speakers mentioned the high international standards of UK science, as the noble Lord, Lord Rees, emphasised in his remarks. But the word "science" was not mentioned in the text of the Queen's Speech and there is no section on it, hence my remarks on it under the heading of business. They did not explain that in many key areas of science, Parliament and government benefit only if the scientists and engineers, as well as the Government, can report openly on their work. The recent rather heavy asides from the Government that they may stop scientists being allowed to speak are extremely dangerous, and there was some retreat from the Cabinet Office's earlier remarks. The air pollution dangers of diesel engines is an example. As I learned last night, there was a report to the Department of the Environment in 1993 about the dangers of diesel engines for air pollution and health, but it was not publicised nor reported to Parliament. Japan acted earlier to eliminate most diesel-engine cars in cities. I saw that in Japan and have never had a car with a diesel engine. But the EU has not introduced the regulations that are needed although there has been a lot of scientific work, and some of that has not been adequately publicised.

The Queen's Speech rightly identified the growth of information technology as vital to the modernisation of the UK economy and continued growth. The Government also need a broader strategy for other areas of technology. As a Rolls-Royce engineer pointed out to the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee when we were looking into the question of the effect on the science and technology base of the UK perhaps leaving the European Union, UK industries are not participating sufficiently in EU industrial research programmes. He ascribed this problem to the demise of the regional development agencies, which was an immediate knee-jerk reaction by the coalition Government when they began their work in 2010. There has been some slow reversal of that through local enterprise boards, but the money available to them is much less

and they do not have the role of enabling small enterprises to work beneficially with the EU on industrial R&D projects.

The House of Lords committee also benefited from the advice of Siemens, a leading example of the many foreign high-tech companies that have invested in and set up branches in the UK. Although some economists say that it does not matter whether industries in this country are owned by UK or foreign companies, according to the *Financial Times* and many other commentators—starting of course with Lord Macmillan when he was here in the Lords—there are serious limitations in allowing everything essentially to be sold off. It is clear that where there are foreign owners, the strategic R&D work is often done in the countries where the companies are based, and we have seen the effects of this in some aspects of aviation, trains, steel and so on. The financial benefits of UK government investment in research often simply lead to the benefit of these companies in their foreign-based headquarters and overseas share holders. As I said, the *Financial Times* laughed at the French because they had to have a French yoghurt industry, but it has now withdrawn from that point of view.

If companies are foreign owned, will HMG do more to improve networking and combined technologies for advanced industries? In some areas of Europe technological networks have been developed, some of which are as advanced as any in the world—I was involved in organising one in aviation and fluid mechanics. I am pleased to see that the UK Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council is now strengthening the network involvement of UK scientists and institutions. The future integration and collaboration between industry and government is likely to be much more conceptually advanced than at present. The new policy of the German Government on industrial software programmes is called Industry 4.0—it sounds much better in German. It connects technology and design in terms of the human, social and commercial aspects of companies. In an extraordinarily integrated way the software looks not just at one company or one product, but at how different companies can work into projects. This is far beyond anything we can see at the moment, but perhaps the Government's catapult programme will begin to develop the kind of integrated approach adopted by the German Government, which was described last week at the German embassy. I am afraid that some German industrialists in the UK have commented that while Britain is very good at moving the deckchairs around in endless reorganisations of science and technology, perhaps we are not as effective as they are in Germany.

However, there is one very encouraging development in UK technology, and that is the design, construction and research associated with the Trident project, which was mentioned in the Queen's Speech. But there is no question that it would be more effective and more likely to be accepted if there was a closer integration between the military project and civilian ship construction. At the moment there is a gap and indeed there is very little civilian ship construction in the UK. In France, for example, it is really rather different.

I have sought in my remarks to review our industrial and technological developments and I look forward to the Minister's reply.

3.44 pm

Lord Taverne (LD): My Lords, I want to follow the excellent speech made by my noble friend Lady Walmsley and discuss the question of the future of health and social care. Our National Health Service is heading for a crash and it may come sooner than even the pessimists fear. You cannot run a viable health service if the Government are committed to reducing their share of national income while health costs increase much faster than GDP, but that is what is happening. Health costs are rising inexorably because the population is ageing, new lifesaving drugs are expensive, the needs of mental health and many other urgent demands have been neglected and so require more funding. More and more hospitals are piling up huge deficits. Yet according to the Office for Budget Responsibility, the share of GDP allotted to the NHS will decline from 6.1% in 2014-15 to 5.4% in 2020-21, the lowest of any comparable country in the European Union. At the same time social care, which also desperately needs more money, as the Barker commission showed, faces draconian cuts. Social care and health cannot be separated. How else can the problem of, for instance, bed-blocking ever be solved?

The Government claim that efficiency savings will keep the NHS afloat, but even a miraculous leap in efficiency greater than anything experienced to date cannot close the huge gap between health and social care needs and what the Government are prepared to spend. What is required is a new cross-party commission on the future of health and social care, as advocated by Norman Lamb and others. But the NHS as we have known it will cease to exist long before any commission has had time to report, which is likely to take years.

To survive, the NHS needs a substantial injection of extra funds in the next few years. Unfortunately, the Conservative manifesto has committed the Government to not increasing income tax, corporation tax, VAT or national insurance contributions, so where can the money for health and social care be found? There is only one source left: a new, reformed national insurance system, earmarked specifically and exclusively for health and social care. Of course, the Treasury strongly dislikes hypothecated taxes. Indeed, they reduce government flexibility and the ability to allocate tax receipts according to spending priorities and best value for money. There are other, technical objections, but they are not insuperable.

There is one overwhelming argument for a system of especial health and social care contributions. According to opinion polls, people seem far more willing to pay additional money to fund the NHS, which is still regarded as a national treasure, than taxes in general. Indeed, in 2002, when Gordon Brown, with some hesitation, increased NICs by a penny to finance extra spending on the NHS, he was surprised to find that it was very popular. Of course, in the event, less than half the proceeds went to their declared purpose. Most were swallowed up in the general tax pool.

In fact, NICs no longer make sense. They were originally designed to finance the NHS and pensions—most people believe that they still do—but most of the proceeds go into the general pool of tax receipts. Only some 20% goes to the NHS; 80% of the NHS is financed from general taxation. Likewise, the basic

state pension is now almost entirely unrelated to contributions, and is also financed from general taxation. The public are unaware of what they are paying for when they pay NICs, contrary to every principle of a good tax system.

Who should set the health and social care budget and be responsible for its oversight and administration in such a reform? The answer should be a new independent health and social care mutual, as advocated by Frank Field and others, the trustees of which would include not only representatives of the Government and the relevant professions, but members elected by the public. After hearing his speech, I suggest that the noble Lord, Lord Bichard, would be a very good member. It would be part of a new deal between the public, politicians and the NHS.

3.49 pm

Lord Quirk (CB): My Lords, like others before me, including the noble Lords, Lord Fowler, Lord Foster and Lord Clement-Jones, and the noble Baroness, Lady Bonham-Carter, I shall largely address issues to do with broadcasting. As I worked my way through the White Paper on the future of the BBC, noting its attractive and helpful format, my first reaction was pleasurable relief that months of alarmist speculation seemed to have been unwarranted. The BBC's mission will still be to inform, educate and entertain.

There is glowing recognition of the public regard in which the BBC is held and of the reputation for objectivity that it has earned over the best part of a century. It is probably the most trusted broadcaster anywhere in the world. As the White Paper notes, it is "hugely valued by audiences" worldwide, and,

"a vital part of the UK's ability to lead the world in terms of soft power and influence".

The White Paper has much less to say about independence, though it is surely on this widely perceived independence that the public trust is based, at home and abroad.

On the proposal for a governing board to replace the short-lived BBC Trust, I have nothing to say. Its membership and its powers seem to be still open for discussion. I hope that they are. But I have something to say on the direction of travel that the Government seem intent on following. In framing my reflections, I naturally resorted to the magisterial five-volume *History of Broadcasting* by Asa Briggs, whom this House sadly lost only a couple of months ago. Lord Briggs knew more about the BBC than anyone else in the world. So it was not only to his voluminous history that I turned, but also to shorter distillations of his thought and knowledge, such as his recent study, *From Gutenberg to the Internet* of 2002, his book *Governing the BBC* of 1979, and his contributions, along with those of Shirley Williams and others, to the 1982 volume, *The Future of Broadcasting*.

What, I asked myself, would Asa Briggs have made of this new White Paper? I think that, on the whole, he too would have been pleased and reassured, but I have no doubt that he would also have had serious concerns. After all, the fifth and final volume of his *History*, published in 1995, is entitled *Competition*, an activity he strongly favoured. He knew that in the fierce environment of television, competition was essential

and he was in no doubt that, despite talk and very real fears about “dumbing down” and the “race to the bottom”, the very existence of the BBC, its strong ethos and the keen competition it presented, had already had a strong beneficial effect on the output quality of the proliferating commercial channels.

The White Paper insists on the need for the BBC to be distinctive—a much used word—and that it should stop watching the ratings as a guide to its success. Is there not in this, Briggs might wonder, a hint of the BBC abandoning its role as a mass provider? Would not this put at risk the licence fee model of financing, which has worked well for more than 90 years? It was always vulnerable and it could become critically so if the White Paper's hints turned into outright discouragement of mass entertainment. Surely, we do not want the BBC to be relegated to niche programmes for niche audiences, whether these be regional, ethnic, social or culturally highbrow. Can the Minister reassure me?

After all, the BBC has been highly distinctive before. In the 1920s and 1930s, which most noble Lords do not remember but Asa Briggs did and so do I, the BBC had its own distinctive voice, its linguistic style, which was called BBC English. If the masses happened to switch their newly acquired “wireless sets” to a BBC programme, they would promptly, and in droves, switch over to a commercial station such as Radio Luxembourg. By 1940, of course, the exigencies of war were requiring the establishment to reach out to the masses. Then, 20 years later and under quite different pressures, Carleton Greene took the risk of reaching out further still. The moment was noted by an editorial in the BBC's own newspaper, the *Listener*, on 22 March 1962:

“The BBC needs to be braver and sometimes is. So let there be a faint hurrah as Auntie goes over the top”.

It was only from about then that the BBC became genuinely popular.

The challenges facing all public service broadcasting are vastly more threatening today than they ever have been. Let us in this House ensure that the governance provided by the new BBC board will stoutly support and encourage the creative professionals as they compete to offer programmes of good music, good drama, good documentary and, yes, good sitcoms and quiz shows.

3.59 pm

Lord Naseby (Con): My Lords, I, too, welcome the gracious Speech. I note that there are 21 Bills—too many in my judgment—but I can applaud the vast majority since they are focused on one-nation Conservatism. En passant, I note that there is a key Bill on prison reform. I am a man of Bedford, where John Howard was the great prison reformer. John Bunyan was put in Bedford jail and Hanratty was the last man to be hanged there, following the A6 murders. I hope that we have done enough thorough, in-detail, pre-research in relation to the all-important reform of our prisons.

In my judgment, the Chancellor has set a clear financial strategy which I greatly applaud. Now is the time for implementation. I will comment on business and health matters. An element of business is the situation with Tata and British Steel. I want to thank the Secretary of State and the Minister of State for the

time, energy, work and commitment they have put in to finding a solution. I had the privilege of working in India for a couple of years. I know the Tata company and I know in some depth the way in which the Indian community negotiates. I say to my noble friend who has to do a lot of it that I hope she has plenty of patience. She will need it. But the longer you sit there, the more likely you are to be successful. If the pension area is a problem, as a trustee of the parliamentary pension fund, I can say that no one particular format is a solution that can be implemented anywhere. There is flexibility and I hope that we will find an answer there, too.

I turn to exports. The House will recognise that, certainly in my judgment, five Ministers in charge of our exports over five years is not a good strategy. It is not one likely to produce any consistency. We can see the results in the balance of trade. Now we have a new Member of our House to take over that role, my plea to my own Government is that he will stay in position for at least three years and agree a strategy with the CBI and other relevant parties so that we can move forward and reduce what is really a pretty poor situation on the balance of trade.

London airport has been mentioned. Here is a golden opportunity to have a bigger hub airport to assist all our exporters, be they the SME Export Track 100 group, the City, or anybody else. The third runway is a must. I speak as someone who was only an RAF pilot but, by the time this runway is implemented, we will have a new generation of aircraft, with better fuel consumption, lower noise, a lighter carbon footprint from sustainable fuels and better air traffic control allowing better and less-noisy stacking. The people of south-west London should welcome all this.

Moving from high-tech to low-tech, I declare an interest in that my daughter has two shops in Bedford. There has been some progress on business rates but why does the poor, hard-pushed retailer have to wait until 2020 to move from increases based on RPI to increases based on CPI? Why can that not be done next year to help them a bit? We have a situation where 40% of trade is now done online. No business rates are paid by online traders. We have to find a way to bring about a balance between high-street and online trading. In my judgment, we should learn from the United States and look long and hard at a sales tax.

Thirdly, in the business area, I turn to the PM's conference on fraud and the effect it may have on the Overseas Territories. Again, I declare an interest in that my youngest son is a lawyer in the Cayman Islands. That part of the Overseas Territories has worked really hard over the last three or four years to produce a register that is legitimate and to build up a financial infrastructure with it. It is available to the authorities here in the UK at 24 hours' notice. I believe that that is as much as we can ask them to do.

This brings me to the USA, which is not co-operating at all but just siphoning off business from our Overseas Territories. Delaware, Wyoming, Nevada and now South Dakota are proudly advertising in the *Financial Times* and they are all taking business from our legitimate Overseas Territories. I do not think that is acceptable. If we are to have a global conference in 2017 with the USA as co-host, it is time that was sorted out.

[LORD NASEBY]

I will mention three issues in relation to health. I ask Her Majesty's Government to think again about changing the position of the specialist Cancer Drugs Fund to one where it is controlled by NICE and the commissioning committees. I suggest to the House that it should stay where it is because it is working well and we have a long way to go to equal what is done in the rest of Europe.

Secondly, palliative care is a disgrace. No GP—or very few—visits dying people. Young doctors are not even taught any element of palliative care. That whole area needs urgent attention.

Thirdly, as regards GP numbers and work patterns, the King's Fund has just produced a report showing that 90% of trainee GPs and 70% of women GPs want to work part-time. On top of that, we have a shortage of GPs. This situation needs urgent review in terms of both numbers at our medical schools and rebalancing the figure from the 60%—and growing—female intake to somewhere nearer a 50-50 intake. Given our expenditure on health and on their training, we need to ensure that they commit to work full-time in the National Health Service. I declare a past interest in that my wife ran a large GP practice, had three children and helped me in my work as a Member of Parliament. That was not out of the ordinary in the days when she was a GP, which was not so long ago. If my suggestion is not taken up, I say to my noble friend on the Front Bench that there is no hope of having seven-day care.

I conclude with a very serious subject, which is prompted by just seven words in the gracious Speech—namely,

“the primacy of the House of Commons”.

Your Lordships will recall that I was Chairman of Ways and Means in another place from 1992 to 1997, charged with running all the committees and taking all the constitutional debates on the Floor of the House, including 25 days on Maastricht. I am acutely aware of the angst felt by the Government over the treatment of amendments to the welfare Bill. I warned the Government at the time that the amendments sent to your Lordships' House should never have come here as they involved major changes involving billions of pounds and were in effect money Bill matters. I trust, therefore, that in the cold light of day and upon further reflection, Her Majesty's Government will not be tempted to put any new check on your Lordships' legitimate role to revise as we see fit any Bill that is sent to this House.

4.07 pm

Baroness Massey of Darwen (Lab): My Lords, I follow the analogy of my noble friend Lord Griffiths in relation to gardening and the blooms of education with, of course, the accompanying thorns, and the need for delicate care rather than frog-marching. Last week, I attended a debate on life chances in your Lordships' Chamber, which was eloquently introduced by the noble Lord, Lord Farmer. Many noble Lords spoke movingly about the importance of various factors in improving life chances, such as parenting, where and how families live, skills, opportunity and education. I shall speak about the importance of education in improving life chances.

Education was important for me and was important, apparently, for many colleagues in this House, yet I see a paradox in the Government's education reforms since 2010. All politicians have the best interests of children at heart. However, even a Conservative Back-Bencher recently stated that the Government have “gone bonkers” in trying to rush through academisation—that dreadful word. The noble Lord, Lord Baker, gave a more elegant, but still critical, response. In a recent article, my noble friend Lady Morris of Yardley spoke of the growing number of failing academies, resulting in fragmentation, incoherence and confusion. I regret the lack of consultation and the lack of hard evidence that academies are a panacea to improve school performance—I think that this has been realised. Some academies are of course excellent; some are not.

There is a terrible muddle about much of education—here come the thorns—and I think that parents and teachers are tired of it. I am uneasy about several things: the confused picture on early years care and education; school admission policies; the overtesting of young children; the mistaken belief that pupils will do better the more that they are trained to pass exams; teacher recruitment; the north/south divide in school attainment; and the lack of cohesion in education and training for 16 to 24 year-olds. It seems to me that the Government would do well to take stock and develop a coherent and consistent policy across government for children and young people, from birth to 24. Young people and children do not come in bits; they have different talents and interests, they move through different phases of life and different influences, including education, health, social care, economic status, and so on. As the noble Baroness, Lady Benjamin, said earlier, they need holistic consideration.

The school admissions policy is full of holes. It is divisive and unfair. I hope that the Government will look at the LSE's recommendations: that school admissions policy should be, by law, easy to understand; that local authorities should be involved in the whole process; that an independent body should handle admissions; and that banding assessments should be revised.

Regarding learning and achievement, the principal of a college in Cambridgeshire said recently on the White Paper for education that,

“reference to children's learning is sparse”,

and that:

“The essence of schooling, its complexity and richness, appears to have been overlooked. Schools aren't factories for results”.

These are powerful words. In the debate on life chances last week, many noble Lords spoke of a broad and balanced education that encourages inquiry and independent learning. Sport and the arts—the importance of which has been discussed already—citizenship, self-confidence, self-esteem, and the ability to form good relationships are not only worth while in themselves but also encourage good academic performance. Time and again, however, the Government have backed away from making this aspect of education statutory.

I welcome the Government's commitments to fundamental reform of the alternative provision for excluded pupils and to technical education, which brings me to my next point. The House of Lords Select Committee on Social Mobility recently published its

report, which begins by saying that 53% of young people do not follow the traditional academic route into work and are significantly overlooked by the education system. I hope that its eight recommendations will be noted. I agree with the noble Earl, Lord Kinnoull, who put much emphasis on careers and advice.

My final point is that variations in achievements are stark between the north and south of England, as pointed out by the IPPR North report and alluded to by the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Durham. Liberating the potential of all people must start early and requires early investment in future success across all areas of the country. This means focusing on children's and young people's achievements and life chances.

The Government must recognise that consultation and collaboration are vital in education—with teachers, parents, academics, school governors, the voluntary sector and pupils. I repeat my plea that a policy for the life chances of all children and young people should be made vital and apparent and discussed regularly in Parliament. Our young people, parents and teachers deserve respect and consideration, not bureaucratic and inflexible hammering, and I hope the Government will listen.

4.15 pm

Baroness Brinton (LD): My Lords, I declare my interests as an honorary fellow of Birkbeck College and a former director of learndirect, when it was owned by UFI. In today's debate on the humble Address, I want to focus on social care but will also make some brief comments on a couple of other topics.

First, while I know that the prison education reform proposals will be debated more fully next Tuesday, there are inevitable links with education, BIS and welfare, through vocational and academic achievement as well as in-work learning such as apprenticeships. I am concerned that the proposals are being described by government spokespeople as the academisation of prisons. Yet again, we see a Government changing structures rather than focusing on the actual improvement of services.

Education and training for all prisoners do need real attention, but this is not new. When my late father was a Member of another place, he gave me the Second Report of the Education, Science and Arts Select Committee in the 1983-84 Session, on prison education, which says:

"The previous Committee concluded that there existed a profound confusion and lack of clarity throughout the Prison Service as to the purpose of the regime in general and education in prisons in particular".

It goes on to say:

"The previous Committee clearly found that the prison service was in a state of crisis. Concerned as it is with education, this Committee believes that existing prison education departments, because of the fundamental indecision about objectives found by the previous Committee, are unable to operate with full effect and make their proper contribution to a rehabilitative prison regime. The consequence for public expenditure is waste".

I have quoted that report at length because hidden behind the public reports of the current crisis in the general running of the Prison Service lie decades of crisis in education and learning in prisons. When I was a director of UFI learndirect about a decade ago, we

had a large contract to deliver prison education. In many instances it was almost impossible to achieve this because the day-to-day regime conflicted time and again with the idea of any prisoner successfully completing a course. For example, prisoners had no access to internet exams, and records did not follow them when they moved quickly from one prison to another. I thought those days were long over, but I recently talked to a former prison tutor who finally resigned a few months ago after what they saw as deliberate blockage, with the day-to-day prison regime being used to prevent learning or to punish an individual prisoner or, worse, to prevent the education staff being able even to offer the training by there being no one to take them through security at the beginning of the day.

On their own, new buildings and new structures will not change anything at all. Unless there is a clear national learning entitlement for prisoners—with responsibilities on their part, too—and proper funding, which was asked for by the 1984 Select Committee, this clash of cultures in our prisons will not change and the learning attainment as a key part of rehabilitation that we all seek will not happen. Worse, this Parliament will still be debating this issue in 2045.

Mind you, with the speed of reforms in your Lordships' Chamber, I may still be here to debate it. I am mindful of the comments made by the noble Lord, Lord Naseby, about the primacy of House of Commons. I am sure that we will still be recognising the primacy of the House of Commons then.

On the Higher Education and Research Bill, the devil will be in the detail—as ever—but there remains a stubborn conflict in the Government's approach to the sector, absolutely captured in the name of the White Paper: *Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice*. As a nation, either we want flexibility—both of subject and study mode—and priority for student choice or we want an HE sector which will supply our knowledge economy for the next 30 years. The lack of graduates in STEAM subjects—not just STEM, as the arts are vital in the knowledge economy—means that we risk losing that critical leading edge that brings major returns, not least profitability, to UK plc until we resolve this conundrum.

There has been talk of expanding privatisation. The newer private organisations that have moved into the university sector have been very restricted in their choice of subjects, such as law and accountancy. The White Paper relaxes much of the protective structure to ensure quality that has been one of the key reasons the UK's institutions have an enviable reputation. The new degree-awarding powers mechanism must maintain that protection. We await the detail, to see how this will operate, but I have concerns that allowing start-up universities to set up quickly might not provide the security that students deserve. We already have a large number of institutions that need support, and we need to ensure that institutions offer decent teaching, are financially secure—along with the students—and provide new opportunities to their graduates.

Although I am encouraged by the reference to support for excluded pupils in the education for all Bill, there seems to be little in there about support for children who cannot attend school because of severe bullying.

[BARONESS BRINTON]

At present the mechanisms for the funding to follow these pupils into specialist support are woeful and based on very patchy local provision. We cannot have a position where only children who bully or have challenging behaviours get help, while the pupils who are traumatised, and often clinically depressed, through bullying get no support and, worse, their schools can hold on to them, over medical advice to move them elsewhere.

In the remaining short time, I want to speak about social care, but I cannot find a Bill or proposal in the Queen's Speech that permits that. So I make my first point about this Government's approach to social care: it is invisible. Worse than that, it is an invisible elephant in the room. My noble friend Lady Walmsley referred to the seven-day NHS and the increasing crisis of delayed discharges. What sits behind that is a social care system absolutely at breaking point. It is an almost perfect storm: increasing numbers of elderly people requiring care; local government facing the worst crisis in funding from central government for generations; and then the introduction of the living wage. The latter is essential for the employees, and generously set by the Government, but there is no funding for local government which would enable it to raise its rates to social care providers. Finally, slightly at a tangent, even some GPs trying to find cash have scabbled around to find money and are now charging some residential homes for standard GP services to the residents, who should not be charged twice.

In coalition, we established the better care fund, as a pilot, to see if we could cut the Gordian knot between delayed discharges and social care, and make sure we could get people back home from hospital and prevent them from getting there in the first place. There have been some shining examples of success, but too many projects have sunk without trace since last year's general election. The Government may not feel the need for a social care Bill, but the omission of social care from the gracious Speech as a priority should set alarm bells ringing everywhere, as A&E departments struggle and delayed discharges rise. This invisible elephant in the room requires funding and a joint commissioning approach, urgently. Without it, the system will collapse and we will fail our older generation.

4.24 pm

Lord Freyberg (CB): My Lords, I will address my remarks today to education. The Queen's Speech primarily focused on traditional academic subjects and pathways, but the Government's refocusing on vocational pathways for 16 to 19 year-olds also has a massive potential for increasing the life chances of those who would flourish in careers that a traditional academic curriculum might not directly lead to. But there is a real concern that the EBacc—taken from 14 to 16—is aiming to encourage 90% of students to take a roster of traditionally academic GCSEs that will not best prepare them for these pathways and which are only truly core for some industries and higher and further educational institutions.

It is worth underlining that no one disputes the value of these core subjects. Indeed, in different combinations, they are essential for the prosperity of those vocational

students. However, this focus is contributing to the sidelining of creative subjects. Although students may do more GCSEs than required by the EBacc, at the moment one-third of students in academies take only seven, and so would have all of their GCSEs filled by subjects including languages, history and geography but excluding design and technology, art and design and other creative subjects. This emphasis on core subjects has led to a rapid erosion of subjects such as design and technology, and many schools are already cutting back on creative and arts options, which the EBacc measure does not include.

Focusing on a group of subjects that benefits one group of students might diminish the life chances of another: those who are less likely to perform well on these measures. Critically, students taking fewer academic subjects are likely to be the very same students who could benefit from going into careers in engineering, which has a skills gap worth £27 billion; the creative industries, including flourishing sectors such as design, video games and film; or construction, through the relevant colleges set up by the Government. The Creative Industries Federation and engineering bodies such as the Institution of Civil Engineers, have publicly voiced their concerns on this point.

I entirely agree with the noble Lord, Lord Cashman, that the introduction of the EBacc as a headline attainment measure sends a worrying message that the creative subjects are not a central and essential part of schooling. This is borne out by the statistics: when design and technology is included, there has been a fall of more than 60,000 entries to all visual art and design GCSEs in England since 2009-10. When countries such as China, South Korea and Brazil are investing heavily in their creative education because they can see the economic value of culture, it is very worrying that we are marginalising ours. I fear that in years to come, we will pay a very heavy price if we do not reverse this short-sighted thinking. I am not alone in this. A letter in today's *Daily Telegraph*, signed by 97 creative industry leaders—artists, actors and musicians—urges the Government to rethink their policies.

In closing my remarks on this gracious Speech, my question to the Government and the Minister is: how can they ensure that the EBacc does not infringe on the life chances of those who might not be naturally gifted in some of the core subjects, but would excel in careers in these other sectors?

4.28 pm

Lord Stevenson of Balmacara (Lab): My Lords, I am going to mention some points on the Bills that relate to my brief and then touch on the BBC charter review, as a number of noble Lords have done before me. The Higher Education and Research Bill is, to my mind, six years too late. Since 2010, we have been passive witnesses to a radical experiment across our higher education system. In that time, it has been transformed out of all recognition with its vouchers for borrowed fees and maintenance, financed by hugely increased personal debt. None of the policy implications of this was ever exposed to full scrutiny in Parliament.

There is considerable concern about the White Paper and the Bill for the following reasons. The supply-side changes now being proposed for the establishment of

new private and company universities constitute a policy that seems to lack any evidence base except in the United States, where the evidence is not inspiring. The policy might impact adversely on many existing institutions, particularly those which currently do most for widening participation and social mobility. The new teaching excellence framework is a welcome initiative, but it needs a lot of time and very careful consideration before its introduction, so as to minimise unintended consequences, not least through the explicit linking of fees with what seems to be a very narrow range of indicators of teaching excellence. While the legal protection for the dual-support system for research in England is welcome, as is the speedy implementation of Sir Paul Nurse's far-sighted report, the reservations mentioned by the noble Lord, Lord Rees, in his powerful speech will need to be borne in mind as these proposals are taken forward.

We on this side have wider concerns, which do not seem to have been addressed, including how to reverse the disastrous collapse in part-time degree enrolments; what is to be done to grow postgraduate work and research studentships; how we can provide better entry routes for adult students and those who want to retrain; and what links will need to exist with the new apprenticeship schemes, particularly for levels 4 and 5 and the institutions that provide these courses. What is the role of the IFA, and how will it interact with the new HE infrastructure architecture?

My noble friend Lord Mendelsohn mentioned our concerns about the digital economy Bill, and the worry that the Government are repeating the problems of the past, and being unambitious about the future and the new infrastructure that is required. We also need to know exactly what is on offer under the USO; there seem to be too many get-out clauses. However, we will be supporting strongly the clauses implementing the EU directive on parental controls, in line with our support for the Bills over successive years introduced by the noble Baroness, Lady Howe.

We strongly support the Cultural Property (Armed Conflicts) Bill, and we welcome the news that there is to be another intellectual property Bill, as last year we had to make do with some secondary legislation—and for IP aficionados such as the noble Lord, Lord Clement-Jones, that simply is not enough.

A significant number of the contributions made today have dealt with the BBC White Paper, and the continuing unease which many Members of your Lordships' House feel about the proposals. The excellent speeches by the noble Lord, Lord Fowler, my noble friend Lord Macdonald, the noble Baroness, Lady Bonham-Carter, and others have set out the main issues. The key issue here is whether the Government discharge their responsibility to the nation to set out the role and financing to be allocated to the BBC for the period ahead in a consensual or in a partisan way. It is welcome that the Culture Secretary has been forced to back down on some of the most damaging proposals, which his department had apparently trailed in the press. But on a number of key issues there still seems to be evidence of political motivation, which will not only undermine the BBC's long-term ability to fulfil its role, but will also destabilise the broader broadcasting ecology of the country.

On the unitary board, for example, there must be a guarantee that the non-executive appointments should be appointed by an independent appointments committee, established by the Commissioner for Public Appointments, under Nolan principles. The power to review the new charter after five years is inappropriate, at variance with the agreement to an 11-year charter period, and will undermine the BBC's ability to plan and invest for the long term. As others have said, it also cuts across the role of Ofcom, and the proposal should be dropped. The move to accelerate the opening up of in-house production activity to contestability in all areas except news and current affairs may have unforeseen consequences, and the BBC should be trusted to do this at the appropriate rate. More generally, the Government should steer clear of being seen to try to influence programmes or scheduling. The call for the BBC to become "more distinctive" surely reveals that the Secretary of State is both commercially and ideologically opposed to the BBC. As my noble friend Lord Cashman said, the charter review should not be used to make the BBC output so minority-interest and "distinctive" that hardly anybody likes it, so that in time few people would miss it and it can be privatised.

Finally, on a minor point, but one that is still important and which may be illustrative of the whole, I notice that in the existing charter the BBC has the responsibility to bring the UK to the world and the world to the UK across all genres of programming. Can the Minister explain why the White Paper has dropped this wider purpose, relegating the role of understanding the UK and the world to being delivered only by news and current affairs? The BBC is the linchpin of the UK's PSB ethos, and the envy of the world. The overwhelming majority of the public want the BBC to continue to inform, educate and entertain, and to survive and thrive. I hope the Government will listen to the people who use the BBC's excellent services, menus and all, and do the right thing.

4.33 pm

Baroness Tyler of Enfield (LD): My Lords, I welcome the focus in the gracious Speech on life chances and help for the most disadvantaged. My focus today is on some of the key components of an all-encompassing life chances strategy and on mental health. As the noble Baroness, Lady Massey, has said, we had a very good debate on life chances in this Chamber only last week, and I look forward to the Government's forthcoming life chances strategy and the associated indicators that will be developed to assess its progress. It will be important that those indicators are broadly drawn, a point on which this House has much expertise to offer. A key point emerging in our debate was that any life chances strategy worth its name must look at all life stages, but starting of course with investment in young people through measures such as high-quality early-years education and the pupil premium to ensure every child has a fair chance in life. In addition, we need to support strong family relationships, which are the bedrock of nurturing the next generation. So I will be looking closely for evidence that investment in relationship and parenting support is a key component of the life chances strategy.

[BARONESS TYLER OF ENFIELD]

We must never overlook the life chances of the majority of young people—some 53%—who do not pursue the traditional academic route of A-levels and higher education but pursue vocational routes instead. Too often they have received scant attention from Ministers and policymakers, so I join the noble Earl, Lord Kinnoull, the noble Baroness, Lady Massey, and my noble friend Lady Sharp in eagerly awaiting the Government's response to the Lords Select Committee on Social Mobility's report on improving the transition from school to work. It was a great honour to serve on that committee, and I very much hope that the forthcoming education for all Bill will focus on the need for coherent, properly resourced, easy to navigate and high-quality vocational routes. As well as looking at fair funding for schools, I hope the Bill will address the substantial inequalities in funding between schools and FE colleges for 16 to 18 year-olds. While I am not holding my breath, perhaps the Minister will surprise and delight me in her response.

So, yes, we must ensure that every child has the best possible start in life, but that is not the whole story. A comprehensive life chances strategy must also ensure that co-ordinated support is available to help people of all ages address the barriers that are preventing them getting on in life. It is well known that many of the problems that people face today, including homelessness, substance misuse, mental ill-health and contact with the criminal justice system, stem from trauma and abuse in childhood, long-term poverty and the repeated failure of state interventions. A staggering 40% of people with severe multiple needs ran away as children, 24% have experienced abuse and 18% were in the care system. That is why I welcome proposals set out in the Children and Social Work Bill to strengthen the support that local authorities, as the corporate parent, offer to children in care and care leavers up to 25, and to improve standards across the social work profession. We must also use this opportunity to make sure that children's mental health is properly assessed on entry into care and throughout their time in the care system and, critically, that that assessment leads to appropriate and timely support so that children and young people do not have to reach crisis point before help is at hand. As the noble Earl, Lord Listowel, argued so compellingly, this assessment cannot just be the current paper-based method of assessing a child's mental health. I strongly agree with the recommendation of the Education Select Committee that all children have a specialist mental health assessment. Charities such as the NSPCC have been calling for improvements to the therapeutic support received by children who have experienced abuse and neglect to help them rebuild their lives. Given their early traumatic experiences, it is hardly surprising that children in care are significantly more prone to mental ill health.

Another group crying out for better mental health support are young carers, given the distress too many of them are experiencing in looking after their loved ones. As a starting point, the Government must meet their duties to support young carers under the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014. Given the concerns that have been expressed in this area, a review of the impact and resourcing of these Acts is

urgently needed. Mental health services must be able to identify young carers, give them the right information and provide them with support and increased access to mental health services. Schools have a very important role to play here, and am I very glad that the noble Lord, Lord Nash, is in his place to hear me say this. I strongly support the proposal for schools to act as hubs for mental health support, working in collaboration with CAMHS and the voluntary sector. When the Government's carers strategy is published later in the year, it is essential that young carers' mental health needs be centre stage.

Turning now to adults, my experiences as chair of the Making Every Adult Matter coalition of charities—I refer to my declared interests in the register—convince me that we must find more effective ways of supporting adults already in crisis. Too often these individuals receive a poorly co-ordinated and ineffective response from local services, resulting in poor outcomes and significant cost to the public purse.

During the recent life chances debate, I called on the Government to develop a national cross-departmental strategy to support and incentivise local areas to develop better responses for adults experiencing multiple and complex needs, or who are at significant risk of doing so. That should be an integral part of a life chances strategy, and it is a really important opportunity to say more about how entrenched and interconnected social problems can be tackled and, importantly, lives transformed. I again urge the Government to do this, and ask the Minister if she will respond on this point in winding up.

To illustrate how joined-up these problems are, the Royal College of Psychiatrists has estimated that up to 90% of prisoners experience a mental health issue. I therefore welcome the focus in the prison and court reform Bill on education, healthcare and the provision of better mental healthcare for prisoners. However, it is no exaggeration to say that mental health for all age groups and all sections of society has become one of the defining challenges of our age. Missing from the gracious Speech was a strong commitment to mental health across the piece.

I was disappointed not to see an equality for mental health Bill to deliver genuine parity of esteem between mental and physical health. There is so much to do to deliver on the commitments the Government have already made in response to the *Future in Mind* report on children and young people's mental health, the Crisp report on acute psychiatric care for adults and the recent Mental Health Task Force report. The real concern here is that despite all the fine words and good intentions, which I strongly support, the money promised is not getting through to the front line where it is most needed or translating into new mental health practitioners, and that the amounts of money allocated, welcome though they are, are simply inadequate for dealing simultaneously with both historic underfunding on a grand scale and the new initiatives that have been announced, not least in relation to waiting times and access standards.

The recent report from the Mental Health Finance Faculty and NHS Providers has highlighted that parity of esteem is nowhere near being achieved consistently at local level. It makes for sobering reading. In short,

commissioners and providers do not share the same understanding of parity of esteem. All CCGs signed up to the principle of parity of esteem, and underline that they have increased their real-terms investment in mental health services. In practice, though, only half the services reported that they had received it, hence the need for an equality of mental health Bill.

4.42 pm

Baroness Wheatcroft (Con): My Lords, I welcome much of what was announced yesterday in the gracious Speech. It is some years since our current Prime Minister declared that he wanted to heal the broken society. I fully supported that aim and still do, but there is much to be done to achieve it. This legislative programme would make a real difference to life chances through the promised changes relating to childcare and those excluded from schools, along with the much-needed radical prison reforms.

Who could fail to be excited by a Queen's Speech that promised to give the UK the first commercial spaceport? Earlier this year I was lucky enough to meet Chris Hadfield, the Canadian astronaut who commanded the International Space Station. It was not his rendering of "Space Oddity" that stunned his audience, even though it was remarkable, but his conviction that within 20 years earthlings would be colonising the moon. So commercial spaceports to get people back and forth may not be the stuff of science fiction that they currently sound. Innovative business is already investing in developing space technology, and it is on business that I want to concentrate today.

Several measures were announced yesterday that could help business to thrive. In particular, we need to nurture our smaller businesses and help them to become big world-beaters. The digital economy is crucial to that. Fast broadband is not a luxury but an essential. If a business loses its internet connection or is slow in being able to respond, it does not just lose a connection; it loses a customer. So I welcome the commitment to a universal service obligation for fast broadband, a move that could benefit over 1 million households and business premises. However, we have to be sure that fast broadband becomes faster.

The Bill also commits the Government to supporting new digital industries. We have heard much praise already for our remarkable creative industries, which are in a world-beating class, but it should not be forgotten that the inventor of the world wide web was a Brit. Sir Tim Berners-Lee did not make the fortune that the founders of Google, Apple or Facebook made, but he gave the world an extraordinary benefit. Now we must encourage the new pioneers of digital development, and if we can link them, the technological wizards, with the creative minds that we foster, we could generate huge growth.

The local government and jobs Bill could make a big difference to business. Giving local government full control over business rates should encourage creative thinking as to how to attract the businesses that councils need in their areas. It could generate new life on high streets, which in so many towns have suffered a blight of shop closures and desperately need reinvigorating. Differential business rates could be the way to do that.

For regions that have grasped the localism agenda, there is even further scope to engage with business. The new mayors are being given a power to make a levy to fund infrastructure projects. Infrastructure is still woeful in parts of the country, and it is good to see a determination to put this right, both nationally and locally. Incidentally, the modern transport Bill pledges to reduce the congestion that currently costs the UK economy £20 billion a year. I wonder whether that means examining the utilisation of the swathes of the capital's highways now set aside for the use of that most modern mode of transport, the bicycle.

Before mayors can make the levy, the proposed project will have to have the support of local businesses, which is to be ascertained through the local enterprise partnerships. LEPs can be a force for good, and undoubtedly in some parts of the country they are, but the anecdotal evidence is that the quality differs hugely. It is vital that the Government ensure that the LEPs provide the support that businesses, particularly smaller businesses, need. This is really important when it comes to exporting. For a great trading nation, we are pretty bad at exporting. Four out of five small businesses do not export.

If the Government are to stand a chance of reaching their target of taking exports to £1 trillion of goods and services every year, that proportion has to change. BIS and UKTI can offer much support for exporters, but too often it is very difficult for customers to ascertain exactly what is on offer and how to make the most of it. There has been a lot of talk about simplification, but not a lot of simplification. LEPs could help companies to navigate this maze. They could also be instrumental in one of my hobby horses, encouraging big businesses to help smaller ones in the export effort, providing mentoring and contacts and probably even financial support.

Apart from finance, business needs skills, and I hope that the details of the higher education and research Bill will show that skills will be enhanced by it. It promises a new range of universities, but I hope that we are not reverting to the belief that a university education is right for everyone. Apprenticeships offer many school leavers a wonderful chance to acquire the skills that industry needs without acquiring the heavy burden of student debt. Many universities are still failing to offer their students the acquisition of skills and are offering merely the debt.

The target of 3 million apprenticeships by 2020 is admirable, and I hope that the Minister can reassure me that the target remains in place and that the new universities that the Government wish to encourage will be allied to the skills agenda. Sheffield Hallam, for instance, is partnered with some major companies in delivering a chartered manager degree apprenticeship, and given that the Chartered Management Institute reckons that bad management costs the UK £19 billion a year, that must be welcome.

Business has an important role to play in the new plan for prisons. If people walk out of jail and into a job, their chances of reoffending are hugely reduced. Some companies already do marvellous work to ensure that this happens, National Grid and Pret A Manger among

[BARONESS WHEATCROFT]

them. It would make a huge difference if every company joined them and concentrated on taking a few ex-offenders into employment.

Finally, I was not going to mention the referendum but my noble friend Lord Trenchard has persuaded me to do so. If the Bank of England, the IMF and the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, among many others, think it would be deeply damaging for the UK to leave the EU, I cannot help but feel that we should listen to them.

4.50 pm

Baroness King of Bow (Lab): My Lords, I echo those last comments on the EU, but apart from an opening comment on adoption I will concentrate my remarks on public sector broadcasting, culture, and my perennial obsession with diversity in British media.

As the mother of three adopted children I warmly welcome the Government's efforts to increase adoption—when it is in the best interests of the child—through the introduction of the Children and Social Work Bill. But if the Government are so intent on removing barriers to children being adopted, can both Ministers reflect on the contradiction between the Government's stated aims in the gracious Speech yesterday and their recent legislation on the child benefit element of the welfare Act? Child benefit will be limited to two children per family except for certain exemptions, such as adopted children. I should think so, too, because otherwise, prospective parents would face a financial disincentive to adopt, which is the exact opposite of what the Government want. But it transpires that the Government will exempt adopted children only if, for example, they are in a sibling group and not if, like my adopted children, they are not genetically related to each other. This makes no sense. Given the Government's priorities in the gracious Speech, will the Minister raise this issue with her colleagues in the other place?

On culture and broadcasting, I draw attention to my roles as Channel 4's Diversity Executive and as a governor of the British Film Institute. I also draw attention to my debate last week on diversity in the media, and in particular to the fact that my remarks were not as well-timed as the superb speech by the noble Lord, Lord Holmes, from the Conservative Benches. The noble Lord has an extraordinary nine Paralympian gold medals. I would like to award him another gold medal in his absence for brevity and concision in a parliamentary debate. I recommend that everyone look at his remarks in Grand Committee. He said:

"For decades a lack of diversity in British broadcasting has been a stain on all broadcasters".

He also said that broadcasting,

"is absolutely a meritocracy if you are a white, middle-class, middle-aged man".—[*Official Report*, 10/5/16; cols. GC 83-84.]

I was honoured that the noble Lord, Lord Holmes, described Channel 4's *360° Diversity Charter*, which I wrote with the fantastic team at Channel 4, as "a phenomenally significant document". I and my colleagues at Channel 4 sweated blood to put together something we hoped would be a game-changer. It is a game-changer but the game must change a whole lot more.

Now, difficult though it is, I must stop quoting the noble Lord, Lord Holmes, and move on. But I will refer to just one more of his great quotes, which is relevant to our discussion of the gracious Speech. He said that we must absolutely ensure that change is transformational. That is the ambition we all have for the BBC—it is just that the Government want it to be transformed in one direction and many of us would prefer another.

I remind noble Lords of the principles that we need if we are to have distinctive broadcasting in terms of diversity. Those principles include transparency and accountability. We must be data driven; we must implement systemic change, which for broadcasting must be genre specific; and we must bring adequate resource to bear. Underlying all those is the principle that without leadership from the top, nothing happens.

I will mention one fact that possibly trumps everything else I have said so far. Some people will say that it is not a fact but a subjective opinion, but after seven years as a diversity executive, I view it as a non-negotiable fact: "culture eats strategy for breakfast". Some of you will have heard that before; it has been quoted quite widely. I came across it in the illuminating book from Google's head of people operations, Lazlo Bock, entitled *Work Rules!*. It has been generally accepted in the broadcasting industry that we have not in the past been able to live up to the ambitions in our strategies. Why is that? It is because culture eats strategy for breakfast. So I hope that the Government and the broadcasters will look to this important aspect of culture. I will be pushing that and the Creative Diversity Network is working hard on these issues.

It would be fantastic if broadcasters could learn from each other and benchmark progress. We will be able to benchmark progress through Diamond, the new diversity analysis-monitoring data tool that the broadcasters are bringing together. Essentially, Diamond will switch the lights on. Then we will be able to know whether the BBC's diversity strategy, mentioned by other noble Lords today, is working. We will be able to know whether Channel 4's strategy is working and those of all the other broadcasters. We can all learn from each other. For example, ITV has done some truly fabulous work in bringing on diverse writers in some of its soaps, and Sky was excellent in being the first out of the blocks to mention targets around ethnic minorities on screen.

I congratulate in particular the BBC on one area where it was incredibly bold: gender. Its statement is that by 2020, 50% of all those in on-air lead roles and across all genres, from drama to news, will be women. Thank goodness for that. That is bold, but given that we are Britain and not Saudi Arabia, it is about the least we should expect. It is simply unacceptable that women in general, and older women in particular, are always, always underrepresented on screen in relation to men. Just yesterday, another report was published showing that the mismatch we see when we switch on the screen or hear when we turn on the radio is as bad as it has ever been—sorry, that is not strictly true; there has been some progress over the last year. But the figures show that on screen we have not made enough progress. I draw the attention of the House to

Channel 4's recent gender report, which can be found on the channel's website. It was extraordinarily illuminating in this area.

Lastly, will the Government really look at the issue of the BBC's board? The Government are going to pack the board. That is great. I say, "Go ahead and do that, but could you pack it with a little bit of diversity while you're at it?". Maybe there could be two ethnic-minority members; is that too much to ask? Obviously I am not asking for anyone to be appointed because they are black, a woman, from a less advantaged background or disabled. But do not tell me that, having looked around Britain, you cannot find anyone with any of those characteristics who could contribute meaningfully to the BBC board.

If the Government honestly cannot find that diverse talent, I can give them the name of a man who can. Raj Tulsiani of Green Park Interim & Executive Search works very closely with my noble friend Lady Royall. He has just published a list of the top 100 board-ready ethnic-minority British businesspeople, who are truly extraordinary in the breadth and range of their talents. They are ready. They are waiting for their skills and talents to be included in the success story of Britain's creative industries. If we continue to lock them out, over time we will lose our competitive edge for the same reason that the noble Lord, Lord Holmes, gave—because diversity is about a creative and competitive edge. So let us get the data; let us combine it with leadership; and let us change the culture inside our organisations so that we embrace diversity instead of eating it for breakfast and then spitting it out.

4.59 pm

Lord Storey (LD): My Lords, it is a pleasure to speak from these Benches at the end of this first day of debate on the gracious Speech. As my noble friends have said, including my noble and learned friend Lord Wallace of Tankerness yesterday, we regret that many of the measures included in the gracious Speech demonstrate a real lack of ambition and drive for this country.

With regard to my own area of education, the Liberal Democrats are clear that we should be investing in our young people and giving teachers the resources and support they need to deliver real improvements for pupils. We propose a new education charter that will have at its heart consensus to provide every pupil with a qualified teacher, to have a balanced national curriculum for all children to ensure that sport, music and the arts are not marginalised, to change the culture from excessive testing and inspections to more teaching and less testing, good-quality careers education, and a royal college of teaching to ensure that standards and support are maintained.

The Queen's Speech talked about excellence in education, which is a sentiment that we could all subscribe to, but how can you have excellence when some of the fundamentals in our education service now face a real crisis? The supply of teachers in specialist subjects is near to breaking point—try getting a physics or chemistry teacher—and there are schools that have advertised for head teachers and nobody has applied. That is not excellence; it is downright poor planning of teacher supply.

The shortage of school places in parts of the UK is a national disgrace. How difficult is it to know the birth rate requirements and plan with local authorities to provide the places needed? We seem so obsessed with hitting our promised free school targets that we desperately try playing catch-up by adding on to existing schools and making them bigger and bigger. Is a school of 2,000 places the most conducive environment for pupils to be educated in? The admission procedures are fast becoming a nightmare for parents, who are increasingly not getting their first, second or even third choice of school, and as the noble Baroness, Lady Massey, rightly said, we need an admissions procedure that is uniform and has been simplified.

The second crisis that we face is over school finance. The Government promised that there would be no cuts to school budgets, but a stand-still budget takes no account of the rising on-costs that have to be absorbed by the school budget. Employer on-costs in the past three years have risen by 69.4% and there has been no extra finance, so those costs have had to be absorbed into the school budget. The cost of brought-in services has gone up and up, and again the costs have had to be absorbed by the school budget. What we have seen in the health service, with hospital trusts piling up huge deficits, is likely to be a foretaste of what will happen in our schools. There is little wonder that head teachers in the Prime Minister's constituency sought a meeting to highlight the financial difficulties that they were facing, with head teachers even talking about schools facing bankruptcy. Is now a good time to bring forward a so-called national fair funding regime in England? Yes, there will be winners, but there will also be losers and that can only compound school budget difficulties.

The party of parents and family values is increasingly ignoring the views of parents—whether it be on compulsory academisation, schools not having a governing body or the primary testing regime—and parents are increasingly voicing their opinions. A parent in the Isle of Wight even went to court on the principle of having a family holiday in school term time. Of course, it is important that children attend school, and days missed from school can affect a child's education. But some parents have no choice over when they receive their holiday entitlement. Indeed, some factories close down for a holiday period during school time. Parents wanting to have that all-important family holiday together are faced with the agonising choice of holidaying together as a family or facing the approbation of the LA and a possible fine. Come on: let us use some common sense and, rather than penalise parents, give the responsibility back to head teachers and governors to agree in certain circumstances leave of absence from school. Would it not be a good idea if the Government tackled the outrageous practice carried out by the holiday industry in massively increasing costs during school holiday times to the detriment of families, hitting those in the lowest income groups the hardest?

The Education Act 1944 enshrined the need for every child to be given full-time schooling and for every school to be legally approved to provide that schooling. Now, 72 years later, Ofsted has found and reported on 100 unregistered schools, but the scandal of children being taught in unlicensed schools is only

[LORD STOREY]

the tip of the iceberg. We have no central figures on how many children are missing from our schools and no central figures to show how many children are being educated at home. Let us show the same zeal that we have for pupil school attendance to keep an accurate and up-to-date record of those children who go missing from the school system. After all, births are recorded and pupils entering school are given a UPN—a unique pupil number—so why are we allowing pupils to go missing from the school system?

In all our education and social policies, the safety, well-being and protection of the child should be at the heart of all we do. In 2004, a report was published called *Twenty-nine Child Homicides* by Women's Aid. It detailed 29 children who had been killed by abusive fathers. The killings happened between 1994 and 2004 and were committed by perpetrators of domestic abuse in circumstances relating to child contact. Its findings prompted a review of judicial practice and the inception of a new practice direction which prioritised the safety of children and non-abusive parents in child contact decisions in the family courts. If we now move the tape forward, the very same group has produced a further report which uncovers the details of a further 19 children in 12 families killed by perpetrators of domestic abuse in circumstances relating to child contact. In addition, two children were seriously harmed and three women were killed. All the perpetrators were men and fathers to the children they killed. A study of 203 child contact orders found that only one order prohibited any contact by the father who had been committing domestic violence, and only 3% of contact orders were for supervised visiting. We cannot continue to put the lives of innocent children at risk. In all cases of alleged domestic abuse, there must be robust and effective assessments by experts of the implications for the child and of the non-abusive parent's safety and well-being. It is only by doing this that what are now unavoidable deaths will be prevented in the future.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, from these Benches we do wish that the content of the gracious Speech was more ambitious. For so many reasons which we are all well aware of, the next few months will be pivotal to the future of this country. We have heard lots of talk about the referendum. I am reminded that in my own city of Liverpool, it was Objective 1 European funding which turned around the fortunes of the city and city region, and of course being the European Capital of Culture changed perceptions of Liverpool once and for all. The Government can expect a long ride ahead during this legislative Session, but rest assured that we will always scrutinise in a constructive and challenging manner with neither fear nor favour.

5.08 pm

Lord Watson of Invergowrie (Lab): My Lords, several noble Lords have suggested today that the Government's legislative programme is rather thin and even timid. I have to say that I find it interesting to read some political journalists describing the gracious Speech as a small "I" liberal programme while others see it as a series of social reforms designed to reunite the Conservative Party in the aftermath of the referendum—

I say to the Prime Minister, "Good luck with that", especially should the separatists prevail. I hope very much that they do not, although I know from today's debate that the noble Viscount, Lord Trenchard, will not agree with me.

The Government's education policies remain obsessed with structures rather than what matters most, which is what works in terms of educational outcomes. Under this Government, school budgets are falling, there are chronic teacher shortages about which the Department for Education remains in denial, inhabiting a world of its own, and not enough good places are available. Despite being forced to make a tactical shift—I believe that it was tactical rather than strategic—the Government are continuing to force good and outstanding schools to become academies against their wishes. As I have said many times in your Lordships' House, there is simply no evidence that academy status automatically raises school performance; in fact much of the evidence points in the opposite direction, as highlighted by my noble friends Lord Griffiths and Lord Murphy. Yet the Government plough on regardless.

My noble friend Lady Massey spoke eloquently on the question of academisation, but it has been widely reported that the Government have retreated from the mass academisation programme in the face of widespread and vociferous opposition. They have not fooled many in the education community with their apparent U-turn. The notes that accompanied the education for all Bill said that the Government would:

"Convert schools to academies in the worst performing local authorities and those that can no longer viably support their remaining schools, so that a new system led by good and outstanding schools can take their place".

There already is a system led by good and outstanding schools—the local authority system. Is there room for improvement there? Of course: there always is, just as there is room for improvement in the academy and free school sectors. Is there any basis for binning the entire local authority sector in favour of the other two sectors? Absolutely not.

Just yesterday I visited Tollgate Primary School in east London, a teaching school that leads an alliance of 30 schools across seven London boroughs. It was already an outstanding school, and in 2013 its executive head also took on that role in nearby Cleves Primary, which had a "requires improvement" rating from Ofsted. Within just 18 months, Cleves joined Tollgate in being judged as outstanding in all areas. To achieve that in 18 months is very rare, and it was made possible by the schools working jointly in a federation. But the Government have effectively outlawed any new federations of maintained schools and Tollgate is now considering becoming an academy because, if it does not, it will be unable to progress from its current position as a teaching school.

That is an example of the covert pressure applied to outstanding maintained schools to make them bend to the will of the Government. I suspect that we can expect more underhand tactics when the Bill announced yesterday is rolled out. The Minister did not spell out how it would define local authority "viability" or a "minimum performance threshold" for local authorities, but it is to be hoped that there will be consultation on these definitions.

The independent think tank CentreForum has done some calculations on this. Working on the basis that a local authority is “unviable” if less than half of pupils in the area attend local authority maintained schools, and a local authority is “underperforming” if its maintained schools at either key stage 2 or key stage 4 are below the current national average, CentreForum has calculated that as many as 122 local authorities responsible for 12,000 maintained schools meet these not unreasonably assumed criteria for defining “unviable”. Forcibly converting those 12,000 schools to academy status would result in around 85% of all schools being academies, which, along with those converting voluntarily, would in turn render most remaining local authorities unviable.

Hey presto: the Government are within touching distance of their wish for all schools to become academies and so, by smoke and mirrors, the apparent pulling back from mass-academisation is not what it seems at all—not so much a U-turn, more a Z-turn. If I am wrong or this analysis is overly pessimistic, I am sure that the noble Lord, Lord Nash, will write to me pointing this out. At a cost of around £1 billion the mass conversion of schools is simply not good use of public money, particularly at a time of huge funding pressures on schools.

We welcome the improvements to support for care leavers outlined in the Children and Social Work Bill. I listened closely to the wise words of the noble Earl, Lord Listowel, who regularly demonstrates his knowledge of and commitment to issues associated with children in care. Approximately 10,000 young people leave care in England every year, in many cases before they turn 18. Research shows that they are more likely than their peers to have poor outcomes later in life. This includes education and work, homelessness, contact with the criminal justice system and mental health problems.

It will also be important for this Bill to make up for the missed opportunity in the Education and Adoption Act by ensuring that, this time, provisions are introduced to ensure that children's mental health is properly assessed on entry into care and then throughout their time in the care system. As the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Durham said, leaving care is often traumatic, yet the Government have failed to provide adequate adoption support, and cuts to services are putting pressure on the system. Measures that will increase adoption are welcome, but it is vital that action is taken that is in the best interests of the individual child. It is unacceptable that the Government have not yet developed a strategy for the wholesale improvement of the care system that delivers for all, not just those children being considered for adoption. As the noble Lord, Lord Bichard, told noble Lords, social work should be seen as an honourable profession, yet often it is not. It is certainly a vital one. It is essential that other forms of care, such as kinship care and fostering, are not marginalised, because that will prevent the step change we need to see in outcomes for looked-after children. This Bill invites more than a few questions for the Government, but rather than list them now I will wait until 14 June when the Bill will have its Second Reading.

We believe that the digital economy Bill should detail a comprehensive approach to address the digital skills challenge in the UK and improve digital inclusion, improve the communications infrastructure and

connectivity and make the UK the best place to start and scale up a high-growth tech business. As my noble friend Lord Mendelsohn said what seems a very long time ago now, the Government are letting down millions of households and businesses over the rollout of high-speed broadband. Six years after abandoning Labour's fully-funded commitment to universal broadband, the Government's superfast broadband rollout is still suffering delays. Many noble Lords have either outlined problems that they have experienced personally or talked about it in general terms. As the noble Baroness, Lady Burt, said, they simply must do better because the economy as a whole is suffering.

We welcome the focus on the age verification of websites containing pornographic material. However, in the knowledge that children's digital lives play out across various social media platforms as well as websites, we remain concerned that unless we extend age verification measures to these platforms, children will continue to be exposed to pornographic and age-inappropriate material online.

Despite not meriting a mention in the gracious Speech, the elephant in the room throughout this debate has been the BBC, and understandably so. In fact, the elephant trumpeted loudly on many occasions, to the extent that it would be simpler to list noble Lords who did not mention the BBC than those who did. If I mention in particular the noble Baroness, Lady Bonham-Carter, the noble Lords, Lord Fowler and Lord Addington, and my noble friends Lord Macdonald of Tradeston, Lord Cashman and Lord Stevenson, I hope other noble Lords who spoke on the BBC's behalf will forgive me. Although the proposals published in the White Paper last week do not require legislation, it is, of course, very much a hot topic. Noble Lords who spoke warned of the need to be wary of the Government undermining, underfunding or otherwise weakening the great institution that is the BBC. I echo the view of the noble Lord, Lord Foster, that the BBC's independence and impartiality must be upheld and decisions as to who will form the new unitary board should be the preserve of the Commissioner for Public Appointments. It is also essential that the licence fee should be protected, if the BBC is to continue to serve the whole country, which I and many people believe it does very effectively.

The Higher Education and Research Bill marks a sharp turn away from the established university system and on the face of it will empower more people than ever to access higher education in their local area through a college. So it was perhaps appropriate that it was the noble Baroness, Lady Sharp, who outlined with great clarity some of the issues that will arise. It is to be welcomed that the new regime will provide a wider choice of courses linked to employment, but there are two buts. First, as my noble friend Lord Murphy told the House, under this Government and the previous one tuition fees have already trebled to £9,000 and we could see them climb even higher, saddling young people who want to go to university with tens of thousands of pounds of debt. That is likely to act as a disincentive to many would-be applicants and is an issue that the Government must address if they genuinely want to expand the social background from which students are drawn.

[LORD WATSON OF INVERGOWRIE]

Secondly, what the noble Lord, Lord Nash, called a “wide range of providers” sounds like a free-market free-for-all, very much like the US model. As my noble friend Lord Stevenson, said, that is a matter for real concern because any brief examination of that system reveals the dangers, with many degrees next to worthless and students often left no more employable at the end of their course than when they started it. It would be encouraging to hear the Minister tell us that that will not be the case, although I suspect that the detail of the Bill is not yet complete.

On an NHS overseas visitors charging Bill, we will support any moves that are about ensuring fairness in the system and getting a better deal for taxpayers. However, we need to avoid turning NHS staff into border guards and the key test of these proposals will be whether they can be effectively enforced and whether it will cost the NHS more to administer the charges than it ends up receiving. We will also be seeking a guarantee that certain exemptions will remain in place, such as those for asylum seekers and people with infectious diseases.

Since the gracious Speech we have learned of agreement being reached between the Government and the BMA on junior doctors' hours. The noble Baroness, Lady Walmsley, highlighted some of the contract conditions apparently withdrawn by the Secretary of State, enabling agreement to be reached. That is, of course, most welcome, but it demonstrates what many have believed for some time—that Mr Hunt wanted this dispute, he planned it and he prolonged it. The agreement reached yesterday could have been achieved weeks ago, obviating the need for industrial action. Very few employees in any sector go on strike unless it is the last resort. That was particularly true of the junior doctors. Yet, the Secretary of State's intransigence left them with little choice because media coverage of cancelled operations and picket lines outside hospitals served his purpose. That is shameful. Now we are at an end point, it should be understood that it is despite the approach adopted by Mr Hunt, not because of it. The priority for Ministers now must be to repair the damage the dispute has done to staff morale and begin the process of rebuilding the trust of the very people who keep our NHS running.

In the weeks and months ahead, the detail of the 21 Bills announced yesterday will emerge. It is to be hoped that, unlike last Session, we are not presented with skeleton or framework Bills which are not even fleshed out fully during consideration in both Houses but are left for Government to fill through secondary legislation at a later date. This is not an acceptable or even responsible manner in which to legislate. As my noble friend Lord Murphy suggested, in perhaps the most perceptive speech of what has been a debate of genuine quality, the Government need to give more thought to the implications and practicalities of proposals that they bring forward. I echo that plea. Will Ministers heed it? We shall see.

5.20 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and Department for Culture, Media and Sport (Baroness Neville-Rolfe) (Con): My Lords, the gracious Speech is, of course, the second

in this Parliament. We have already made good progress in many areas of policy though, at the macro level, it must be acknowledged that the EU referendum—which several noble Lords mentioned—dominates political attention. Matters will not return to normal until it is out of the way.

Today's debate has been a bit of a marathon, as the noble Lord, Lord Watson, hinted in his summing up. It has also been very wide-ranging on many points, some of which the Government will want to respond to on other days during this debate. But it has underlined the vast expertise of this House. As a business and culture Minister, I have hugely enjoyed the chance to go deeper into areas where I do not have responsibilities but which are vital to this country, such as health and education. To give one example of the wide-ranging nature of this debate, I always enjoy the challenging comments of my noble friend Lord Hodgson—which very often are on the subject of the British pub. Today he made a very thoughtful contribution on how people form opinions and how that is changing, and on the implications of population growth.

I did not entirely agree on the issue of automation. I think that driverless cars and so on provide an opportunity for the UK, and they are in our plans for the next Session. Once changing relative wages and new jobs are taken into account, there is little evidence for the reduction in mid-level jobs. Since 2010, our economy has seen employment growth across nearly all the major occupational groups and the digital revolution has been an important driver.

As the Prime Minister said in another place yesterday, with this Government economic security always comes first. We build on strong foundations. The deficit has been cut by almost two-thirds as a share of GDP; the highest employment rate on record was announced this week; and our long-term economic plan means our economy is over 13% bigger than at the start of 2010. We have 900,000 more businesses and 764,000 fewer workless households, and poverty is at its lowest rate in three decades.

In response to the rather grudging comment by the noble Baroness, Lady Burt, on the Queen's Speech, I believe that it sets out a clear programme of reform using the strength of our economy to deliver security for working people and to increase life chances for the most disadvantaged, strengthening national security while living within our means.

I must endorse the comment by my noble friend Lord Suri about our gracious Queen. I was very glad, as he was, to see the proposals for prisons. This is an area that will be discussed on another day but it was one on which I worked when I was at Downing Street. The noble Baroness, Lady Brinton, made some very good points about prison education.

The right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Durham and the noble Baroness, Lady Burt, raised concerns about investment in the north and in the Midlands. For too long, the economy of the north has underperformed compared to the UK average. I speak as a business Minister who enjoys visiting the north. In recent times I have visited manufacturers in Darlington, Catapults and a video games business in Newcastle—and, of course, Durham cathedral, which is a jewel in a UK treasure trove of beautiful cathedrals. The Government

are committed to the northern powerhouse. We will spend £150 billion on health, £45 billion on schools and £13 billion on transport across the northern powerhouse over this Parliament. This will be coupled with the Government's investment in the Midlands Engine, which includes a £250 million Midlands Engine investment fund, and £5 million to Midlands Connect to take forward the new regional transport strategy.

The noble Lord, Lord Mendelsohn, said that we needed to step up to the challenge of industrial policy. The long-term approach upon which our industrial strategy was formed will continue. It means focusing on policies which boost productivity. It means our 3 million target for apprentices, which I reassure my noble friend Lady Wheatcroft has not been abandoned. It means the promotion of competitiveness and creating long-term investment. This is crucial for the stability and strengthening of our economy, as is enhanced competition and, of course, taking advantage of the opportunity of the digital revolution. I will focus on those areas and then turn to education, welfare and health, including mental health.

Competition is the lifeblood of a healthy economy. Strong competition in markets generates greater choice, lower prices and better-quality goods and services for consumers. I thank the noble Lord, Lord Mendelsohn, and the noble Baroness, Lady Burt, for graciously welcoming the markets Bill and look forward to working with them on its important provisions. The Government believe that consumers should have quick access to their data and reliable, transparent price comparison websites. The Bill would encourage quicker and easier switching of energy suppliers and other providers in regulated sectors. We want to simplify the whole process of competition investigation to reduce business burdens and improve consumer choice. The Bill will ensure that the CMA has the right and proportionate tools to do its job.

We have committed to a business impact target to reduce regulatory burdens by at least £10 billion. We have already taken measures to deliver more than £300 million in annual savings to hundreds of thousands of small businesses through changes to audit rules, and 800,000 self-employed people no longer have to comply with burdensome health and safety regulations.

The UK's system of independent economic regulation is a great asset for the economy and supports investment in UK infrastructure. This Bill will make the way they operate more straightforward for investors, consumers and businesses and will maintain focus on the core task of economic regulation.

The noble Lord, Lord Harrison, raised concerns about productivity. Last July, the Government published *Fixing the Foundations*, which sets out the Government's plan to tackle the UK's productivity gap—this long-term gap that we must do something about—and this Queen's Speech takes that forward.

I am also very glad to be able to tell the noble Lord that I sit next to Estonia in the Competitiveness Council, and I have already met Estonia's President to discuss the digital single market. We will be working on a trio of presidencies—the UK, Estonia and Bulgaria—to advance the single market and the digital single market, using the influence we hope to have during the EU presidency from 1 July 2017.

We are taking several steps to address late payment, as the noble Lord knows only too well. We are setting up the Small Business Commissioner. There will be new transparency reporting requirements regarding payment performance for larger companies and we are extending representative bodies' powers to challenge grossly unfair contract terms related to the scourge of late payment, which we have discussed on many occasions. In a related area, I thank my noble friend Lady Wheatcroft for her suggestion that larger exporters should help smaller exporters to move forward.

My noble friend Lord Naseby raised concerns about retailers having to wait for changes to rates. The Government will switch the indexation from RPI as the main measure of inflation to CPI in 2020. We believe that this strikes the right balance between fiscal consolidation, certainty for local authorities and support for business. It is in the pipeline. The Government will also seek to protect the high street from unfair competition from those retailers from beyond the EU selling over the internet and evading VAT.

We made a manifesto commitment to make the UK the best place in Europe to innovate, patent new ideas and set up and expand a business. A clear and fair intellectual property framework is crucial to achieving this. Our work now embraces education, regulatory change and enforcement to reduce piracy and IP theft. I was so glad to hear from the noble Lords, Lord Stevenson, Lord Watson and Lord Clement-Jones, regarding their support for this area. The digital economy Bill will not contain a backstop power to regulate platforms as, later this month, we expect an indication of where the EU is going with its own work in this area. Nor will the Bill contain measures specifically on streaming, although the changes to criminal penalties on online copyright infringement will obviously cross over and help with regulating that activity.

I was asked by one noble Lord whether I would support a pan-EU IP enforcement agency—he has seen our enforcement strategy and I thank him for quoting it. I believe that close work across Europe is absolutely vital in tackling IP infringement. We are doing a lot with a number of agencies and we will do more.

I am obviously delighted that today, we have brought forward the law commission Bill and that we have been able to do something about our frustration with the misalignment in criminal penalties. In the digital economy Bill, there will be a maximum 10-year prison sentence for online crime to equal that available for physical infringement. We are also allowing designers to mark their products with a web link for the first time.

The digital revolution is bringing economic and social change at a faster pace than we have ever seen before. To keep the UK at the front of the pack, we need a legal framework that supports connectivity for consumers, business and government and encourages consumer engagement. It can also help to support and fire up our creative industries, which the noble Baroness, Lady Bonham-Carter, described with such eloquence, as did my noble friend Lady Wheatcroft, and—in a different industry—the noble Lord, Lord Bichard, rightly talked about telemobile and its potential use in healthcare.

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By the end of the year, 95% of UK premises will have a superfast broadband connection; the digital economy Bill will give the final 5% a legal right to be connected on request, so no one will be left behind. The noble Lord, Lord Bichard, asked whether 10 mbps was enough—we will keep this under review. It will enable households to stream films in HD, watch catch-up TV, make a video call and browse online at the same time. Ofcom has advised that it is enough for a typical household today. However, the Bill will enable the Government to increase the minimum speed to meet future needs.

The noble Baroness, Lady Burt, asked about fibre. Fibre is obviously only one measure of connectivity, but the UK has the highest level of superfast coverage among EU countries. As of June 2015, more than a third—36%—of UK fixed broadband connections had speeds of 30 mbps or more, a much higher proportion than in France, Germany, Italy and Spain. The Bill will enable investment in fibre and other technologies through the reform of the Electronic Communications Code and planning reform. It will aid consumers in choosing the right products for their needs. The noble Lord, Lord Mendelsohn, seems to have rather a lot of problems with his broadband. I suppose that one good bit of news is that we will require providers to pay automatic compensation, so there will be a new incentive to maintain reliable, high-quality services. I am sure that we will discuss these provisions during the passage of the Bill.

I am passionate about enabling the digital revolution to provide improvements in this country. We are part of it in this country and the Bill will enable us to use government data to deliver better public services.

The UK must also do what we can to prevent any further cultural destruction. Our cultural protection Bill will make it clear that the UK views attacks on cultural property as unacceptable and will establish us as world leaders in the field of cultural protection. I particularly thank the noble Baroness, Lady Bonham-Carter, and the noble Earl, Lord Clancarty, along with many other noble Lords, who have given such strong support to the Bill and got it into this House today.

Today it has become clear yet again that the future of the BBC is a subject about which this House cares deeply. I have a long list of those who have spoken on that subject, starting with my noble friend Lord Fowler; we also heard from the noble Baronesses, Lady King of Bow, Lady Bonham-Carter and Lady Benjamin, the noble Earl, Lord Clancarty, and the noble Lords, Lord Stevenson, Lord Cashman, Lord Macdonald of Tradeston, Lord Clement-Jones, Lord Foster, Lord Watson of Invergowrie and Lord Addington. I apologise to anyone I have failed to mention. This will not be the first or last debate on the BBC.

We care deeply about the BBC and, as I set out last week, the Government believe that the BBC is one of our country's greatest institutions. We have listened carefully to the views of 190,000 members of the public and those put forward by experts, organisations and independent reviews. As a consequence, the Government have set out a new framework. Under this framework,

the BBC will focus on providing high-quality, distinctive content which informs, educates and entertains while continuing to serve all audiences.

A number of noble Lords questioned what a distinctive BBC would look like. The BBC is already distinctive in many ways, but the noble Lord, Lord Hall, director-general of BBC, has said that he wants to see, "a BBC that is more distinctive than ever – and clearly distinguishable from the market".

The Government support this and want to free up the BBC's outstanding creative talent to take creative risks and push the boundaries, making sure that its output as a whole is distinctive from the market. Audiences can only gain from this, by getting more choice and outstanding creative programming. Given all that the noble Baroness, Lady King of Bow, said, I should add that diversity is also a key priority.

There has been concern about the role of Ofcom in setting the regulatory framework for the BBC's distinctiveness record. Ofcom has a strong track record in media regulation, which has resulted in a diverse and creative media sector, and I look forward to further debate about the detail of that in the summer.

The noble Baroness, Lady Benjamin, also brought up children's programming, an issue that is close to the hearts of parents across the UK. Children's programming is a vital public service genre, which Ofcom has recently identified as being in decline. The Government have proposed a small contestable fund for public service content. The proposal is for a small-scale pilot for two or three years. The numbers are small relative to the £4 billion spent on the BBC. The specific detail about how it operates is important, which is why the Government will be consulting over the coming months on the most appropriate body to administer this fund and on the criteria for the scheme.

A further area noble Lords have drawn to our attention is the BBC's vital international role. The Government believe that this is incredibly important, which is why the White Paper sets out protection for World Service funding. I do not think there were any subtleties in the point raised by the noble Lord, Lord Stevenson, but obviously I will take a look at it. The BBC will also have enhanced editorial and financial independence, while being much more effective and accountable through stronger governance and regulation.

Noble Lords raised the important issue of appointments. We are strengthening the independence of the BBC by giving it a powerful new unitary board, with the BBC able to appoint the majority of board members, unlike the BBC Trust or the governors, which were 100% public appointments. Whether made by public appointment or by the BBC board, all appointments will be expected to follow public appointment best practice, including having independent members on selection panels; those appointments made by the Government will follow the OCPA code; and the BBC will need to follow best practice in seeking public appointments, for those appointments it makes. Peter Riddell, Commissioner for Public Appointments, has welcomed this approach and these principles.

The issue of the health check was also raised today. Given the speed of change within the sector and the fundamental reform of the governance and regulatory

structures that this charter will make, it would not be appropriate to wait for over a decade to review how the reforms are bedding in and whether any changes at all are needed. The charter will therefore make provision for a review to provide a health check, focusing on the governance and regulatory reforms at mid-term. The review will take into account the relevant findings and the most recent review of BBC performance that Ofcom will have published. There will also be greater scrutiny of the BBC's efficiency record and stronger transparency requirements.

None of the heated speculation about the fate of the BBC has materialised. Instead, these reforms will mean the BBC can continue to thrive, deliver for audiences and act as an engine for growth. The Government intend to publish a draft charter in the summer, and I look forward to ample opportunities for further informed discussion and debate about the future of the BBC following publication. It is very clear that this House will make a valuable contribution to that debate.

My noble friend Lord Fowler and the noble Baroness, Lady Bonham-Carter, asked about Channel 4. The Government are looking at a broad range of options to ensure that Channel 4 has a strong and secure future in what is a fast-changing and challenging broadcasting environment. No decisions have been taken, and the Secretary of State said last week that the Government hope to provide an update as soon as possible.

I turn to education. In our manifesto, we committed to ensuring that higher education provides the best possible value for money to students. We said we would introduce a new framework to recognise universities offering the highest teaching quality and to provide students with more data to help them choose the course that is right for them. We also committed to ensuring we are investing strategically in our research base, following the recommendations of Sir Paul Nurse's review. We will be doing all this through the Higher Education and Research Bill, while respecting institutional autonomy and academic freedom. The White Paper setting out our reforms has been welcomed by business groups, with the CBI commenting that,

"it's good that the White Paper proposals have taken on board the business view—building on and expanding the diversity of our higher education provision, which already is a brilliant asset".

We committed to a teaching excellence framework in our manifesto, which will drive up the standard of teaching. It will put clear, understandable information about outcomes in the hands of students so they know where teaching is best and what benefits they can expect to gain from their course. We will make it quicker and easier for new high-quality providers such as the New College of the Humanities or BPP to enter the market and award their own degrees, promoting a diverse and innovative higher education sector where students have more choice. To respond to the noble Earl, Lord Kinnoull, the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act 2015 made amendments to allow the linking of education data to labour market data, which will enable us to improve the robustness and coverage of progression following the student journey.

The UK research base is the most productive in the G7. Through our Bill, we will maximise value from our investment of over £6 billion a year in research and innovation. We will deliver on Sir Paul Nurse's recommendations to establish a single, strategic funding body which will allow the UK to lead the world in multidisciplinary research. Royal charters are not the most appropriate structure in the current research environment, where we are merging multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary funding, which is coming to the fore. However, we believe that it is important to retain the international prestige and standing that the research councils have, which is why they will operate with delegated autonomy and authority as part of UK research and innovation. I hope that that will be some comfort to the noble Lord, Lord Rees, whose views I was very pleased to consider.

Your Lordships have heard that we will bring a wide-ranging education Bill to provide education for all in a school-led system. The noble Baroness, Lady Sharp, mentioned the importance of collaboration in education, which is central to our academy reforms. Our aim is that all schools will be academies, and funded fairly, although as my noble friend Lord Nash said in opening, we have removed the blanket power to convert schools. I hope this is welcome to the noble Lord, Lord Griffiths.

Excellence that comes with more teacher freedom will spread to every community. We have found that collaborative multi-academy trusts both do better and make schools feel better supported. Most of these operate in local clusters very well connected to their communities.

I am grateful to the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Ely for his remarks about the importance of strong schools supporting weaker schools. We plan to support rural schools through the new national funding formula, and agree totally with his remarks about the importance of them collaborating together and with his comments about the vital importance of religious literacy. It is well known how good Church schools are at community cohesion. The SACREs continue to play an important role in supporting schools to teach high-quality RE. Local authorities have a statutory duty to support these activities and we do not have any plans to remove the duty.

Our work on academies will complement our programme to raise the quality of teachers, school leadership and governing bodies. I pay tribute to the establishment of the foundation for educational leadership mentioned by the right reverend Prelate.

I do not agree with the noble Lord, Lord Murphy, that the academy programme is against devolution. Devolution is at its heart a school-led system, devolving powers to our great teachers and leaders. We will consult in the coming months on the definitions and thresholds relating to underperforming local authorities so that there is agreement on where the need for action is clear.

The noble Baroness, Lady Massey, said that the school admissions procedures should be easy to understand. The White Paper stated clearly that that is our priority. The noble Baroness, Lady Tyler, asked about our plans on technical education. We are currently

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planning reforms that will ensure high-quality offers to young people that are simple and genuinely owned, understood and valued by employers. To deliver these reforms, the Government are working closely with an independent panel led by the noble Lord, Lord Sainsbury. We will publish the report and response shortly.

It has been an important debate on education; my noble friend Lord Nash will benefit from your Lordships' comments. The truth is that we lag internationally on education measures. These changes will help to close the major productivity gap between our economy and other economies.

Improved education links into our forthcoming life chances strategy. This will set out our new approach to tackling poverty and transforming the life chances of the most disadvantaged children and families. I believe that everyone should be able to realise their full potential.

The right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Durham talked about the Joseph Rowntree work. The Government are committed to tackling inequality. The report does not make enough of the national living wage, the higher personal allowance or the extension of free childcare to 30 hours. Our life chances strategy will tackle poverty and disadvantage.

The Children and Social Work Bill is a key part of the Government's ambition to make fundamental changes to the children's social care system. The Prime Minister has made his personal commitment clear: he is determined to improve the life chances of some of the most vulnerable children. The Bill will make sure that the state meets its obligations as corporate parent—a long-standing concept—to support those in its care. It will introduce a care leavers covenant to support those making the transition to adulthood; improve decisions about adoption and long-term care, and promote the educational achievement of children who have been adopted. It will also promote professional standards and public confidence in the vital profession of social work.

The noble Baroness, Lady Tyler, and the noble Earl, Lord Listowel, talked about the mental health of children in care. We are investing £1.4 billion into children's mental health services over the next five years. We recognise that children in care can be particularly at risk of mental health issues. Local areas are required to factor this into their plans. My noble friend Lord Nash would be delighted to meet with the noble Baroness, Lady Nicholson, to discuss her concerns about music. I welcome the support of the noble Lord, Lord Mendelsohn, in this area; forthcoming debates in this House will enable noble Lords to see and test the education and health departments' careful thinking on implementation.

The noble Lords, Lord Cashman and Lord Freyberg, and the noble Baroness, Lady Sharp, all raised the

question of arts, drama and the EBacc. I have an excellent response, and I think there might be merit in my writing to the noble Lords, setting out some of the detail on this very important subject, in which obviously, as the Intellectual Property Minister, I am extremely interested.

It is a pleasure to debate the vital issue of health and to continue to work towards a seven-day NHS in tune with the needs of Britain today. Our NHS is now treating more patients than ever before. Our Government are investing £10 billion to fund the NHS's plan up to 2020 to transform its services—more than the sum that was asked for. I agree with the noble Baroness, Lady Walmsley, that GPs do a brilliant job. Of course, compared to 2010 there are almost 1,300 more GPs working and training in the NHS. To support implementation of the forward view, which was a concern of the noble Lord, Lord Taverne, by 2020-21 the Government will increase funding for the NHS, as I have already said.

We will bring forward a Bill that will enable us to meet our manifesto commitment to recover up to £500 million from overseas visitors and migrants who use the NHS by the middle of this Parliament. The Government intend to publish their response to the recent public consultation on the extension of charging by this summer.

The noble Baroness, Lady Walmsley, talked about childhood obesity, and we will launch our strategy in the summer. It will look at everything that contributes to a child becoming overweight and obese. Of course, the soft drinks changes announced by the Chancellor were but one step in making important progress.

The noble Lord, Lord Foster, asked about FOBTs. The Government understand concerns about this problem. We are continuing to monitor the matter. The last review of the stakes and prizes of gaming was in 2013; we will set out our views on the next one as soon as we can.

This debate has highlighted the many steps that this Government have taken to strengthen business, accelerate digital change, enhance the life chances of our citizens and further improve our schools and universities. I thank all noble Lords for their contribution to the debate. Their valued expertise will be required in supporting a number of challenging ambitions set out by the Government and—I emphasise this point—in scrutinising a number of important Bills. I look forward to many more discussions inside and outside the House. This is a one-nation agenda from a Government who empower people through competition and choice and who put the vulnerable first.

Debate adjourned until Monday 23 May.

House adjourned at 5.52 pm.

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