

Monday
23 March 2020

Volume 674
No. 45



HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT

PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Monday 23 March 2020

HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

(FORMED BY THE RT HON. BORIS JOHNSON, MP, DECEMBER 2019)

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY, MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE AND MINISTER FOR THE UNION—
The Rt Hon. Boris Johnson, MP

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt Hon. Rishi Sunak, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS AND FIRST SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Dominic Raab, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt Hon. Priti Patel, MP

CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER AND MINISTER FOR THE CABINET OFFICE—The Rt Hon. Michael Gove, MP

LORD CHANCELLOR AND SECRETARY OF STATE FOR JUSTICE—The Rt Hon. Robert Buckland, QC, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE—The Rt Hon. Ben Wallace, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE—The Rt Hon. Matt Hancock, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY—The Rt Hon. Alok Sharma, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE, AND MINISTER FOR WOMEN AND EQUALITIES—The Rt Hon. Elizabeth Truss, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WORK AND PENSIONS—The Rt Hon. Dr Thérèse Coffey, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION—The Rt Hon. Gavin Williamson CBE, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS—The Rt Hon. George Eustice, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT—The Rt Hon. Robert Jenrick, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt Hon. Grant Shapps, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt Hon. Brandon Lewis CBE, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt Hon. Alister Jack, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt Hon. Simon Hart, MP

LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS AND LORD PRIVY SEAL—The Rt Hon. Baroness Evans of Bowes Park

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT—The Rt Hon. Oliver Dowden CBE, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT—The Rt Hon. Anne-Marie Trevelyan, MP

MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO—The Rt Hon. Amanda Milling, MP

DEPARTMENTS OF STATE AND MINISTERS

Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Alok Sharma, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. Kwasi Kwarteng, MP (Minister for Business, Energy and Clean Growth)

Sir Gerry Grimstone §

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Nadhim Zahawi, MP

Amanda Solloway, MP

Paul Scully, MP

Lord Callanan

Cabinet Office—

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY, MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE AND MINISTER FOR THE UNION—
The Rt Hon. Boris Johnson, MP

CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER AND MINISTER FOR THE CABINET OFFICE—The Rt Hon. Michael Gove, MP

MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO—The Rt Hon. Amanda Milling, MP

PAYMASTER GENERAL—The Rt Hon. Penny Mordaunt, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Chloe Smith, MP

Lord Agnew of Oulton §

Lord True CBE

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES—

Julia Lopez, MP

Johnny Mercer, MP (Minister for Defence People and Veterans) §

Defence—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Ben Wallace, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Jeremy Quin, MP (Minister for Defence Procurement)

Baroness Goldie DL

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

James Heappey, MP (Minister for the Armed Forces)

Johnny Mercer, MP (Minister for Defence People and Veterans) §

Digital, Culture, Media and Sport—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Oliver Dowden CBE, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Caroline Dinenage, MP (Minister for Digital and Culture)

The Rt Hon. John Whittingdale, MP (Minister for Media and Data)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Matt Warman, MP

Nigel Huddleston, MP §

Baroness Barran MBE

Education—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Gavin Williamson CBE, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Michelle Donelan, MP (Minister for Universities)

The Rt Hon. Nick Gibb, MP (Minister for School Standards)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Gillian Keegan, MP

Vicky Ford, MP

Baroness Berridge §

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. George Eustice, MP

MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park §

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Rebecca Pow, MP

Lord Gardiner of Kimble

Victoria Prentis, MP

Foreign and Commonwealth Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE AND FIRST SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Dominic Raab, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. James Cleverly, MP (Minister for the Middle East and North Africa) §

The Rt Hon. Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park (Minister for the Pacific and the Environment) §

Nigel Adams, MP (Minister for Asia) §

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon (Minister for South Asia and the Commonwealth) §

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

James Duddridge, MP §

Wendy Morton, MP §

Baroness Sugg CBE §

Health and Social Care—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Matt Hancock, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Edward Argar, MP (Minister for Health)

Helen Whately, MP (Minister for Care)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Jo Churchill, MP

Nadine Dorries, MP

Lord Bethell of Romford

Home Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Priti Patel, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. James Brokenshire, MP (Minister for Security)

Kit Malthouse, MP (Minister for Crime and Policing) §

Baroness Williams of Trafford (Minister for Countering Extremism)

Stephen Greenhalgh §

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Victoria Atkins, MP

Kevin Foster, MP

Chris Philp, MP §

Housing, Communities and Local Government—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Robert Jenrick, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Simon Clarke, MP

The Rt Hon. Christopher Pincher, MP (Minister for Housing)

Stephen Greenhalgh §

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Luke Hall, MP

International Development—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Anne-Marie Trevelyan, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. James Cleverly, MP (Minister for the Middle East and North Africa) §
 The Rt Hon. Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park (Minister for the Pacific and the Environment) §
 Nigel Adams, MP (Minister for Asia) §
 Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon (Minister for South Asia and the Commonwealth) §

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

James Duddridge, MP §
 Wendy Morton, MP §
 Baroness Sugg CBE §

International Trade—SECRETARY OF STATE AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE, AND MINISTER FOR WOMEN AND EQUALITIES—
The Rt Hon. Elizabeth Truss, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. Conor Burns, MP
 The Rt Hon. Greg Hands, MP
 Sir Gerry Grimstone §

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Graham Stuart, MP
 Kemi Badenoch, MP (Minister for Equalities) §
 Baroness Berridge (Minister for Women) §

Justice—

LORD CHANCELLOR AND SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Robert Buckland, QC, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Lucy Frazer, QC, MP
 Kit Malthouse, MP (Minister for Crime and Policing) §

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Alex Chalk, MP §
 Chris Philp, MP §

Law Officers—

ATTORNEY GENERAL—The Rt Hon. Suella Braverman, QC, MP

SOLICITOR GENERAL—The Rt Hon. Michael Ellis, QC, MP

ADVOCATE GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt Hon. Lord Keen of Elie, QC

Leader of the House of Commons—

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt Hon. Jacob Rees-Mogg, MP

Leader of the House of Lords—

LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. Baroness Evans of Bowes Park

DEPUTY LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt Hon. Earl Howe CBE

Northern Ireland Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Brandon Lewis CBE, MP

MINISTER OF STATE—Robin Walker, MP

Scotland Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Alister Jack, MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Douglas Ross, MP

Transport—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Grant Shapps, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Andrew Stephenson, MP
 Chris Heaton-Harris, MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Kelly Tolhurst, MP
 Rachel Maclean, MP
 Baroness Vere of Norbiton

Treasury—PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY, MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE AND MINISTER FOR THE UNION—
The Rt Hon. Boris Johnson, MP

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt Hon. Rishi Sunak, MP

CHIEF SECRETARY—The Rt Hon. Stephen Barclay, MP

FINANCIAL SECRETARY—The Rt Hon. Jesse Norman, MP

MINISTER OF STATE—Lord Agnew of Oulton DL §

ECONOMIC SECRETARY—John Glen, MP

EXCHEQUER SECRETARY—Kemi Badenoch, MP §

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—The Rt Hon. Mark Spencer, MP

LORDS COMMISSIONERS—

James Morris, MP
 Rebecca Harris, MP
 Iain Stewart, MP
 David Rutley, MP
 Maggie Throup, MP
 Michael Tomlinson, MP

ASSISTANT WHIPS—

Leo Docherty, MP
 David T. C. Davies, MP §
 Alex Chalk, MP §
 Tom Pursglove, MP
 Maria Caulfield, MP
 Nigel Huddleston, MP §
 Eddie Hughes, MP

UK Export Finance—

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE—The Rt Hon. Elizabeth Truss, MP

Wales Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Simon Hart, MP
 PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—David T. C. Davies, MP §

Work and Pensions—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Dr Thérèse Coffey, MP
 MINISTER OF STATE—Justin Tomlinson, MP (Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work)
 PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
 Mims Davies, MP
 Guy Opperman, MP
 Will Quince, MP
 Baroness Stedman-Scott OBE, DL

Her Majesty's Household—

LORD CHAMBERLAIN—The Rt Hon. Earl Peel GCVO, DL
 LORD STEWARD—The Earl of Dalhousie
 MASTER OF THE HORSE—Lord de Mauley
 TREASURER—Stuart Andrew, MP
 COMPTROLLER—Mike Freer, MP
 VICE-CHAMBERLAIN—Marcus Jones, MP
 CAPTAIN OF THE HONOURABLE CORPS OF GENTLEMEN-AT-ARMS—The Rt Hon. Lord Ashton of Hyde
 CAPTAIN OF THE QUEEN'S BODYGUARD OF THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD—Earl of Courtown
 BARONNESSES IN WAITING—
 Baroness Penn
 Baroness Scott of Bybrook OBE
 Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist
 LORDS IN WAITING—
 Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay
 Viscount Younger of Leckie

§ Members of the Government listed under more than one Department

SECOND CHURCH ESTATES COMMISSIONER, REPRESENTING THE CHURCH COMMISSIONERS—Andrew Selous, MP
 REPRESENTING THE SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE ON THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION—Bridget Phillipson, MP
 REPRESENTING THE SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE FOR THE INDEPENDENT PARLIAMENTARY STANDARDS AUTHORITY—Sir Charles Walker, MP
 REPRESENTING THE HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION—Pete Wishart, MP
 CHAIRMAN OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION—The Rt Hon. Sir Edward Leigh, MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

THE SPEAKER—The Rt Hon. Sir Lindsay Hoyle, MP

CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—The Rt Hon. Dame Eleanor Laing, MP

FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—The Rt Hon. Dame Rosie Winterton, MP

SECOND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Mr Nigel Evans, MP

PANEL OF CHAIRS—

Sir David Amess, Mr Clive Betts, Mr Peter Bone, Sir Graham Brady, Ms Karen Buck, Sir Christopher Chope, Geraint Davies, Philip Davies, The Rt Hon. Sir Roger Gale, The Rt Hon. Dame Cheryl Gillan, James Gray, Mr Philip Hollobone, Stewart Hosie, The Rt Hon. Sir George Howarth, The Rt Hon. Sir Edward Leigh, Steve McCabe, Siobhain McDonagh, The Rt Hon. Caroline Nokes, Ian Paisley, Mark Pritchard, Mr Laurence Robertson, Andrew Rosindell, Mr Virendra Sharma, Sir Gary Streeter, Graham Stringer, Sir Charles Walker

SECRETARY—Chris Stanton

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION—

The Rt Hon. The Speaker (Chairman), Ian Ailles (Director General of the House of Commons), Dr John Benger (Clerk of the House and Head of the House of Commons Service), Jane McCall (External Member), Dr Rima Makarem (External Member), The Rt Hon. Jacob Rees-Mogg, MP (Leader of the House), The Rt Hon. Valerie Vaz, MP, Sir Charles Walker, MP, The Rt Hon. Dame Rosie Winterton, MP, Pete Wishart, MP

SECRETARY OF THE COMMISSION—Marianne Cwynarski

ASSISTANT SECRETARY—Robert Cope

ADMINISTRATION ESTIMATE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE AND MEMBERS ESTIMATE AUDIT COMMITTEE—
Dr Rima Makarem (Chair), Sir Paul Beresford, MP, Mr Clive Betts, MP, Jane McCall, Bob Scruton

SECRETARY OF THE COMMITTEE—Hannah Bryce

COMMONS EXECUTIVE BOARD—

Mostaque Ahmed (Finance Director and Managing Director, Finance, Portfolio and Performance), Ian Ailles (Director General of the House of Commons), Dr John Benger (Clerk of the House and Head of the House of Commons Service), Isabel Coman (Managing Director, In-House Services & Estates), Sarah Davies (Clerk Assistant and Managing Director, Chamber and Committees), Mandy Eddolls (Managing Director, HR and Diversity), Eric Hepburn (Director of Security for Parliament), Tracey Jessup (Director of the Parliamentary Digital Service), Dr Edge Watchorn (Managing Director, Participation), Penny Young (Librarian and Managing Director, Research and Information)

SECRETARY OF THE BOARD—Rhiannon Hollis

SPEAKER'S SECRETARY—Helen Wood

SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—Saira Salimi

SPEAKER'S CHAPLAIN—The Rev. Canon Patricia Hillas

PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER FOR STANDARDS—Kathryn Stone

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 17 DECEMBER 2019]

SIXTY-NINTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES

VOLUME 674

SIXTH VOLUME OF SESSION 2019-2021

House of Commons

Monday 23 March 2020

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Speaker's Statement

Mr Speaker: Yesterday, 22 March, marked the third anniversary of the death of PC Keith Palmer, who died in the line of duty protecting this Parliament from terrorist attack. His sacrifice will not be forgotten. May I express, on behalf of the whole House, our sympathy with his family, friends and colleagues on this sad anniversary? We are grateful every day to the police service and emergency services in all parts of the country for all that they do.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

The Secretary of State was asked—

Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme

1. **David Simmonds** (Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner) (Con): What plans she has to mark the conclusion of the initial five-year term of the vulnerable persons relocation scheme. [901677]

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): All right hon. and hon. Members will also associate themselves with your remarks, Mr Speaker.

It is vital that we help those in greatest need, including those requiring medical treatment and support, which is why we are working closely with local authority and civil society organisations.

David Simmonds: Will my right hon. Friend consider making budgets available from the official development assistance funds to support refugees with their ambition to learn the English language after their resettlement to the UK?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend asks an important question and makes a very important point about the vulnerable persons relocation scheme. He will know, as will all Members, that our ODA budget is used exactly for that purpose, and the Government have a proud and considerable record of achievement when it comes to the vulnerable persons resettlement scheme.

Covid-19: Law and Order

2. **Nick Fletcher** (Don Valley) (Con): What steps her Department has taken to ensure that law and order is upheld during the covid-19 outbreak. [901678]

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): I know that, at this particular time of emergency, the public are incredibly anxious about the provision that is in place. However, I can assure my hon. Friend that my priority as Home Secretary is to ensure that the British people are kept safe, and of course that means working with our law enforcement agencies throughout this outbreak of covid-19.

Nick Fletcher: Is my right hon. Friend as confident as I am that the police will have the full support of the British public during this difficult time?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend asks an important question, and he is right. The police are doing an excellent job when it comes to providing public confidence, as well as protecting the public. This is an incredibly challenging

time for our entire country, but also for everyone who works in our emergency services and our public sector. I am here to back the police and make sure that we provide them with the resources and support that they need.

Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab): I associate the Opposition with the remarks about PC Palmer. I ask this question in place of my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Louise Haigh) in order that we can have social distancing in the Chamber.

The challenges for police in tackling covid-19 will be unprecedented. Will the Home Secretary consider relaxing regulations, as the NHS has done, to allow recently retired and leaving police officers to rejoin the force? Will she suspend the tax and pension disincentives to recently retired officers returning to work? Will she include special constables in the emergency volunteer scheme provisions of the Coronavirus Bill, with access to the compensation fund?

Priti Patel: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his questions. I can categorically say that work is already taking place across Government on suspending the tax and pensions disincentives—because they are disincentives at this time of crisis and national emergency. We want to make sure that retired police officers, for example, can come back and join the service. I have specifically asked Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and the taxman to look at that, and they are doing so right now. When it comes to looking at special constables in the emergency volunteer scheme, we are absolutely doing that too.

I would like to take this opportunity to give the House this reassurance on policing. I am working with the National Police Chiefs' Council every day—as, of course, is the Policing Minister—and engaging with Martin Hewitt, but also with all forces across the country. That is the right thing to do to understand the operational challenges they are facing and to make sure that our officers are supported, but also in terms of looking at all the ways we can make sure that we have flow in the service, bringing back people with the right kind of skills and capability to keep our country safe at this critical time.

Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): On behalf of the SNP, I also echo your powerful words in relation to PC Keith Palmer, Mr Speaker.

The weekend saw a new but worrying development, with significant numbers heading to isolated and scenic areas—the highlands and islands, for example—for purposes of social distancing, not appreciating that these areas are not well equipped to deal with new arrivals as coronavirus spreads. Will the Home Secretary send a clear message that this behaviour is not appropriate? Although we do not want it to become a police matter, is she satisfied that sufficient powers are available to stop this trend continuing, if required?

Priti Patel: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his question and his comments. He is absolutely right. He and the public have observed very clearly the type of behaviour that happened over the weekend. It is not acceptable. The Government could not have been clearer that, to save lives and protect the public during this public health emergency, it is right that we practise social distancing,

in the way that the Government have outlined and are reinforcing, and that the chief medical officer and many others are reinforcing day in and day out.

With that, we ask the public to take responsibility. Of course, there are enforcement measures now in place, through a statutory instrument that was put in place over the weekend, which covers places for social gatherings—pubs, clubs and cafés, for example. The public have been observing those measures, but the police, local authorities and trading standards are working together now to make sure that they are being put in place.

My final comment is that the guidance that is coming from the Government and Public Health England is there to protect and save lives. I urge everyone—all members of the British public—to follow that guidance and absolutely not to use this period for any other practices. It is important that we observe social distancing and do everything we can as individuals to be responsible in our conduct.

Mr Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con): Some of my constituents have asked for a police presence at supermarkets. Does the Home Secretary agree that, although there may be a case for increased patrols around supermarkets, the main answer is for the public to buy responsibly?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is unsurprising that we are seeing greater demand on our supermarkets right now. There are a number of important points here. It is not appropriate for police officers to be inside supermarkets. I and colleagues across Government have been working with the Security Industry Association, whose members provide guards at supermarkets to look after their functioning. Of course, the answer is that everyone should behave responsibly, and that we should ensure that we are kind to people and observe the right kind of social practices in supermarkets.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): May I, through the Home Secretary, thank the National Police Chiefs' Council and our senior police officers? We had an extremely reassuring brief from them at the Home Affairs Committee the other day, and I thank them for all they are doing. Will the Home Secretary say a little about ensuring that personal protective equipment is available not only to police forces across the country but to our Border Force? We had very worrying evidence from the ISU, the immigration service union, about actions its members are having to undertake without any equipment at all. Can she provide some reassurance?

Priti Patel: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right; the work of the police is crucial, and I am aware of the briefings that he and others have received. PPE is vital for all frontline workers. There is a cross-Government effort taking place, yes for Border Force—I spend every day with Border Force officials on my team—but also for police officers. Over the weekend, I spoke to individual chief constables to understand the challenges on PPE. Of course, not all PPE is the same; it depends on the service someone is working in, so we are ensuring that the right type of PPE goes to the frontline for the type of worker. Where there have been issues, not with supply but with distribution, we are working across Government to unblock them.

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con): I commend Dorset police and all its officers, who are doing a fantastic job down in Dorset. Unfortunately, with South Dorset being the most attractive seat in the House of Commons, thousands disobeyed the Government's guidelines and descended on Dorset's coastlines, parks and everywhere else, causing local residents to get extremely cross. Can my right hon. Friend reassure the House and remind the public that they have to stay at home and not mix in such huge numbers?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Notwithstanding the beauty of his constituency and that part of the country, he makes a very important point. The Government guidance on social distancing, self-isolation and staying at home is critical for public health, protecting lives and saving lives. I urge all members of the public to follow that advice and guidance.

Stephen Timms (East Ham) (Lab): A large number of law-abiding workers in my constituency have leave to remain but no recourse to public funds. Those who need to self-isolate will do so only if they have support, along with others. What plans does the Home Secretary have for that particular group during the current crisis?

Priti Patel: The right hon. Gentleman makes a very important point. We are already working on a range of measures across Government and at pace, and rightly so; obviously, access to public services such as the NHS, and to support systems, is vital. Working across Government means working with the Department for Work and Pensions. He will be familiar with many of the measures that are being put in place and with those that are being looked at for particular groups, in the way that he mentioned.

Custody Suites

3. **Damien Moore** (Southport) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to ensure that custody suites are accessible to police officers. [901679]

The Minister for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): My hon. Friend has been a persistent correspondent with the Home Office on this matter, but, as he hopefully knows, the provision of custody suites is an operational decision for chief officers and police and crime commissioners, who best understand the needs of their local communities. The Government are committed to supporting the police in their vital work protecting the public and keeping us safe by recruiting 20,000 officers over the next three years and delivering the biggest funding increase in a decade, to ensure that police officers have the resources they need.

Damien Moore: Can my hon. Friend confirm that police forces will continue to arrest suspects throughout the covid-19 outbreak?

Kit Malthouse: I can confirm that. My hon. Friend is correct in his supposition that there will be extra burdens on the police, but the Home Secretary and I are in close contact with forces across the country, and we are confident of their ability to continue to manage crime in the way they have been doing.

Knife Crime

4. **Rob Butler** (Aylesbury) (Con): What plans her Department has to tackle knife crime. [R] [901680]

10. **Stuart Anderson** (Wolverhampton South West) (Con): What plans her Department has to reduce knife crime in Wolverhampton. [901688]

The Minister for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): Knife crime is a scourge on our society that leaves a trail of grief, anger and despair across entire communities, costing lives and leaving people afraid. That is why the Home Secretary has increased police funding by more than £1 billion this year, is giving the police more powers to stop and search known offenders, has started recruiting 20,000 more police officers, and is ensuring that those who carry a knife are locked up for longer. We will do everything in our power to end these shocking acts of violence and this senseless loss of life.

Rob Butler: Aylesbury young offenders institution in my constituency has a large number of young men aged between 18 and 21 who have been convicted of very serious offences, many of them involving knives, yet many young teenagers still believe—wrongly—that they need to carry a knife for their protection. What message does my hon. Friend have for them?

Kit Malthouse: My hon. Friend is quite right to raise this appalling issue which, notwithstanding the current crisis, has dogged this country. As somebody who, in my role at City Hall in London 10 years ago, had to fight a similar upsurge in knife crime, I know he is right that we need to send the right message to young people. It is statistically true that someone is much more likely to be stabbed or injured if they are carrying a knife than if they are not. That is a basic truth that we need to communicate to young people.

Stuart Anderson: What plans does my hon. Friend have to invest even more in youth facilities based in local communities like the city of Wolverhampton, given the strong link between youth knife crime and a lack of youth services?

Kit Malthouse: My hon. Friend is quite right to point out that alongside police enforcement, we need to do longer-term intervention work with young people of all ages to turn them away from a life of violence and crime. He will be pleased to know that the Government are making significant investments, not least through the youth investment fund, to ensure that that is the case. We want to make sure that all young people across the country have access to good, rigorous, disciplined, socialised activities that teach them the way of truth and light.

Settled Status for EU Citizens: Internet Access

5. **Neale Hanvey** (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath) (Ind): What support her Department is making available to EU citizens who are unable to use the internet to apply for settled status to continue living in the UK. [901681]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Kevin Foster): We are committed to giving all EU citizens living in the UK the certainty they need. Last week, I announced that 3 million people have

been granted status under the European settlement scheme. We have made available a further £8 million of funding to help vulnerable EU citizens apply. For those who are unable to access the support mechanisms in place, including assisted digital, a paper application form will be made available.

Neale Hanvey: I have met a number of constituents and organisations who are providing vital support to vulnerable people applying for EU settled status. Some of the stories they have shared about the difficulties faced by those challenged by an internet-based system, such as people with dementia, are harrowing. While the news that funding to support those groups has been extended until this June is welcome, with a bidding process until June 2021, many vulnerable people are currently only able to secure pre-settled status. They will be required to apply again for settled status within five years. Where should those individuals turn when the funding to support them is cut off?

Kevin Foster: As the hon. Gentleman reflected, we are making funding available, and the current grant-funded organisations will continue until the new funding comes in, one of which is Fife Migrants Forum in his constituency. As with any Member, I invite him, once the current situation is over, to visit the team in Liverpool who are dealing with the European settlement scheme to see at first hand the lengths to which they go to ensure that everyone gets the status they are entitled to.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): On behalf of Opposition Members, I offer my profound sympathy to the families of the 289 persons who have died in this unheard-of pandemic.

On the settlement scheme, we obviously welcome the fact that 3 million persons have been successfully processed, but Ministers will be aware that the number of rejections is on a rising curve, with 300 last month. That is increasingly because of problems with documentation. Last week, the House debated the Windrush lessons-learned review and one of the problems at that time was documentation. Is it not time that the Government ended the uncertainty hanging over the heads of EU citizens and guaranteed the rights of EU citizens in the UK?

Kevin Foster: A very small number has been rejected—just 300 out of over 3 million applications—and the core reason for rejection, for saying no to someone, is criminality. Where there are eligibility issues, people can make a free re-application but the evidence levels are quite basic. People must prove their identity; they must prove that they have residence in the UK, particularly for pre-settled status; and they are subject to the eligibility and suitability checks around criminality. Actually, the system is working very well, and again, I extend an invitation to the right hon. Lady to come to meet the team and see at first hand the work that they are doing and why this has been such a success. It is the biggest documentation of immigration status in history and it is going well.

County Lines Drugs Gangs

6. **Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to dismantle the operations of county lines drugs gangs. [901682]

11. **Royston Smith** (Southampton, Itchen) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to dismantle the operations of county lines drugs gangs. [901689]

12. **James Cartlidge** (South Suffolk) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to dismantle the operations of county lines drugs gangs. [901690]

18. **Andrew Jones** (Harrogate and Knaresborough) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to dismantle the operations of county lines drugs gangs. [901696]

19. **Sally-Ann Hart** (Hastings and Rye) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to dismantle the operations of county lines drugs gangs. [901697]

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): We will not tolerate the abhorrent gangs that are terrorising our towns and exploiting our children, when it comes to county lines drugs gangs, and we have committed £25 million of targeted investment to boost law enforcement to roll up these drug lines.

Robert Courts: Does my right hon. Friend think that the covid-19 outbreak might lead to an increase in the number of county lines gangs, and will she take steps to address that?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend is right about the risks associated with drug line gangs and covid-19. We are working with the police on this, because they are on the frontline and they monitor everything that goes on with gangs. They will not desist from the work that they are doing, and it is important that we pursue this work throughout the crisis to give the public confidence and provide reassurance that we are determined to roll up these drug gangs.

Royston Smith: We hear plenty about county lines networks but not so much about the customers. It is simply not acceptable for people to pop down to Waitrose on a Saturday afternoon and buy their quinoa and then invite their friends round on a Saturday evening for some recreational cannabis. Will my right hon. Friend update the House on what she is doing to try to disrupt the drugs trade—not just those who supply drugs, but those who use them?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The use of drugs is simply unacceptable and the fact of the matter is that those who misuse and take drugs should also be aware of the consequences of their actions: children around the country are being trafficked and abused and used by drugs gangs to fuel people's drug addictions. A great deal of work is taking place across Government on this, including by Dame Carol Black, who did a review of drugs and has provided further evidence on what other measures the Government can bring in, in addition to law enforcement measures.

James Cartlidge: I welcome my right hon. Friend's robust approach to this, but I echo the concerns of my hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Robert Courts). The concern is that with schools closed, children will have more time on their hands and that is a vulnerability. Will she assure us that what we do to encourage online activities and so on for them can be looked at across Departments, so that we reduce the likelihood of this happening?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is important that we recognise the nature of the vulnerability of young people and children. It is a fact that, throughout this crisis, children are not at school. They could therefore become prey to gangs and are, equally, more vulnerable, so we are working with the police to make sure that greater work takes place on protecting young people. We are doing the same with local authorities, but the public need to do much more as well. It is a collective duty of the state to protect our children and make sure that they are safeguarded. Right now across Government, with covid-19 taking place, we are absolutely determined to make sure that we safeguard children, protect vulnerable children and ensure that more kids do not become vulnerable to county lines drugs gangs.

Andrew Jones: It is very good to hear about the Government's robust approach to tackling county lines. The issue of dealing around schools, including even at school gates, has been raised with me by anxious teachers and parents over the past year. Will my right hon. Friend ensure that when schools reopen, her focus will be on making sure that they do so safely for all those attending?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. This is about protecting children, including vulnerable children, but it is also about safeguarding. Everyone has a duty and a responsibility when it comes to safeguarding children. When schools finally reopen, they will play a very important role in making sure that children are protected, that they get back into education and on a stable footing, and that they will not be susceptible and vulnerable to these types of criminal activities.

Sally-Ann Hart: Hastings and Rye has serious issues regarding county lines, with drug dealers deliberately targeting young and other vulnerable people. Sussex police is working hard with local partners to combat drug dealers, but it needs the support of the justice system, imposing strong deterrent sentences to ensure zero tolerance of drug gangs, particularly during the coronavirus crisis. What steps is my right hon. Friend taking to ensure that the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice are working together to pursue a zero-tolerance policy for drug gangs?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Through the crime and justice Cabinet Committee that we now have, we look at this from an end-to-end perspective. The Home Office has put in £25 million specifically to target county lines drugs gangs and to roll up county lines. She has highlighted a really important point about the role of the criminal justice system in sentencing and deterrence, and about how we should work together to use intelligence to go after the gang leaders and cut the head off the snake—the people who are fuelling this awful, abhorrent crime.

Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab): County lines are one aspect of the threat posed by serious and organised crime, in respect of which the coronavirus crisis presents hugely difficult challenges. I should be grateful if the Home Secretary passed my thanks on to the Minister for Security for the discussions that I have had with him on measures on warrants, but can she set out what other measures she will take to ensure that our

police can deal with urgent issues, including their having the appropriate protective equipment? Does she agree that we need to ensure that this period in which we will be in emergency measures is not exploited by those who wish us harm?

Priti Patel: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to raise those matters. I am aware of the discussions that have taken place between him and the Security Minister about the legislation that will be discussed this afternoon on the Floor of the House. He is absolutely right—I restate the points that I made about PPE, in particular, to protect frontline workers.

The hon. Gentleman will know that there are various measures in the Bill on the appointment of temporary judicial commissioners, as well as on biometric data and information—the essential steps that we have to take to make sure that we protect our people, our communities and our country. We cannot have any gaps or loopholes that would allow people who want to come in and do us harm to come in and do us harm right now.

The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right about our collective focus, and I thank him and the Opposition Front-Bench team for the way in which they are working with us to make sure that we have those protective measures, because the duty of Government during this epidemic and crisis is to make sure that we have responsible measures in place to protect our country and our people.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I am grateful to the Home Secretary for that answer. Of course, the police are going to be under pressure in the months ahead, and they deserve all our support. We should all say that any abuse directed towards the police is totally and utterly unacceptable. However, there will be people carrying out the role of police officers in the months ahead. Thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant), the police have the protection of the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018, allowing courts to take into account the fact that they were on duty when the abuse occurred. Can we look at extending that measure to those who are carrying out the role of police officers in the months ahead?

Priti Patel: The hon. Gentleman makes a very important point. I have put on the record in the House my views about the appalling abuse to which our police officers and emergency workers are subject. That is simply unacceptable, and my intention, as he will know from the police powers and protections Bill, is to introduce the right legislation to bring in enhanced powers and measures in the criminal justice system to make sure that the right kinds of penalties are put in place.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman. At this particular time, when there are additional pressures and strains on public workers—our public sector, our emergency workers and our police officers—we should do everything possible, and I will absolutely look into that.

Covid-19: English Language Testing

7. **Caroline Ansell (Eastbourne) (Con):** What plans she has to review the English language testing requirement for student visas as a result of the closure of overseas language test centres in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

[901683]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Kevin Foster): These are extraordinary times, and we are working hard to ensure that no foreign students are penalised unfairly by these events. We recognise the concerns of the education sector about the impact of covid-19, and we are working with it to mitigate the adverse consequences. We are also working closely with secure English language test providers to ensure that there is sufficient capacity for all those who need to take tests while prioritising the health and safety of staff and applicants.

Caroline Ansell: I thank the Minister for his answer. Clearly my question was tabled before we hit the mission-critical phase in our actions to combat the virus, and of course it feels rather discordant to talk today about international travel when we are talking self-isolation and social distancing. But below that there is another really important message—that we will come through this, we will rally and we will rebuild. So can the Minister say what measures are being taken to expedite the process for international students coming to our universities in particular, because it is so vital in towns such as Eastbourne and across the country?

Kevin Foster: I recognise the comments my hon. Friend makes, and as she says, at the moment it seems strange to be talking about international travel when we are rightly advising against all non-essential travel within the United Kingdom, let alone abroad. We are very clear that no one will have a negative outcome through the immigration system due to a circumstance that was beyond their control. We have already done a block extension of visas for Chinese nationals, and we are looking at further measures that we can take—for example, allowing in-country switching that we would not normally allow—to ensure that no one is penalised because they followed the advice and did what they could to protect our NHS and save lives.

Police Disciplinary Procedures

8. **Christian Matheson** (City of Chester) (Lab): What plans she has to review police disciplinary procedures. [901684]

The Minister for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): The vast majority of police officers fulfil their duties to a very high standard, but where they fall short, it is only right that they are held to account. In February this year, the Government overhauled the police complaints and disciplinary procedures, introducing reforms to make the systems more accountable, proportionate and efficient.

Christian Matheson: I was disappointed to learn that two Metropolitan police officers are facing potential disciplinary action for crashing their car while in hot pursuit of an active terrorist on the rampage. I know that the Minister cannot talk about individual cases, but is he satisfied that all circumstances are taken into account before a police officer faces suspension? If he meets the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police any time soon, will he pass on to her my personal thanks to every single one of the police officers involved in that operation, including those who are facing disciplinary sanction?

Kit Malthouse: I am certainly willing to pass on the hon. Gentleman's good wishes to the men and women of the Metropolitan Police Service, who we are in touch with daily, if not several times a day at the moment. He is right that I cannot talk specifically about that particular case, but he can be confident that in that case, and in all cases, the Independent Office for Police Conduct, which will conduct the investigation, is well aware of its duty to take into account all the circumstances.

Covid-19: Screening for UK Entry

9. **Andrew Rosindell** (Romford) (Con): If she will take steps to ensure that people entering the UK are screened for covid-19 symptoms. [901687]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Chris Philp): We are facing an unprecedented threat from covid-19. In response to that, an enhanced monitoring process was implemented by Public Health England during the containment phase to monitor direct flights and identify any ill passengers from affected countries. However, the UK Government do not intend to introduce port screening measures such as temperature checks, as the scientific advice suggests that they simply do not work.

Andrew Rosindell: I thank the Minister for his reply, but can he tell us what steps he is taking to ensure that British citizens returning from high-risk countries are fully aware of the need to self-isolate on their return? Will he also promise that any advice that he gives is shared with the Governments of the devolved Parliaments and Assemblies, and also the territories and dependencies? They all need advice, support and help during this very difficult time for our country.

Chris Philp: I thank my hon. Friend for that question, and he raises an extremely good and important point, as always. All aircraft flying into the United Kingdom will have an announcement on the symptoms and what to do if any passengers have those symptoms. In the UK, that has been enforced by a notice to airmen filed with the Civil Aviation Authority. In addition, the Government have made sure there are posters and leaflets containing public health information in all international airports, ports and international train stations. The need to self-isolate when people have those symptoms is critical, and I will take up his suggestion and make sure that is propagated to all the other Administrations to which he referred.

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): Will the Minister and the Home Secretary pass on huge thanks to the Home Office staff, the Border Force staff and the police, who are working immensely hard on the response to the coronavirus? Given that other countries have mandatory quarantines in place for people arriving and that the Government in this country withdrew on 13 March the previous advice for travellers coming from high-risk countries such as Italy to self-isolate, does the Minister accept that it is hard to understand why there is no guidance on self-isolation on a precautionary basis for travellers coming from high-risk countries? Will he and Home Secretary look at that issue again? Will they also work with the Home Affairs Committee to ensure that they can attend remote meetings to answer our questions during this crisis?

Chris Philp: First, may I echo the right hon. Lady's comments about the fantastic work being done by civil servants and staff of various Executive agencies? As she has said, they are doing an incredible job in very difficult circumstances. On mandatory self-isolation for people returning from high-risk countries, she is right to say that the advice changed. However, let me reassure her by saying that it is under continual and ongoing scientific evaluation. The Home Secretary and I have both asked recently for refreshed scientific advice, and that is being monitored almost daily. If the scientific advice says that the safety of our country requires a further change in policy, we will certainly do that in response.

On the right hon. Lady's question about enabling remote hearings for her Select Committee, I am sure that civil servants, officials and Ministers at the Home Office will do exactly that if required, to make sure that her Committee can function and discharge its scrutinising responsibilities, regardless of our current circumstances.

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): In previous Home Office questions, I have asked for reassurances from the Home Secretary that those who enter or seek to enter illegally from France are immediately returned, but I have not received that absolute reassurance. As we have a pandemic going on, it is even more important that people who seek to enter illegally are first apprehended, and are then returned, tested and, above all, put into isolation. Can the Minister reassure me that that is going on?

Chris Philp: Significant resources are being put into protecting the short straits, particularly the crossing in the direction of Dover. Where people make that crossing clandestinely, they are met by the relevant officials, particularly from Border Force and from immigration enforcement. Of course, one of the screening checks now being done relates to their health, to make sure that if they need to be isolated to avoid the disease being transmitted onwards, that happens. On returns, we are currently bound by the Dublin regulations, but once we exit the transition period, we will not be and there will be an opportunity for us to form our own policy in this important area.

Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): Overwhelmingly, people entering the UK in Orkney and Shetland do so because they are coming off cruise ships. That traffic is currently suspended, as a result of the businesses themselves suspending it. Will the Minister reassure me that if these businesses were to try to reinstate cruise ship business before it was safe to do so, steps would be taken to prevent their doing it?

Chris Philp: Let me reassure the right hon. Gentleman that, as I said previously, the scientific advice is at the forefront of the Government's thinking and there is no question at all of allowing any unsafe operating practice—by cruise ship operators or anyone else. The Government will not contemplate allowing this business to happen until the scientific advice categorically states that it is safe.

Crime Hotspots

13. **Tom Hunt** (Ipswich) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to reduce burglary and theft in crime hotspots. [901691]

17. **Edward Timpson** (Eddisbury) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to reduce burglary and theft in crime hotspots. [901695]

The Minister for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): Burglary and theft are a blight on all members of our community, which is why this Government are committed to reducing burglary and other neighbourhood crimes. We recently launched the £25 million safer streets fund to protect areas that are disproportionately affected by burglary and theft and to invest in well-evidenced crime prevention measures. A reduction in burglary, along with other neighbourhood crimes, will form one of the many outcomes we will be putting forward to the police that we expect to see as part of the recruitment of 20,000 police officers.

Tom Hunt: As my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will know following her recent visit to Ipswich, it has seen a number of burglaries in our town centre recently. These break-ins have been targeted at stores in specific parts of the town, including important local businesses like Willy's & Milly's café and Emilia Hair & Beauty Studio. Given that Suffolk constabulary's resources are stretched and Suffolk urgently needs a review of the police funding formula, what steps is the Minister taking to ensure that the police in Ipswich have every resource they need to thoroughly investigate each burglary, bring the perpetrators to justice and prevent more such serious crimes from happening in the future, especially in the light of the additional pressures that tackling covid-19 will place upon the local force in Suffolk?

Kit Malthouse: Ipswich has rarely had a champion quite as robust as my hon. Friend, and he is right to be as persistent as he is in the defence of his town. I urge Suffolk constabulary, or the police and crime commissioner who represents Ipswich, to make a bid to the safer streets fund. Lots of things can be done to target-harden in particular areas where there are burglary hotspots. My hon. Friend is aware that we have given Suffolk constabulary another £9.2 million this year to start the recruitment of police officers, and of course there will be more to come in the years that follow, but he is right to keep up the pressure and I hope he will see results soon.

Edward Timpson: In Cheshire, the police rural crime unit recently reported having dealt with 170 crimes, including burglaries and thefts, in three months. Will my hon. Friend guarantee that tackling such crimes will remain a key focus for his Department, and that the extra resources being made available will help to keep specialist police officers out there to protect the Eddisbury countryside and its farms and businesses into the future?

Kit Malthouse: I offer my hon. Friend a belated welcome back from his extended recess; it is nice to see him in his place. He is right to raise the issue of rural crime. As somebody who represents 220 beautiful square miles of rolling Hampshire down land, I am well aware of the problems that rural communities face with crime. My hon. Friend will understand that it is an operational matter for the chief constable in his area to decide where and how his police officers are deployed, but I know that some of the more rural forces are working hard to maintain their capacity in respect of that crime type. As he will know, there is a National Rural Crime Network, which is looking at what more can be done.

Shop Workers: Protection from Violence

14. **Huw Merriman** (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): What recent steps her Department has taken to protect shop workers and owners from violence and crime. [901692]

The Minister for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): We are committed to driving down crime and violence in all its forms, which is why, to strengthen our understanding of the scale of violence and abuse towards shop staff, we launched a call for evidence. The findings are supposed to be published this month, and it is still my ambition to do so, but we will see what happens given the current circumstances. We will continue to work closely with the police, industry and other partners to ensure a robust collective response.

Huw Merriman: Many colleagues from all parties will share the concern that the criminal justice system can be too slow and too lenient in dealing with those who cause violence against shop workers and owners. Right now, will the Minister share his expressions of solidarity with all the shop owners and workers who are putting themselves on the frontline to help those in our community to be fed and looked after? Can we send a message out from the House that we expect those people to be treated not just in line with criminal standards, but with respect and gratitude?

Kit Malthouse: I wholeheartedly endorse my hon. Friend's remarks. He is right that when we emerge from the crisis that is engulfing our country, there will be a general reassessment of who is important in this country and what a "key worker" means. He is right that those on the frontline, delivering, stacking shelves and taking money at tills, are as much part of the national effort to beat this coronavirus as a police officer or NHS worker, and we thank them for it.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): On the question of protecting shop workers and owners, as was referred to earlier, we have all seen the unfortunate recent scenes of disorder in supermarkets when persons attempt to stockpile in response to the coronavirus. We have seen shelves swept clean just hours after the shops open, the apparent shortages of very basic products such as paracetamol, and the elderly being unable to purchase their basic needs. A number of measures are being taken to deal with the situation, but we note that even when supermarkets tried to set aside hours at the beginning of the day for the frail, elderly and NHS workers, others just barged them aside. No one on the Opposition Benches wants to see police officers in supermarkets, but if the situation remains unmanageable, will the Minister consider talking to the shops, the supermarket owners and their security officers to see whether patrols by police community support officers in the vicinity of some of the larger supermarkets might play a role?

Kit Malthouse: The right hon. Lady is right to raise this issue. I hope to reassure her that we are in very close contact both with the police about the patterns of behaviour they are seeing, and with representatives from the food industry, particularly from the supermarkets, which I know are meeting regularly with the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Environment,

Food and Rural Affairs to monitor the situation. We hope and believe that, over the next few days, things will settle down. Our food and supply chains in supermarkets are extremely strong, and we are reassured by those companies that they can fulfil the demand as it comes, but she is right to hold us to the challenge of monitoring the situation. If we need to take further steps, obviously we will. As the Home Secretary said, we are also talking closely with the Security Industry Association about the welfare and capability of its staff in these circumstances. We want to ensure that this is managed proportionately and calmly, but we are keeping an eye on it.

Topical Questions

T1. [901702] **Theo Clarke** (Stafford) (Con): If she will make a statement on her departmental responsibilities.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): This country is facing its greatest challenge since the second world war. The covid-19 pandemic requires us to change our way of life for many months to come and, throughout this uncertainty, nothing has made us as a nation prouder than the extraordinary humanity and dedication of our police officers, firefighters and, of course, our NHS workers and key workers. This battle against coronavirus is being fought in our hospitals and will be won through the efforts of the public, who need to stay at home to protect the NHS and to save lives. On behalf of the Government and the country, may I say that, although we are all facing this unprecedented challenge, we will come through it together? There is a role for compassion and commitment to ensure that we all work together at this challenging time.

Theo Clarke: Over the weekend, I spoke both to my local resilience forum and Staffordshire police, who raised various concerns with me about access to personal protective equipment and lack of personnel if people are off with self-isolation. What conversations is my right hon. Friend having with police forces across the country to ensure that they have the resources that they need for dealing with covid-19?

Priti Patel: I have daily conversations across the entire policing network across the country with regard to the resources that they need at this incredibly challenging time. The Government are, of course, working closely with all partners, including the emergency services, on a range of issues, including suitable PPE and the development of suitable testing. Those are the things that our police officers and police chiefs are asking for right now, and we are working with them to co-ordinate supplies and the policing response.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): I wish to return to the subject of that category of person under immigration legislation who has no recourse to public funds. Because of the coronavirus epidemic and the consequent shutdown of large parts of the economy, these persons will not be able to work. We welcome the help for workers through bank loans and the benefit system that the Government have brought in, but the category of person to which I refer are not entitled legally to benefits of any kind. I note that the Home Secretary is talking to the Department for Work and Pensions about this matter, but when can she give

some assurance to people who are literally facing destitution that this matter will be resolved and that there will be a way of offering them some measure of financial support?

Priti Patel: Let me repeat to the right hon. Lady the comment that I made earlier. This is work that is taking place across Government, and not just in the Home Office. We are engaging with the Treasury and with the DWP. It is vital that, at this particular stage and given the really significant challenge that our country finds itself facing, we provide resources and support for people at all levels, and that is something that the entire Government are committed to do. I would be very happy to come back to her on this specific point in due course.

T2. [901703] **Alexander Stafford** (Rother Valley) (Con): In the light of the panic buying, profiteering and rising tensions occurring at some shops across the country, what measures is my right hon. Friend taking to ensure that sufficient security and public safety personnel are present to keep such premises open and to maintain the availability of essential goods to all, especially to the elderly, vulnerable and our much-valued NHS workers?

The Minister for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): My hon. Friend is right to raise an issue that has been of concern in the media and across the country. As I said earlier, we are talking to the Security Industry Association about what more it can do, and we are in close touch with, in particular, the supermarkets as to how they are administering and making sure that those who need to get resources can do so. We are monitoring the situation very closely with our colleagues in the police, but, as I say, we hope and believe that, in the next few days, the good sense of the British public will reassert itself and everyone will start to behave appropriately.

Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): May I welcome the fact that no recourse to public funds rules appear to be being looked at just now, but there is a host of other immigration and asylum policies, which surely also need urgent revision to deal with the coronavirus crisis, of which immigration detention, requirements to report or attend appointments and interviews, and shared asylum accommodation are just three. Are all of these issues being looked at urgently and could we simply receive a comprehensive update from the Home Office in early course?

Priti Patel: The answer is yes.

T3. [901704] **Steve Double** (St Austell and Newquay) (Con): One of the things that the current crisis is teaching us is that many people who we considered to be low-skilled are actually pretty crucial to the smooth running of our country—and are, in fact, recognised as key workers. Once we are through this situation, will my right hon. Friend consider reviewing our points-based immigration system to reflect the things that we have learnt during this time?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend makes a very important point. We have never said that people at lower skill levels are unimportant. As we know, throughout this crisis everybody is making a tremendous contribution and effort to keep all services functioning and running, while at the same time ensuring care and compassion

for workers in service provision that is essential right now. I have already committed to keeping all aspects of the points-based immigration system under review. The important thing about that system is that we will ensure that points are tradeable based on skills and labour market need across particular sectors.

Bill Esterson (Sefton Central) (Lab): I am afraid that the lack of sense displayed by some parts of the British public is putting retail workers under enormous pressure and threat. Retail workers often cannot be 2 metres apart from other people, especially at checkouts. This point was brought home to me by a constituent who witnessed somebody being spat on for refusing to allow bulk buying. Will the Minister please revisit what he and the Home Secretary have already said about the need to protect retail workers? We are going to need them to continue at work; we cannot afford for them to become sick.

Kit Malthouse: The hon. Gentleman is right to raise this issue once again. As I said earlier, the protection of retail workers is one of the uppermost issues in our mind. I have noticed a number of retailers who are taking protective measures—for example, measuring out the distance and putting tape on the floor to indicate where people should stand in order to stay 2 metres away from a retail worker. However, the hon. Gentleman is right that action needs to be taken when there are serious offences. As far as I can see, the incident that he mentioned is a crime that should be reported to the police and actioned accordingly.

T4. [901705] **Ben Bradley** (Mansfield) (Con): The fire services are vital for our safety. My right hon. Friend knows that they do far more than running into burning buildings to save people, including with regard to wider public safety and public health measures—even more important now, perhaps, than usual. What conversations has she had with the fire services about what role they might play in supporting our efforts to tackle coronavirus, and will she ensure that they have all the resources they need for this particular crisis and for the future?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Today we have spoken clearly about policing and the daily calls we have with the police, but there is a similar system with the fire service, which is providing incredible work and support, particularly for vulnerable communities across the country. We should all pay tribute to the fire services; their work is truly remarkable. They are an integral feature of the local resilience forums that cover all our constituencies, and we are in close contact with them to ensure that they are getting the equipment, support and resources they need throughout this crisis.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): Foreign national doctors and medical students at Morriston Hospital in Swansea are very concerned about their immigration status. They face significant bills if they want to renew their visas now, and obviously want an expedited process. Would it not simply make sense for the Government to announce as swiftly as possible that they will waive all fees for such doctors and medical trainees, that they will try to ensure that those processes can be expedited and that anybody who wants to stay can stay?

Priti Patel: Let me give the hon. Gentleman, his constituents and all public health workers in that category reassurance. Some very fast work is taking place at the Home Office right now to look at exactly that issue. I would be very happy to write to the hon. Gentleman outlining that work.

T5. [901706] **Fay Jones** (Brecon and Radnorshire) (Con): A huge amount of tourists came flooding to my constituency of Brecon and Radnorshire at the weekend. But, as beautiful as it is, Powys simply cannot cope with visitors at the moment. I am urging people to stay away from the area, as visiting puts a huge strain on our already stretched rural resources—not least our police force. What can the Home Office do to ensure that members of Dyfed-Powys police and other forces across the UK are protected as they carry out this vital work?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to raise her concerns, which have been echoed in the House today. She does have a beautiful constituency and an incredible police force, which I pay tribute to. The police have robust contingency arrangements. They have the ability to work with others in the community and alongside the other emergency services to ensure that we stop people from behaving irresponsibly. I restate the message that everyone should take responsibility and follow the Government's advice. This is about saving and protecting lives, and we all have a duty to follow that advice.

Gavin Robinson (Belfast East) (DUP): The Home Secretary is well aware that the emergency legislation being brought forward this afternoon provides quite extraordinary but important measures for immigration officials and extends the power of detention. Does she not understand that without adequate proactive screening, that power will be rendered useless? Will she keep open the option of providing a better regimen of screening at our air and sea ports?

Priti Patel: We are working with the Department for Transport and across Government on screening, but it is important that the House recognises that where there is proper scientific evidence, we are following it. This will all be under review, and as things change and more evidence comes from the chief medical officer, that is what we will be doing across Government, day in, day out.

T6. [901707] **Sally-Ann Hart** (Hastings and Rye) (Con): In the time of extreme crisis facing this country the vast majority will pull together, and they are doing so in the spirit of community and solidarity. Unfortunately, there are always those who will attempt to exploit or take advantage of vulnerability and weakness. What measures is my right hon. Friend taking to ensure that the British people, our streets and our communities remain as safe as ever?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend raises an essential question about the safety and security of the public and our communities at this time. It is fair to say that we have seen incredible resilience among the British public. In all constituencies, people are behaving in a generous and community-minded way. That helps and it is what we want to see. At the same time, we are seeing organisations

and individuals coming together and working with our local police, our local authorities and our local resilience forums, and we will continue to encourage that.

Chris Elmore (Ogmore) (Lab): At the weekend, I was horrified to receive calls from constituents telling me that some pub landlords were trying to let customers come in through the rear entrances to their pubs, leading to my local authority having to send licensing officers to ask those people to leave the pubs. What punishment will be given to the landlords if they continue to flout the law and break the licensing conditions set out by the Prime Minister?

Priti Patel: Fines will be put in place, but licensees also run the risk of losing their licence and their livelihood.

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con): As the Home Secretary will know, covid-19 has already had an impact on police numbers on the frontline and in back office support roles. What discussions has she had, or would consider having, with the Foreign Office about getting the key workers, including police officers, nurses and support staff, who are currently stranded in other parts of the world back as a priority?

Priti Patel: On police officers in particular, the numbers of frontline staff are proving to be very resilient, but my hon. Friend makes an important point about those who are abroad and how we can repatriate them, so that they can rejoin the frontline services in our country. That work is taking place across Government, specifically with the Foreign Office, and Border Force is now tasked with joining up with the Foreign Office to make sure that happens.

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): Before leaving their country of origin, many of my asylum-seeking constituents were skilled doctors or nurses. Given that there is such a shortage of nurses and doctors at the moment, will the Government consider lifting the work ban on asylum seekers to let them take part in this national effort?

Priti Patel: I have already indicated that many measures are under review. We are working at pace across Government to consider what changes we will bring in.

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con): Over the weekend, I was alerted to the fact that a number of religious workers, students and business people whose visas are soon to expire are not able to return to India. What advice does my right hon. Friend have for the people in that category?

Priti Patel: We are going to announce changes we will make very soon. I will write to my hon. Friend and all colleagues about how we will enable extensions.

Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): Coronavirus is driving many aspects of our daily lives online. Hopefully that will help bring us together, but it will also undoubtedly attract criminal elements to new crimes, particularly with all the vulnerable people going online. What additional capacity is the Home Secretary ensuring in the police forces to patrol the online streets and keep us safe at this time?

Kit Malthouse: The hon. Lady raises an extremely important point. While we might see other forms of crime fall because of the lack of activity in the street, we are well aware and sensitive to the fact that fraud might emerge. I have seen over the weekend some reports in the media of unscrupulous individuals exploiting elderly and vulnerable citizens in particular, and certainly when we have been discussing these matters with police leaders on our regular calls, they are aware of that issue and are thinking more about how they could redirect resources towards it, if it becomes systemic.

Mr David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con): We probably have more than half a million undocumented migrants in this country—people who, if they fall ill with coronavirus, might be afraid to declare themselves to the health authorities for fear of deportation. The Irish Government, who have the same issue in Ireland, have firewalled their national health service data from other parts of Government. I do not know whether that is the right answer, but will the Secretary of State look at the issue and find a similar resolution?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Kevin Foster): The point is well made and we will certainly look at it. No one should fear accessing medical advice from our superb NHS for an immigration reason.

Sarah Jones (Croydon Central) (Lab): Concerns have been raised in Croydon—I have seen them elsewhere—that religious organisations are not adhering to the new

guidance about holding their services or not. Indeed, I have seen some people seeing it as an act of faith that they are bold enough to go to their religious services. What more can we do in terms of enforcement and communication to ensure that people are doing what they should?

Kit Malthouse: The hon. Lady is quite right, and I received reports just this morning that certain communities in London in particular are not observing the rules. We will be talking to Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government colleagues this afternoon about what they can do to draw people together to create better observance.

Mr Tobias Ellwood (Bournemouth East) (Con): I thank you, Mr Speaker, for referring to the death of PC Keith Palmer, who tragically died three years ago. The pressures on the Home Office are only likely to increase. We have seen 20,000 armed forces personnel mobilised, many of whom will probably provide military assistance to the police. In the event of a lockdown, will the Home Secretary say what role the armed forces might play?

Kit Malthouse: My right hon. Friend is right to raise the capacity and capability of our military, which is second to none. Where we can, we will draw upon it. He will know that this country has a proud tradition of a strong division between the civil and the military, and we wish to maintain that. However, our armed forces colleagues have superb expertise in logistics in particular, but also in planning and construction, which we aim to use to the fullest extent.

Speaker's Statement

3.32 pm

Mr Speaker: I wish to make a statement relating to parliamentary services, aspects of the Chamber and other parliamentary business. I ask that hon. Members bear with me, as it is longer than I would like.

On Chamber attendance, Parliament as a whole continues to follow the latest Government advice relating to covid-19, including advising Members and staff to work remotely where possible and limiting all but essential access to the parliamentary estate. I remind Members and those watching our proceedings that steps are being taken to preserve social distancing in the Chamber. As a result, attendance will be more limited than usual, but that does not curtail the commitment of hon. Members to fulfilling their parliamentary duties.

We recognise the need to improve our video conferencing facilities to enable those working remotely to engage in Committee proceedings. Regarding evidence sessions, these facilities are currently limited, not least because the management of these sessions requires expert operators to produce audio-visual output of a suitable quality for broadcast use and *Hansard* transcription purposes. The teams who make such arrangements work are currently under—I do stress—significant strain because of staff absences. Further work in this area will be taken forward as a matter of priority over the Easter recess. Once the current situation has settled, I will commission a review to ensure we can develop systems to ensure we are ready and able to be more agile in the future.

Some Members and key parliamentary staff are still required to work on the estate to enable the House to continue to fulfil its important constitutional role. As this is a workplace, it is important that they continue to have access to adequate canteen facilities. A number of venues have been closed, but in those that remain open, we are employing a range of measures to increase social distancing, while encouraging diners to use takeaway options where possible. The following outlets remain open: Tea Room, Terrace Cafeteria, Debate and Dispatch

Box. The Members' Smoking Room remains open, but there is no service. I can confirm that, from today, the sale of alcohol in House of Commons catering venues has been suspended until further notice. I took that decision on Friday evening. All those measures will be kept under constant review.

If Divisions take place from today onwards, until further notice, the arrangements will be modified to allow for social distancing. The entry of Members will be staggered, with entry at separate times for three alphabetical groups. Members will be able to record their names at any of the desks. A Division may take between 30 and 40 minutes to conduct in that way. Further details will be communicated via the Whips and announced again if a Division takes place. I want to ensure that Members feel satisfied that all the staff are trying to do their best.

I understand the wish of Members—particularly those not able to attend the Chamber—to fulfil their duty to hold the Government to account. However, I urge Members to think twice before tabling parliamentary questions. In particular, they may want to think about the impact of such questions on Government officials who are working incredibly hard to respond to the current crisis. If they are desperate questions, I will understand, but multiple questions will block not only staff members in this House but Government Departments that need to be carrying on with their duties, so please think twice. When a Member puts 60 questions down, that is not helpful to anybody or to this country.

I should also mention that names added to early-day motions that are not submitted electronically are not being processed. I am sure all Members will understand that, in these exceptional circumstances, some changes to procedural services have proved necessary, and further changes may be needed.

Finally, I want to again express my thanks to Members and staff across Parliament for their hard work in enabling this House to continue to function and for their efforts in limiting the spread of coronavirus among our community. We have some absolute heroes in this House who I want to thank on behalf of all of us.

Business of the House

3.37 pm

The Leader of the House of Commons (Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg): With permission, Mr Speaker, I should like to make a short business statement.

Further to my announcement to the House last Thursday, the first item of business tomorrow will now be consideration of a business of the House motion, followed by all stages of the Contingencies Fund Bill. This will be followed by Committee and remaining stages of the Windrush Compensation Scheme (Expenditure) Bill, followed by a motion relating to appointments to the parliamentary works sponsor body. The last item of business will be a general debate on the situation in Yemen, as determined by the Backbench Business Committee. The business for the rest of this week remains unchanged.

3.38 pm

Valerie Vaz (Walsall South) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for remembering PC Keith Palmer in your earlier statement. I thank the Leader of the House for the business statement. We agree that the Contingencies Fund Bill should be accommodated through this change of business.

Mr Rees-Mogg: I am grateful for the support of the right hon. Lady. Our hearts continue to go out to the family of PC Keith Palmer. It was a great sadness that afflicted them and the whole House three years ago.

Mr Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con): Mr Speaker, I welcome your statement and the steps you have set out to enable this House to continue to fulfil its democratic role, but in a way that is safe and consistent with the advice that the Government have set out and expect our constituents to follow. In that spirit, if the Leader of the House is not able to update us today, will he think about what further steps can be agreed between Mr Speaker and the usual channels to enable the House to properly hold the Government to account over what might be a considerable period, as we deal with this virus, in a way consistent with the firm, important advice that we are giving to the rest of the general public?

Mr Rees-Mogg: My right hon. Friend raises a point that is being considered by the Government and which will be discussed with the official Opposition and other opposition parties. We will need to legislate and to ensure that the Government are held to account, but we may well have to do that in ways that are different from those we have used previously.

It is very encouraging to see that right hon. and hon. Members seem to be sitting at least 6 feet away from each other in the Chamber, and I would encourage that even on my own Front Bench. Government Front Benchers seem to be observing the suitable gaps at this moment, as do Opposition Front Benchers.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): We are happy to support the Government in their efforts to get the Contingencies Fund Bill through so they can make the expenditure needed to get the country through this crisis. We welcome, Mr Speaker, the announcements you have just made, particularly about social distancing should we find—and perhaps we will not—that Divisions are necessary.

However, the continuing business of the House continues to put pressure on staff and Members. Can the Leader of the House say what consideration is being given to bringing the recess forward to the end of this week? The reality is that any of us who return to our constituencies from London, the epicentre of the virus, are going to have to self-isolate—it would be inappropriate for us to go into our communities—and it would therefore be impossible for us to get back for sittings next week. Will the Leader of the House please take that into consideration?

Mr Rees-Mogg: Yes, absolutely. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that that is being considered. I would say to the House that pairing has been very widespread for this week to ensure that right hon. and hon. Members who do not be here are not. We obviously need to ensure that the emergency legislation is successfully passed this week: that depends on the other place as well as here and then the receipt of Royal Assent. We will have other legislation to do in due course, but whether the Bill about rate relief for toilets and the general debate before the Adjournment are essential business that we all need to come back for is debatable.

Greg Clark (Tunbridge Wells) (Con): When the Leader of the House speaks at Cabinet tomorrow, will he convey my appreciation to the Chancellor of the Exchequer for the package of measures to support workers that he announced on Friday? He may have been Chancellor for only a few weeks, but he may have saved more jobs than any of his predecessors. However, will the Leader of the House ask him urgently to come back to the House on a comparable package for the self-employed—I know he is working very hard on that—whose businesses are crucial to every constituency in this country and, indeed, to the nation?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I will do better than my right hon. Friend asks; I will ensure that an extract of *Hansard* recording the thanks of my right hon. Friend is sent to the Chancellor. His proposals have received widespread support across the country and the House. My right hon. Friend's point on the self-employed is very well made, and I will ensure that that is also passed on.

Mr Kevan Jones (North Durham) (Lab): May I add my welcome to the support given last week to those in employment? There is, however, real anxiety out there among the self-employed. For example, Bill Cronery, one of my constituents who runs an event catering business contacted me this morning. These people have got no money coming in, and I think people need to realise that. The Government need urgently to bring forward active measures, and the indication of a statement tomorrow would at least be a ray of hope for some of those people in desperate times.

Mr Rees-Mogg: Although the Bill coming before the House tomorrow is not specifically directed at the self-employed, the scale of tomorrow's Bill is such that it will allow expenditure of £260 billion on account. That gives the Government the flexibility that they need, assuming the House is willing to pass that Bill, to ensure that steps can be taken. I know that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor is giving urgent attention to ways of helping the self-employed. I think it is accepted across the House that that needs to be tackled.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (The Cotswolds) (Con): Mr Speaker, I, too, welcome your measures to try to keep all the staff and ourselves safe in this House.

We are to go into recess some time in the near future. We do not know what is going to happen over the next few weeks, but undoubtedly there will be problems in all our constituencies. May I ask the Leader of the House to urge all his Front-Bench colleagues to treat any queries from any of us as if the House was sitting and with the urgency that they need to be dealt with?

Mr Rees-Mogg: Mr Speaker, may I refer to your statement, which, I think, gave the House very good advice? We, as right hon. and hon. Members, need to consider what is urgent and pressing and needs raising with Ministers and what is routine and can wait until after this crisis is solved. It is of the greatest importance that urgent messages get through and are not swamped by routine messages that we would usually be passing on to try to seek high-level responses. Self-denial by us will help Ministers to ensure that the right responses are given to the most urgent items.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): I add my voice to those of the right hon. Member for Tunbridge Wells (Greg Clark) and my right hon. Friend the Member for North Durham (Mr Jones) about the self-employed and freelancers, and I ask the Leader of the House to convey to the Chancellor the urgent requirement for him to come back to the House for a statement about them. I also commend to him the report issued today by the Musicians' Union, which outlines the impact that this has had on many people in the creative industries.

Mr Rees-Mogg: The hon. Gentleman is right to raise the issue of those in the creative industries, who are mainly self-employed and have been particularly affected because, of course, the places where they perform have been closed. The Government are inevitably conscious that when we close places by order and that has an effect on people's livelihoods, there is a societal responsibility. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor is fully aware of that.

Mr Andrew Mitchell (Sutton Coldfield) (Con): Mr Speaker, you may recall that I have over the past couple of years secured not one but two emergency debates on Yemen and have been a pretty staunch critic of the Government's policy in respect of that country. However, even I wonder about the timing of the debate tomorrow and whether it is wise for the House to sit and devote time to that particular subject.

Mr Rees-Mogg: My right hon. Friend has, I know, campaigned to bring the attention of the country at large to what is going on in Yemen. It is always open to somebody who is going to move a motion not to move that motion, and hon. Members might consider whether they wish to bring forward specific business.

Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): As things stand, we will return from the Easter recess just as this epidemic reaches its peak, or heads towards it. Inevitably, either by agreement or for any other reason, a lot of Members will not be here. Mr Speaker, may I ask the Leader of the House to take seriously your indications about the use of modern technology

for distance working over the recess, so that the appropriate provision is in place for Members? After all, distance working is what we are asking people in workplaces the length and breadth of the country to do.

Mr Rees-Mogg: Many aspects of distance working are already available, such as e-tabling and so on. A motion will be brought to the House later today to allow greater flexibility for the working of Select Committees, which will be an important step in allowing them to hold the Government to account during this period.

As regards the workings of things on the Floor of the House, there will be discussions with leading figures in Opposition parties, I hope during the course of this week, to see whether we can by agreement and consensus work out how to limit the numbers of people who need to be in the Chamber.

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con): Some businesses in my constituency are already looking to the future. When they get back on their feet, they will, sadly, have to make some redundancies because they will not be turning over or making the profits that they are making now. They are asking who will meet that bill. Will my right hon. Friend ask the Chancellor what the answer to that particular conundrum is?

Mr Rees-Mogg: My hon. Friend raises the question at the heart of what many right hon. and hon. Members have been saying: how do we take care of businesses that were sound on 1 March but which might find that they are not sound when this crisis ends? The Government are doing everything we can to help ensure the continued soundness of businesses, and that, in my view, is absolutely the right thing to be doing.

Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): The House is due to return on 21 April, but that might not be possible for health reasons. In light of that, is it possible to lift the convention that Members do not usually table parliamentary questions over the recess? In that way, questions could be spaced out sensibly, rather than a huge backlog being caused by their being put in next Tuesday afternoon.

Mr Rees-Mogg: The hon. Lady makes an interesting point that is certainly worth our looking into in the few days that remain before we go into recess.

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con): Following on from the question of the right hon. Member for North Durham (Mr Jones), can I ask that a statement on the self-employed and freelancers comes forward quickly, given the immediate need of many self-employed people? There are 6,500 self-employed people in my constituency of The Wrekin. Will that statement be forthcoming when the House is sitting, rather than when the House has risen, so that right hon. and hon. Members can constructively interrogate the Government's suggestions?

Mr Rees-Mogg: My hon. Friend puts his finger on why it is important for the House to be sitting so that the Government can be held to account and so that questions can be asked on statements. I am sure that if there are no statements from the Government within the next few days, there may be a receptiveness to urgent questions, so I think information will be forthcoming.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): I welcome the indication that we will move to more virtual ways of working, but may I ask that that also incorporates electronic voting as soon as possible? It is ridiculous that we will all be cooped up in the Lobbies.

Secondly, I reinforce the importance of action for the self-employed. In particular, the insurance companies need to be pressed: they are saying that, because coronavirus was not listed as a disease, they will not pay up. The insurance bodies clearly need to be brought to heel.

Mr Rees-Mogg: I record my gratitude to the Opposition for deciding not to divide the House last week. We have become aware that politicians in this country can act in the interests of the nation and of us all by coming together to do this, and we have shown that with surprising speed. I reiterate the thanks given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to his shadow, the hon. Member for Leicester South (Jonathan Ashworth), who has been particularly helpful in this difficult period.

The issue regarding the self-employed is of great importance and has been widely raised.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): I warmly condemn—warmly commend, I mean—the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care for recognising that, sometimes, Opposition Members want to be helpful with their criticisms. There are specific issues, such as the treatment of employees, of those in rented properties and, for that matter, of freelancers and sole traders, on which proper questions from Members on both sides of the House can get us to a better place.

My anxiety is that we are telling the nation that we should bend every sinew to deal solely with this issue, yet we are still doing all sorts of other things in the House that are not solely directed at coronavirus. May I suggest to the Government that we shred every other ongoing legislative process? We should only be debating issues that relate to the national crisis.

When will we have the necessary votes under the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 to enforce the measures that were introduced last Friday in relation to pubs and clubs?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I will not make cheap shots about the hon. Gentleman's default position when he is trying to be helpful.

The difficulty is that some of the business we carry on needs to be carried on. It is important that the Windrush compensation scheme is debated and dealt with tomorrow. The hon. Gentleman knows the procedures of this House better than almost anybody: he will be aware that we need to introduce the Finance Bill within a set period of the motions being introduced, so there is routine business that needs to be carried out. Other things are happening on which MPs will want to hold the Government to account so, although I understand his point, we cannot go quite so far as he suggests.

Bill Esterson (Sefton Central) (Lab): But we can lead by example in this place—right here, right now. There are four people sitting within 6 feet of the Leader of the House; certainly within 2 metres. *[Interruption.]* I will come over with a tape measure in a moment. We have to

demonstrate it by our actions, and the visual example of people sitting immediately in front of and behind other Members does not do that.

My main point is about the self-employed. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff West (Kevin Brennan) mentioned the statement by the Musicians Union, which makes two specific proposals. One is for an immediate payment of £400 a week to every self-employed person, and the second is to use the tax records as evidence to deliver 80% of long-term income. Will the Leader of the House make sure those figures are given to the Chancellor?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I accept the point and encourage right hon. and hon. Members to try to keep 6 feet apart. I think we are doing pretty well, considering how much we practically sit on each other's laps during ordinary sittings of Parliament—this is a significant and visible improvement on how things used to be. As the hon. Gentleman has asked me to be the postbox for the Chancellor, I will of course make sure that those points are passed on.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): May I add my voice to the chorus of those asking for the Chancellor to bring forward measures on the self-employed? Every single day that goes by without them means livelihoods devastated. In particular, the voice of musicians and from the creative industries is vital—I draw attention to my declaration of interests as a supporter of the Musicians' Union.

Will the Leader of the House urgently arrange a statement on the situation facing charities? The Chancellor introduced a very welcome set of measures on the wage subsidy, but charities are expending large sums of money on providing services, not just on staff, and they face a £4.3 billion drop in income over the next 12 weeks. Hundreds of Members from eight parties in this House have signed a letter on that. Will the Leader of the House urgently arrange a statement, written or otherwise, to clarify the situation?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising the plight of charities, which is well known to the Government, and for the wonderful work that charities are doing to help in these circumstances.

I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will understand that the Government are working through a very large number of issues and doing it in an orderly way. The priority was rightly to give reassurance to those in employment, so that we did not face mass redundancies, which was likely, but that does not mean that the charity sector and the self-employed have been forgotten.

Gavin Newlands (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): May I also echo the sentiments on support for the self-employed? One sector crying out for support and clarity is the aviation industry. In addition, we have bus and coach companies with drivers on short-time working that are unsure how to treat those employees. Has the Transport Secretary indicated to the Leader of the House whether he will be making a statement in due course?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I think the issues in the transport industry have been at the forefront of people's minds from very early on in this crisis, and I know that my right hon. Friend the Transport Secretary is working

[Mr Rees-Mogg]

hard to try to find solutions for these problems. I will bring this issue to his attention and point out that there is an interest in a statement being made to this House.

Liam Byrne (Birmingham, Hodge Hill) (Lab): I very much associate myself with the calls from across the House for urgent action to help the self-employed. May I ask the Leader of the House to bring forward an urgent debate about an issue that we have not touched on—the need for urgent price caps and action to stop price gouging?

I highlighted an issue in my constituency last week: a disreputable chemist had increased the price of children's medicine tenfold. Since then I have been flooded with complaints about businesses, small and large, doubling, tripling or quadrupling prices. Two thirds of American states have legislation, activated in emergencies, that sets a price cap of 10% to 20%. We are obviously going to need such measures here—and the sooner we debate them, the better.

Mr Rees-Mogg: Whenever a large number of right hon. and hon. Members raise one issue with me at business questions—in this case, the self-employed—I invariably raise it with the relevant Department immediately after the session. I absolutely assure the House that I will do that in relation to this session.

On the right hon. Gentleman's second point, profiteering is extremely disagreeable. There have been times in our history when it has been illegal and subject to quite strong penalties. His point is exceptionally well made, and I will ensure that it is made also to the right person in Government.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Leader of the House for coming and making a statement, and also put on the record my thanks to the Chancellor. The issues coming to me and others in the House are legion, whether they concern Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, employment, health issues or Department for Work and Pensions business.

The support for small businesses that the Government have guaranteed is helpful, because moneys are coming forward to cover 80% of employees' wages. These are people in small companies, by the way, employing between six and 16 people, who are lucky to have their jobs, but what happens is that their employers cannot employ them, because it seems that there is nothing in the package to help those people. So it seems that the employees are looked after—and thank you for that—but the employers who employ them are not. What can we do for them?

Mr Rees-Mogg: The hon. Gentleman, as always, gets to the nub of any matter that this House is discussing, and he is absolutely right. We are bringing forward packages to help as many people as possible, and the more people who are kept in employment, the more business there will be across the economy. The effect of these closures on the economy is much bigger than anything that we have normally come across, which is why it has required this enormous response, including the announcement that I made at the beginning about a Bill allowing for up to £260 billion to be advanced to Departments.

Bob Seely (Isle of Wight) (Con): I am delighted that my right hon. Friend will go back to the relevant Department about some of the matters raised. May I add my voice on the importance of looking after the self-employed? In my constituency, we are going to be especially badly hit because of our reliance on tourism and the visitor economy. Many of the people involved have small businesses and are self-employed, and our economy is going to be devastated this summer.

Mr Rees-Mogg: My hon. Friend's point is extremely well made and echoes what has been said by many other right hon. and hon. Members.

CORONAVIRUS BILL: BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That the following provisions shall apply to the proceedings on the Coronavirus Bill:

Timetable

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

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

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

Timing of proceedings and Questions to be put

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(a) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

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

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

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

(e) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded; and shall not put any other Questions, other than the Question on any Motion described in paragraph 15(a) of this Order.

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

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

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

Consideration of Lords Amendments

(8) (a) Any Lords Amendments to the Bill may be considered forthwith without any Question being put; and any proceedings interrupted for that purpose shall be suspended accordingly.

(b) Proceedings on consideration of Lords Amendments shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion one hour after their commencement; and any proceedings suspended under sub-paragraph (a) shall thereupon be resumed.

(9) Paragraphs (2) to (11) of Standing Order No. 83F (Programme orders: conclusion of proceedings on consideration of Lords amendments) apply for the purposes of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph (8) of this Order.

Subsequent stages

(10) (a) Any further Message from the Lords on the Bill may be considered forthwith without any Question being put; and any proceedings interrupted for that purpose shall be suspended accordingly.

(b) Proceedings on any further Message from the Lords shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion one hour after their commencement; and any proceedings suspended under sub-paragraph (a) shall thereupon be resumed.

(11) Paragraphs (2) to (9) of Standing Order No. 83G (Programme orders: conclusion of proceedings on further messages from the Lords) apply for the purposes of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph (10) of this Order.

Reasons Committee

(12) Paragraphs (2) to (6) of Standing Order No. 83H (Programme orders: reasons committee) apply in relation to any committee to be appointed to draw up reasons after proceedings have been brought to a conclusion in accordance with this Order.

Miscellaneous

(13) Standing Order No. 15(1) (Exempted business) shall apply to proceedings on the Bill.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(17) No debate shall be held in accordance with Standing Order No. 24 (Emergency debates) at today's sitting after this Order has been agreed.

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

(19) No private business may be considered at today's sitting after this Order has been agreed.—(*Matt Hancock.*)

Coronavirus Bill

Second Reading

4.1 pm

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Matt Hancock): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Coronavirus is the most serious public health emergency that has faced the world in a century. We are all targets, but the disease reserves its full cruelty for the weakest and the most vulnerable. To defeat it, we are proposing extraordinary measures of a kind never seen before in peacetime. Our goal is to protect life and to protect every part of the NHS. This Bill, jointly agreed with all four UK Governments, gives us the power to fight the virus with everything that we have.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): Like many hon. Members, I have had a huge number of issues raised with me by NHS workers regarding the availability of personal protective equipment to frontline staff and testing. I know the Secretary of State wants to protect NHS staff through the Bill, so will he take the opportunity of Second Reading to update us, perhaps with any information he has from across the UK, about progress on these matters?

Matt Hancock: Yes. If it is okay with you, Mr Speaker, I will answer that intervention and then get on with the point in the Bill. These issues are outwith the Bill, but they are incredibly important and very much part of the topic.

In terms of making sure that NHS staff, social care staff and those who need it clinically get the protective equipment they need—especially but not only the masks—we are undertaking enormous efforts to get that equipment out. The equipment is there; we have it. It is a distribution effort. I was not satisfied with the stories I heard of people running short, so we have brought in the military to help with the logistical effort. I want to hear from every single member of staff in the NHS or in social care who needs that equipment but does not have it, so we have also introduced a hotline and an email address, which is manned. I have had an update on that, and it has had a number of calls, which are all being responded to. In that way, we will find out where the gaps are, so that we can get this distribution out. It is a mammoth effort; we have been working on it for several weeks, but the increase in the use of the protective equipment in the last week has been very sharp, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman and the House will understand. The logistical effort is very significant.

We are expanding the amount of testing. We are buying tests, both ones made abroad and ones made here in the UK, because testing is absolutely vital to getting out of this situation. I want to get to a point where anybody who wants to get tested can get tested. At the moment, we are having to reserve the tests we have for patients, especially in intensive care, so that they can be properly treated according to whether or not they have coronavirus. Very soon, we are getting the tests out to frontline staff so that they can get back to work, where somebody in their household might have the symptoms and they are household-isolating. I understand absolutely the importance of testing. We are working on it incredibly hard. We were working on it all weekend, and we are making some progress.

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con): On the point about testing, will the Secretary of State be absolutely clear? Does the current test that is available show whether somebody has got covid-19 or has perhaps previously had it? Does it do both, or does it do just one? If it does just do one, when are we likely to have a test that does both?

Matt Hancock: Tests for both have recently been developed. The test for whether someone has coronavirus, which we call the case test, was first developed here by Public Health England, and that is being expanded. The antibody test, which tests whether someone has the antibodies that make them immune to coronavirus, has now been developed, and we are buying it in large quantities.

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): Nobody denies that the Bill is necessary, but given that it gives the state, for the first time in our history, unprecedented powers to enforce isolation on people who have committed no crime, will the Secretary of State reassure the House that it will be fully involved in renewing this once this crisis is over, and that there will be no drift in this matter?

Matt Hancock: Yes. I will turn to this point shortly, but let me just correct my right hon. Friend. The measures we are taking to be able to hold people in quarantine build on those in the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984, which we have been using hitherto. In that element, the Bill is not unprecedented. The Bill makes these powers UK-wide and strengthens the basis on which they can be exercised, but the powers are not unprecedented. Nevertheless, the point he makes about the House's ability to scrutinise these measures and to ensure that we are, as a House, content with their continuation is important.

Greg Clark (Tunbridge Wells) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Matt Hancock: Let me make a little more progress in answering my right hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh), and then of course I will give way.

The Bill is jointly agreed between the four UK Governments. Of course, there are measures that are significant departures from the way we normally do things, but they are strictly temporary. I think that they are proportionate to the threat we face, and they will be activated only on the basis of the best possible scientific evidence. Crucially, to my right hon. Friend's point, the legislation is time-limited for two years and the measures can each be switched on and off individually as necessary by the relevant authority, whether that is the UK Government or the devolved Government, depending on who exercises the powers. As an additional safeguard, we today tabled an amendment to give the House the opportunity to confirm that the powers are still required every six months.

Greg Clark: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way. Everyone admires the steps he is taking. He knows that I have been questioning and corresponding with him on testing for some time. Given that, as he pointed out, the test was developed in this country, can he explain why it seems to be so much less available in this country than in other countries around the world?

Matt Hancock: We have done more testing than most countries. There are some countries that are ahead of us, and we are racing to catch up. We have tested far more than, say, France or America, but not as much as Italy. It is something that we are putting a huge amount of effort into. I understand the pressure my right hon. Friend rightly puts on me to expand testing capability. We are increasingly using private companies to do the testing—to expand their production and execution of the tests—rather than just doing it in the brilliant public health labs we have at Porton Down and around the NHS.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): I commend what the Secretary of State said about working with the devolved Administrations to get the measures in the Bill right. It is crucial that many of these measures are UK-wide; I realise that these are unusual times. There is a specific power in schedule 21 to limit entry to premises and, if necessary, to close them down, which applies to all four Administrations. Can he be clear about whether that will apply to care homes? I have heard a lot of concern from constituents who are worried that some care homes still are not restricting entry to individuals and are therefore putting elderly residents at risk. There is real demand for this to be unified across the country to protect elderly residents.

Matt Hancock: We have other ways to enforce that with care homes, not least contractually through local authorities. I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern; people in care homes need to be protected, and many of them shielded, from the virus, because many of the most vulnerable people are in care homes. I will take away the point and look at whether more needs to be done, but we do have other powers available to deliver on what he and I—I think—agree is needed.

Mr David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con): I commend the Secretary of State for accepting the six-month review that he has just announced, but in the event that the House decides that one element of the Bill is working badly, will we be able to amend or strike out that element, or will we have to take the whole thing or reject it at that six-month point?

Matt Hancock: As discussed with the Opposition, we are proposing a six-month debate and vote on the continuation of the Bill, and before that debate we will provide evidence and advice from the chief medical officer to inform the debate. There is also a reporting mechanism for a report every eight weeks on the use of the powers in the Bill.

Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for the time he has taken in explaining at every stage how he has used the powers of his office to this House and, indeed, to the people through the media. I am hugely grateful and I know many others are. Could I just, however, state that over the last three weeks the world has changed in a rather more radical sense than many of us appreciate? The powers in the Bill, even over six months, are likely to change and to be exercised in different ways. Can he assure me that he and all other Ministers will exercise their powers reasonably, in keeping with only the coronavirus issue, and making sure that they are limited to the purpose for which they were intended, because these powers could—in different circumstances—be used in a particularly malicious fashion?

Matt Hancock: I can confirm that the Bill is to deal with the current coronavirus emergency, and that is an important point. But I would also say that although the world has changed in the past three weeks in ways that many could not have imagined, every measure that has been taken by the Government has been part of the action plan that we published three weeks ago. Of course, the Bill has been drafted over a long period, because it started on the basis of the pandemic flu plan that was standard before coronavirus existed and has been worked on over the past three months at incredible pace by a brilliant team of officials right across Government. The Bill is consistent with the action plan, so while some people might have been surprised by each of the measures we have taken, they have all been part of the plan that we set out right at the start. I can confirm that it is only for coronavirus.

I also want to give further detail to my previous answer to the hon. Member for Cardiff South and Penarth (Stephen Doughty), which is that section 21 does not specify what it defines as a gathering or an event. It is deliberately broad, so it could include a care home, should we need it to, and that would be defined in secondary legislation should that be necessary.

Mr Andrew Mitchell (Sutton Coldfield) (Con): I am sure the whole House will want to support my right hon. Friend and the provisions in the Bill. I just want to reinforce two points. The first is that I was very concerned to see the two-year provision, which is why I put my name to new clauses 1 and 6, and I am very pleased to hear what the Government have said about the six-month review. Notwithstanding what he just said about the period of time in which this has been produced, it is a heroic effort—321 pages of legislation which may well be subject to changes in the next few weeks and months as this crisis develops. I hope, therefore, that he will see the six-month review not just as a rubber-stamping effort, but as a chance to improve the legislation, should it require that improvement.

Matt Hancock: We could consider that. The proposal is to have a debate and vote as opposed to a whole new piece of legislation and, of course, only to renew it if the measures in the Bill are still necessary. Then, of course, they will fall after two years. I understand the concern of my right hon. Friend and his wisdom. I know that as Secretary of State he dealt with some of these issues, albeit not here but around the world, and he knows the sorts of measures that are needed, which are contained in the Bill.

Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): Will the Secretary of State provide clarity on the six-month period? Obviously, six months is quite a long time for people who are chronically ill or have a serious disability. Some of the proposals have implications for social care for the devolved regions or local government. What will happen if there are negative effects on people who receive social care within that six-month period? What recourse will Members have to bring that to the House?

Matt Hancock: There will be recourse, and I will come on to that in a moment. The purpose of the social care measures in the Bill, which are very important, is to allow for the prioritisation of social care, should that be necessary. However, there are a number of restrictions on that, because local authorities will still be expected

[*Matt Hancock*]

to do what they can to meet everyone's needs during that period. While local authorities will be able to prioritise to ensure that they meet the most urgent and serious care needs, there are restrictions to require them to meet everyone's needs and, indeed, to fulfil their human rights obligations to those in receipt of care.

Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con): I thank the Secretary of State for the excellent work he has done to ensure that individuals get the care they need in these difficult and challenging times.

On the human rights perspective, I thank the Secretary of State and the Government for listening to faith organisations. Initially there were concerns that under part 2 loved ones would have to be cremated. As somebody from a Muslim background and the Prime Minister's special envoy for freedom of religion or belief, it was completely unacceptable to consider that if taking account of the views of the Muslim and Jewish communities. I therefore thank the Government for ensuring that the wishes of the deceased will be taken into account in relation to their final rites.

Matt Hancock: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend, who has worked hard to ensure that we come to a solution in the Bill, through the amendments we have tabled today, that ensures we can not only have dignity in the case of a large proportion of the workforce not being available, but accede to the wishes of families from the many different faith communities who had concerns about the way it was originally drafted. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General, who found a way through that I think everybody can be content with.

Essentially, the Bill gives all four UK Governments a legislative and regulatory toolkit to respond in the right way at the right time by working through the action plan. While I hope that some of the powers never have to be used, we will not hesitate to act if that is what the situation requires.

Imran Hussain (Bradford East) (Lab): To follow on from the hon. Member for Gillingham and Rainham (Rehman Chishti), I am grateful for the work the Government have done in this area, because many of my constituents—both those from a Muslim background and those of the Jewish faith—were naturally concerned. It is one of the major tenets of faith that everybody has the right to dignity in death, so I am grateful to the Government for listening. Will the Secretary of State join me, at this difficult time for all our communities, in thanking our faith communities for the role they are playing, the difficult decisions they are taking and the support they are giving?

Matt Hancock: I entirely agree. This exchange is an example of the cross-party approach we are all taking. I am very grateful to the hon. Member for the work he has done, together with the Paymaster General, to bring this point to light.

I am also grateful for the work the hon. Member and many others have done with faith groups of all religions who want to gather. Understandably, it is upsetting not to be able to do that, but it is right that they cease large gatherings—or, indeed, any gatherings—where there is social contact that can spread the disease. It is happening

around the world. It is a difficult thing for some, and I pay tribute to the faith organisations and faith leaders across all faiths who have made the right decision. I urge all faith leaders to see what has been done by those who have taken the right steps and to follow them.

I wish to thank the hon. Member for Leicester South (Jonathan Ashworth) for his constructive approach to the passage of this legislation and his constructive tone in respect of this whole crisis. I reassure him that I listen to what he says very carefully. Even when he does not agree, he has done so in a calm, sensible and evidence-based way. I think the House can see from the Bill that we have taken on many of his suggestions, and they will go into law. Along with the Labour Administration in Wales, the SNP Government in Scotland and the multi-party Administration in Northern Ireland, we have taken on ideas from all parties.

The measures in the Bill fall into five categories: because we rely on the NHS and social care staff now more than ever, the first set of measures will help us to increase the available health and social care workforce; secondly, there are measures to ease the burden on frontline staff, both in the NHS and beyond; thirdly, there are measures to contain and slow the spread of the virus so that we can enforce social distancing; fourthly, there are measures on managing those whom the disease has taken from us with dignity and respect; and fifthly, there are measures on supporting people to get through this crisis. I shall briefly take each of them turn.

The first part of the Bill is about boosting our healthcare workforce at a time when it comes under maximum pressure, both through increased demand and because of household isolation and the fact that large parts of the workforce may fall sick. The Bill allows for the emergency registration of health and social care professionals, including nurses, midwives, paramedics and social workers. I can update the House with numbers: 7,563 clinicians, including Members of this House, have so far answered our call to return to work, and I pay tribute to every single one of them. These are difficult times and they have risen to the call of the nation's needs. We know that many more will join them.

Our thanks also go to the social workers who play such a vital role in protecting the most vulnerable in this country. The Bill protects the income and the employment status of those who volunteer in the health and social care system. Volunteers will play a critical role in relieving the pressure on frontline clinicians and social care staff. Again, I offer our thanks.

Sir Edward Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): Is the Secretary of State aware that many people in the refugee community in the UK are qualified healthcare professionals? I have spoken to the refugee charity *RefuAid*, which says it has 514 qualified healthcare professionals on its books. These are people who are willing to work and fully qualified in their own country, but there are bureaucratic barriers to their coming forward. Will he please look into this matter with great urgency so that such people can help us out?

Matt Hancock: Yes. If the right hon. Gentleman emails me with the details, we will get right on to it. He refers to bureaucratic barriers; we of course have to make sure that people are able to do the work that is necessary, but we have already shown in the Bill that we are willing not

only to bring people back into service but to put into service those who are towards the end of their training, to make sure that we get as many people as possible in full service. I absolutely want to pick up on the right hon. Gentleman's proposal and take it up with the General Medical Council or the relevant regulator to see whether we can find a way through for the period of this crisis.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): I wonder whether the Secretary of State may not need an additional power in relation to the Home Office being able to waive fees for tier 2 and tier 5 visas for foreign nationals who are already working in the NHS and are about to have to renew their status in this country, or for those who have been studying as students.

Matt Hancock: It is already within NHS trusts' power to pay those visa fees if it is necessary.

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): Will the Secretary of State look at the immigration surcharge for doctors and nurses who are working in intensive care units? Will he also look personally at the issues relating to research trials for potential new drugs or treatments, or existing drugs or treatments that are being used? Concerns have been raised with me that those processes are all being delayed by the traditional randomised controlled trial processes, which may not be appropriate given the emergency we face.

Matt Hancock: Absolutely. The chief medical officer is personally looking into that issue to make sure that when there is a treatment, we can bring it to bear as soon as is safely possible. There is a challenge with a disease that has, thankfully, a mortality rate as a proportion of the overall population as low as this one, which is that we do not want to do more harm than good. Many of these drugs are safe, because they are licensed for another purpose. It is a question of repurposing them—this is for treatment, rather than vaccine—and that is something we are actively working on. If the right hon. Lady has examples of particular barriers that we need to crunch through I would like to know about them. If she could email me I will take that up with the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency.

Matt Hancock: I want to bring to the attention of the House to the professional indemnity clauses. Where there is no existing professional indemnity agreement in place the Bill provides legal protection for the additional clinical responsibilities that healthcare staff may be required to take on as part of the coronavirus response. I do not want any clinician not to do anything that they can do because that they worry about indemnity and what might happen if it goes wrong. I want everybody in the NHS to do their very best to the top of their qualification, looking after people and keeping them safe.

Dr Andrew Murrison (South West Wiltshire) (Con): I commend the Health Secretary on everything that he and his team are doing. To ensure that returning healthcare professionals can do so at the right time, when the disease peaks around Easter, we have to move at pace to put the indemnity that he has cited in place, to ensure that people are physically and mentally fit to do this work and, crucially, to ensure that they are skilled or reskilled to do what we are asking of them. Can he assure the House that those three things are being put in place?

Matt Hancock: Absolutely—all of that is in hand. My right hon. Friend is quite right to raise it.

Wes Streeting (Ilford North) (Lab): I thank the Secretary of State for everything that he is doing. We are all rooting for him to be successful. I am genuinely worried about what is happening in London hospitals, and what it says about the prospects for the rest of the NHS. He is right to try and get staff to return, but we have to be able to keep them when they arrive. I have seen disturbing reports over the weekend of agency staff walking out mid-shift because they do not have the right protective gear, the right sanitising hand gel, and the things that they expect to keep themselves and patients safe. Can he look urgently at this issue, because London is the story that will follow for the rest of the country if we do not get this right?

Matt Hancock: Yes, this is what I have been spending the weekend on—absolutely; it is incredibly important.

Turning to the second part of the Bill, which is about easing the burden on the frontline and follows from that intervention, that refers not only to the NHS frontline but to the dedicated public servants who guard our streets, who care for our children, and look after communities, in local government—in short, all those who keep the UK running safely and securely. By cutting the amount of paperwork that they have to do, by allowing more remote working, by delaying some activities until the emergency has ended, we can keep essential services going while we get through the pandemic.

Some of the measures are difficult, and not what we would choose to do in normal times. For instance, the Bill will modify temporarily mental health legislation, reducing from two to one the number of doctors' opinions needed to detain someone under the Mental Health Act 1983 because they pose a risk to themselves or others. In circumstances in which staff numbers are severely affected, the Bill allows for the extension or removal of legal time limits governing the short-term detention of mental health patients. The Bill also allows for an expansion of NHS critical care by allowing for rapid discharge from hospital where a patient is medically fit. NHS trusts will be permitted to delay continuing healthcare assessments, a process that can take weeks, until after the emergency has ended. The people who need this support will still receive NHS funding in the interim.

The Bill contains powers allowing local authorities to prioritise the services they offer, as we discussed earlier in relation to social care, and that prioritisation, while challenging, is vital. The measures would only be activated in circumstances where staff numbers were severely depleted. They do not remove the duty of care to an individual at risk of serious harm or neglect. We do not take any of these measures lightly. I hope that many will not have to be used, but we will do whatever it takes to beat this virus.

Mark Pritchard: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way. He is being very generous. On frontline care, particularly those working in intensive care units around the country, may I press him again? When will those staff be tested? There are many staff who want to go to work, but are afraid that they may be carrying the virus. For those who are at work, if they are tested and they have the virus, they want to isolate so that they can return as quickly as possible to the frontline. When are they going to be tested?

Matt Hancock: The answer is as soon as the tests we are buying are available. Expanding testing is absolutely critical to everything we are doing.

This part of the Bill also covers other mission-critical parts of public services, not just the NHS, including schools, borders, justice and national security. The Bill empowers schools, for instance, to respond pragmatically to this situation, including the ability to change teacher ratios, to adapt school meal standards and temporarily to relax provisions for those with special educational needs. The Bill also gives the Home Secretary the power to close and suspend operations at UK ports and airports, powers that will be deployed in circumstances only where staff shortages at the Border Force pose a real and significant threat to the UK's border security. It expands on the availability of video and audio links in court proceedings, so that justice can continue to function without the need for participants to attend in person. To ensure that the Treasury can transact business at all times, the Bill makes it possible for a single Minister or Treasury commissioner to sign instruments or act on behalf of other commissioners.

At a time of unprecedented social disruption, it is also essential to maintain our national security capabilities. The Bill allows temporary judicial commissioners to be appointed at the request of the Investigatory Powers Commissioner and for an increase in the maximum time allowed for an urgent warrant to be reviewed from three to 12 days. That means that vital investigation warrants can continue to be issued, and our security services and police can continue to protect the public.

Catherine West: On the key points of people with mental health problems being signed off by one doctor and a loosening of the regulations relating to children with special needs, what measures can be put in place, by local authorities or others, so that there is a review mechanism on those two very crucial points for vulnerable people?

Matt Hancock: Clearly, these are issues of the highest sensitivity. It is important that we take those measures in case they are needed in the circumstances where staff numbers available are low, to make sure we can get the support needed as appropriate and make the interventions that are sometimes difficult to make. For instance, it can be, in some circumstances, far worse not to detain somebody under the Mental Health Act where they are a danger to themselves or others. If there is not the availability of a second doctor, because of staff shortages due to the virus, then I think that is appropriate, but the safeguards are an important part of getting this right and an important part of why this is time limited.

Stephen Doughty: I thank the Secretary of State for giving way. He is being incredibly generous. Clause 23 talks about food supply chains, which are absolutely crucial. He will have seen that many supermarkets are taking on additional workers to meet demand. Can he provide an answer on this point or get one from the Treasury? I have heard from many people who are thinking of applying for those jobs, perhaps to make up loss of income. If they are covered by the 80% wage subsidy, are they able to take on extra work or will they lose the 80% wage subsidy from their existing job? May we have urgent clarity on that point, because it could be deterring people from taking up those important jobs in our supermarkets and supply chains?

Matt Hancock: That really is a question for the Treasury. My understanding is that the 80% wage subsidy is for those who are furloughed, as the Chancellor put it, as opposed to those who have moved into other jobs, but the hon. Gentleman will have to ask the Treasury for a more detailed answer.

Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): I thank the Secretary of State for giving way and for all the work he is doing—indeed, I thank the House for all the work it is doing—on this essential legislation. With regard to university settings, there seems to be some confusion. I have looked at the Universities UK advice, but some universities do not seem to be following it and are requiring students, notwithstanding the advice the country at large is being given, to attend.

Matt Hancock: I am surprised to hear that, because we have been very, very clear about universities, alongside schools. It is, of course, a matter for my right hon. Friend the Education Secretary in the first instance, but on public health grounds we made it absolutely clear that we were taking steps to close schools, nurseries, universities and colleges, except for the children of key workers where they absolutely need to be at school, for example where neither parent can look after them. However, all those at university can stay at home on their own and do not need a parent, so I do not think there is any excuse whatever.

Mr Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con): Our local authority, the new unitary Buckinghamshire Council, has made the point that workers in leisure centres who are furloughed may need to be redeployed into other areas of council work where they would not normally be employed. That raises a problem. The council really needs to use the furlough scheme to take those workers out of leisure centres and put them into social care—quite a different industry. Will my right hon. Friend undertake to make sure that that is possible?

Matt Hancock: I do not think a legal change is needed to do that, because to second someone from one job to another is perfectly possible under existing employment law. In fact, the Bill brings in a statutory volunteering scheme, which is essentially a new form of employment through volunteering. That is one way that that could be done, but I would not expect it to be the main way used. If someone is moving to do a different type of job because we need more people doing some things and fewer doing others during this crisis, that sort of secondment can be done entirely normally—unless I have misunderstood my hon. Friend.

Mr Baker: My right hon. Friend has slightly misunderstood, and I hope he does not mind me saying so. The point really is that all councils will be haemorrhaging money at this time and they will need that 80% support for those workers whom they would otherwise furlough, so that they can then use them as volunteers. The point is to constrain cost.

Matt Hancock: I will take that up with the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Munira Wilson (Twickenham) (LD): While we understand that the circumstances are exceptional, there is understandably grave concern about lowering social care standards. We are talking about some of the most

vulnerable in our society—the elderly and disabled of all ages. Having the convention on human rights as a back-up could lead to care standards being lowered to a dangerous level, putting those people at risk. Will the Secretary of State outline the thresholds for turning the powers on, and indeed off to ensure that they do not become the new norm?

Matt Hancock: The threshold is to do with staff shortages. I say gently to the hon. Lady that I understand her concerns, but in fact the purpose of these measures is precisely the opposite: it is to make sure that when there is a shortage of social care workers, those who need social care to live their everyday life get it and can be prioritised ahead of those who have a current legal right to social care under the Care Act 2014 but for whom it is not a matter of life and death. This is absolutely about prioritising the vulnerable. That is the purpose of the legislation, but I understand her concern, and that is why we put the safeguards in place to ensure that the prioritisation works as intended.

Bob Seely (Isle of Wight) (Con): I have a general question about the supply of medicine. Paul Howard, a consultant in palliative medicine at our excellent hospice on the Island, says that under patient group direction—that is, group prescriptions—nurses can give out morphine, but due to a quirk in the rules they cannot give similar powerful opiate painkillers. Will the Bill enable nurses to give controlled drugs as part of patient group direction? I ask not only in case medical supplies run short, but specifically because we on the Island rely on ferries, and such a provision would give us slightly more diversity in patient treatment.

Matt Hancock: I will look into those specific points. There are parts of the Bill that would help to tackle the problem my hon. Friend describes if it is appropriate to do so, but I think it is better if I get some medical advice and then get back to him.

The third part of the Bill contains measures to slow the spread of the virus. As the disease accelerates, our goal is to protect life, to protect the vulnerable and to protect the NHS by flattening the curve and minimising unnecessary social contact. This is a national effort, and everyone has their part to play—self-isolating if someone or anyone in their house has symptoms, working from home wherever possible, avoiding social gatherings and, of course, regularly washing your hands.

The Bill provides for us to go further: it gives us stronger powers to restrict or prohibit events and public gatherings and, where necessary, to shut down premises; and it gives the police and Border Force the power to isolate a person who is or may be infectious. This part of the Bill also allows us to close educational settings or childcare providers, and to postpone for one year elections that were due to take place in England in May. These are not measures anyone would want to take, but they are absolutely necessary in this crisis.

Ben Lake (Ceredigion) (PC): The Secretary of State will be aware that over the weekend thousands of people made their way to holiday areas and rural areas such as mine. Do the powers in schedule 21 allow Ministers to require people, in circumstances where local health boards are under increased pressure, to remain in their primary residences?

Matt Hancock: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point, because we have advised against all unnecessary travel and I do not regard going to a holiday home in Wales as a necessary journey. There is a risk of putting extra pressure on the NHS in rural areas from large numbers of people going to second homes, so I entirely understand the concern he has raised. The powers do allow for a constable to take somebody to a place in order to prevent the spread of the infection and make sure that we can police the public health guidance that we have given. We have been absolutely clear in the past few days that if people do not follow this advice, we will not hesitate to act. We acted last week on pubs, clubs and restaurants. We said that people should not go to them, but it was clear that some were still open and so we took the decision to close them down, with enforcement powers for the police and trading standards. This Bill provides those powers more broadly.

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): I am pleased with what the Secretary of State has said, as this is a significant problem. I received more than 1,000 emails over the weekend from constituents who are petrified about what is going on. The highland area makes up more than 10% of the UK landmass, but we have one acute hospital, in Inverness, and some of these tourist destinations are more than three hours from Inverness. We have been inundated with people who showed no concern for the local population. People are saying that they are now being denied the right to travel to the islands by ferry because we have stopped it and they are going to come to Skye. This is a dangerous situation, where they are imperilling the lives of our constituents. They must go home and they must stay at home, as I am sure the Secretary of State would agree.

Matt Hancock: Well, what can I say? I am concerned that people are not following the public health advice.

Wes Streeting: Some holiday companies have been responsible. For example, Sykes Cottages has cancelled a raft of bookings for weeks ahead. However, my hon. Friend the Member for West Ham (Ms Brown), by phone, has raised the fact that lots of Airbnb bookings are still available in holiday resorts. Surely that is irresponsible. If the companies will not do the responsible thing by limiting access to holiday properties, does the Bill give the Government the power to act? If so, will they act to stop this kind of behaviour?

Matt Hancock: If it is deemed a risk to public health, the Bill does give the potential power, through secondary legislation, to take action if that is needed.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): I mean this in a constructive way, but it does feel as though we are constantly behind the curve; we are always waiting for people not to do what we have asked them to do before we then step in and introduce more strict communications. So I beg him: will he underpin this legislation and everything else the Government are doing with a much bigger, wider, louder and more comprehensive public education campaign, because right now the message clearly is not getting through? Anyone who was looking at the coverage over the weekend of people gathering in Richmond park and elsewhere will know that it is not being heard. We need to be doing an awful lot more to be able to catch up and get ahead of this.

Matt Hancock: There is the most comprehensive public communications campaign probably in the history of Government peacetime communications—maybe I will send the hon. Lady a poster.

Alicia Kearns (Rutland and Melton) (Con): The issue of Brits seeking to isolate in remoter parts of the country is a big issue in Rutland. Over the weekend, I went around the constituency, and I saw pile after pile of cars. I saw caravan parks open and hotels advertising self-isolation holidays and breaks in my constituency. Can the Secretary of State confirm, for the benefit of all in the House, that the current guidance is that people should stay in their own homes and not travel for self-isolation holidays or anything of the sort?

Matt Hancock: I agree with my hon. Friend.

Mark Pritchard: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Matt Hancock: I will take one more intervention, and then I will make some progress.

Mark Pritchard: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way; he is being very generous, but these are important issues. On the issue of social distancing, is there something that he feels might happen tomorrow that is not happening today, as far as people's behaviour is concerned? People are gathering in their thousands on the beautiful landmark of the Wrekin in my constituency. It is right that people should have exercise for their physical and mental health and wellbeing, but social distancing is not being followed by many, whether it be in the Wrekin or Holland Park, Hyde Park, St James's Park or counties around the country. What behavioural changes does he expect? Is it not the case that we will have lockdown, and would it not be better to have it today rather than next week?

Matt Hancock: My hon. Friend makes an important point. We are absolutely clear that we are prepared to take the action that is necessary.

The fourth part of the Bill contains measures for managing the deceased in circumstances where many of those involved in the registration and management of death will themselves be self-isolating. We want to ensure that those taken from us by the virus are treated with the utmost dignity, while protecting public health and respecting the wishes of bereaved families. Among other measures, the Bill will expand the list of people who can register a death to include funeral directors. It will mean that coroners only have to be notified where there is not a medical professional available to sign a death certificate. It will allow death certificates to be emailed instead of physically presented. It will remove the need for a second confirmatory medical certificate in order for a cremation to take place, and it gives local authorities the power to take control of elements of the process if needed. Those powers would only be used if absolutely necessary and on clinical advice, but we plan for the worst, even while we work for the best.

Mr Kevan Jones (North Durham) (Lab): The Secretary of State will know that a new medical examiner system has been introduced in many areas, including Durham. Their role is to look into deaths in hospitals, so they will be inundated if there is a large number of deaths.

Is there any provision in the Bill that loosens up their role? Otherwise, they will be overwhelmed by the number of examinations that they will have to do.

Matt Hancock: I very much hope that they will not be. The medical examiners regime is very successful, and as the right hon. Gentleman says, we are expanding it across the country. We do not deem that necessary, not least because we think that we can expand it if necessary. We do not think that there is a need for statutory change in an area that is improving.

Chris Bryant: There may be instances where it is impossible to allow for a normal funeral in the way that one is used to. There might have to be mass funerals or, for that matter, instances where just one person is allowed to attend, apart from the celebrant. I wonder whether it might be possible to ensure that in all local authorities, and in particular crematoria, it is possible to film such moments, so that loved ones at least have an opportunity to feel that they are engaged online, if not in person.

Matt Hancock: I know that the hon. Gentleman speaks from experience of having presided over these events. That is available—increasingly so—and I entirely understand why many people would want that.

The fifth and final part of the Bill includes measures to protect and support people through this crisis. This is not an exhaustive list of everything we plan to do, but the principle is that no one should be punished for doing the right thing and self-isolating if they or someone in their household has symptoms. To make that happen, the Bill will ensure that statutory sick pay is paid from day one, and this will be applied retrospectively from 13 March. Small businesses with fewer than 250 employees will get a full refund for sick pay relating to coronavirus during the course of the emergency. Finally, the Bill will require industry to provide information about food supplies. That all comes alongside our plan for people's jobs and incomes announced by the Chancellor on Friday.

The Bill allows the four UK Governments to activate these powers when they are needed and to deactivate them when they are no longer needed. We ask for these powers as a whole to protect life. We will relinquish them as soon as the threat to life from coronavirus has passed. This Bill means that we can do the right thing at the right time, guided by the best possible science. That science gets better every day. This disease can isolate us, but it cannot separate us from the ties that bind us together. With patience and resolve, with the painstaking use of data and evidence, and with the whole nation working together as one United Kingdom, we will get through this. I commend the Bill to the House.

4.50 pm

Jonathan Ashworth (Leicester South) (Lab/Co-op): May I start by thanking the Secretary of State for his kind words and for the way in which he has continued to keep me updated throughout this process, for the arrangements he has made for us to be briefed by officials and the chief medical officer, for keeping me informed of Government decisions, and for his ongoing engagement on the Bill? I hope that Members across the House understand that when we ask the Secretary of State probing questions, we do so constructively—not

to undermine him or to create some false dividing line for the sake of political point scoring. This is a frightening time for our constituents and we all have an interest in ensuring that the Government get this right. We want the Government to succeed in defeating this virus.

I will make a few remarks about where we are with responding to the virus before moving on to some specific comments about the Bill. As always, our thoughts are with those who have lost loved ones to the virus. Again, let me put on record our praise for the extraordinary efforts of our NHS staff and other dedicated public servants. This unprecedented global health crisis tests each and every one of them like never before; we are forever in their debt.

Today this House is being asked to make decisions of a magnitude that I simply would never have dreamt of only a few weeks ago. I know that no Member came into this place to put powers like this on to the statute book—powers that curtail so many basic freedoms that our forebears fought so hard for, and that so many people today take for granted. But I also know that every Member here will want to do all they can to support all means necessary to save lives and protect our communities in the face of this virus.

This is a global health emergency the like of which the world has never seen since the Spanish flu outbreak over 100 years ago. Throughout this outbreak, I have said that the virus spreads rapidly, exploits ambivalence and thrives on inequality. The Government have quite correctly sought to promote social distancing as a means of reducing person-to-person transmission of the virus. For the most part, these measures have been on a purely voluntary basis, but I am afraid that too many people are still not following the advice. This weekend we will all have seen the pictures of bustling markets, packed tube trains, and busy beaches and parks. I am afraid that the public health messages are still not being heard loud and clear. Everyone who can be at home should be at home. Everyone who can work from home must do so. This House must also send a clear message to young people—millennials—that they are not invulnerable to the virus; they are at risk too.

To be frank, we in this House need to adjust our behaviour as well. I love and respect this Chamber, and I think Members will agree that I relish the cut and thrust of robust debate across these Dispatch Boxes. But if other workplaces can use Zoom calls, Skype, conference calling and so on to make decisions, why can't we? I therefore look forward to the reforms that Mr Speaker is looking into.

Kevin Brennan: It would be remiss of me not to thank my hon. Friend and the Secretary of State for the way in which they are both responding to this crisis—even though they are on opposite sides of the House—in the interests of the whole country. The whole House appreciates the way that both of them have conducted themselves throughout this crisis. On the point that he raises, an acquaintance of mine, who is an NHS nurse, asked:

“Why is the public creating more work for us medical staff and exposing us to the risk of dying?”

I thank him for giving those messages so clearly, but does he think that there is more that can be done to communicate more effectively to the public what social distancing means in practice and how people should behave given the scenes that we have seen this weekend?

Jonathan Ashworth: I agree with my hon. Friend. I did note that the Secretary of State talked about the comprehensive public health advertising campaign. We welcome that campaign, but we encourage the Secretary of State to use his offices to see whether that comprehensive campaign can become even more comprehensive. Can we have more adverts on television and more adverts on radio stations? Can we have a leaflet going through every door, explaining what social distancing means, explaining what shielding means? Before this virus took hold, the words “social distancing” and “shielding” were probably not often used in the Chamber, so if they are not words that we are familiar with, we can bet that our constituents are not entirely familiar with them either.

Mark Pritchard: The shadow Secretary of State will know Telford and Wrekin very well as he has visited them many times in the past 12 months due to flooding and other issues. I am grateful for his visits despite the fact that he is a member of the Opposition. Is he aware that, today, the Labour-led council made a decision, which I support, to close all the public parks, play areas and open spaces that it runs, and that that in turn will put more pressure on the other open spaces that are not currently run by the local authority? May I encourage him to continue to press the Government to move quicker to this lockdown that we all want to avoid, but that will ultimately save lives.

Jonathan Ashworth: I must tell the hon. Gentleman that my attempts to change the political complexion of Telford and Wrekin have completely failed to date, but I am grateful to him for his comments about the Labour council. I think that this is the nub of the matter. I have a point to put to the Secretary of State while he is still in the Chamber. Sadly, it has just been reported on social media that the case fatality figures are continuing to climb and there is some discussion that we are seeing now an exponential growth in line with Italy. I appreciate that there are different demographic issues in different nations, but, clearly, people are concerned that our death rates are increasing at a rate that suggests that we could be heading to an Italian-style situation. We all know what is happening in Italy. The point is that clinicians are warning us that our intensive care bed capacity and our high-dependency unit capacity, could very quickly be overwhelmed. We have already seen a critical incident at one hospital, and no doubt we will see more in the coming days. This is a crisis and it is a crisis that demands an overwhelming Government response.

Sir Edward Leigh: It is vital that we have a sense of national unity on this. If it becomes necessary for the Government to impose a lockdown, which I suspect may well happen if people do not change their behaviour, can we rely on the Opposition to support the Government?

Jonathan Ashworth: The right hon. Gentleman has rather anticipated my point. Looking at the graphs—and I do caveat this with a recognition that different countries have a different demographic profile—we are now beyond the numbers of fatalities that existed in Spain and France when they announced their stricter enforcement measures and their lockdowns. I do not really like the term lockdown, because it means different things in different contexts, but I think that we broadly understand what we are talking about this afternoon. In answer to the right hon. Gentleman's point, we, as Her Majesty's

[Jonathan Ashworth]

Loyal Opposition, do now call on the Government to enforce social distancing and greater social protection as a matter of urgency. I am sorry and disappointed about that, but I am afraid that many people are not adhering to the type of social distancing that we expect.

Imran Hussain: My hon. Friend the shadow Secretary of State is absolutely right in what he says, but there are those who are finding it difficult to socially isolate because of the financial circumstances that they find themselves in. There are self-employed taxi drivers, those in the gig economy and others who are sometimes only just getting by in the first place. There needs to be clear financial packages available to put those people on an equal footing so that they can also take up that measure.

Jonathan Ashworth: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and his point has been made repeatedly by my right hon. Friends the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Chancellor. The challenge of social isolation will not be boredom and fatigue, as some behavioural scientists have suggested; I think the biggest challenge of social isolation will be personal finances, and so on. That is why our proposed measures on sick pay are so important, and it is why we welcomed some of the measures announced by the Chancellor last week, but we think they need to go further.

Caroline Lucas: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way and for taking the issue of communication more seriously than the Secretary of State. We need leaflets going house to house, and we need them in different languages so that different communities can hear this.

The hon. Gentleman's point about a strict lockdown is well made, but I echo what others have said about the importance of guaranteeing economic security to make it much more possible for people to cope with that lockdown, particularly the self-employed who are now struggling so much. Statutory sick pay is not enough for them.

Jonathan Ashworth: The hon. Lady is absolutely right. I am proud to represent the great city of Leicester, which is probably the most diverse city in the United Kingdom—every language in the world is spoken there—so I entirely endorse what she says. If we funded local government properly, it would be able to put such measures in place.

I entirely agree with the hon. Lady's broader point that if we have to ask people to stay at home, or if we have to force them to do so—we would support the Government if they took that action, and I think they do need to take that action—we would also need to provide them with the economic security they rightly deserve.

Stephen Doughty: I thank my hon. Friend for his approach to this issue on a day-to-day basis. I completely support what he says about the need to enforce social distancing, and I know many Members on both sides of the House would do so, too.

I am struck by the contact I have had with friends in Italy and elsewhere who are, frankly, aghast that we have not moved to tougher measures sooner. Anybody looking

at the graphs of the situation in Italy would definitely want to avoid it here, so I wholeheartedly support such measures, but they have to come with the economic measures he rightly talks about.

Jonathan Ashworth: I totally agree.

John Spellar (Warley) (Lab): There is a lot of talk about income, but it is also about expenditure. I have had many complaints from constituents about prices rocketing, particularly for staples, but it is unclear whether that is the fault of the retailers, the cash-and-carry wholesalers or, indeed, the suppliers. The Competition and Markets Authority is looking into it, but I urge the Government to crack down urgently on profiteering from people's difficulty.

Jonathan Ashworth: My right hon. Friend makes an excellent point, and we are seeing it in my constituency. I have had complaints from constituents about exploitative profiteering, so I hope the Government will come forward with some proposals to stamp it out. It is an absolute disgrace that it is happening at this time of national crisis.

Siobhain McDonagh (Mitcham and Morden) (Lab): May I raise, once again, the issue of housing? Social isolation is great, but it is really difficult for people who happen to live with their family in one room in a deeply overcrowded shared house—sharing a kitchen and sharing bathrooms—as so many of my constituents do, particularly when the kids are off school. There needs to be some thought about letting them out in parks and stuff like that, because they do not have gardens.

Jonathan Ashworth: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. I represent an inner-city seat, and I appreciate that her seat is on the outskirts of London but, none the less, our seats have similar demographics. I know full well that many, many families are living in cramped, small flats. There are intergenerational families living with elderly mums, elderly grandmothers and so on who have various comorbidities and who need to be shielded.

If we enter a situation in which we force people to stay at home, I hope the Government will look at how to support such families, because it is quite outrageous that, in many parts of the country—especially in London, but also in my constituency—there are flats with families of nine or 10 people sleeping on the floor, and so on, while property developers have flats standing empty. Why cannot we take over some of those empty flats to house some of these very vulnerable families and to help us get through this national crisis?

Mr David Davis: I commend the hon. Gentleman for the stance he is taking in this debate. The whole House will respect him for it. The series of interventions that he has just taken demonstrates a wider point: the need for the Government, sadly—and I did not think I would ever say this in this House—to get into intrusive levels of planning that we have never seen before, because every time we have a change in the level of ferocity or intensity of our dictating what the state and society should do, we run into a new set of problems, whether that is crowding on tube trains overwhelming our desire for social distancing, or young mothers with children at home finding it very difficult to get to supermarkets and therefore literally running out of food, which is even

more fundamental than running out of money. We need to think forward, and I say that because we have seen in Europe—between Germany, Italy and Spain—very similar policy actions but with completely different outcomes. I suspect that it is because of a different approach taken by the German Government and society from that taken by the Italians or the Spanish, and we have to think about that as we go into the next stage.

Jonathan Ashworth: The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. We are asking people, and are probably on the cusp of probably of forcing people, to radically adjust their behaviour in a way in which we have not been used to for more than 70 years. The last time that we asked people to radically adjust their behaviour was in the second world war. We have generations who are not used to this. We are a society who are used to going where we want, buying what we want, doing what we want and socialising when we want, and clearly, for a lot of people, it is not dawning on them that they will have to change the way they behave. That has huge knock-on effects for how public services will be organised, how the criminal justice system will have to work and how food distribution systems are going to work. It is right that we as parliamentarians continue to ask Government Ministers serious questions about that, but we also have to be aware that we have a responsibility to set an example to the country. We have to socially distance ourselves, so I really hope that the good offices of the Speaker, the Leader of the House and everyone who is involved in House business can quickly find a satisfactory set of procedures for us to continue having our discussions and asking Ministers questions, but not setting the example that we are unfortunately setting today. I am not making any personal criticism of any Member, because it is the situation we are in—we have to debate the Bill today—but we are going to have to hold the Government to account on the far-reaching, extensive powers that they are taking.

Dr Murrison: As always, I am listening with great attention to what the hon. Gentleman has to say. Does he agree that part of the problem is that policy has to be based on behavioural science, but behavioural science is one of the most imprecise of sciences? The difficulty is that it is not like chemistry or physics. It means that we have to have a wider margin of error when designing policy, and what that means, in effect, is erring on the side of caution and safety, which I think is the burden of the direction that he is urging on Ministers. In a sense, it is about getting ahead of the curve by bringing in measures that we would all regret. However, if we are going to base policy on behavioural science—it being fairly inexact and difficult to predict, as we have seen over the weekend—we have to have that margin of error and caution, which I think he is recommending.

Jonathan Ashworth: The right hon. Gentleman has shrewdly interpreted the stance I am taking. Throughout all this, given the way in which the virus has spread so rapidly, its reproduction rate and the mortality rate, I have always urged the Government to take a precautionary principle approach to every decision that they make. I have been a bit sceptical about some of the behavioural modelling that has been used. Let me give him a quick example. Before the Government banned mass gatherings, we were told by Ministers and officials—I hope that no Minister takes this as a personal criticism; I certainly do not mean it in that way—that there is no point in

banning a football match with 70,000 people in the stadium, because the person with the virus is not going to infect the other 70,000 people in the stadium and that if we stop them going to the stadium to watch the match, they would all go to the pub to watch it and infect more people there. I am sure he has heard that example.

I am very proud to represent Leicester City football club, and all the football fans—or a large proportion of them—go to the stadium before the match, and go to the stadium after the match—[HON. MEMBERS: “Pub!”] I beg your pardon, they go to the pub. They go to the pub before the match, and they go after the match—[*Interruption.*] Some of them do avoid the stadium, actually. I am sure that the right hon. Member for South West Wiltshire (Dr Murrison) sees the point I am making. Some of these behavioural models do not always, it would seem, reflect how humans behave. Given that, Ministers and Governments should follow a precautionary principle at all times. That is why Labour is now urging Ministers to come forward with their plans to enforce compulsory social distancing. There are different models in different countries—we have France, Spain and Italy, New Zealand, where they did it overnight, Greece, and Germany, where, other than families, they have banned more than two people from meeting outside the house—but we think that the time has come for the United Kingdom to go down this line. We would encourage the Prime Minister to come forward with plans for how he thinks that this should apply to the UK.

Neale Hanvey (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath) (Ind): Behaviour is changing, and, unfortunately, some of it is unhelpful. Today, I have had probably one of the most upsetting emails that I have received throughout this time from my local foodbank, which tells me that two of the main supermarkets in the area are refusing to sell it food. The people who get that food from the foodbank have no other means of obtaining food in the midst of this crisis. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Government need to speak urgently to the major supermarkets to ensure that foodbanks can secure sufficient supplies for those people who have no other option?

Jonathan Ashworth: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point, and I totally agree that that is an absolute disgrace. I hope that the Government will look into that, because although foodbanks should not be necessary in this day and age, we know that they are vital and I hope that the Government can resolve that swiftly.

I was originally answering the point made by the right hon. Member for South West Wiltshire so long ago: we would support the Government if they came forward with such proposals, but suppressing and defeating the virus is about more than just so-called lockdowns and enforcement. We need more testing, we need more contact tracing and we need more isolation to break the chains of transmission. The World Health Organisation has famously instructed the world to test, test, test—and we agree. Labour has called for testing for the virus to be carried out in our communities on a mass scale, starting with NHS and care staff as a priority. We urge the Government rapidly to scale up testing and we thank all NHS lab staff and PHE staff who are working so hard.

For example, could the Government consider what is happening in the Republic of Ireland, where there are 35 community testing facilities in operation? They have

[Jonathan Ashworth]

six more planned, and the largest, in Croke Park stadium in Dublin, provides a drive-through service that tests 1,000 people a day.

Chris Bryant: I completely agree with my hon. Friend on the need, in particular, to protect all key workers and to therefore make sure that there is testing available for them. Is it not important that at the same time we make sure that path labs have enough resources and capacity to be able to be able, for instance, to do cancer biopsies and get them back to people fast enough, because all those other conditions and diseases that are very time-critical will be just as important?

Jonathan Ashworth: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Path lab and virology labs are under intense pressure, because not only are they being asked to test for covid-19 but they have other testing responsibilities as well, whether that is for HIV, influenza, measles or all the other illnesses that are still circulating and still need to be treated. He makes a very important point.

I hope that Ministers can update us on testing capacity, because looking at the figures it appears that between 21 and 22 March, we did around 5,500 tests, but the previous day we did 8,400 and the day before that about 8,100. I am told that many labs at hospitals have not been able to start testing or are testing at under planned capacity because there are now supply chain issues with the chemicals that are used and the kits to do the testing. If this is the case, could the Government update the House on what they are doing urgently to procure the testing kits we need, and explain why we are not part of the EU joint procurement initiative on testing kits and other equipment?

I emphasise the point I have made in this House before that we really need to be testing our NHS staff. Not testing NHS staff puts them at risk and it puts their patients at risk. This weekend, we heard powerful messages from doctors who were literally shouting out for help and telling us they feel like lambs to the slaughter because of failures in the distribution of protective kit and because they are not able to get access to testing. I have heard of GPs—indeed, GPs have got in touch with me directly telling me this going to DIY stores to make their own PPE kit. It has been reported today that one of the healthcare distribution chains has put out a call to DIY stores asking them to donate or hand over their visors and goggles.

Pharmacists are worried that they cannot get through to CCGs to get appropriate PPE when sick patients are walking through the door daily asking for advice. We have heard stories of community nurses, health visitors and paramedics without PPE. Indeed, *The Daily Telegraph* reports today about staff at Norwick Park Hospital being forced to wear bin bags because of a lack of PPE.

The health, happiness and lives of our constituents, and of their loved ones and neighbours, depend on our NHS staff now more than ever. We should not expect our NHS staff to go into battle exposed and not fully protected—lacking the armour they desperately need. If more PPE has been delivered in the last 24 hours, as the Secretary of State indicated, then we welcome that, but to be frank, it should not have taken so long. Our NHS staff deserve every ounce of support we can offer, and on that front, will Ministers also consider binning hospital car parking charges for NHS staff at this time of crisis?

Those working in critical services more widely—our police, our careworkers, our postal workers—need appropriate protective clothing too. We urge the Government to ensure that all public services can access the appropriate PPE speedily. For example, in *The Sunday Times* yesterday, it was reported that flights continue to arrive at Heathrow from Italy, Iran and China. Those flights are obviously coming from hotspots—perhaps Ministers could explain why that is still happening—but what protections are being afforded to airline and airport workers, and what measures are in place for those passengers on arrival? On the tube and on the train, there is real worry that services are being reduced too steeply, causing our key workers to get on to crowded carriages and putting everyone at risk. What assurances can Ministers give us that there is a sufficiency of public transport services to get our frontline workers safely to their workplace?

Let me turn to some of the specifics in the Bill, and first to the health and social care clauses. On the health clauses—the hon. Member for Twickenham (Munira Wilson) raised this with the Secretary of State—the Bill makes provisions for retired staff and final-year medical and nursing students to rejoin or join the health service for the duration of the pandemic. We understand why, and we welcome this. Can Ministers tell the House, either in response to the debate or in Committee, whether final-year nursing and medical students will be able to return to learning and complete more supported clinical placements, if needed, once the crisis is over? Will Ministers also outline how these students will be fully supported while working during what will undoubtedly be an incredibly stressful time for new doctors and nurses? Will students be properly remunerated for their work, and what protections will be available for retired staff, many of whom could also be in a vulnerable group? I put on record our thanks to those retired staff who have returned to the frontline.

Some of the most vulnerable people in the country absolutely depend on all of us here to defend their human rights and civil liberties, and they are the ones in receipt of adult social care services. On social care, this Bill makes sweeping changes to the duties that are placed on local authorities. It removes the duty to assess care needs, including on discharge from hospital, so there will be no duty to assess people who may need care or to assess their carers, and no duty to assess some of those with the most severe needs who may be eligible for continuing healthcare. Can Ministers reassure us that this will not mean that carers, disabled people and older people are left abandoned by the state until after this crisis?

Most significantly, the Bill downgrades the level of support that councils are obliged to provide to older and disabled people. Rather than the current wellbeing measures, councils will now have to provide services where necessary to uphold people's basic human rights. In short, this means people will only be entitled to receive social care to keep them alive and to uphold their rights to privacy and a family life. Obviously, that is not the vision for social care that we legislated for in 2014, but we all appreciate that these are incredibly difficult times.

Many older and disabled people, and their families, will be concerned that this will lead to existing care packages being significantly reduced overnight. Local authorities are already struggling to meet statutory needs, and increasing levels of workforce absence will

only make that harder. None of us wants to see the new legal minimum of support become the default. Where local authorities can provide more comprehensive packages of support, they should, and they should always bear in mind that people who use social care are not simply passive recipients; there are doctors and nurses who rely on social care, as well as teachers, shop staff, food manufacturers and countless other vital professionals. When councils reduce care packages, they must be careful not to end up causing yet more difficulties for staff in crucial services.

Catherine West: Does my hon. Friend agree that, since the courts are likely to be stood down, and in a context where disabled people often use them to ensure that their rights are protected, we are in a doubly difficult situation for disabled people and elderly people?

Jonathan Ashworth: Absolutely. That is why these particular clauses must be scrutinised so carefully by Members across the House.

We have tabled amendments to schedule 11. We recognise that there will be difficulties delivering social care over the coming weeks and months, but it should not be possible for local authorities to immediately drop care packages to a lower level. As long as it is reasonably practicable to do so, they should continue to meet people's care needs. The presumption should always be that services will be disrupted as little as they can be under the circumstances. Nothing in our amendments would stop a local authority cutting back care hours if it had to, but they would mean that disabled and older people could be reassured that any reductions in their care will be a last resort, and that their independence will not be the first sacrifice to be made.

There are particular concerns about people who live alone or are being held in in-patient units and care homes. We have seen visits to those settings stopped as part of the Government's shielding approach, and the CQC has halted all inspections, but we know from incidents such as Whorlton Hall that it is too easy for abuse to go unnoticed—something the current situation could make worse. How will we ensure that in-patient units and care homes do not become hotbeds of abuse of human rights over the coming months?

Mr David Davis: That is precisely why I asked the Secretary of State whether, when we get to the six-month review and renewal of this legislation, we will be able to amend it. If there is oppressive behaviour in one part or another of it while the rest is all very important to the survival of our people, what stance will the Labour party take?

Jonathan Ashworth: The right hon. Gentleman is right: we cannot just have a take-it-or-leave-it approach to these things. Tonight, the House will give the Government extraordinary powers, like we have never seen before, and it is right that we parliamentarians are given an opportunity, after the appropriate timeframe, to look at how those powers have been used and hold Ministers to account. I agree with the spirit of the point he makes, although I cannot at this stage—I suppose it may emerge later in the debate—give him a commitment one way or the other on a particular amendment. We will see how the discussions proceed throughout the afternoon, but I certainly endorse the spirit of what he says. As I say, these are extraordinary powers that the House will grant the Government this week.

We have tabled a new clause related to schedule 11. We propose that a relevant body, such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission, should be tasked with overseeing the Bill's impact on the provision of social care. That body would have to report every eight weeks on the operation of these changes and whether they should be amended. It would provide the oversight that is needed to prevent people's rights from being undermined.

One of the ways the Bill seeks to free up medical staff is by relaxing the requirements of the Mental Health Act 1983. Specifically, only one medical professional will have to agree to someone's being sectioned, rather than the two it currently takes. The scale of that change should not be underestimated. No longer will a decision to section a person have to be taken in consultation by two doctors. There will be no requirement for anyone involved to have had prior involvement with the patient. Medical professionals are going to be under huge pressure in the coming months, and mistakes may well be made.

The Bill says that a decision should be taken on the basis of one signature if requiring a second signature would be

“impractical or would involve undesirable delay.”

That seems to be too vague and potentially open to misreading. I hope Ministers can tell us what exactly that means and what safeguards will be put in place to prevent the change from being misused. Our amendments to schedule 7 would narrow the provision so that a second signature could be left off only if acquiring it would mean an undesirable delay. If something is impractical, it will by definition create an undesirable delay. By narrowing the wording in the Bill, we can avoid the potential misuse of powers.

We propose changes to ensure that private mental health hospitals cannot detain someone solely on the single recommendation of one of their employees. That could create a conflict of interest whereby a doctor comes under pressure to sign a detention authorisation because doing so will provide their employer with income from the NHS. No medical professional should be put under that kind of pressure, and our amendment would ensure that they cannot be. *[Interruption.]* Is the hon. Member for Bracknell (James Sunderland) seeing to intervene?

James Sunderland (Bracknell) (Con) *indicated dissent.*

Jonathan Ashworth: The Bill extends to five days from three the length of time for which somebody in hospital can be held waiting to be sectioned. That may seem like a minor change, but for the individual concerned it could make a significant difference. I hope Ministers can reassure the House that the intention should still be to adhere to the timetable set out in the Mental Health Act, with the changes we are discussing to be used only if absolutely necessary.

Let me turn to some of the proposals on education and schooling. Many parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities will understand the need for flexibility during this difficult time, but they are also extremely nervous that they could see the erosion of the hard-fought-for rights of disabled children and young people, children and young people with special educational needs, and their families. The Bill gives the Secretary of State powers to change section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014: rather than giving children rights in law, it would only request that public

[Jonathan Ashworth]

bodies take “reasonable endeavours”. That sets a low bar, and we will seek to change that provision to a duty to take all practical steps, which will go much further.

Let me move on to some of the other issues in the Bill. Others have alluded to concerns that the Bill still does not go far enough in providing people with the incomes that they need to self-isolate. We welcome much of the Chancellor’s statement last Friday setting out plans to support the incomes of workers impacted by the coronavirus outbreak. However, there are still some gaps in the provisions that were offered. Currently, the proposal for income support through the job retention scheme does not include the self-employed and freelancers, whose incomes are increasingly being seriously affected by the coronavirus outbreak. Will the Government today offer assurances to those groups of workers, who do not have a safety net to safeguard and help them through this time?

We have welcomed the new Government measures to improve access to statutory sick pay for workers. However, the Bill does not extend eligibility to all workers, including the just under 2 million workers who earn less than the qualifying threshold of £118 a week on average. It does not raise the level of statutory sick pay, which is, at £94.25, already the second lowest rate in Europe. We hope the Government will respond on those issues quickly because, as we have continually said throughout this crisis, people should not be expected to make a choice between their health and hardship.

Nobody should lose their home because of this virus. It is welcome that Ministers have listened to Labour and committed to an evictions ban for renters, but despite the Prime Minister’s promises that the Government would legislate to that effect, no such measures are in the Bill. Some 8.5 million households rent their home from a private, council or housing association landlord in England. Our analysis of Government statistics shows that 6 million renting households have no savings at all and are particularly vulnerable if they lose their job or have their hours cut as a result of coronavirus. To give people confidence and reassurance during this difficult time and to ensure that no renter loses their home as a result of coronavirus, rent needs to be suspended for those adversely affected by the impact of the coronavirus outbreak.

Like many Members across the House, the Opposition support this Bill with a very heavy heart—heavy not just with the shock and grief that this deadly virus has brought, but given the very real threats that emergency powers of this nature pose to human rights. The Bill contains the most draconian powers ever seen in peacetime Britain—powers to detain and test potentially infectious members of the public, including children, in isolation facilities; powers to shut down gatherings, which could impede the ability to protest against the overall handling of the crisis or against the abuse of the powers themselves. It needs no explanation and very little imagination to understand the huge potential for abuse that such powers and others in the Bill, however well intended and needed, still give rise. Those words will chill every liberal and libertarian instinct of Members across this House, which is why we were grateful to the Health Secretary and the Solicitor General for discussing these measures with us and with my shadow Cabinet colleagues in the rapid preparation stage of this Bill.

We have heard many wartime analogies in the press. Many here have talked about Winston Churchill. Of course, Churchill was remembered not only for victory in the war, but for the European convention on human rights at the end of the war. Notwithstanding the anti-Human Rights Act and anti-judicial review grumblings that we have heard in recent times, this Bill comes under the cover of a statement of compatibility under section 19 of the Human Rights Act. Further, the Bill does not attempt to oust the supervisory jurisdiction of the courts. That means that every exercise of Executive power or administrative action under the legislation must and will be measured against human rights and common-law standards. These include necessity, proportionality, rationality, fairness and, crucially, non-discrimination. I thank the Government for that concession on their part and for agreeing, I hope once and for all, that human rights and the rule of law, far from impeding national efforts in time of crisis, should instead guide and inspire them.

It is important that various measures in the Bill, some interfering with liberties and others deregulating standards, may be turned on and off, as and when needed, by the appropriate Administration under our devolution settlement. It is welcome that the Bill contains a two-year sunset clause, but as we have discussed, two years is a very long time in normal days and longer still in the context of this pandemic. That is why we tabled an amendment last week seeking parliamentary votes on the renewal or revocation of these emergency powers at six-monthly intervals. Indeed, many of us would prefer even more frequent reviews, but given the particular challenge even for Parliament of this crisis, I am glad that the Government seem to have moved some way towards the compromise offered by the Opposition in the constitutional interest.

Mr Steve Baker: I welcome the spirit in which the hon. Gentleman is making his speech and also his proposal for a review at six months. I certainly support that, but does he agree that we could also sunset the powers in the Bill after one year and that the Government could then bring forward a Bill—there is plenty of time between now and then—that would go through Parliament about this time next year and make whatever changes proved to be necessary between now and then? Doing that—a six-month review and, after a year, a Bill—would not involve us signing off on two years today.

Jonathan Ashworth: As I understand it, our amendment calls for a review every six months, but the hon. Gentleman makes an interesting point, to which I am sure Ministers will respond in Committee, when we get to that point later.

I hope the Government will be able to explain the differences between their amendment and ours, and to reassure the House that there will not be large exceptions to the six-monthly review, especially in England, which has only this House to hold Executive power to account.

We have been scrutinising the Bill on behalf of our constituents. None of us came into politics to put a Bill like this on the statute book, and I for one will never rest until the day comes, hopefully not too far away, when I can come to this House and vote to get to get rid of it. But what we have seen in recent months is concerning, if not frightening, all our constituents, and it is right that

we are taking the powers that we are taking today, although we have to continue to hold Government to account. We will overcome this virus, and when we do, serious lessons will have to be learned. The crisis has exposed the vulnerability of a society in which insecure work is rife, deregulation is king and public services are underfunded. When we come out on the other side, as we will, we have to build a society that puts people first.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. It has been very important that right hon. and hon. Members have had the opportunity to intervene on the Secretary of State and the shadow Secretary of State, but that has inevitably meant that the opening speeches have been somewhat longer than normal. There is, therefore, immense pressure on time. I would say two things. Those who have intervened a lot might feel that they have made their points and might not want to make a speech. There is also, I would point out, Committee stage, where a lot of issues can be raised. It is very difficult to see how everybody who has put their name down for Second Reading, which has to finish at eight o'clock, can all get in, but I start by urging colleagues to stick to five minutes—obviously that does not include the leader of the SNP. That way we can hopefully get as many people in as possible.

5.36 pm

Jeremy Hunt (South West Surrey) (Con): The Health Secretary is not in his place—understandably—but I want to start with a tribute to him. I think I am the only other person in this House who has sat behind his desk, and I can testify that even without a pandemic it takes years off your life. The Health Secretary has made himself exhaustively available. He has worked tirelessly, and no one could have done more or better to prepare the NHS for the crisis we now face. I also want to thank the shadow Secretary of State for the way that he has risen to the challenge of his role. All of us as parliamentarians are proud of the exchanges that we have had this afternoon and on many occasions.

Ordinarily, our role as MPs is to scrutinise every detail of legislation, to understand it and to try to improve it. There are many questions about this legislation, but we are in a national emergency and every day we delay could cost lives. So I support the Bill 100% and I encourage all colleagues to do the same. A week ago, the Government said we were four weeks behind Italy. That then changed to three weeks behind Italy, and today our mortality rates are just two weeks behind Italy. Our hospitals, especially in London, are filling up. We have had a critical incident at one, and others say they are running out of ICU beds. According to the papers, we have one nurse fighting for her life in an intensive care unit. One London hospital has seven doctors with the virus in just that one hospital. Yet still people are going to shops, parks, beaches and holiday homes as if nothing has changed. It may be too late to avoid following Italy, but to have any chance at all of doing so we must move now to lockdown rules that ban non-essential travel. It is time not just to ask people to do social distancing, but to enforce those social distancing rules—not next week, not this week, but right away. I support the call by the shadow Secretary of State to do that, and it is very important we do so as soon as we possibly can.

The Bill can help in two areas. The first is on protective equipment for staff. Last week, Sir Simon Stevens told the Health and Social Care Committee that there were sufficient national supplies of PPE, but there were distribution problems. Since then, I know that the Government have moved heaven and earth to try to resolve those. All hospitals have had deliveries, and I pay tribute to the Health Secretary and everyone in the Department for achieving that, but there is still a lot of concern on the frontline. The main reason for that is because on 6 March Public Health England downgraded the recommendations as to what PPE doctors should use. That appeared to be at odds with World Health Organisation recommendations. I understand that has now been clarified by Professor Keith Willett in a message sent out on Friday that does bring our advice more into line with WHO guidelines.

Most importantly, the advice now makes it clear that doctors should wear goggles if there is any risk of being sprayed, but obviously doctors would feel vastly more secure with more extensive protection, such as full-length gowns and FFP3 masks. Is not the solution just to order manufacturers to make more of that vital equipment—not just a little more, but massively more? If that needs legal powers, the Bill should give the Government those powers to require every factory that is able to devote itself to the production of that life-saving equipment to do so.

Numerous doctors have died across the world, including Dr Li Wenliang, the courageous Chinese doctor who first tried to blow the whistle on this virus. Twenty-three doctors have died in Italy. This weekend, France lost its first doctor. None of us wants that here. Given the total determination of the Health Secretary to protect our frontline staff, would he urgently look into whether we need to manufacture more of the highest-grade equipment?

Dr Murrison: Does my right hon. Friend share my dismay at my being told just now that masks and PPE that were meant to be delivered to my authority, Wiltshire, tomorrow, will now be delivered on 9 April? I am not sure what the situation is in Surrey, but that seems extraordinary. Does he also agree that it has to be the right PPE—it cannot simply be a paper face mask from B&Q, as we heard earlier? It needs to be appropriate, and people need to know how it works. When they wear it, they are likely to have to work harder, because wearing PPE is not easy or straightforward.

Jeremy Hunt: My right hon. Friend knows, as a clinician—and I am concerned—that in our desire to get PPE out we have not understood the vital role that local authorities play in this. Residents in care homes are extremely vulnerable, and their carers need that equipment, so I very much support his concern about that.

The second area where the Bill needs to do more is testing. A week ago today our strategy changed from mitigation to suppression. I strongly support that change in strategy. Suppression strategies are being followed very successfully in South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and China, which appear to have turned back the virus. Here, all our public focus has been on social distancing, but testing and contact tracing to break the chain of transmission are every bit as important, if not more important. Those countries that have turned back the virus rigorously track and test every case and

[Jeremy Hunt]

every suspected case, then identify every single person with whom a covid-19 patient has been in contact to take them out of circulation. As a result, those countries have avoided the dramatic measures and some of the economic damage that we have seen in Europe.

South Korea has avoided national lockdown, despite having a worse outbreak than us; Taiwan introduced temperature screening in malls and office buildings, but kept shops and restaurants open—it has had just two deaths. In Singapore, restaurants remain open and schools are reopening, although working from home is discouraged. Again, in Singapore, there have been just two deaths. Ten days ago in this country, we went in the opposite direction, and stopped testing in the community. How can we possibly suppress the virus if we do not know where it is? So far, we have had 281 deaths, tragically. According to the modellers, there is about one death per 1,000 cases, which means that we have just under 300,000 cases in this country. According to the same modellers, the number of cases is doubling every five days, which means that at the end of next week we will have about 1 million cases or more in this country. Unless we radically change direction, we will not know where those 1 million cases are.

The Prime Minister talked about expanding testing from 5,000 to 10,000 to 25,000, which is welcome. He even talked about 250,000 tests a day, which would be more than anywhere in the world—I welcome that ambition, but ambition is not the same as a national plan, and we have not seen a national plan on testing.

Munira Wilson: The right hon. Gentleman may have seen reports today that some care providers are refusing to take patients being discharged from hospitals because those hospitals are unable to test them before discharge. Quite understandably, care homes are concerned about admitting patients who may be carrying the virus, given the other vulnerable people there. Does he agree that as testing is ramped up, not only health and care professionals but patients being discharged should be a priority?

Jeremy Hunt: I am very worried about that. A doctor in my constituency told me of exactly the same problem, and of course, the risk is that hospitals then fill up and do not have the space to treat people who urgently need hospital treatment.

We have an ambition to increase testing to 25,000 tests a day, but at the moment we are still only testing between 5,000 and 8,000 people every day. On Saturday, we tested 5,500, which is no significant increase on a week ago. It is not just South Korea that is testing more than us per head of population—Germany, Australia and Austria are as well. Now is the time for a massive national mobilisation behind testing and contact tracing.

If we have the antibody test, now is the time to become the first country in the world that says, “We are going to test every single citizen.” Now is the time to introduce weekly tests for NHS and social care staff, to reduce the risk of them passing on the virus to their patients. If the Francis Crick Institute in London is doing any research into anything other than covid-19 right now, it should stop—we need it to be designing tests. If the Sanger Institute in Cambridge is still decoding genomes, it should not be—we need it to process covid-19 tests.

And it is not just the science. Contact tracing is manpower-intensive, yet Public Health England has just 280 people devoted to this. We probably need 280 people in every city and county in the country. Every local government official doing planning applications, every civil servant working on non-corona issues and volunteers all should be mobilised in this vital national task.

As we have heard, testing is vital for NHS staff who are desperate to get back to work. Here is one tweet from a midwife called Katie Watkins, who speaks for so many:

“I know this is happening all over but had to call in sick for my clinical shift on labour ward today as my husband spiked a temperature last night. I feel fine and yet cannot go to work... Where are the tests for #NHS staff?? I could be helping but instead sat at home.”

Testing is also vital for the economy. If we are going to have a year of stop-go as we try to protect the NHS if the virus comes back, testing and contact tracing allows an infinitely more targeted approach and way to control the spread of the virus than economic measures that are much more blunderbuss and do much more damage. This Bill could help that by giving the Government powers to require any pharmaceutical company in the country to manufacture tests and any laboratory in the country to process those tests. It could stop the scandal of £375 tests being available to wealthy people in Harley Street when, in a crisis, every spare test should be used by NHS staff to get them back to work.

This Bill could help with something else being done very successfully in South Korea and Taiwan: the use of mobile phone data. In those countries, they look at the mobile phones of covid patients to identify other phones that they have been nearby when that patient was infectious. That has civil liberty implications, but in this national emergency, being able to do that would save lives, so those powers too should be in the Bill.

Finally, please do not take my word for it on testing. Dr Tedros Adhanom, the director general of the World Health Organisation, and virtually every epidemiologist at the World Health Organisation makes the same point: it is not possible to “fight a fire blindfolded”; social distancing measures and hand washing will not alone extinguish the epidemic; and “our key message is: test, test, test.”

I know that time is short, but I want to touch briefly on two other issues. Some good points have been made about social care this afternoon. The Bill replaces local authorities’ duty to meet care needs with a power to meet care needs, except when it is a breach of human rights. Bluntly, there may be less provision of social care as a result. We understand in this House why that may be necessary, but if it lasts as long as a year, that will mean more pressure, not less pressure, on hospitals. If there was any lesson from my time as Health Secretary, it is that we need to invest in social care as well as in health. We need to ensure that these new measures do not have the unintended consequence of putting yet more pressure on hospitals that are already on the point of falling over.

My final point is on mental health. Under the measures in the Bill, someone can be sectioned not by two doctors, but by one, and that doctor does not have to know the patient. I understand why we have to take these measures, but obviously it causes huge concerns in the mental health community that someone could be locked up on

the say-so of a doctor who does not even know them. I want a commitment from the Government that all cases will be reviewed on the basis of the current procedures as soon as this virus is behind us, and certainly within the first three months.

I end my remarks with a tribute to frontline staff, not from me, a politician, but from an eight-year-old constituent of mine called Tamsin. She says:

“I really want thank all the doctors and nurses who are working so hard to look after all the sick people...they are all risking their own lives to try and stop the coronavirus instead of being safe at home. I’m missing my Nana, Gamma and Grampy a lot because they have to be isolated at home but if they get sick they will need the doctors and nurses to help them get better. Doctors and nurses are amazing.”

Tamsin is right. We must not let them down.

5.51 pm

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt). I do not think he will mind my saying that I cannot think of another time when I have agreed with almost every single word he said. I hope that people listen to his wise words, which come from his experience; there was an awful lot in his speech that was sobering. The way we are conducting this debate and the collegiate style of the contributions from the Secretary of State and the shadow Secretary of State are a testament to the importance of the crisis we are all experiencing. In this national emergency, the desire shared by all our constituents is that we all work together.

I will begin by saying something that is often repeated, but cannot be said enough. On behalf of all who sit on the Scottish National party Benches, I thank all of those who work in our NHS—our doctors, our nurses and all those in support roles around them who day after day make the choice to go into work, literally risking their own health to save the lives of others. At a time when the fragility of human life occupies the thoughts of us all, their example, their care and their limitless compassion are a source of inspiration and comfort to us all. They are nothing short of heroic. In return, they deserve all our thanks, but even more important, they need all our support. Today we would all do well to keep it in mind that the primary purpose of the emergency legislation is to help them—to help those who work in our NHS across all these islands. They need our help to slow the spread of this virus. They need our help to flatten the curve of infection. They need our help to reduce the pressure on their services.

In passing these emergency measures, we have to be fully transparent and open. That means being honest about the uncertainty of the timeline ahead. There are few things we can say for certain, but we know we are only in the foothills of this mountainous challenge. There remains a long way to go. We have to be honest that in fighting this virus, we may only be approaching the end of the beginning. No one knows for sure when this will end, but we do know that NHS and governmental action will not be enough on its own. Everyone has a part to play. We can get through this and overcome it only if we all work together.

On the specifics of the Bill, first, I am pleased to confirm that the Scottish Government have worked constructively with the UK Government on this legislation. It is important to say that, given the context of the last

few years. It is no secret that there has been a virtual stand-off in other legislation, but the joint efforts and the extensive co-operation on this Bill highlight the extraordinary public health and economic challenges posed by the virus. Passing this legislation is fundamentally about protecting and saving lives. Politics cannot and will not be allowed to get in the way of that.

The Scottish Government tabled their legislative consent motion, with advice to approve consent, in Holyrood last Thursday. The LCM will now be considered by the Finance and Constitution Committee at Holyrood on Tuesday morning, and will be debated in the chamber on Tuesday afternoon. The urgency of that timeline is, unfortunately, necessary. It is clear, and we accept, that this Bill cannot be scrutinised in the way we would normally wish. The immediacy of the pandemic, and the unprecedented challenges facing Scotland and the rest of the UK, simply does not permit that. The stark reality is that there is simply no time to lose.

Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson (Lagan Valley) (DUP): There is common cause even between Unionists and nationalists on this issue. The Northern Ireland Assembly will tomorrow give consideration to the legislative consent motion. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that before this legislation is enacted and enforced, the Government must move swiftly to give the self-employed people whom he and I represent the reassurance they need that they will be supported?

Ian Blackford: I am happy to say that I completely agree. My right hon. Friend and I were in meetings with the Prime Minister last Friday morning, and there was a consensus about the economic measures that had to be taken for those who were in employment—one of the reasons being that we were fearful of the potential risks of unemployment if we did not take those measures. I commend the Government for the actions that were taken and the announcements made last Friday afternoon, but there is unfinished business for the self-employed and the unemployed. Collectively, we need to work together to do what we need to do in order to secure the incomes of those we are asking to take action to protect themselves and the rest of us over the course of the coming months. I hope that the Chancellor will be in a position to meet Opposition leaders over the course of the next few hours, and to come to the House tomorrow to tell us all what we are going to do to ensure that we protect the interests of absolutely all our citizens.

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): A number of Glasgow taxi drivers live in my constituency and they are self-employed. Over the weekend and last week, many have taken their cars off the road. May I say to the Government, through my right hon. Friend, that time is really running out? We need the Chancellor to come to the Chamber tomorrow to make it crystal clear that support will be given to taxi drivers and lots of other self-employed people, including those in the wedding industry. The measures that have been brought forward so far are very good, but time is literally running out for self-employed people.

Ian Blackford: I agree. I hope that the Minister might make some reference to this issue when she sums up later. We are respectfully saying to the Government: let us work together to ensure that we can offer the financial

[*Ian Blackford*]

security that all our citizens need, whether we are talking about taxi drivers in Glasgow, or the people who provide bed-and-breakfast accommodation and guest houses in my constituency, whom I am asking to shut their doors. It is important that we provide the financial security that they all need.

It is impossible to overstate the scale and seriousness of this health and economic emergency. None of us has witnessed or experienced anything like this before. It is no exaggeration to say that the covid-19 threat is the biggest challenge that we have faced since the second world war. That is the frame of mind that all of us should be in. It is for that reason—the extremity of this time—that we welcome the measures in the Bill. They are the measures that we need to fight this virus. The breadth of measures contained in this legislation reflect the enormity of the challenge across these islands. They also include bespoke provisions for Scotland to reflect our different legal system. For the public looking on today, it is crucial that we explain fully the powers that are being discussed and sought, and the reasons for them. They include additional public health measures to assist with the containment or mitigation of the spread of disease.

Neale Hanvey (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath) (Ind): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Ian Blackford: Give me some time and I will. The part of the world I live in, the highlands, needs the powers in this Bill if we are to protect our population, and I know that the same goes for the constituencies of many other right hon. and hon. Members, not least the hon. Member for St Austell and Newquay (Steve Double), whom I know has been outspoken on this in the past few days.

Let me put on the record the challenge we are facing. The Highland Council landmass is 25,656 sq km, and of course that area does not include Argyll, the Northern Isles or the Western Isles. That Highland Council area makes up 32% of the landmass of Scotland and 10.5% of the UK landmass, yet we have one acute hospital, in Inverness. For many, that hospital will be more than three hours' drive from home. Just think about that. If a hospital in an urban area has an issue with capacity, people can often be transferred to another hospital, but we do not have that opportunity in the highlands, as we have that one hospital. I am asking everyone who is thinking about coming to the highlands to think about that threat to our NHS.

I have been working with the NHS and talking to the police, and on the back of what we have been witnessed over the weekend I would like, with the forbearance of the House, to read out a press release from the chief executive of NHS Highland yesterday. It stated:

“As a community we in the Highlands, Argyll and Bute are friendly, welcoming and hospitable to the thousands of visitors we get all year every year. However, we are currently in a situation that has never been experienced before and for the first time we are making a plea for you to stay away.

We have heard that there are many people using campervans/motorhomes to make their way to the Highlands and Argyll and Bute as a way to self-isolate during this period. Please don't.

National advice is quite clear that we, as a nation, need to stay at home, self-isolate and stop all non-essential travel. This includes using our area as a safe haven.

We have asked our communities in NHS Highland to do everything they can to stay safe. This includes self-isolating, working from home (where possible), and limiting their contact with the outside world.”

That is a very clear and a very stark message.

Neale Hanvey: This situation is fluid and ever-changing, and I am sure everyone is receiving multiple emails about the changes in their constituencies. My right hon. Friend makes a point about the need to self-isolate. That is an essential part of any infection-control programme, and this is a public health emergency. Constituents have contacted me today to say that their employer, Amazon, is refusing to pay members of staff who have self-isolated unless they can prove that they have had a positive covid-19 test. That is forcing people to make the choice to go into work and not self-isolate. Does he agree that that is reckless behaviour on the part of Amazon?

Ian Blackford: That is the height of irresponsibility, and Amazon and anybody else who would behave in that way needs to think again. Of course there are companies that are engaging in best practice. I have had a number of complaints from people in the highlands about those who have not been doing the right thing, but let me thank Highland Experience Tours, which has suspended all its activities and sent its drivers home. The hon. Member for Ilford North (Wes Streeting) mentioned Sykes Cottages, and I have to disagree with what he said, because its behaviour has been absolutely reprehensible. Let me read to Members what Sykes Cottages sent to me on Saturday. It said, “Given concerns surrounding the current outbreak, it is understandable that people want to arrange private accommodation in more remote locations to distance themselves from larger towns and cities. The latest Government advice does not prohibit travel in the UK. We are continuing to provide a service for customers.” That is a service to customers to come from the urban areas; it is deliberately creating the circumstances whereby their customers should come to self-isolate in an area where we have limited public health capabilities. That simply is not good enough.

I am delighted to say that, under pressure, the site has now relented and is stopping new bookings in the highlands and islands over the next few weeks, but it has sent a considerable number of people up to the highlands who are there today. The site should be delivering immediate advice to all those guests that they should return home to their place of origin.

I give the same message to those with holiday homes and second homes in the highlands: “Do not come to the highlands. Do not put additional pressure on our public services. We will welcome tourists back to the highlands once this emergency is over, but do not threaten the health of our constituents.” In my district, like in many rural areas, 35% of the population is aged over 65. We have to think about the needs of those living in such areas.

In addition to the sites I have mentioned, Cottages.com is refusing to allow cottage owners to cancel bookings without a penalty, which is simply not good enough. As this is now in the public domain, I hope all these providers will now think about their responsibilities.

As I have mentioned, some providers are behaving more responsibly. HomeAway has guidance on its booking site for giving refunds to those who cancel, but I will read one last email from somebody living in the Lake district:

“My family and I were due to take up a holiday home rental from the 28th March. We will stay away and remain in the Lake District where we live.

However you might be interested to learn that the owner of this holiday home, let through HomeAway, is refusing (at present) to cancel my booking, refund my payment of £957 or move my reservation to next year. He maintains that Skye is an ideal place to self-isolate...and as the home is available he is refusing to refund the total of my booking fee.”

[Interruption.] I can hear an hon. Member shout, “Shocking.” Skye, or anywhere else in the west highlands, is no place for anyone to self-isolate, and I hope this cottage owner, and others who are behaving in such a reprehensible manner, changes their ways.

Of course, it is not just those who are providing accommodation. Everyone knows about the Harry Potter films and the attractions of the rail line from Fort William to Mallaig. The steam trains, which operate on a regular basis, are due to start on 6 April. What on earth is the Jacobite steam train company thinking? These train trips, along with every other visitor attraction in the west highlands, must close, and they must close today.

This is my message to anyone thinking of coming to the highlands: “You will be made welcome when this is over but, for the time being, stay at home. If you are in the highlands now, please go home. The Scottish Government have already announced that ferry traffic will be prohibited for those on non-essential journeys, but you have the ability to return home today. Please do so.”

This Bill includes badly needed powers to allow more health and social care workers to join the workforce. That includes removing barriers to allow recently retired NHS staff and social workers to return to work, as well as bringing back those on a career break and bringing in social work students to become temporary social workers. It has to be said that the number of doctors, nurses and carers already seeking to re-register to help in this emergency has been one of the most uplifting stories of this crisis. The Bill allows that process to become much easier. Its provisions also allow for the relaxation of regulatory requirements within existing legislation to ease the burden on staff who are on the frontline of our response.

The next few weeks and months need simply to be about saving as many lives as possible. Try as we might to save these lives, unfortunately the truth is that this virus will inevitably end up with many of our people dying before their time. That terrible reality is why it is right that this legislation includes special arrangements and provisions to manage an increase in the number of deceased persons with respect and dignity.

Finally, something my party has raised repeatedly since the early stage of this crisis is the economic interventions required to help our people through this emergency period. I note that the legislation includes provisions to support the economy, including on statutory sick pay, that are aimed at lessening the impact of covid-19 on small businesses. While we have welcomed many of the measures brought forward by the Chancellor,

we have put it on record that more needs to be done. The self-employed and the unemployed, whom we talked about earlier, need to be considered. They are under pressure and they need to know that we have got their backs. They need the security of a guaranteed income. We now have an opportunity to overhaul and fix the universal credit system—ending the delays, uprating the level of support and scrapping the bedroom tax. If we are to fight this virus together, we must ensure that everyone is supported equally and that no one—no one—is left behind.

The emergency and extensive powers in this legislation have rightly raised questions and concerns, many of which we have heard this afternoon. The imposition of measures that will significantly alter individual liberties deserves full and frank scrutiny, no matter the context. We know that the Bill sunsets after two years. However, there are serious concerns over the two-year period and the scrutiny of this measure. I know that aspects of the Bill and amendments to it will be discussed at later stages. I hope that the Government will look carefully at the safeguards of regular reporting, review and renewal if it is required.

Mr David Davis: The right hon. Gentleman is making a powerful speech. As he knows, I have an amendment in Committee to change two years to one year. I asked the Health Secretary whether we would be able to amend or delete an element of the legislation at the six-month review; otherwise, we will perhaps be faced with eight good bits of legislation and one or two bits that are doing badly, and we will be forced to vote the whole thing through, rendering it a rubber stamp. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that either my amendment or a variant of the amendment tabled by the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman), which would allow us to change the Act, would be a better way forward?

Ian Blackford: I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that that would be a very good way forward. It is important that we enact the Bill, but the House must have oversight of it in the period ahead. I commend him for his approach.

The Scottish Government have pledged to have appropriate reporting on how and when they will use the powers in the Bill. They will embed such reporting and renewal in law. They have stressed that the creation of these additional powers does not mean we will automatically be required to use them. I hope the UK Government follow that lead and give assurances in the remaining stages this evening.

The emergency powers and the extent of the legislation demonstrate what all of us are faced with. This is not a normal time. Unfortunately, the truth is that none of us will live normally for some time to come. As the First Minister has said, if individuals are continuing to live normally, they need to ask themselves if they are following all the scientific advice. The sheer speed of the spread of this deadly virus has shocked us all. It has naturally made us reflect on the way we live and the vulnerability to which we are all exposed. Equally, it has demonstrated our dependence on one another. We live in an ever smaller world and the major challenges we all face are the same; we can only face them together.

[*Ian Blackford*]

The provisions in this legislation are about saving as many lives as possible during the biggest health emergency this planet has faced in 100 years. If we do not take immediate and unprecedented actions, we will be responsible for putting people at risk. If we act fast, we know that we can save thousands of lives. It is as simple and as clear as that. Never has a more important responsibility been placed upon all of us. Saving these lives must be our sole focus.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. I will put a five-minute limit on speeches from here on in.

6.15 pm

Theresa Villiers (Chipping Barnet) (Con): There can be no doubt that this is an extraordinary Bill for extraordinary times. As others have said this afternoon, when we put our names forward to stand for election to this House none of us must have contemplated the day when we would be asked to back legislation of this kind, but back it we must, and we must do so today.

It is hard to find the words to comment intelligently on a situation that has been so exhaustively analysed and debated by the media and in every household and workplace the length and breadth of this country and of much of the rest of the world. Let me provide some reassurance: my slightly hoarse tone relates to a condition that I have had in my vocal cords since August, so it is nothing to do with covid-19. If it were, I would be back at home self-isolating.

Let me express my sympathy and support to everyone across the country who is grappling with this disease, who has had their lives turned upside down by this disease, or who have lost loved ones. I have not experienced anything like this in my 15 years in this place, nor, indeed, in my whole lifetime. It is difficult to point to any crisis as severe as this since the flu epidemic of 100 years ago. Of course there have been many political upheavals, especially in the past four years, but there has been nothing that has had such a direct and dramatic impact on the daily lives of every single occupant of these islands, and there is nothing that has come close to matching the potentially devastating impact on our economy. It is welcome that the Government have announced a wholly unprecedented package of support for jobs, wages, businesses and benefits. The plan to stave off economic disaster is a bigger injection of support into our economy than anything that any Government have carried out in our peacetime history. The consequences will be far reaching. We and future generations will be paying off these debts for many years to come, but as a great Prime Minister once said, “There is no alternative.” I urge the Chancellor and the Government to ensure that the grants, the loans and the other measures get out to the people who need them as soon as possible—not in three months, not in three weeks, but now. We do need to find more to help the self-employed and the freelance workers.

Of course, it is vital that we do all we can to protect the NHS and social care workers. It is at times such as this that we really appreciate how incredibly lucky we are that the NHS is there for us, and how incredibly

lucky we are to live in a country that has one of the best healthcare systems in the world, staffed by professionals of outstanding skill and expertise. I want to express my gratitude to every single one of them. If we are to get through this crisis without a massive loss of life, we need to ensure that our NHS staff and our social care staff have the best, most comprehensive personal protection equipment. That means masks that fit properly and equipment that is compliant with World Health Organisation standards.

We also need to be testing thousands and thousands of our NHS staff so that we can keep them healthy and keep them on the frontline. The commitment to stepping up testing to 25,000 a day is welcome, and I urge Ministers to ensure that NHS staff are first in the queue.

I have been contacted by care homes who are crying out for a complete ban on care home visits to help them ensure that they can say no to visitors. For the safety of our elderly relatives and the people who look after them, care home visits must stop.

In conclusion, the next few months will test us in a way that none of us, except for the world war two generation, have ever been tested before. It will be difficult. It will be disruptive. It will be exasperating. It will be, at times, alarming and distressing, but we must as a nation rise to the challenge, and this legislation is part of that. We need a collective effort to keep our loved ones safe from this terrible disease. We must rise to the challenge as previous generations did when they too faced periods of great adversity and hardship. My advice to everyone, and to my constituents in Chipping Barnet, is to stay home, stay safe to protect the NHS and save lives.

6.20 pm

Bill Esterson (Sefton Central) (Lab): I entirely agree with the right hon. Member for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers) about the message we should give to our constituents. We have to support health workers as a priority and we have to support all essential workers, and we have to make sure that everything we do delivers that objective. I want to say a few words about information. We need information clarity. One of the problems we have had over the last few weeks has been the change in the information and advice given by the Government and others. What the right hon. Lady has said is exactly right: stay at home, stay 2 metres away from everybody else, wash your hands, and protect those health workers and essential workers so they can look after us. I do think we are going to need more stringent measures, and need them soon.

I will focus the remainder of my remarks on the financial measures. The Bill references sick pay, but 4.7 million self-employed workers, many of whom have lost their entire work, do not qualify for sick pay, and the same applies to a further 1 million company owners. It is essential that the Chancellor brings forward measures that deliver sick pay, yes, but also a package for our self-employed workers, as the Musicians Union has suggested, which means the real living wage. It has suggested £400 a week initially, and an equivalent 80% figure based on previous years' earnings. This is to put the self-employed in a similar position to the package the Chancellor suggested for employees on Friday, which I think was a very important step forward.

There has to be rent and mortgage provision that does not put people into arrears. It is no good pushing people into debt and making life more difficult. I say these things because if people are not financially secure, they are more likely to make risky decisions and try to go to work, and to act in a way that is counterproductive to achieving the objectives of supporting our health workers and reducing infection.

Another point put to me by many self-employed workers is that insurance is simply not working. Provision has to be in place for business interruption and for income protection, as those policies are being regarded as not valid by the insurers. I have had many constituents and business organisations coming to me, including the example of a self-employed couple who already cannot put food on the table.

The other point I want to make is the importance of actions being taken quickly. The Government need to say for employees, as well as announcing the package for employers, exactly how people are to access the funds. How do businesses get the money quickly so they can carry out the income replacement schemes? Given that it will not apply in March, there is a risk that hundreds of thousands of workers will miss out because businesses will not survive. There are additional costs that have to be covered—the costs of rent, insurance and utilities—and many businesses simply will not be able to cover those costs to be in a position to take advantage of the measures announced on Friday. This is about speed of access, making sure the schemes are available and that the cash gets through as quickly as possible, and that does mean this week. I am glad that the Paymaster General is taking notes on these points.

On the loan scheme that has been announced, the banks are saying that they want personal guarantees. That is going to stop businesses taking out loans, and the loans that might have delivered cover for those other costs are simply not going to be viable for too many businesses. That is another aspect that needs sorting out. There is so much detail that needs attention, and I appreciate that, but the schemes need to be up and running.

Emergency workers, especially in the health service, need everyone to be able to stay at home. The schemes need to be implemented, and information from the Government needs to be clearer. The Government can now take advantage of advert breaks because the commercial advertisers are not going to be using them. Let us get the information out there on the telly, on the radio and on social media about how people can access these schemes and about staying safe out there. Let us make sure these schemes are in place quickly to look after people in employment and self-employment.

6.25 pm

Robert Largan (High Peak) (Con): I rise as one the last new Members to give their maiden speech. I had planned to speak on the Budget last week, but I did not feel that a traditional maiden speech full of local anecdotes and questionable jokes was suitable in the current circumstances. Needless to say, the speech that I am giving now is very different from the one I had originally written.

I had desperately wanted my parents to be able to sit in the Gallery to watch me give this speech today, but my parents are both in their 70s, in high-risk groups, and, frankly, I dare not wait any longer. My dad was

one of eight children from an Irish Catholic family in Salford. He was the only one to pass the 11-plus and went on to do a wide range of jobs, from being a Shabbos goy to a postman to a trade union shop steward. My mum left school with no qualifications, after having to take care of her younger sisters following the death of her father on her 11th birthday. Despite that, she had a groundbreaking career at the Department of Social Security, helping unemployed people back into work. My parents taught me the importance of public service and doing the right thing. They are the reason I am standing here today. It fills me with more pride than I can ever fully explain that they are able to watch me give this speech, even if it has to be on television.

I am also very grateful to see the shadow Health Secretary in his place. Like me, he went to Philips High School. For a comprehensive in north Manchester to have produced two Members of Parliament is a very rare achievement indeed.

When I put myself forward for election, campaigning for improved transport in the north, I could not possibly have imagined making my first speech in a debate such as this. As it turns out, being in this place makes me incredibly fortunate. I stand here with a secure job—for the next four years at least—and a guaranteed salary. That many of my constituents do not have the same security plays heavily on my mind. I am particularly concerned about the self-employed. They do not benefit from the job retention scheme, and many are seeing a big drop in their income. The Government have sensibly brought in protections such as the mortgage holiday and suspension of evictions, but many self-employed people, often with families to support, are understandably worried about the future, so I call on the Government to look urgently at more ways to support them. I realise that that is a simple thing to say and a difficult thing to do. Anybody can be a critic. I know a huge number of people are working day and night, many not seeing their own families, to tackle this pandemic head on. I am sure I speak for the whole House when I say to those people, thank you.

This crisis is without precedent and we are all navigating without a map. Events are moving in minutes and hours, not days and weeks. That is why this emergency legislation is necessary. We have to give the Government the tools they need to respond quickly to events. But it is also essential that we keep Parliament functioning as best we can, so that we can continue to challenge those decisions and hold Ministers to account.

The crisis is undoubtedly bringing out the best in the people of High Peak. It is a staggeringly beautiful place, and we are very lucky to live there, but as beautiful as the High Peak is, it is the people who make it so special, and in this crisis they are pulling together, just like they did during the evacuation of Whaley Bridge last year, when the dam at Toddbrook reservoir partially collapsed.

This time, volunteer groups have sprung up in almost every town and village. Teachers are delivering packed lunches to the homes of children on free school meals. Food banks are working day and night to support the most vulnerable. In many ways, that is what makes the situation so hard. People want to come together and look after each other. Social distancing is counter to our natural instincts, and I do worry about the toll that this isolation is going to take on the nation's mental health.

[Robert Largan]

I come to this place intending to take an independent-minded approach and prepared to criticise my party and the Government when they get things wrong—and they will, as I have no doubt I will too. I am keenly aware that I was elected by the smallest of margins, just 590 votes. People did not vote for me because they agreed with every single line of the Conservative manifesto. Many lent me their vote, often reluctantly, after their pencil hovered over the ballot paper for a long time. So I want to make it clear to the people of High Peak that I am working round the clock, trying my best to represent everyone, no matter who they voted for. I will not get everything right, and I will make mistakes, but I promise that I will always put the High Peak ahead of party politics.

I want to quickly finish with a note of caution on the limits of power and our ability to achieve the things we hope for. The best intentions can easily get blown off course by events. Far too often, politics is boiled down to a contest between a simple, easy-to-sell magic solution and a nuanced, hard-to-explain truth. The truth is that governing is hard. It involves taking almost impossible decisions between competing lesser evils. There are rarely, in reality, obvious right and wrong choices, so we should be wary of those who are always certain or never change their minds. Ideological purity is a moral maze that many get lost in. For the modern puritan, it is no longer enough to accept that someone disagrees with them. They think that others can disagree with them only because their motives are malign. If our history has taught us anything, it is that we must reject that puritanism. Our greatest reforms—universal suffrage, civil liberties, the NHS—were secured not through ideological purity or confrontation, but by collaboration and taking the view that compromise is not betrayal but a kind of victory.

6.31 pm

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): May I warmly commend the hon. Member for High Peak (Robert Largan), who I think made a magnificent speech? He delivered it with simple earnestness and a dignity that will commend him to many Members of this House. It is a sad moment, is it not, when one thinks that being an MP is the most secure job around. He was quite right to say not only what he said about no party having a monopoly on truth—ideological purity rarely does anybody any favours—but what he said about being an independently minded Member. I warmly commend everything that he said.

However, I completely despair of some of the scenes that I have seen from our fellow citizens over the last few days. The panic buying—the hoarding, frankly—of essential goods, which will therefore be denied to many people who most need them, including our key workers, is a disgrace. It is born out of selfishness and it must stop. People ignoring advice—because somehow or other they think that they will be immune to the disease or that it will only affect some other people—is, again, an instance of massive selfishness, and it really must stop. I am sick and tired of people saying that they know better than all the experts. The number of armchair epidemiologists and virologists in this country seems to have grown dramatically without any evidence of qualification.

I hate the idea that there are companies that are actively profiteering in this country. It was a criminal offence in the war and it should be a criminal offence now. I hate the scam merchants who are going round preying on the vulnerable at the moment, which is why it is all the more important that local councils run proper schemes for volunteer forces, so that if somebody knocks at the door, an elderly person can know that they are getting the right person.

I hate the way that some of our police have been treated in the last few days—spat at and coughed over deliberately, as an offensive weapon as it were, when they have merely been trying to prevent people from gathering, in the way that the Government have been advising. This goes back to what we have been trying to do for the last few years to stop assaults on our emergency workers, and I bet my bottom dollar that there will be more assaults on emergency workers during this process. This must come to an end. We as a nation must show the best side of our humanity, not the worst side of our humanity.

And I am sorry, but to those politicians in various different countries around the world who have somehow or other tried to dismiss the experts, including those who have dismissed the idea of vaccination over the last few years, I say this: you are dangerous and you must stop it. People will die because of your misinformation.

This is, of course, a draconian Bill, for two main reasons. First, it suspends lots of protections for individuals, such as who is able to certify a death. I know why the provision is there, but, frankly, the idea that in the end it could end up just being a funeral director certifying a death is worrying, let alone the provisions in relation to sectioning under the Mental Health Act 1983. The Bill also gives Ministers the power to impose significant restrictions, which we all know are draconian. On top of that, the Attorney General rang me—I am grateful for the phone call the other day—

The Solicitor General (Michael Ellis): The Solicitor General.

Chris Bryant: All right. Let us stand on these things; they are the ones that matter. The Solicitor General rang me the other day and made the important point that we are suspending, very unusually, the normal process in allowing Ministers to switch powers on and off. All of these things are extraordinary in peacetime.

There are some things we have to do simultaneously, and they have to happen at the same time. First, there must be a deal for sole traders and the self-employed. I have had people ringing up my office in floods of tears worrying about how they are going to make ends meet over the next few weeks, and they need an answer to that urgently. Undoubtedly, because of the ludicrous misbehaviour of so many of our fellow citizens in the past few days, we will have to move forward with enforced measures. That must happen, but it cannot happen before the Government put in place provisions for sole traders and the self-employed.

We have to put much more protection in place for our NHS staff. Every single fashion brand in this country, from Marks and Spencer through to Burberry, should be ringing up the Government now to say, “What can we do to provide more personal protective equipment

for staff?" Many local councils, including my own, have hardly a stitch to give their key workers. We need to give them that protection.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): There is still considerable pressure on time, so after the next speaker, I will reduce the time limit to four minutes.

6.37 pm

Steve Brine (Winchester) (Con): I echo what a beautiful maiden speech that was from my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Robert Langan). I will be rather novel and speak about the Bill. Before I do that, I want to say that the package announced thus far and in the Budget last week was incredibly welcome, but I echo what so many Members have said so far today: we need to deal with the self-employed next, please. Many of my constituents are desperate for the Government's help.

I rise to speak in support of the Bill receiving its Second Reading. Nobody wanted to be here, but it is an essential and urgent piece of legislation. We may be discussing the Coronavirus Bill today, but for some it is in large part the pandemic influenza Bill. I was very much involved in that when I was fortunate enough several years ago to be the public health Minister. The legislation will not make covid-19 suddenly vanish, as President Trump bizarrely proclaimed the other day, but it will help the state and our Government do what they have consistently stated is their primary objective, which is to protect the NHS and save lives.

As the Secretary of State made clear, these are extraordinary times and these measures are being pursued as a result. I, too, have had lobbying this weekend saying that the Bill goes too far and is a disproportionate power-grab by the Government, but it is worth saying that these measures were not dreamt up on the hoof by the Secretary of State over the past week. The "UK Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Strategy 2011" sets out our preparedness for a severe pandemic. It was tested in 2016 through a major three-day exercise called Cygnus, which involved about 1,000 organisations and the devolved Administrations. It demonstrated a number of things that we do well as a country and a number of things that we need to improve upon, one of which was the drafting of the draft pandemic influenza Bill, which forms the basis of the legislation today.

The scrutiny we are giving this legislation on the Floor of the House is not what we do in normal times, of course, but these are not normal times. Parliament needs to work swiftly and with deftness of touch to match what pretty much everyone else is doing right now. I am satisfied that the legislation is, as was always intended, time-limited. It makes it clear that it is neither necessary nor appropriate for all the measures to come into force immediately. What is more, the lifetime of the Bill, once an Act, can itself be ended early, if the available scientific evidence supports that, and we can extend the lifetime of the Act for a further temporary period if that is prudent.

I want to home in on a couple of areas. Increasing the health and social care workforce is obviously mission critical, so the Bill introduces new registration powers for the registrars of the Nursing & Midwifery Council and the Health and Care Professions Council. That is absolutely right, but we need to hear from Ministers,

as mentioned in the impact assessment, exactly how the Department of Health and Social Care plans to engage with the professional regulators to ensure that sufficient infrastructure is in place to allow the policy to be implemented.

I note the sensible move to allow the early registration of final-year students studying to become nurses, midwives, paramedics and social workers. The Government's assumption is that all 28,100 of the students estimated to be in their final year in England will be willing to join the register early. What evidence do we have that that is likely to be the case, and are the costs noted in the impact assessment covered so as to give the regulators total confidence that they can get on with this?

I am pleased that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs holds responsibility for food supply, as a critical national infrastructure. It of course has to maintain our high standards, working with the Food Standards Agency, but I do not think the legislation goes far enough in protecting stock on the shelves. Like all of us, I have been contacted by hundreds of constituents in recent days, on many different subjects, but a consistent message is that what they are hearing from Ministers and the supermarkets about there being enough food is jarring with what they are seeing on the ground and, more importantly, online when they try to book a delivery slot.

Of course, the Government are not to blame for the change in our food policy, from the policy of "Dig for victory" of the last century, backed up by local food networks, to the centralised distribution controlled by the big five supermarkets we have now, but how sad it is that we have literally put all our eggs in one basket, and that we are reaping what we have failed to sow now that we need it most.

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con): My hon. Friend is making a very good speech on different aspects of the Bill. On his first point, about reassuring the self-employed, does he agree that no single scheme will be able to cover every single situation perfectly, and that the crucial point at this moment is the reassurance that something will be done to help everybody who is self-employed?

Steve Brine: Yes, I do agree. I understand why we have to do this through pay-as-you-earn first, because employers are making decisions about job losses this weekend, but I completely agree that we need to hear something from the Prime Minister on that. I understand that he will be addressing the nation this evening—we can probably all guess what is coming—when he could say something reassuring to the self-employed and to sole traders, which would be very welcome.

Finally, on emergency volunteering leave, the provisions for which are set out in clauses 7 and 8, the unpaid statutory leave that the Secretary of State has mentioned is very welcome. Clause 8 states:

"The Secretary of State must make arrangements for making payments to emergency volunteers by way of compensation –

(a) for loss of earnings;

(b) for travelling and subsistence."

Could the Minister tell the House at what level that might sit? There seems to be a norm of 80% for the coronavirus job retention scheme, so are we looking at the same for this? I think it is a smart move, as many of our volunteers come from the older generation, so we have to find a way of filling that gap.

[*Steve Brine*]

We need ruthless, determined, collection action to protect the NHS and to save lives, combined with scientific progress. The Bill is part—only part, I have to say—of that national effort. I have listened carefully to the many voices lobbying us on the Bill over the weekend, but I am comfortable that it is a well-judged piece of legislation that will provide the powers needed to respond to the pandemic and the national crisis that we face.

6.43 pm

Sir Edward Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): I would like to begin by thanking everyone who is working hard to keep our country and our world as safe as possible from this dangerous pandemic. Above all, I want to thank the staff of our NHS and our social care sector. We are seeing people face personal risks, and we will forever be grateful for what they are doing.

In normal times, I and my party would be opposing many of the measures in the Bill with every breath in our bodies. The implications for civil liberties and human rights are profound and alarming, but our society now faces the unprecedented threat of coronavirus, which leaves some of the most vulnerable in our society at serious risk. It seems clear that at least some of the new powers being sought by the Government are necessary to deal with the threat. Nevertheless, our position is that the powers must be used only when absolutely necessary during this emergency, and not for a moment longer.

Like others, I welcome the Government's change of heart on the two-year renewal. The six months now proposed is, self-evidently, a significant improvement. Nevertheless, we remain unclear why it is six months rather than three months. There may be good reasons, but it is important that the Government set out why they chose six months. After all, the Prime Minister said just the other day that the peak of the epidemic would be just 12 weeks away, so it is not unreasonable to ask why six months is needed.

Moreover, we need to look carefully at the review process. When it comes, it should enable amendments to this law, and the other place needs to be allowed to vote on it too. Let me give one reason why a more frequent renewal process should be considered. It relates to the Bill's provisions on social care. The Bill temporarily suspends the duties on local authorities to meet people's care needs—from older people to adults and children with disabilities. I am yet to be convinced that those provisions are needed at all. They are some of the most alarming provisions in the Bill. At a time when the most vulnerable in our society need more care, not less, why on earth are people's rights being reduced? At the very least, such a reduction in rights for the elderly, disabled and mentally ill must be subject to early review and renewal.

The right hon. Member for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt) was right to raise the issue of personal protective equipment and testing. NHS staff who have contacted me are angry and alarmed at the lack of PPE. They do not understand why the distribution system has taken so long and is still failing to provide PPE for so many people. The testing experience in this country compares appallingly with other countries.

There are other problems with the Bill. Due to the time, I will mention just one: the Bill's failure to enable the Government to extend the Brexit transition period.

I know that is politically sensitive and contentious. I know we need to bring our country together after Brexit tore us apart, so I do not seek to reopen the Brexit question, despite what my heart tells me. I raise the Brexit transition period as a practical and real issue. Our economy faces its biggest challenge since the second world war—disruption to business on a scale even greater than would have been caused by the worst-case scenario of a no-deal Brexit. Surely, the Government should think again and allow themselves to extend the Brexit transition period.

We on the Liberal Democrat Benches will support the Bill tonight, but with a very heavy heart. We hope the Government will come back and allow the House to ensure that we can protect our country against this coronavirus threat but not ditch our civil liberties and human rights.

6.47 pm

Bill Wiggin (North Herefordshire) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Robert Langan).

May I say to colleagues across the House that being angry with the public for what they are doing wrong is no way to proceed? In Fownhope in my constituency, a community that was hit very badly by flooding, we are seeing the most phenomenal community spirit and wonderful behaviour blossoming as people reach out to those who are lonely and self-isolating. Young people are writing to people in care homes to make sure that they feel valued. A wonderful sense of community spirit is shining forth. For me, that is worth so much more than being cross with people who may be getting their self-isolation or shielding wrong.

I want to talk about the most important thing we have here: our parliamentary accountability. That accountability is a baby worth saving no matter how toxic, dangerous or infectious the bathwater, so two years calls into question the advice the Government have been given. China has had 81,307 cases and 3,254 deaths, yet it has managed to shut down the disease in six weeks from its epicentre—a much more difficult task than we have—with flights still coming in from countries such as Iran three times a day. How is that possible when we are looking at such draconian legislation today?

It is not necessarily perfect legislation. Under clause 23, which relates to powers on food—I was naturally drawn to it—a person may be required to provide “relevant information” to the authority in subsection (1), and yet subsection (6) states:

“A requirement under this section may not be imposed on an individual.”

That does not look quite right, so perhaps the Government could look at that before Report.

In my last few seconds, I want to reiterate how much the public need to understand that what we are sacrificing, both economically and in terms of our freedom, is worth it if we are protecting the professionals in the health service, local authorities and all the caring services that are reaching out and providing the sort of community that we all hold so dear. I am seeing it every day in my constituency, and I want to make sure we never forget that it is the goodness of the British people that makes all these sacrifices worth it.

6.50 pm

Gavin Robinson (Belfast East) (DUP): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for North Herefordshire (Bill Wiggin). When I indicated to some constituents and even members of my family over the weekend that I was coming to London today, they thought I was mad. They think that, collectively, we should not be here. They point to the information that we give out and the leadership that we show and wonder why we are here.

But when I reflected that my brother, a consultant in the NHS, will be going into hospital to face these acute difficulties on the ward, and that his wife, my sister-in-law, and tens of thousands of members of our national health service—not through bravado or machismo, but because they care—will be turning up to work today and in the days and weeks to follow, I decided that we could do our duty and be here today. It is a tribute to our institutions and our democracy that, even though parts of this legislation will curtail our freedoms, we are here, and it is important that we put on record our gratitude for all those who are stepping up at this time.

The shadow Secretary of State for Health raised the subject of parking charges at our hospitals. I also want to raise that, because I think it is totally abhorrent that, in the face of such adversity, we are expecting people to not only turn up to work at hospital but pay for the privilege of parking there. I know that all these issues will be devolved and will fall to different trusts and commissioning groups across the country. I want to put on record my appreciation to the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust for its decision to waive parking charges for staff members in all the Belfast facilities. I ask the South Eastern trust, which is responsible for the Ulster Hospital in my constituency, to take exactly the same measure. We need to be supporting people through this.

When I attended a pharmacy on Friday, it could only be described as a warzone. They asked why they were left without sufficient pharmacists, and in that regard I welcome the extension for new registrants in clause 4. They were saying, “We can’t sell paracetamol. We have run out. You cannot use anti-inflammatories in this situation. Our stores are filled with 100-packs of paracetamol, and yet we are legislatively precluded from breaking them down and giving them to people who need them.” They said, “The Government say that we have a home delivery service to get prescriptions out to those in self-isolation, but it is an unfunded and overstretched service, and our vans run on diesel, not good will.”

There are huge challenges in every aspect of our society through this crisis that the Bill alone will not resolve, but it is an important first step. I want to place on record my appreciation for not only the Government’s engagement with us over the last week but the substantive nature of the Bill. There is hardly a clause of the Bill that does not replicate provisions for Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. Officials have performed a mammoth task over the last number of weeks, and we need to put on record our appreciation to them.

I want to raise an issue with the Paymaster General, and I hope she will be able to give clarity on two specific points. As she will know, clause 13 covers continuing healthcare assessments and clause 14 covers local authority care and support in England and Wales, while clause 15

relates to Scotland. That is the one part of the Bill where I see no corresponding provisions for Northern Ireland. I mention that not to raise concern, but because there are people out there who are advocating on behalf of charities and who have children in a vulnerable situation or with mental capacity issues who feel that that means they will not get the care they need. Can she respond appropriately to that, to alleviate their concerns? Madam Deputy Speaker, I am grateful for the time.

6.54 pm

Caroline Nokes (Romsey and Southampton North) (Con): There have been some fantastic speeches this evening so far, including from my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Robert Langan) who made a stunning maiden speech, but I wish to go back to the words of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State when he said that the virus impacts most the weak and vulnerable. He is of course right.

I support the measures in the Bill. They are extraordinary measures that can only be used in extraordinary times, but that is exactly what we are facing. Tonight I wish to speak for the weak and the vulnerable, as hon. Members might expect from the Chair of the Women and Equalities Committee. I have real concerns about how equalities might be impacted and about how those people with protected characteristics for whom we speak might be affected. I draw particular attention to the elderly, who we know are the most impacted by this disease, and their need for care that is appropriate in their own homes at the right time. I speak for the disabled, who of course have the biggest challenges and who desperately need assistance. I appreciate why we have the powers in the Bill, but they must be used proportionately and reasonably.

I also speak for those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, and, of course, the Paymaster General, my right hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth North (Penny Mordaunt), has done some phenomenal work with faith communities, making sure that funerals can be held appropriately for religions. But I would like to point out that it is in the gig economy where we are most likely to find people from a BAME background working: they are also most likely to be young people. They are also most likely to be self-employed, on zero hours or sole traders, and we must be particularly cognisant of the impact the virus will have on those people who we will want—when this horror is over—to be able to bounce back to be the entrepreneurs who will enable our economy to recover from this difficult period.

I will also, of course, mention women. We know that caring responsibilities fall most heavily on their shoulders. We also know that in areas such as childminding, childminders are not only doing the caring, but of course are providing the support that enables women to go out to work, whether it be in our essential professions at the moment or in all parts of the economy. We must provide support to the childminding sector as well as the early years sector, because when the virus is quashed and we are in a position to rebuild the economy, we will need childminders to enable that 50% of the workforce to go back to work. We have done great work over the past few years in making sure that there are more women in employment, but we have to make sure that it is possible for them when this is over to be able to—

Steve Brine: That is exactly the point: so many of the early years sector and childminders are self-employed. That is another reason to repeat the point that so many have made today about why we need something for that part of the economy.

Caroline Nokes: My hon. Friend is right, so I have managed to fit in the childminding sector and the self-employed in one hit.

I want also to speak about volunteering and the clarity that is needed. There is a great company in my constituency that runs Kimbridge Barn. That is shut, of course, but the company wants to enable its staff to volunteer, whether in the health service or the care sector, or as delivery drivers—it has many vehicles—but it wants clarity as to whether the 80% of salaries that HMRC will underwrite will be applicable if people are effectively outworking in a voluntary capacity.

I also draw attention to the comments made by my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt) about whether local government officers should be considering planning applications at the current time. I would also ask whether they should be implementing or imposing parking fines. Those are all areas of regulation that are undertaken by local authorities that are far from an imperative at the current time.

I would like to pay tribute in the voluntary sector to both Southampton Voluntary Services and Unity in Test Valley, who have done some brilliant work pulling together volunteer bureaux and making sure that people in the shielded group will have the support from people in the community who can help deliver medicines and essential shopping.

There is much in the Bill that in ordinary times we would not consider, but I end with one final plea about parliamentary scrutiny. There is as yet no mechanism or ability under Standing Orders for Select Committees such as the Women and Equalities Committee—which has much to scrutinise in the Bill—to meet remotely by video link, by Zoom, by Skype for Business or through any other mechanism. I understand that the Leader of the House will make a statement at some point. I very much hope that he will make sure that, at the very least, the Select Committee structures can work at this time to ensure that measures such as this are held to proper scrutiny, so that we understand how they are impacting on the most vulnerable.

7 pm

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): I very much appreciate the spirit of co-operation and purpose in the Chamber today. We all want the same thing: for the coronavirus outbreak to be over, for people to be safe, and for our public services to be resilient and well resourced enough to cope. I believe that to achieve that, we need today's legislation, but we also need to speak the truth, which is, sadly, that we have wasted weeks—time that could have been spent ramping up testing, acquiring more protective equipment and ordering more ventilators. This emergency legislation is welcome, but more than anything else, decisive Government action is overdue.

The UK had the advantage of being able to learn from the experiences of China and other countries, yet to people watching from the outside, we have too often seemed like a nation in denial. We cannot change where we are now, but only by understanding the answers to

those questions can we ensure that similar errors of forward planning do not cost lives. So let us put that right now with a clearer and stricter lockdown—I agree with the shadow Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Leicester South (Jonathan Ashworth), on that—and, crucially, with the economic security that will make that possible. I echo everything that others have said about the importance of underpinning the livelihoods of those who are self-employed, and crucially—I make no apology for repeating this—we need a much, much clearer, more comprehensive, wall-to-wall public education campaign to underpin all that.

The message from our health workers could not be clearer: stay home to save lives. We owe them a massive debt of gratitude, but more than that, as MPs in particular, we owe it to them to listen and model the behaviour that we are asking of our constituents. The clearest way to do that is for Parliament to start meeting virtually and voting electronically, rather than putting staff at risk here and risking sending mixed messages to the rest of the country.

I have three brief points to make about the Bill. The first, on sovereignty and democracy, has been made by many others and I am very grateful that the Government have accepted the amendments to ensure that the legislation will come back to the House after six months, rather than waiting two years. It is crucial that we have the opportunity to correct any mistakes that could easily have been made in the understandably speedy drafting of this very large piece of legislation.

My second concern is about what is missing from the legislation: from closing detention centres and safely housing those released to allowing asylum seekers to work and have recourse to public funds; and from preventing utility companies cutting off anyone's water, gas, phones, internet or electricity to putting real pressure on the insurance companies who are hiding behind the definition of notifiable diseases and refusing to pay out to businesses that are forced to close. Powers are needed to make them play fair. The Bill should give local authorities the power to grant council tax holidays and suspend all business tax payments, with central Government meeting the lost revenue. It needs to freeze household and business rental payments across all sectors, again, with compensation for landlords for the lost rent—not just for three months but for as long as is necessary—and to allow for flexible provision for those at risk from domestic abuse, sexual violence and child abuse. Above all, the Bill needs to include those measures to protect people's incomes, not just their wages.

So many people in Brighton have raised with me the fact that their concerns have not been covered by the Government's guarantees so far. As a nation, we are rightly proud of our entrepreneurs, creators and innovators. We need to remember that many of them lack all the legal protections of redundancy and other rights that exist to help employees who are faced with a sudden lack of income. They need to be included in the Government's scheme. Something like 80% of their average wage needs to be made available to them as well and it needs to happen very fast.

My last point is simply that, as we go through this crisis, we need to do it in a way that prepares us for the next crisis, which is still there, my friends—the climate crisis. Therefore, the kinds of measures that we put in place—for example, when it comes to choosing which

businesses we are bailing out—must also be driven by a concern for the climate and ensure that we are supporting the green economy, not the fossil fuel economy of the past.

7.4 pm

Adam Afriye (Windsor) (Con): I would like to put one or two points on the record before the Bill goes through. The first thing that strikes me is that this is an ambitious and aggressive virus, which intends to infect every single one of us, both here in the UK and across the entire globe, unless we do something quite dramatic to stop it. It does not discriminate between rich and poor, old and young, black and white, gay and straight, and it does not discriminate on the grounds of nationality. It does not respect borders, and the pace at which it is covering the globe is something to behold. That is why I very much welcome the legislation, because the pace at which we are delivering these important measures that the Government need to be able to take under Executive action is equally as impressive.

I have a couple of questions for Ministers. Clearly, I am going to support the measure, as it is necessary that these types of measures go through quickly so that we can respond as a nation. First—I asked this question last week, but did not receive a full answer—why was it felt necessary to introduce a brand-new piece of legislation, as we have the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 on the books? Looking at the Bill, it seems that the measures and powers in it would fit within that Act quite comfortably. I raise that because some of the questions that have been asked today—I am glad that we have seen some compromises—were about accountability and about the timeframe in which the measures will be in force. The Civil Contingencies Act says that if a measure is introduced by a Minister, within seven days Parliament can say something about it. If Parliament is in recess, it can be recalled to within five days deal with any urgent matters.

I am only flagging that up—I suspect that there are good reasons why a separate piece of legislation outwith the scope of the Civil Contingencies Act was introduced. This is a dynamic and fluid situation, and things are changing, literally day by day. Some of the actions that the Government may rightly need to take may have consequences, some intended, some unintended. For example, last week, we heard about measures that, I suspect, will be incorporated in powers in the Bill relating to pubs, restaurants and clubs being told to close their doors. Without an immediate adjustment, perhaps 1 million to 3 million people would have had no money within a week or so. Thankfully, the Government were able to introduce measures that dealt with that for the majority of those people. I suspect that there will be situations in the weeks ahead where the numbers begin to escalate and we all begin to worry about our sanity, let alone our health. There will be moments when it may be necessary for the military or police services to be on the street, committed to take actions that will surprise us.

Mr Steve Baker: Does my hon. Friend agree that all these measures need to be unwound one day, and that Ministers must keep an eye on how they are going to do so?

Adam Afriye: I certainly do, and my hon. Friend has made the point very well. That is the central thrust of what I am saying.

One of the key aspects of the virus, and a key reason why it is so aggressive, intrusive, ambitious and quick to move around is that it may well have the ability to mutate. If that were to happen, I should like confirmation from the Government that they have in the Bill the powers necessary to ramp up the actions that they have taken in the wording of the Bill.

Overall, I very much welcome this piece of legislation, but I should like clarification about why the Civil Contingencies Act was not used, as it was carefully thought through and includes a lot of checks and balances. Secondly, I should also like reassurance that if some of the powers under the Act were deployed on the streets of our country, Parliament would in some way—I know that Ministers are responsive, and the Prime Minister has shown great leadership and is seeking to do the absolute best for the nation—be able to express, even in recess, concerns to which Government Ministers and the Executive could respond quickly, rather than at the end of a six or three-month period, or a two-year period.

7.8 pm

Liam Byrne (Birmingham, Hodge Hill) (Lab): I would like to begin where many hon. and right hon. Members have begun, by putting on record our profound thanks to the volunteers and public service workers who have done so much. The definition of the frontline is the point of maximum danger, and there are hundreds of thousands of people who have put themselves in danger to keep the rest of us safe.

There is one group I would like to single out: the extraordinary group of people at Heartlands Hospital in my constituency who have been working tirelessly to help to keep our city of Birmingham safe. It was Ernest Hemingway who said that the definition of courage is grace under pressure. Well, our volunteers and public service workers are under pressure today like never before. Their skill, their care, their compassion, their grace, and their courage are something that will live in the memory for generations to come.

There are two issues with the Bill that I want to touch on. Those issues are protections that are needed, but which are missing from the legislation—one on the income side and one on the cost side. On the income side, the challenge now for Her Majesty's Government is to begin quilting together the patchwork of measures that have been so rapidly put in place. There are five groups whose household income will come under severe pressure very quickly: those who are in work; those who are self-employed; those who are newly sick; those who are newly unemployed; and, of course, those who are having to take parental leave because the schools are now closed.

The Government have moved quickly to put in place wage subsidies, and that is good and welcome. I add my voice to those who tonight are calling for rapid measures to help the self-employed, but we also need to address three other areas in the income protection system. First, we need to ensure that the rate of statutory sick pay quickly moves up to about £160 a week. It is very difficult for people to live on the extent of the pay cut that they have taken just because they are ill. Secondly, paid parental leave now needs to kick in from day one, and that has to be enforceable as a statutory right. Thirdly, for those now labouring on universal credit,

[Liam Byrne]

that payment has to go up to at least £100 a week. A couple in my constituency with two kids will now be £800 a month below the poverty line if they were having to live on universal credit. That is simply not acceptable, and we are going to have to improve that situation.

The second protection that is missing relates to costs; I mentioned this earlier in comments I made to the Leader of the House. Some companies are behaving very badly. For example, individuals such as Philip Green laid off thousands of staff before the income protection system kicked in. He should be summoned to the Bar of this House to explain himself. Staff in Topshop are telling me that they are being prohibited from circulating the petition that I have launched to have him summoned here to explain himself. Of course, we also need rapid protection in price regulation. In times of emergency, prices go up. I have been inundated with complaints after Jhoots Pharmacy in my constituency raised the price of Calpol from a couple of quid a bottle to 20 quid a bottle. Markets need morals in times of emergency more than at any other time, and we now need rapid action to put in place the price regulation that I have proposed in new clause 28, which has been widely shared and supported by Members across this House.

7.13 pm

Mr Tobias Ellwood (Bournemouth East) (Con): I join others in commending the spirit, tenacity, determination and grit of those on the frontline, not just in the health service, but in the police and other services—the growing team out there who are trying to keep our country together during these difficult times. I commend the Government's work to provide the necessary medical support through mobilising the NHS at the start, and the economic support for businesses and employees. I also commend their provision of support to 1.5 million of the most vulnerable people in the country.

This emergency legislation is unparalleled in modern times. It grants enormous powers to the state and is expected to be approved in the shortest of time periods. I very much welcome the Health Secretary's assurances that the measures in the Bill are temporary, proportionate to the threat, only to be used when strictly necessary and only to remain in place for as long as is required to respond to the crisis.

As the Bill is being debated tonight, we should remember that the Cobra meeting is taking place. British nationals abroad are being called back to the UK. There is every expectation that there will be either a national lockdown or localised lockdowns. The armed forces have already been mobilised. The Ministry of Defence has had planners in various Departments for a number of weeks, but we should expect to see more of them providing fantastic assistance to a number of agencies across the nation. We must not forget that the armed forces are also preparing their own manpower—that which is needed to watch our backs—because while the national focus is absolutely on the coronavirus, our armed forces have a duty to ensure that we can sleep at night. They protect our skies, shores and seas as well. We must not forget that they have a day job to do, as well as their contribution to the nation. We should remember that this decade was on track to be one of the most dangerous since the cold war. Complex and diverse threats remain out there,

and a wily competitor will take full advantage of the global turbulence, not least because threats are no longer so much territorial but come from a cyber and digital capacity.

The Government have focused on their role—on the power of the Government to tackle the crisis—but, as has been repeated again and again in the House, we all can and must play our part in reducing the spread of this deadly virus. Life is not on hold, as some commentators have claimed; we must adjust to a new normal. We must face the reality and understand that life will now be different, not only as we tackle the virus, but afterwards as well.

The Bill is unprecedented, but if the powers are used to their full, that is because too many Britons continue to ignore the guidelines and are part of the problem, not the solution. The Queen sent more than a message to the nation last week; it was an instruction. Let us change our routine, as the country has done in the past. Everyone must play their part, for the greater good, towards the common goal of saving lives. This is a national crisis—not a national holiday, which some people seem to be taking it as—and every person, authority, business, charity and laboratory must turn their efforts either towards helping to save lives and supporting our NHS, or towards helping us all to adapt to the new normal, because life will not go back to what it was for months or years to come. The world has changed; we must all play our part in the solution.

7.16 pm

Zarah Sultana (Coventry South) (Lab): This is an unprecedented crisis.

How this House, the Government and the Prime Minister respond will determine the fate of millions. We are making life-and-death decisions—choices that either save millions of people from poverty or plunge them into it. They are choices about priorities and about what and who is important. They are political choices, and I am concerned about the choices the Government are making. For example, the rich can buy a covid-19 test at private health clinics, but frontline NHS staff are not getting them. That cannot be right. In response to this emergency, we must change our priorities. Public health must come before private profit.

I welcome the fact that an amendment has been accepted that gives protections to Muslim and Jewish communities, who feared that the Bill would have resulted in forced cremations. I hope that the provisions on those protections are heeded. I have a number of ongoing concerns; given the time constraints, I shall limit myself to three.

First, even after the passing of the Bill millions of workers—including low earners, the self-employed and workers in the gig economy—will not qualify for statutory sick pay. For the people who do qualify, at £94 a week it is the second lowest rate in Europe. The Secretary of State himself has admitted that he could not live on it, so he should not expect our constituents to. I urge the Government to raise the rate to the equivalent of a week's pay at the real living wage and extend it to cover all workers.

Secondly, the Bill will have an impact on disabled people by suspending the duty to meet the needs of disabled people and their carers. It will weaken the duties to meet children's educational requirements and

relax the safeguards for detaining people under the Mental Health Act. The virus presents us with huge challenges, but it cannot be an excuse for abandoning disabled people. Ten years of cuts have already drastically eroded disabled people's rights; coronavirus must not be allowed to hit them hardest, too.

My third and final point is on migrants' rights. There are now confirmed cases of covid-19 in Yarl's Wood detention centre. The virus will cause a health disaster unless the Government release detainees. It is not just migrant detainees who are at risk; in spite of the fact that NHS staff from around the world are on the frontline battling the pandemic, migrants are still being charged for NHS treatment. Adding covid-19 to the exempted conditions does not go far enough. As long as there are charges for some conditions and the NHS is sharing data with the Home Office, migrants will be deterred from seeking medical help when they need it the most. That is unfair and it is a public health risk, so I urge the Government to release detainees from detention centres, suspend NHS charging, end data sharing between the NHS and the Home Office, and make sure that NHS staff and migrants know about it all with an information campaign.

I will finish by saying this. Crises show us who we are. They show us what we care about, and across the country people are answering. They are reaching out to elderly neighbours they do not know, offering support and reassurance. Strangers are organising food deliveries for vulnerable people they have never met. In cities across the country, networks of support and solidarity are springing up. That is one answer; it is an answer that says we value everyone and that no one should go through this alone or unsupported, but that is not the answer the Government are giving. Instead, they are abandoning the self-employed, neglecting the sick and disabled, letting businesses lay off staff, and leaving sick workers destitute. They are giving millions to profiteering private health companies, while NHS staff do not even get basic protective equipment and are resorting to using bin liners. That is not a response true to our values, so before it is too late, I urge Members: let us rise to the challenge and beat this virus together.

7.20 pm

Chris Loder (West Dorset) (Con): On Saturday, we had our first death from coronavirus in West Dorset at our county hospital. However, while a fellow citizen was dying from this awful virus in hospital, others were congregating all along the Jurassic coast, particularly in Lyme Regis and Bridport, sharing ice creams on the beach as if it were a summer Saturday afternoon, showing flagrant disregard for the Government's advice. This country is not on holiday; it is time to wake up and take this seriously. We need to minimise the transmission of this highly contagious virus, because with 38% of the population in West Dorset older than 60, the risk is considerable. Whatever is asked of us, we must follow the Government's advice.

Right now, we in West Dorset urgently need two things. I appreciate very much indeed what the Chancellor has done so far to support people's incomes, and I commend all the Ministers here today for their work, but 24% of those in work in West Dorset are self-employed, and at the moment we are not doing enough to help them. I urge Ministers to expedite measures to support our self-employed workforce.

On Friday, our local bus operator gave 48 hours' notice that it was stopping vital bus links into our second town. Those buses have now stopped operating. They are connections that are desperately needed to get to Bridport Community Hospital. I urge colleagues and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to consider what help we can give local buses in rural parts of the country. This will be an issue not just for my constituency but for the entire country.

I support the Bill. It covers many of the measures that are necessary in this national emergency. This past weekend, people were still ignoring reasonable advice to observe social distancing, so the Bill has to contain measures that enable the Government to ban gatherings and to go still further if necessary, however uncomfortable that may be. It allows our recently retired healthcare heroes to return to the frontline, and it puts into law the Chancellor's welcome statements on statutory sick pay. As the Member for one of the most at-risk areas in the country, with the eighth highest proportion of over 65s in the United Kingdom, I am pleased that the Government are taking this approach, but we must do more for the self-employed. They are the backbone of the economy, and while I welcome announcements regarding the minimum income floor, we need to sort that out.

The United Kingdom is facing a pandemic the like of which none of us has seen in our lifetime. We need only look at Spain and Italy for an insight into the challenges that we are going to face. I pay tribute to the chief medical officer and the chief scientific adviser, both of whom are playing crucial roles in tackling this virus. I commend the Prime Minister, the Chancellor and other Ministers for their leadership at this incredibly difficult time. Our response to the coronavirus will prepare this country like never before. I have only this left to say: to those on the NHS frontline, thank you, and to the volunteers in West Dorset and across the country, thank you.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. The more people can keep their speeches short, the more people can get in. I call Ruth Jones.

7.24 pm

Ruth Jones (Newport West) (Lab): I start by paying tribute to all those who, right now, are working so hard in Newport West and right across the country to help their patients, their neighbours and their friends. My message to everyone across the UK is to think of others and act wisely—that is how we will get through the weeks and months ahead.

As of last night, there have been 12 confirmed covid-19 deaths in Wales, five of them in the hospital in my constituency. They and their families are in my prayers at this difficult time. Like all hon. Members, I extend my deepest sympathies to all those across Wales, Britain and the world who have lost loved ones.

I am grateful to the Welsh Government and their staff, who are working around the clock to ensure that vital services are maintained and that the most vulnerable are protected and supported as best as possible. There are a number of specific, practical Welsh measures that I welcome, including free travel for NHS staff on Transport for Wales services from today.

[Ruth Jones]

My first key demand is that this legislation must be renewed every six months by a fresh binding vote on the Floor of the House. Many parts of life, as we know, have changed and will change, but we cannot allow the basic democratic principles of this country to change. I am pleased the Government have tabled their own amendment, and I welcome the provision for Parliament to review progress and hold the Government to account over the coming months.

My second demand is for action on jobs, livelihoods and incomes. Over the past week, like many others, I have been inundated with requests and demands for guidance, answers and clarity from local businesses in Newport West. The Government can take some tangible steps now: they can underpin jobs and incomes with a comprehensive income protection scheme; they can introduce European-level statutory sick pay for all workers from day one; they can tackle universal credit by increasing it, suspending sanctions and scrapping the five-week wait for the first payment; and they can act now to assist the many millions of self-employed people who are worried out of their minds about where their next penny is coming from.

My third demand is that we must have action on rents. There should be a clear suspension, and there should be an immediate ban on evictions for six months. I note the Government have introduced a three-month ban, but that does not go far enough or provide enough protection.

My final demand is that the legislation is examined with regard to those with additional needs. The legislation, as drafted, removes the right of those with disabilities to access care homes on their terms. The duty to educate children with additional educational needs has been modified to require authorities only to make reasonable endeavours, and the civil liberties of disabled people appear to have been severely eroded, along with their right to support in many areas of their lives. It cannot be right that legislation that is intended to do the most good will inadvertently affect the most vulnerable in our society, and I ask the Minister to address that specific point in her summing up.

Another specific ask is a plea for clarity on the definition of “key worker.” There is much confusion, and we need clarity.

Five million self-employed people have spent the weekend desperately worried about what will happen to them, their families, their staff and their livelihoods. We need immediate support for the beautician, the journalist, the childminder, the dog walker, the cleaner, the publican and those who support our churches, mosques and other places of religious worship.

Talking of faith, I welcome the amendment on the burial, not cremation, of victims, which will do so much to reassure the strong and vibrant Muslim community in Newport West that respect and decency, as well as saving lives and getting through this crisis, is an important focus for all of us.

My last point is a direct plea to my constituents and to people across the country: please, please, please stay at home and follow the medical advice. This is a matter of life and death but, if we work together, we will get through this.

Several hon. Members rose—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. I will have to take the time limit down to three minutes if we are to have any chance of getting people in. I am sorry.

7.28 pm

Paul Bristow (Peterborough) (Con): I start by paying tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Robert Langan) for his maiden speech. I have been his friend for 12 years. It was an excellent speech, and I always knew he would make a significant contribution to this House.

Everyone recognises that these are unprecedented times and that the Government needed to act with extraordinary speed. I thank Ministers, and particularly the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for the energy and determination they have shown. The coronavirus pandemic is the biggest crisis facing our country for a generation. Today’s legislation is necessary to tackle it. Both the Government and local authorities will require temporary emergency powers to get us through this period. Passing this Bill is the right thing to do, but we must hope that not all of the powers outlined in the Bill will need to be used. Some are uncomfortable and are justified only by the magnitude of the moment.

My one concern related to the proposal in schedule 27 to disregard the wishes of the deceased, which would have allowed all bodies to be cremated indiscriminately if the system could not cope. Understandably, that caused alarm to anyone whose religion forbids cremation, including my local Muslim community in Peterborough, who made their feelings clear to me this weekend. However difficult circumstances become in the weeks and months ahead, it would be extremely undesirable for their religious beliefs to be ignored. To get through this crisis, we need to bring every community in our country with us. For that reason, I am enormously grateful to the Government for their reassurances today on that issue. Because of the speed required, we all understand that not every measure announced will be perfect or complete first time. Today’s notice of the amendment from the Secretary of State, combined with his comments, will give our Muslim and Jewish communities much of the security they need. I sincerely hope that this will now mean that local authorities will never enforce cremation of a dead body against the express wishes of the family when they have ample burial plots available and the ability to transport the body to the plots. That is welcome and needed.

I have been in close contact with the leaders of all Peterborough’s mosques, who took a firm lead last week in closing Friday prayers, in their extra-curricular schooling and in all their other activities, which was by no means easy for them. They saw through the tough decisions that had to be made. I thank Mr Abdul Choudhuri of the Faizan-e-Madinah, Nazim Khan of the Masjid Ghousia, Hamid Choudhery of Masjid Khadijah, Mohammad Yunas of the Alma Road Mosque, and Salim Rehmatullah of the Hussaini Islamic Centre, Burton Street. We need them and they need us, now more than ever. I know that they will be relieved and pleased by the news from the Government. I also know that Peterborough can come together to refine procedures that will allow for Muslim and Jewish burial. As the pandemic develops, we may face the heartbreak of

capacity limits, but I am now confident that the city council and local communities will now find a way through this that is respectful to all.

7.31 pm

Sarah Jones (Croydon Central) (Lab): First, I pay tribute to civil servants across Government, who have worked incredibly hard to put this legislation together. I welcome the content of the Bill and the work that the Government are undertaking. But I want to focus my remarks on housing, because there are massive holes in today's proposed legislation when it comes to protections for the millions of people who rent, not own, their home. I am basing my remarks on the amendments that have, in the last 15 minutes, been published by the Government. We have absolutely no time properly to scrutinise them.

These are very difficult times for all of us in this country, but the risk of losing one's home is surely too much to ask anyone to bear at this time, on top of everything else. The Government themselves have acknowledged that with their action on mortgage holidays. The Labour party, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth and Dearne (John Healey) in particular, published draft legislation last week to protect renters, which would have gone much further than the Government have gone today. There is an overwhelming case for action: 20 million people in England rent, 6 million of whom have no savings whatsoever.

Last week, Shelter estimated that 50,000 households could face eviction through the courts in the next six months, and those evictions do not include large numbers of section 21 no-fault evictions. We have heard of landlords threatening to evict health workers because of the risk of their exposing others to the virus. More alarmingly, some of the 1.5 million people the Government have written to and told to stay at home for 12 weeks could face eviction notices over the coming weeks.

Astonishingly, today's amendments do not get us to what the Government promised last week, which is a three-month ban. They simply extend the notice period for evictions by one month. That means that, over this entire period, eviction notices will still be landing on people's doormats. They simply will not be evicted until June instead of May. It is really clear what we need. We need three things: a real ban on evictions for six months; suspension of rents to defer rental payments and allow repayment over a further manageable period; and a substantial increase in support for rental costs through the social security system.

Although I broadly welcome the work that the Government are doing, it would be frankly disgraceful for Ministers to have promised one thing last week and to have misled renters with a promise to ban evictions, when the reality is nothing like that. Will the Minister please tell us what he will do for the thousands of families who could be evicted in the middle of this lockdown? Will we see an immediate suspension of all possession cases? Shelter has draft legislation in place. Will the Minister also protect those families in temporary accommodation and bed and breakfasts and listen to the Children's Commissioner's call and pay attention—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. I call Peter Aldous.

7.34 pm

Peter Aldous (Waveney) (Con): I think it is important to recognise what the Government have done so far. They have produced a 321-page Bill at very short notice. There is no template for this; they have moved very quickly. They have listened to concerns from all around this Chamber, and they are leaving no stone unturned in minimising the impact of coronavirus on both the British people and their businesses. There is still work to be done to address the needs of the self-employed and to ensure that our world-leading charitable sectors can be sustained, but we need to get this Bill on the statute book as soon as possible. The brief comments I will make are intended to seek reassurance, not to thwart.

In order to beat this virus, our statutory services need all the help and support possible from the voluntary sector. As a former member of the St John Ambulance Suffolk county board, I would like to highlight the work that St John can do working alongside the NHS. There are 15,000 St John volunteers, of whom 8,500 are clinically trained. They can provide ambulances, first aiders in emergency departments and support for the homeless with outreach clinics. However, to make full use of their services, St John volunteers need access to paid leave, ready access to emergency volunteering certificates, as required by schedule 6 to the Bill, and inclusion within the definition of key workers so that the children of St John volunteers can attend school.

This Bill has the very best of intentions, but the Government must guard against unintended consequences. Many groups are worried that the disabled and the vulnerable will be disadvantaged, and left both without essential support and any right to request that support. This could put lives at risk. There are concerns about possible delays in carrying out assessments for the eligibility of NHS continuing care, and that local education authorities may suspend a child's education, health and care plan. Reassurances from the Government on these two points would be welcome, and funds must be provided for, not diverted from, this vital work.

A final unintended consequence, based on the evidence from China, is that lockdown conditions created by the pandemic could lead to a significant increase in the number of victims of domestic abuse. SafeLives has set out a number of actions that the Government can take to prevent this, and I urge them to give these full and very serious consideration.

We must not dither and delay—we must get on and enact this Bill—but in doing so we should continue to seek to build consensus and to guard against unintended consequences.

7.37 pm

Matt Rodda (Reading East) (Lab): I will be brief, given the time, but it is quite clear that we face the most serious and sustained crisis—something that is, quite simply, new to many of us and that our generation has never faced before.

I would like to commend the speech by the former Health Secretary, the right hon. Member for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt), in which he pointed out the very effective action that has been taken in a number of Asian countries. I associate myself with the thrust of his remarks, which is that we need to take very clear and determined action as fast as possible, given the circumstances. That means obviously much tighter social

[*Matt Rodda*]

distancing measures and a much more active approach by the state. It also requires, as he pointed out and other speakers have said, the need for effective PPE and other supplies to get to our hospitals as soon as possible. I should say that I have heard of cases in my own area—not in my constituency, but nearby—where there are real concerns about this.

We do need to look at what works and what has worked around the world in tackling this dreadful problem. There are examples where action has been taken immediately and it has constrained the spread of the virus. I am very pleased that the Prime Minister has now pivoted: he has listened to the World Health Organisation advice and he has taken the UK on a different track. We have a very narrow window of opportunity to stem the worst of this crisis. We have seen what has happened in Italy and in many other countries on the TV news, and we do not want to see that in this country. I would urge everyone to support the measures that are being taken forward.

However—I am conscious of time—I have some reservations about this Bill. I would like to echo the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester South (Jonathan Ashworth) and by other Members around the House about the need for consent, for protection of the needs of vulnerable people and for greater thought to be put in. I urge the Government to take on board the points made across the House today. The spirit of the debate has been extremely constructive. The Minister is nodding and I know she is thinking about this matter. Please take on board the need for wider social consent, for effective review mechanisms at six months at a minimum, and for a further ability for Parliament to bring it back within a year, if possible. I urge Ministers to consider that. I am conscious of time and grateful for the opportunity to speak.

7.40 pm

Imran Hussain (Bradford East) (Lab): There is no doubt in this House that the situation we are facing is unprecedented in living memory. The raft of measures we are debating this afternoon would be unspeakable in any other situation outside wartime, such is the challenge we face.

The Government have my support in implementing measures to help keep us all safe from this hidden enemy. I share the concerns of Opposition Front Benchers about the impact on the self-employed, those who are disabled and frontline NHS staff.

Time not permitting, I will make one point that has been raised with me by a number of constituents about schedule 27, which suspends protections that prevent the cremation of an individual regardless of their wishes or faith. The right to faith and dignity in death is one of our most inalienable rights and one on which we must never compromise. How our physical bodies are handled and treated after our death is a core tenet of all faiths. That is why I wrote to Public Health England some time ago to express my concerns about how the deceased may be handled during this emergency, and why I was alarmed to learn of the measures in the Bill that overrule the right to faith and dignity in death by permitting a local authority to cremate an individual against their wishes.

While I acknowledge that the Government have this afternoon taken a step in the right direction and shown that they are listening to and engaging with faith communities by making it clear in law that faith must be taken into account before a decision on cremation is made, there is still some confusion as the provisions still appear to allow a local authority to cremate an individual against their wishes where there is a lack of capacity, either locally or in the immediate area, for handling the deceased. The Government must this afternoon address that confusion and make it clear that the absolute right to refuse the option of cremation is upheld in their amendment and in Government policy.

The Government must also make clear their commitment to ensuring that all local authorities have sufficient capacity to handle an increased number of deaths. On that point, I pay tribute to the work of Bradford Council over recent days and weeks to build additional capacity to handle deaths in a faith-compliant manner, to ensure that in Bradford we never have to compromise on the right to faith and dignity in death. As the leader of Bradford Council has firmly set out:

“Those of faith where burial is a prerequisite will always have that wish respected, and that will always be Bradford Council’s position in all circumstances.”

I think that point should be put clearly on the record.

In short, our Muslim and Jewish faith communities are rightly concerned about the measures in the Bill and want firm assurances from the Government—assurances I urge the Government to provide today—that they will never compromise the rights to faith and dignity in death. Those are fundamental and absolute rights, and they are non-negotiable.

7.43 pm

Helen Hayes (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): I recognise the need for emergency legislation at this time to minimise and reduce the harm and devastation that covid-19 threatens for communities across the country.

I rise today to speak on behalf of the millions of people who are currently receiving social care, those who are in need of social care but whose needs are not currently being met, those who will need social care for the first time because of the impact of covid-19, and children with special educational needs and their families. These are already some of the most vulnerable groups in our society. Many are also in the vulnerable category for covid-19 due to age or comorbidities. They are also exceptionally vulnerable to the social and mental health impacts of the pandemic.

In suspending all of the rights of older and disabled people under the Care Act 2014, there is a significant risk that some vulnerable people will have care withdrawn as resources are prioritised and that some will be left in truly desperate circumstances. I am concerned that in his opening speech, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care appeared to say that the purpose of the measure was to ensure that people’s life-and-death social care needs would be met over those who currently have a statutory entitlement, but for whom it was not a life or death issue. In my experience, it is simply not the case that, for anyone who is able to access social care in one way or another, it is not a matter of life or death. What assurance can the Minister give that the needs of those already eligible for care under the Care Act 2014 will continue to be met? We need greater clarity from the

Government on what criteria will be used to allocate social care resources at this time and how individuals can trigger a review of decisions made about their care under this Bill.

I am also concerned that the Bill could result in what little progress has been made on the “Transforming Care” agenda for people with autism or learning disabilities being undone, that the withdrawal of support for autistic people and people with learning disabilities could result in a higher incidence of crises, and that, because of the provisions in the Bill, more people could end up being detained and back in institutions that have been traumatising and where abuse has taken place.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Ninety seconds, Yasmin Qureshi.

7.45 pm

Yasmin Qureshi (Bolton South East) (Lab): It is clear from the words set out in sub-paragraphs 13(1)(a) and (b) in part 3 of schedule 27 that it is desirable for local authorities to consult with religious communities and groups in the event of a deceased person. However, that provision does not say that if a family or person objects to the cremation taking place, the local authority can still go ahead and cremate. I would like the Minister’s assurance that that is correct; or will the Bill be amended during its passage to say very clearly that if a person does not wish to be cremated, then a cremation will not take place?

7.46 pm

Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab): The tone of this debate—sober, serious, determined—reflects the mood of the people. I am conscious that, on a Bill of any importance, I would usually be addressing a packed Chamber. However, I thank those Members who are not here and have stayed away for reasons of social distancing. They are doing the right thing, and they are still standing up for their constituents.

We have heard some powerful speeches from hon. and right hon. Members. I thank my right hon. Friend the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Liam Byrne) and my hon. Friends the Members for Sefton Central (Bill Esterson), for Rhondda (Chris Bryant), for Coventry South (Zarah Sultana), for Newport West (Ruth Jones), for Croydon Central (Sarah Jones), for Reading East (Matt Rodda), for Bradford East (Imran Hussain), for Dulwich and West Norwood (Helen Hayes) and for Bolton South East (Yasmin Qureshi) for their contributions. I also commend the hon. Member for High Peak (Robert Lorgan) for his maiden speech. He said that his parents were unable to watch it from the Gallery, but that at least they could watch it on television. I am sure they were very proud, and I wish him well in his time in the House.

This Bill will change our everyday life in profound ways. Freedoms we have enjoyed over generations will be curtailed. As my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester South (Jonathan Ashworth) set out, in this public health emergency the Opposition are supportive of the Bill as a necessity to mobilise resources effectively, but most importantly of all to save life. Our thoughts are with families who have lost loved ones in the global pandemic. At this time of crisis, the public interest requires that we consider extraordinary measures that only a few weeks ago were unthinkable.

We have to ensure, though, that the arrangements are fair and just for everyone. Social distancing and isolation but must be accompanied by guarantees of access to the basic means of living: food, fuel, income and housing. For every sacrifice expected from our people, there must be an equally strong imperative on Government to protect and provide for them. Nobody should have to choose between their own wellbeing and the nation’s public health. Nobody should lose out for doing the right thing. I will set out in more detail in Committee the measures that we suggest to improve what the Chancellor has suggested.

As we ask many people to remain at home, with all the effects that has, let us remember, too, those who do not have a home to stay in and are on our streets, in need of our protection. Let us thank all those who have been working for the good of others in the most difficult of circumstances—our brilliant NHS staff, caring and compassionate; the teachers who, with school closures imminent, continue to do their very best for our children with dignity and determination; all our local government workers, keeping vital services going; and our shop workers, who have kept going, sometimes in difficult circumstances. But words of gratitude are not enough. The Government have to make sure that protective clothing and equipment is available to every single person who needs it, and there must be ventilators, too, for every patient who needs them.

In time of peril, it is right that people look to Government and elected representatives for leadership. It is when Government is at its most powerful that it needs most scrutiny. I am pleased to see the certification on European convention on human rights compliance and the fact that this Bill will be subject to the supervision of our courts, but a two-year sunset clause without regular scrutiny was not enough. I welcome the Government’s concession to move to six-monthly votes, but the general view of the Chamber is that if it could be made clear that any votable motion is amendable, it would make it clear that certain individual elements of the Bill could be switched off as well.

In 1939, the then Government passed emergency legislation to deal with total war, and that required renewing annually. Times have changed now and we are not in a battle with other countries. Rather, we stand together in the values of our common humanity to drive back the coronavirus disease, which threatens us all. The Government’s focus must be on diverting resources to this colossal national effort, but that should not mean that duties to people already in need completely fall away and that hard-won rights over many years are lost forever. New legal minimums of support should not be a default. Care packages should not automatically be cut back to the minimum required, those with special educational needs must have the care they need and those with disabilities must have their rights protected. The Government must make clear its value—in action, not words—for everyone who relies on support.

Life will return to a sense of normality in the not-too-distant future, but we are asking for changes in our way of life. There have of course been negative stories—in the course of this debate, the shadow Transport Secretary has sent me a photo of workers in a canteen in Teesside clearly not respecting social distancing—but alongside those there are also great stories of the very best values of our society. Hearing the famous “You’ll never walk alone”

[Nick Thomas-Symonds]

played simultaneously on radio stations across the world summed up where we are. We must not let this period be defined by isolation. I think of the grandparents not seeing their grandchildren as they otherwise would and of the people whose attendance at community events kept them going, but being separate does not mean that people have to be alone. In this age of modern technology, we must use all the means at our disposal to keep talking, to stay together. I say to anyone watching this: if you do nothing else this evening, contact somebody who is on their own to show them that.

The late Aneurin Bevan, who created the national health service, which we will need more than ever in the weeks ahead, wrote:

“Not even the apparently enlightened principle of the ‘greatest good for the greatest number’ can excuse indifference to individual suffering. There is no test for progress other than its impact on the individual.”

There can be no other test for this Bill and the financial measures that go with it than how it protects every single individual person. Let this be a time of togetherness across our United Kingdom, with us all determined to get through this. Let us look out for each other and set an example across the world.

7.52 pm

The Paymaster General (Penny Mordaunt): I do not have a lot of time left, so if I cannot address some points now, I will try to address them in the Committee stage. I would like to briefly put on the record, echoing the sentiments that every Member has expressed in this debate, my thanks to our care and health professionals, the police, the military, volunteers and everyone who is working so hard to combat this crisis. I also wish to thank all hon Members who have contributed on Second Reading. The key points are: that the vast majority of powers in the Bill will not be live at Royal Assent; that parts of this Bill and those powers can be switched on and off—they do not stand or fall together; and the powers the Bill creates can be switched on and off as well. That addresses many of the points that have been made by some Members. We are only taking powers that we need. Many Members, including the hon. Member for Croydon Central (Sarah Jones), raised points about renters and the self-employed, but the Bill today is about the powers we need to take now and not about every aspect of our response.

I am now going to deal with the shadow Secretary of State’s points. I thank him for his approach to working with the Government on all aspects of this response. What he says on social distancing and the offer of support he has made for further measures is noted, and I thank him for that. He asks about EU joint procurement. Not all member states are part of that procurement system, and we have chosen other routes. He asks about car parking, and I believe there are ongoing discussions with trusts about that and about pay for nurses taking time out of training. They will be paid in accordance with the terms and conditions of those roles.

I want to turn to the issue of social care, which was mentioned by many Members, including the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Catherine West), my right hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Southampton North (Caroline Nokes), and the hon. Members for

Coventry South (Zarah Sultana), for Newport West (Ruth Jones) and for Dulwich and West Norwood (Helen Hayes). I fully understand why this is such an issue. Carers, adults in social care, parents of children with learning disabilities and others often feel that they have a fight on their hands at the best of times, and we are heading for what I hope will not be the worst of times. I understand their concerns around that and wish to provide them with reassurance. The purpose of these powers is to protect the most vulnerable when we come under great strain in these systems.

Clause 13 is live on Royal Assent, but clauses 14 and 9 are not. They need further regulations in order to commence. The Minister for Care, my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately), is doing an amazing job of ensuring that we understand what is going on around the country. If these powers are switched on, we will understand what is happening, taking data from the CQC and from other areas as well. I think I can provide the assurance that hon. Members are seeking on that, and I am happy to do so at length in Committee, if I get the chance.

My right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt) mentioned personal protection, as did many other hon. Members. We are working with business, and there has been an incredible response from industry—injection moulders and others—to produce more PPE. The strains in the system are not to do with the volume, but the distribution, but military assistance and other assistance has been stood up to get that to where it needs to be.

I am sure that hon. Members will hear more in the future about testing and the new end-to-end testing scheme that has been put in place, and about mobile phone data. My right hon. Friend mentioned Dr Tedros, and we should all pay tribute to his efforts and those of his team.

The hon. Member for Dulwich and West Norwood, along with my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey, mentioned the “Transforming Care” aspects. I know that the schemes that my hon. Friend the Minister for Care has put in place, which monitor referrals and other such data, will give us confidence that we can understand what is happening in the system.

The right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford) emphasised the importance of our working together and that we needed to put economic measures in place. I would say to him that we have to recognise that people who are travelling to other parts of the country might be doing that with the best of intentions. He is right, and we are right, to ask them to follow the chief medical officer’s advice, and that is why we need to be clear about that advice, and about staying at home and the support systems that are around people in their communities—

Ian Blackford *rose*—

Penny Mordaunt: I am sorry, but I am very short of time.

Other hon. Members have mentioned businesses, with examples of good practice and, I am afraid, bad practice. That needs to be called out. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers) spoke about care homes and, obviously, policy is under review but we have to find the right balance between giving those individuals mental health and social support and keeping them safe.

The hon. Member for Sefton Central (Bill Esterson) mentioned sick pay and what further support we could give to caseworkers and so on. The DWP is looking at training and teach-ins for citizens advice bureaux, caseworkers and others so that we can ensure that as these initiatives come out they are well understood.

In the short time I have left, I must pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Robert Lorgan) on his maiden speech. As the Opposition spokesman pointed out, Louise and Terry, as I believe they are known, are no doubt watching on television and I am sure that the whole House will want to send them our best wishes as they follow the chief medical officer's advice and to let them know that their son has done very well for himself. He was absolutely right to acknowledge—I know that Members understand this—that we are in a very privileged position compared with many people, and I know that that is in everyone's thoughts as we consider our own personal response to this situation.

The hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) rightly raised the matter of people's behaviour. My hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Steve Brine) also mentioned that this is not a new issue, and that we have trained very heavily.

I am sorry to disappoint hon. Members. I have the issues they have raised in front of me and I will say more about them, including the issue of funerals, in Committee. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time; to stand committed to a Committee of the whole House (Order, this day).

Further proceedings on the Bill stood postponed (Order, this day).

CORONAVIRUS BILL (MONEY)

Queen's recommendation signified.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 52(1)(a)),

That, for the purposes of any Act arising from the Coronavirus Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

- (a) any expenditure which is incurred by a Minister of the Crown, government department or any other public authority by virtue of this Act,
- (b) any increase attributable to this Act in the sums payable by virtue of any other Act out of money so provided, and
- (c) any other expenditure which is incurred (whether before or after the passing of this Act) by a Minister of the Crown, government department or other public authority in connection with the making of payments, or the giving of financial assistance to a person (whether directly or indirectly), as a result of coronavirus or coronavirus disease.—(Michael Tomlinson.)

Question agreed to.

Coronavirus Bill

Proceedings resumed (Order, this day).

Considered in Committee (Order, this day).

[DAME ELEANOR LAING *in the Chair*]

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Eleanor Laing): I have a few things to explain before we begin Committee stage. For understandable reasons, a large number of manuscript amendments have been tabled by the Government today, and in fact a large number of other manuscript amendments have, unusually, been allowed today as well. Members therefore need to make sure that they are working from the right version of the notice paper and that they have the latest version of the grouping and selection list, although I should explain that there is one group.

Government amendments 79 to 82 on extradition are on a separate supplementary notice paper, and a revised grouping and selection list will be issued shortly. The late appearance of these amendments is due not to Government action but to a mistake on the part of the Public Bill Office, but, lest anybody complain, I will defend the Public Bill Office, because they have done a marvellous job today. I have seen it over the last few days, and the people who work here have worked miracles to get us to this stage in such good order.

The Business of the House motion, which the House agreed before Second Reading, allows the Chair discretion at the end of the time allowed for Committee—in this case, that falls at exactly 10 pm—to call non-Government amendments and new clauses to be moved formally at that stage for separate decision. I have to tell the Committee that my sense of where we are at this stage is that I will call Divisions only when they are really essential. As always, the Chair will listen to the debate and form a judgment on whether to exercise that discretion. I am simply informing the Committee now that today the bar is a high one—no one will be surprised to hear that—and that arguments in favour of going through the Division Lobbies tonight will need to be very persuasive.

Clause 1

MEANING OF “CORONAVIRUS” AND RELATED TERMINOLOGY

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

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

Clauses 2 to 7 stand part.

Amendment 74, in clause 8, page 2, line 29, leave out “loss of”.

Amendment 75, page 2, line 34, leave out subsection (3).

Amendment 76, page 3, leave out from “care” in line 27 to the end of line 31.

Clauses 8 to 10 stand part.

Government amendment 20.

Clauses 11 to 30 stand part.

Government amendments 21 and 22.

Clauses 31 to 36 stand part.

Government amendment 40.

Clause 37 stand part.

Amendment 78, in clause 38, page 25, line 43, at end insert—

“(8) Section 153(9) is repealed.”

This amendment would abolish the lower earnings limit (currently £118pw) below which a worker is not entitled to statutory sick pay.

Clause 38 stand part.

Amendment 77, in clause 39, page 26, line 12, at end insert

“and, in particular such regulations shall deem ‘a day of incapacity’ in this part of the Act to include—

- “(i) a day of self-isolation in accordance with the aforesaid guidance or published document of the aforesaid bodies;
- (ii) a day reasonably necessitated to care for a person needing such care who—
 - (a) is suffering from severe respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 or other communicable disease; or
 - (b) is self-isolating in accordance with the aforesaid guidance or published document of the aforesaid bodies; or
 - (c) is unable sufficiently to care for themselves and who is unable to attend an establishment or a carer who would otherwise provide care but is unable to do so by reason that the establishment or the carer is acting in accordance with the aforesaid guidance or published document of the aforesaid bodies; or
 - (d) qualifies for time off pursuant to s.57A Employment Rights Act 1996 (time off for dependants).”

Clause 39 stand part.

Government amendment 41.

Clauses 40 to 51 stand part.

Government amendment 79.

Clauses 52 to 57 stand part.

Government amendment 26.

Clauses 58 and 59 stand part.

Government amendments 27 to 29.

Clauses 60 to 62 stand part.

Government amendment 30.

Clause 63 stand part.

Government amendments 31 and 32.

Clauses 64 to 73 stand part.

Government amendments 33 and 23.

Clause 74 stand part.

Amendment 1, in clause 75, page 45, line 25, leave out subsection (1) and insert—

“(1) This Act expires at the end of the period of 6 months beginning with the date on which it is passed (subject to subsection (1A)).

(1A) The Secretary of State may by regulations provide for this Act (or specified provisions) to continue to have effect for an additional period not exceeding 6 months.

(1B) Regulations under subsection (1A)—

- (a) shall be made by statutory instrument, and
- (b) may not be made unless a draft has been laid before and approved by resolution of each House of Parliament.

(1C) If this Act (or specified provisions) would expire on a day on which either House of Parliament is not expected to be sitting—

- (a) Her Majesty may by Order in Council make provision of a kind that could be made by regulations under subsection (1A); and

(b) an Order in Council may not be made unless the Secretary of State has consulted—

- (i) such members of the House of Commons Liaison Committee (or any Select Committee replacing that Committee) as are available, or
- (ii) at a time when there is no such Committee, any available Chairs of the Committees previously represented on that Committee.”

Amendment 2, page 45, line 25, after “expires”, insert “in accordance with subsection (1A) or”.

This is a paving amendment for amendment 4 which provides for the Bill's emergency powers to be renewed at 6 month intervals.

Amendment 6, page 45, line 25, leave out “2 years” and insert “12 months”.

This amendment would “sunset” the provisions of the Bill after one year rather than after two years.

Amendment 3, page 45, line 26, after “subject” insert “in either case”.

This is a paving amendment for amendment 4 which provides for the Bill's emergency powers to be renewed at 6 month intervals.

Amendment 7, page 45, line 26, leave out “and section 76”.

This amendment is linked to amendment 8 to leave out Clause 76.

Amendment 4, page 45, line 26, at end insert—

“(1A) No more than 14 sitting days before the end of the periods of 6, 12 and 18 months beginning with the day on which this Act is passed each House of Parliament shall consider, on a motion moved by a minister of the Crown, whether it wishes this Act to continue to have effect after the expiry of that period; and this Act shall expire at the end of that period unless, no less than 7 sitting days before the end of that period, each House of Parliament has resolved that it wishes this Act to continue to have effect.”

This amendment provides for the Bill's emergency powers to be renewed at 6 month intervals.

Government amendments 34, 24 and 47.

Clauses 75 to 78 stand part.

Government amendment 37.

Clauses 79 to 82 stand part.

Government amendment 18.

Clauses 83 and 84 stand part.

Government amendments 44, 48, 80, 25, 48 to 50, 38, 39, 81, 35, 36, 42, 45, 72, 43 and 73.

Clauses 85 to 87 stand part.

Government new clause 15—*Emergency arrangements concerning medical practitioners: Wales.*

Government new clause 16—*Disapplication of limit under section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982.*

Government new clause 17—*Elections and referendums due to be held in England in period after 15 March 2020.*

Government new clause 18—*Elections due to be held in Wales in period after 15 March 2020.*

Government new clause 19—*Six-monthly parliamentary review.*

Government new clause 20—*Local authority meetings.*

Government new clause 21—*Extension of BID arrangements: England.*

Government new clause 22—*Extension of BID arrangements: Northern Ireland.*

Government new clause 23—*Extension of time limits for retention of fingerprints and DNA profiles.*

Government new clause 24—*Residential tenancies: protection from eviction.*

Government new clause 25—*HMRC functions.*

Government new clause 26—*Up-rating of working tax credit etc*

Government new clause 30—*Business tenancies in England and Wales: protection from forfeiture etc.*

Government new clause 31—*Business tenancies in Northern Ireland: protection from forfeiture etc.*

New clause 1—*Postponement of General Synod elections—*

‘(1) Her Majesty may by Order in Council, at the joint request of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, postpone to the date specified in the Order the date on which the Convocations of Canterbury and York stand dissolved for the purposes of the Church of England Convocations Act 1966.

(2) Section 1 of that Act is, accordingly, to be read subject to provision made by an Order under this section.

(3) If either of the Archbishops is unable to exercise the power to join in making a request under subsection (1), or if the see of either of the Archbishops is vacant, the power may be exercised by the senior bishop of the province, with seniority for that purpose being determined in accordance with section 10(4) of the Bishops (Retirement) Measure 1986.

(4) An Order under this section may make consequential, supplementary, incidental, transitional or saving provision.’

The new clause would enable elections to the General Synod of the Church of England that are due to take place this summer to be postponed.

New clause 2—*Parliamentary consideration of status of specified provisions of this Act—*

‘(1) The specified provisions for the purposes of this section are—

- (a) sections 17 to 20 (on registration of births and still-births etc),
- (b) sections 23 to 27 (on food supply),
- (c) sections 28 to 30 (on inquests),
- (d) section 48 (on powers to direct suspension of port operations),
- (e) section 49 (powers relating to potentially infectious persons),
- (f) section 50 (powers relating to events, gatherings and premises), and
- (g) section 56 (on powers in relation to bodies).

(2) A Minister of the Crown must make arrangements for—

- (a) a motion to the effect that the House of Commons has approved the status report in respect of the provisions of this Act mentioned in each of the paragraphs in subsection (1), to be moved in that House by a Minister of the Crown within the period of 14 Commons sitting days beginning with the day after the end of the first reporting period, and
- (b) a motion for the House of Lords to take note of each status report to be moved in that House by a Minister of the Crown within the period of 14 Lords sitting days beginning with the day after the end of the first reporting period.

(3) If the House of Commons decides not to approve a status report in respect of any of the sections mentioned in one or more paragraphs of subsection (1), then the sections in respect of which a status report has not been approved shall cease to have effect at the end of 7 days beginning with the day on which the House of Commons made that decision.

(4) The “status report” is the report required to be prepared by the Secretary of State under section 83 in respect of each 2 month reporting period, as modified by this section.

(5) In this section—

“Commons sitting day” means a day on which the House of Commons is sitting (and a day is only a day on which the House of Commons is sitting if the House begins to sit on that day);

“Lords sitting day” means a day on which the House of Lords is sitting (and a day is only a day on which the House of Lords is sitting if the House begins to sit on that day);

“reporting period” has the same meaning as in section 83.’

This new clause provides for debates to be held promptly on amendable motions on the status reports laid every 2 months in relation to provisions of the Bill impinging most directly on civil liberties, with the possibility of the House of Commons terminating the exercise of powers under those provisions.

New clause 3—*Parliamentary scrutiny: status report on specified matters—*

‘(1) If when a status report to which section [Parliamentary consideration of status of specified provisions of this Act] applies is made under section 83 Parliament stands prorogued to a day after the end of the period of 5 days beginning with the date on which the status report is laid before Parliament, Her Majesty shall by proclamation under the Meeting of Parliament Act 1797 (c. 127) require Parliament to meet on a specified day within that period.

(2) If when a status report to which section [Parliamentary consideration of status of specified provisions of this Act] applies is made under section 83 the House of Commons stands adjourned to a day after the end of the period of 5 days beginning with the date on which the regulations are made, the Speaker of the House of Commons shall arrange for the House to meet on a day during that period.

(3) If when a status report to which section [Parliamentary consideration of status of specified provisions of this Act] applies is made under section 83 the House of Lords stands adjourned to a day after the end of the period of 5 days beginning with the date on which the regulations are made, the Speaker of the House of Lords shall arrange for the House to meet on a day during that period.

(4) In subsections (2) and (3) a reference to the Speaker of the House of Commons or the Speaker of the House of Lords includes a reference to a person authorised by Standing Orders of the House of Commons or of the House of Lords to act in place of the Speaker of the House of Commons or the Speaker of the House of Lords in respect of the recall of the House during adjournment.’

This new clause provides for Parliament to be recalled from adjournment or prorogation to debate status reports which must be made every 2 months under Clause 83 of the Bill.

New clause 4—*Duty to support basic means of living—*

‘The Prime Minister must make, and lay before Parliament, arrangements to ensure that everyone in the United Kingdom has access to the basic means of living including food, water, fuel, clothing, income and housing, employing all available statutory and prerogative powers.’

This new clause sets an overarching responsibility for the Government to use all its powers to ensure that everyone in the United Kingdom has access to the basic means of living throughout the present coronavirus emergency.

New clause 5—*Guidance on identification, support and assistance for victims of slavery or human trafficking during the coronavirus emergency—*

‘(1) The Secretary of State must issue guidance to such public authorities and other persons as the Secretary of State considers appropriate about continuing the process for identifying persons in the United Kingdom who may be a victim of slavery or human trafficking during the coronavirus emergency.

(2) The Secretary of State must issue guidance to such public authorities and other persons in England and Wales as the Secretary of State considers appropriate about continuing arrangements for providing assistance and support to persons during the coronavirus emergency where there—

- (a) are reasonable grounds to believe the person may be a victim of slavery or human trafficking; and
 - (b) is a conclusive determination that the person is a victim of slavery or human trafficking.
- (3) The guidance in subsection (2) must include—
- (a) whether a victim who is on immigration bail must remain at an address where another occupant is experiencing the coronavirus disease;
 - (b) on-going provision of a support worker to victims and the ability of the victim to receive financial support, where either a support worker or a victim has the coronavirus disease or has had to self-isolate;
 - (c) provision of accommodation for victims who may need to leave current accommodation because of concerns about the coronavirus disease; and
 - (d) provision of accommodation for victims who have the coronavirus disease.
- (4) The Secretary of State must liaise with the Northern Ireland Executive and Scottish Ministers about how the guidance issued under subsection (2) may have relevance for the support and assistance of victims in those jurisdictions.
- (5) For the purposes of subsection (2)—
- (a) there are reasonable grounds to believe that a person is a victim of slavery or human trafficking if a competent authority has determined for the purposes of Article 10 of the Trafficking Convention (identification of victims) that there are such grounds;
 - (b) there is a conclusive determination that a person is or is not a victim of slavery or human trafficking when, on completion of the identification process required by Article 10 of the Trafficking Convention, a competent authority concludes that the person is or is not such a victim.
 - (c) “competent authority” means a person who is a competent authority of the United Kingdom for the purposes of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.’

This new clause requires the Government to set out its plans for continuing to identify and support victims of modern slavery during the coronavirus emergency.

New clause 6—Powers relating to transport for isolated and island communities—

- ‘(1) The Secretary of State, or relevant Minister in the devolved Administrations, may issue a direction to such ferry, bus and rail operators as the Secretary of State or relevant Minister thinks fit to—
- (a) work together to produce a plan for the continuing provision of a resilient transport service to isolated and island communities; and
 - (b) implement the plan to a timescale specified by the Secretary of State or relevant Minister.
- (2) The plan in subsection (1)(a) must cover—
- (a) the provision of food, medicines and other essential goods; and
 - (b) the provision of passenger transportation to enable people to travel for essential purposes, including medical purposes.
- (3) The direction in subsection (1) supersedes all existing legislation, including but not limited to the Competition Act 1998, that would otherwise prevent operators from working together in the ways set out in subsections (1) and (2).
- (4) The direction in subsection (1) must be given in writing to the ferry, bus and rail operators concerned.
- (5) In this section “isolated communities” means:
- (a) islands that are part of the United Kingdom but are not connected to the mainland by a bridge or tunnel, or
 - (b) communities with a population density of less than 100 people per kilometre.’

New clause 7—Immigration and Asylum—

‘Schedule () contains temporary changes to immigration and asylum laws and procedures for the purposes of preventing, protecting against, controlling or providing a public health response to the incidence or spread of infection or contamination.’

This new clause is linked to NS1.

New clause 8—Provision of education to pupils no longer attending school—

‘(1) A school or provider of 16 to 18 education that closes because of the coronavirus outbreak, whether because of a temporary closure direction issued under Schedule 15 or otherwise, has a duty to ensure that its pupils continue to receive educational provision.

- (2) The educational provision in subsection (1) may include—
- (a) lessons set by a teacher, such as via videoconferencing or the setting of assignments, or
 - (b) teaching resources, including but not limited to textbooks or software.

(3) The Secretary of State must, as soon as is reasonably practicable, indemnify the school or provider of 16 to 18 education for all reasonable purchases of teaching resources for pupils and staff that the head of the school or provider of 16 to 18 education considers necessary for it to fulfil the duty in subsection (1).

- (4) In this section, “provider of 16 to 18 education” means
- (a) a 16 to 19 Academy, within the meaning of section 1B of the Academies Act 2010;
 - (b) an institution within the further education sector, within the meaning of section 91(3) of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992;
 - (c) a provider of post-16 education or training—
 - (i) to which Chapter 3 of Part 8 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 applies, and
 - (ii) in respect of which funding is provided by, or under, arrangements made by the Secretary of State, a local authority or a combined authority established under section 103 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009,

but does not include an employer who is a provider by reason only of the employer providing such education or training to its employees.’

New clause 9—Social security—

- ‘(1) The Secretary of State must, by regulations —
- (a) increase the value of the benefits specified in subsection (2) so that, for the tax year beginning on 6 April 2020—
 - (i) an individual not in work will be awarded at least £150 per week, and
 - (ii) a couple who are both not in work will be awarded at least £260 a week.
 - (b) disapply the minimum income floor of universal credit for the tax year beginning on 6 April 2020;
 - (c) provide that, for the tax year beginning on 6 April 2020—
 - (i) households newly claiming universal credit receive an advance of their first payment by default, and
 - (ii) households in sub-paragraph (i) are not required to repay any part of this advance for a period of at least six months beginning with the date on which they received the advance; and
 - (d) make provision to ensure that claimants of universal credit, jobseeker’s allowance and Employment and Support Allowance are not subject to sanctions in the tax year beginning on 6 April 2020.
- (2) The benefits to be increased under subsection (1)(a) are—
- (a) the standard allowances of universal credit,
 - (b) jobseeker’s allowance, and
 - (c) employment and support allowance.
- (3) A statutory instrument containing regulations under this section is subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.’

New clause 10—Expiry—

‘(1) Except so far as otherwise provided under this section, the provisions of this Act expire at the end of the period of 3 months beginning with the day on which this Act is passed.

(2) The Secretary of State may by regulations provide that any provisions of this Act do not expire at the time when it would otherwise expire under subsection (1) but is to continue in force after that time for a period not exceeding 3 months.

(3) The power under subsection (2) may not be used to continue any of the provisions of this Act in force any later than a period of 2 years beginning with the day on which this Act is passed.

(4) A statutory instrument containing regulations under subsection (2) may not be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before Parliament and approved by a resolution of each House.’

The new clause would set an expiry date on the provisions of the Act at the end of a period of 3 months beginning on the day when the Act is passed unless they are continued in force by means of affirmative regulations. Provisions could continue in force for no longer than 3 months at a time, up to a period of 2 years from when the Act was initially passed.

New clause 11—Statutory sick pay: rate of payment—

‘The Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 is amended as follows:

“In section 157, subsection (1), leave out “£94.25” and insert “£220”.”

This new clause would increase the weekly rate of Statutory Sick Pay from £94.25 to £220.

New clause 12—European Union: extension of implementation period etc—

‘(1) Section 33 of the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020 is repealed.

(2) It shall be an objective of the Government to secure a decision by the UK-EU Joint Committee to extend the transition period for up to 1 or 2 years as per Article 132 of the Withdrawal Agreement.

(3) It shall be an objective of the Government to secure an agreement within the framework of the future relationship of the UK and EU to maintain continued and full membership of the EU Early Warning System.

(4) A Minister of the Crown shall lay before each House of Parliament a progress report on the objective in subsection (1) and subsection (2) within 2 months of this Act being passed, and subsequently at intervals of no more than 2 months.’

This new clause would require the Government to (i) repeal Section 33 of the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020, (ii) seek an extension of the negotiation period for the UK-EU future relationship, and (iii) seek to maintain continued and full membership of the EU Early Warning System, in order to respond effectively to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

New clause 13—Statutory self-employment pay—

‘(1) The Secretary of State must, by regulations, introduce a scheme of Statutory Self-Employment Pay.

(2) The scheme must make provision for payments to be made out of public funds to individuals who are

- (a) self-employed, or
- (b) freelancers.

(3) The payments to be made in subsection (2) are to be set so that the net monthly earnings of an individual specified in subsection (2) do not fall below—

- (i) 80 per cent of their monthly net earnings, averaged over the last three years, or
 - (ii) £2,917
- whichever is lower.

(4) No payment to be made under subsection (2) shall exceed £2,917 per month.

(5) A statutory instrument containing regulations under this section is subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.’

The purpose of this amendment is to make the Government ‘top up’ self-employed workers’ earnings to the lower of 80% of their net monthly earnings averaged over three years, or £2,917 a month.

New clause 14—Social care provisions—

‘(1) Within 10 days of the date on which this Act is passed the Secretary of State must lay before Parliament a comprehensive report outlining how the Government will guarantee provisions for social care while this Act is in force.

(2) The reports must make reference to but are not limited to—

- (a) an outline of the funding available to social care providers, and
- (b) any other provisions in place or to be introduced to ensure that social care standards are maintained to as high a level as possible.

(3) The Secretary of State must lay before Parliament an updated proposal in the same terms every three months from the date on which this Act is passed.’

This new clause requires the Secretary of State to publish a comprehensive proposal outlining how the Government will guarantee provisions for social care while this Act is in force.

New clause 27—Universal access to healthcare—

‘(1) Section 39 of the Immigration Act 2014 is omitted.

(2) A reference in the NHS charging provisions to persons not ordinarily resident in Great Britain shall not include a reference to a person who is physically present in Great Britain.

(3) A reference in the NHS charging provisions to persons not ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland shall not include a reference to a person who is physically present in Northern Ireland.

(4) The “NHS charging provisions” are—

- (a) section 175 of the National Health Service Act 2006 (charges in respect of persons not ordinarily resident in Great Britain),
- (b) section 124 of the National Health Service (Wales) Act 2006 (charges in respect of persons not ordinarily resident in Great Britain),
- (c) section 98 of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978 (charges in respect of persons not ordinarily resident in Great Britain),
- (d) article 42 of the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 (S.I. 1972/1265 (N.I. 14)) (provision of services to persons not ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland).

(5) The Secretary of State shall cease all data sharing between the Home Office and NHS Digital, any NHS Trust, or any other part of the National Health Service where it takes place in connection with—

- (a) NHS charging,
- (b) the compliant environment, or
- (c) any other immigration function.

(6) The Secretary of State shall take appropriate steps to communicate the effect of this section to people who, but for the provisions of this section, would have been considered under the NHS charging provisions to be persons not ordinarily resident in Great Britain or in Northern Ireland.

(7) In taking the steps in subsection (5) the Secretary of State shall have regard to the following—

- (a) the public interest in and public health benefits of all persons physically present in the United Kingdom feeling safe in presenting to medical officials if they fall ill, and
- (b) the particular needs and vulnerability of the groups in question.’

This new clause is intended to safeguard public health by ensuring every person in the United Kingdom is able to access NHS care without incurring a financial penalty or immigration sanction.

New clause 28—Power to cap prices—

‘(1) An appropriate authority may declare a state of disruption to the food supply chain.

(2) A state of disruption may not last longer than 180 days from the date of the declaration.

(3) During a declared state of disruption it is prohibited to charge a price that exceeds an amount equal to or in excess of 10 per cent of the average price at which the same or similar consumer goods or services were obtainable during the seven days prior to the declared state of disruption.

(4) The provisions of this section shall not apply if the increase in price is substantially attributable to additional costs that arose within the food supply chain in connection with the sale of consumer goods and services.

(5) The appropriate authority may direct trading standards officers to investigate apparent breaches of this section.

(6) If the appropriate authority is satisfied, on the balance of probabilities, that a person has, without reasonable excuse, failed to comply with this section, the appropriate authority may impose a financial penalty on that person in accordance with Schedule 14.’

New clause 29—Monitoring body: effect of Schedule 11 to this Act—

‘(1) The Secretary of State shall, within seven days of the date on which this Act is passed, appoint by order a body (‘the relevant body’) to monitor the effect of Schedule 11 to this Act.

(2) The relevant body must—

- (a) advise central government about the effect of Schedule 11 to this Act;
- (b) recommend to central government the amendment, suspension or repeal of Schedule 11 to this Act.

(3) The relevant body must publish a report in respect of subparagraphs (1) and (2) at least once every 8 weeks during any period in which Schedule 11 is operation.

(4) In this section “central government” means Her Majesty’s Government.’

The purpose of this new clause is to ensure that the impact of Schedule 11 is subject to appropriate monitoring and review by an appropriate body such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

New clause 32—Statutory sick pay: extension of entitlement—

‘The Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 has effect as if in section 163 (Interpretation of Part XI and supplementary provisions) after subsection (1) there were inserted—

“(1A) Regulations shall provide that in relation to those specified in section 151(4A)—

- (a) the expression ‘employee’ shall for the purposes of Part XI of this Act mean a human person who—
 - (i) seeks to be engaged by another to provide labour,
 - (ii) is engaged by another to provide labour, or
 - (iii) where the employment has ceased was engaged by another to provide labour, and is not, in the provision of that labour, genuinely operating a business on his or her own account.
- (b) An ‘employer’ in relation to an employee is—
 - (i) any person or entity who engages or engaged the employee, and
 - (ii) any person or entity who substantially determines terms on which the employee is engaged at any material time.
- (c) ‘contract of service shall mean any contract by which the employee is engaged by another to provide labour and ‘employed’ ‘employment’ mean engaged as an ‘employee’.

(d) For the purposes of the regulations, an agency worker shall be treated as an employee of both the employment agency or employment business which arranged for him to provide labour to another and the end user of his labour; and ‘employment agency’ and employment business’ shall have the meanings set out in section 13 of the Employment Agencies Act 1973.

(e) It shall be for the person who is claimed to be the employer and contests that claim to show in any legal proceedings that he or she is not the employer.’

New clause 33—Statutory sick pay: self-employed people—

‘A person who is self-employed and genuinely operating a business on his or her account and who suffers losses directly attributable to the coronavirus outbreak shall be entitled to reimbursement of those losses by the Secretary of State under regulations which the Secretary of State must lay before Parliament for approval.’

New clause 34—Statutory sick pay uprating—

‘The Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 has effect as if in section 157 (rates of payment) after subsection (2) there were inserted—

“(2A) The Secretary of State shall by Order substitute the following rate of statutory sick pay for all those to whom the regulations under section 151(4A) may apply: 90 per cent of a week’s pay calculated in accordance with the provisions of sections 220 to 229 Employment Rights Act 1996, save that the maximum provided for in section 227(1) shall be for the purposes of section 2A of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 the sum of £577 per week and the minimum shall be the rate of the Real Living Wage multiplied by the worker’s working hours which number of hours shall be calculated in accordance with sections 220 to 229 Employment Rights Act 1996.

(2B) An employer who is entitled to reimbursement from the Secretary of State in respect of statutory sick pay or any payment under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme or any other grant or loan from the Secretary of State in relation to coronavirus must—

- (a) not dismiss any employee for a reason which includes redundancy related to the coronavirus outbreak of 2020 and any such dismissal shall be regarded for the purposes of Part X of the Employment Rights Act 1996 as an unfair dismissal,
- (b) pay, in accordance with subsection 2A or in accordance with the scheme of the Job Retention Scheme if more beneficial to the employee, an employee who would otherwise be at risk of redundancy or is put on fewer hours work than normal for a reason related to the coronavirus outbreak of 2020,
- (c) at the discretion of the Secretary of State, cease to be entitled to any further reimbursement from the Secretary of State in respect of statutory sick pay or any payment under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme or any other grant or loan from the Secretary of State in relation to coronavirus, and may be required to pay back some or all of any such sum received if the employer has failed to pay, in accordance with subsection 2A, an employee who would otherwise be at risk of redundancy or has dismissed an employee for a reason which includes redundancy related to the coronavirus outbreak of 2020.”

This amendment uprates statutory sick pay to the level of 90 per cent of the worker’s normal earnings and makes provision for maximum and minimum rates.

New clause 35—Provision of personal protective equipment—

‘Without prejudice to the duties of employers pursuant to sections 2,3 and 4 of the Health and Safety etc Act 1974 and pursuant to the regulations made thereunder and their duties in common law, the Secretary of State has a duty to ensure the provision of suitable and adequate personal protective equipment to all health, care and emergency service workers who are exposed to the risk of contracting coronavirus in the normal course of their work.’

This amendment would impose a duty on the Secretary of State to ensure the provision of personal protective equipment as part of their ministerial role.

Schedules 1 to 6.

Amendment 64, in schedule 7, page 90, line 9, leave out

“is impractical or would involve undesirable delay”

and replace with “would involve unreasonable delay”.

The purpose of this amendment is to restrict the use of single practitioner recommendations to situations where this would cause unreasonable delay in the recommendation being made. This will protect patients in a way that a broader power to use single practitioner recommendations where obtaining two recommendations was said to be ‘impractical’ or involve ‘undesirable delay’ would not.

Amendment 65, in page 90, line 31, at end insert—

“(10) A single recommendation may not be made by a practitioner employed by a private sector body, if it is being contemplated that the patient may be detained in a hospital run by the relevant private sector body.”

The purpose of this amendment is to ensure that patients cannot be detained solely on the recommendation of a doctor employed by a private hospital where it is envisaged that they will or may be detained at that hospital.

Government amendments 15 and 16.

Schedules 7 to 10.

Amendment 57, in schedule 11, page 111, line 19, at end insert—

“(3) In this Part of this Schedule, the phrase “does not have to comply with any duties” means that a local authority does not have to comply with the relevant duty only if it would not be reasonably practicable to do so.”

The purpose of this amendment, along with amendments 58 and 59, is to require local authorities to discharge their Care Act duties and in particular meet needs for care and support which would currently be ‘eligible’ needs where it is reasonably practicable for them to do so. This will provide a measure of protection to disabled people while permitting local authorities to take account of all relevant circumstances in the commissioning and delivery of adult social care.

Amendment 14, in schedule 11, page 112, line 33, at end, insert—

“(d) the local authority has the necessary resources to meet those needs or can make funding available in advance or arrears to meet those needs.”

This amendment would make the duty on a local authority to meet an adult’s needs for care and support conditional upon the local authority having available resources or the ability to access additional resources to fulfil that duty.

Amendment 59, page 113, line 8, after “Convention rights” insert

“or the local authority considers, on the information available to it, that it is likely the adult’s needs would have met the eligibility criteria previously established by the Care and Support (Eligibility Criteria) Regulations 2014 and that it would be reasonably practicable to meet those needs”.

See explanatory statement for Amendment 57.

Amendment 58, page 113, line 30, after “Convention rights” insert

“or the local authority considers, on the information available to it, that it is likely the adult’s needs would have met the eligibility criteria previously established by the Care and Support (Eligibility Criteria) Regulations 2014 and that it would be reasonably practicable to meet those needs”.

See explanatory statement for Amendment 57.

Amendment 60, page 117, line 18, at end insert—

“(3) In this Part of this Schedule, the phrase “does not have to comply with any duties” means that a local authority does not have to comply with the relevant duty only if it would not be reasonably practicable to do so.”

This amendment and Amendments 61 to 63 have the same objectives in relation to the Welsh legislation as the amendments 57 to 59 above have in relation to the Care Act in England.

Amendment 62, page 119, leave out lines 2 to 4 and insert—

“(3) Condition 2 is that the local authority considers, on the information available to it, that it is likely the carer’s needs would have met the eligibility criteria previously in force and it is reasonably practicable to meet those needs.”, and”

See explanatory statement for Amendment 60.

Amendment 63, page 119, leave out lines 7 to 10 and insert—

“(3) Amod 2 yw bod yr awdurdod yn ystyried, o’r wybodaeth sydd ar gael ar y pryd, ei fod yn debygol bod anghenion y gofalwr eisoes wedi cyrraedd meini prawf cymhwysedd mewn rheolaeth, a’i fod yn rhesyml y gellid cyflawni’r anghenion ymarferol hynny.”

See explanatory statement for Amendment 60.

Amendment 61, page 119, line 40, at end insert

“and replaced with “the local authority considers, on the information available to it, that it is likely the adult’s needs would have met the eligibility criteria previously in force and it is reasonably practicable to meet those needs”.”

See explanatory statement for Amendment 60.

Schedules 11 to 13.

Amendment 53, in schedule 14, page 136, line 2, after “chains” insert

“and power to cap prices”.

Amendment 54, page 136, line 5, after “section 26” insert “or [Power to cap prices]”.

Schedules 14 and 15.

Amendment 71, in schedule 16, page 165, line 20, at end insert—

“(1A) Before making any notice in accordance with subparagraph (1), the Secretary of State shall consult with such persons as appear to him to be appropriate, unless they consider that in the particular circumstances it is not reasonably practicable to undertake any such consultation. The Secretary of State shall in particular consider whether they can discharge their duty in sub-section (a) by consultations with representative bodies for pupils, students, parents, teachers, other professionals and local authorities, as they consider appropriate.”

This amendment is linked to amendment 68.

Amendment 68, page 167, line 26, leave out ‘used reasonable endeavours’ and insert ‘taken all practicable steps’.

This amendment and amendments 69 and 70 are intended to be to the modifications to section 19 Education Act 1996, sections 508A-508F Education Act 1996 and section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014 plus the new sub-paragraph on consultation added in after para 5(1) of schedule 16.

Amendment 69, page 167, line 36, leave out ‘used reasonable endeavours’ and insert ‘taken all practicable steps’.

This amendment is linked to amendment 68.

Amendment 70, page 170, line 33, leave out ‘used reasonable endeavours’ and insert ‘taken all practicable steps’.

This amendment is linked to amendment 68.

Schedules 16 and 17.

Government amendment 19.

Schedules 18 and 19.

Government amendments 9 to 13.

Schedule 20.

Government amendments 55 and 56.

Schedules 21 and 22.

Government amendment 82.

Schedules 23 and 24.

Government amendment 5.

Schedules 25 to 26.

Government amendment 51.

Amendment 66, in schedule 27, page 317, line 6, at end insert—

“5A In respect of sub-paragraphs 5 (a), (b) and (c), where a deceased is to be cremated and it goes against their religious belief, the designated authority must consult the next of kin or designated Power of Attorney or the relevant local faith institution in so far as reasonably possible, to find a suitable alternative before proceeding with the cremation.”

This amendment and linked Amendment 67 would require a local authority to consult the next of kin, designated Power of Attorney or local faith institutions (such as a church, mosque or synagogue) for support in order to respect an individual's wishes.

Amendment 67, page 317, line 8, at beginning insert

“Having had due regard to paragraph 5A of this Part.”

Government amendment 52.

Schedule 27.

Government new schedule 2—*Emergency arrangements concerning medical practitioners: Wales.*

Government new schedule 3—*Residential tenancies: protection from eviction.*

New schedule 1—*Measures in relation to immigration and asylum—*

PART 1

RULES IN RELATION TO NO RECOURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS

20 The Secretary of State must consult the Chief Medical Officer or any of the Deputy Chief Medical Officers of the Department of Health and Social Care on the impact of no recourse to public funds rules on preventing, protecting against, controlling or providing a public health response to the incidence or spread of infection or contamination.

21 The Secretary of State must, by regulation, make such amendments to no recourse to public funds rules as considered necessary in light of the consultation referred to in paragraph 1.

22 In this schedule, “no recourse to public funds rules” includes any provision prohibiting access to public funds or other forms of publicly financed support by those who require leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom, including, but not limited to, section 115 of the Immigration Act 1999.

PART 2

IMMIGRATION DETENTION

23 The Secretary of State must consult the Chief Medical Officer or any of the Deputy Chief Medical Officers of the Department of Health and Social Care on the impact of immigration detention on preventing, protecting against, controlling or providing a public health response to the incidence or spread of infection or contamination.

24 (1) Within seven days of the date on which this Act is passed, the Secretary of State must review the list of countries to which imminent removal of immigration detainees is possible.

(2) In light of that review, the Secretary of State must make arrangements to end the detention of any individual who cannot be removed imminently, consistent with preventing, protecting against, controlling and providing a public health response to the incidence or spread of infection or contamination.

PART 3

ASYLUM PROCESSES

25 (1) The Secretary of State must consult the Chief Medical Officer or any of the Deputy Chief Medical Officers of the Department of Health and Social Care on the impact of asylum processes on preventing, protecting against, controlling or providing a public health response to the incidence or spread of infection or contamination.

(2) The matters to be consulted on under sub-paragraph (1) include, but are not restricted to—

- (a) requirements for individuals to report or attend interviews as part of the asylum process;
- (b) the nature and extent of asylum accommodation and rules in relation to eviction from asylum accommodation;
- (c) the nature and extent of financial support for asylum seekers;
- (d) the nature and extent of financial support for local authorities in asylum dispersal areas.

PART 4

EXTENSION OF LEAVE TO REMAIN

26 7. The Secretary of State must make provision, by statement of changes to the immigration rules, to allow for leave to remain for individuals whose previous leave expires during the period in which this Act is in force, or whose leave expired in the 14 days prior to the date on which this Act is passed.

This new schedule contains temporary changes to immigration and asylum laws and procedures for the purposes of preventing, protecting against, controlling or providing a public health response to the incidence or spread of infection or contamination.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): I rise merely to refer to the issue of the timing and the length of the Bill. As Members will know, the Minister said in the previous debate that the Government were tabling a new clause that would allow the Bill to be on the statute book for two years but with an opportunity after six months to vote on whether the temporary measures in it should remain. I urge the Minister to look carefully at that new clause, because I think it is defective. New clause 19 states clearly:

““relevant temporary provision”” means any provision of this Act—

- (a) which is not listed in section (2) (provisions not subject to expiry)”

I cannot find that section anywhere, so I do not think that the new clause works in law. I may be completely wrong—I may have missed something—and if so, I hope the Minister can enlighten me. I do not think there is any conspiracy here; it may just be that something has been missed.

Like the right hon. Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis), my anxiety from the start has been that two years is a long time to have such draconian measures on the statute book and that to have them on the statute book without a moment when the House, rather than Ministers, can decide to switch individual measures on or off is quite problematic. The Government have already used the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 to table statutory instruments to close pubs, restaurants, casino, spas, gyms and so on. That secondary legislation still has to go through the House under the 1984 Act, and the Commons and the Lords have to vote in favour of it within 28 days of it being tabled.

Likewise, if the Government had gone down the route of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, they would have needed to come back to Parliament every 30 days for each of the individual powers that they presented under that Act, and if the House chose not to allow those powers to remain, the Government would not be able to continue using them. In addition, the 2004 Act makes it clear that if Parliament is adjourned for more than four days, or even if it is prorogued, the Speaker and the monarch have to summon Parliament.

Mr David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con): The hon. Gentleman may be coming to this, but there is one other element: putting this in primary legislation rather than secondary takes it out of the purview of the courts., so here we have one of the heaviest-duty Acts we have seen post war prevented from undergoing judicial review in the interests of citizens.

Chris Bryant: I agree, and I do not understand why the Government have gone in this direction. I have been told in several private meetings that it is because they believe that the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 can only be used when they do not know that something is coming down the line, but I think the definition of an “emergency” in section 19 of the 2004 Act would allow for every single thing that we are considering.

I tabled an amendment, and I must apologise to the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mark Pritchard), because it is entirely my fault that, by accident, his name ended up on my amendment. I am terribly sorry. If the Government Whips want to beat anybody up, they should beat me up. There is a serious point here, which is that if the Government are going to take draconian powers and give themselves the power to switch them on and off, that should come back to Parliament more frequently even than is allowed for in the Government’s amendment.

Mr Andrew Mitchell (Sutton Coldfield) (Con): The hon. Gentleman may well be right about the Civil Contingencies Act, because the drafter of that legislation has confirmed that that is his understanding—at least, I believe that to be the case. I agree that two years is too long. I would have preferred the amendment tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis) to be adopted. I do not think there is any sense in the Committee that we want to vote on this. We want to put the Government on notice that the length of time is a matter of concern and we must have a chance to review the legislation; the Government appear to be moving towards agreeing to six-monthly reviews. Although I completely agree with the hon. Gentleman about the importance of the matters that he has sought to enshrine in his amendment, I think that that would encapsulate the will of the Committee.

Chris Bryant: I have absolutely no intention of dividing the House. The nation does not need dividing and I do not think the Committee needs dividing on these matters either. I am grateful to the Government, who have tried to be in as listening a mood as they possibly can. My anxiety, however, is that the Government’s amendment, as tabled, is defective and simply does not work. My anxiety is that in six months’ time the Government will present us with a take it or leave it argument—you’ve either got the whole Act and all the provisions carrying on for another six months or you’ve got to leave it—and retain those powers for another 18 months.

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con) *rose*—

Chris Bryant: I have to give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mark Pritchard: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He has been very gracious in his apology and I thank him very much indeed for that. He says he does not want a Division tonight, which is welcome, and he says that the Government’s amendment is, in his view, defective. However, in principle, does he accept the Government conceding a six-month break?

Chris Bryant: Personally, I would prefer the time period to be shorter. I would prefer Government Ministers not to be switching powers on and off, because that will lead to them being more queried by the nation at large. I prefer something more like a three-month period when they have these powers, with regular review by the House, but I am not going to die in a ditch. There are no ditches here. I laud the Government for the movement that they have made, but they may still need to move some way further. It may be that they need to amend their own amendment when it goes to the House of Lords.

Mr David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con): I rise to speak specifically to amendment 6, in my name and those of others, and to the Government amendment.

The Secretary of State himself said that the Bill has an astonishing range of powers: from forced quarantine to cancelling elections; and from allowing single doctors to section people to reducing parliamentary oversight of intelligence gathering. That is just a taster, but there is much, much more. The Opposition Health spokesman described it as having a draconian impact on many basic freedoms. As the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) has just said, many, if not all, of those powers are actually to be found in two pre-existing Acts. The Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984—the year 1984 is ironic—was designed for exactly the position we are in now: dealing with pandemics and epidemics. It was amended later, I think in 2008, to make it even more specific. The 1984 Act contains the vast majority of measures the Government need. As the hon. Gentleman said, it has been used already for the closure of pubs, restaurants and so on through secondary legislation.

The other Act is the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. As the hon. Gentleman said, the Government could have used that. The Government have argued, most recently last week at business questions, that this is the wrong sort of emergency—sort of like the wrong kind of snow—to fall under the remit of the Civil Contingencies Act. I have to tell the Government that they are plain wrong. I was here for the debates on the Civil Contingencies Act. I remember the arguments about what it would and would not apply to, and this is specifically the case. It is not just me. I am not a lawyer, but a number of public lawyers of my acquaintance think the Government are wrong. Most importantly—my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell) alluded to this—we can call on an even greater authority. After business questions last week, I made a point of order to ask Mr Speaker if we could get the opinion of his counsel, Mr Daniel Greenberg. I will read the relevant paragraph to the House—it is only a couple of lines. He said:

“The 2004 Act (which I wrote), including the powers to make emergency provision under Part 2, is clearly capable of being applied to take measures in relation to coronavirus.”

[Mr David Davis]

The man who wrote the Act, the most authoritative source in this House, Mr Speaker's Counsel, who is completely impartial, says that the Government are wrong, they could have used the Civil Contingencies Act.

Steve Brine (Winchester) (Con): Further to my right hon. Friend's point, when the pandemic influenza Bill was drafted—I spoke about it on Second Reading—it was agreed that if specific circumstances at the time meant the freestanding Bill, on which the Coronavirus Bill is based, was not able to be brought forward to the House, clauses could very easily be converted into regulations under part 2 of the Civil Contingencies Act. I remember those discussions very clearly from being in office at the time. My right hon. Friend has a point.

8.15 pm

Mr Davis: I am glad to get my hon. Friend's support. He has always been assiduous in these matters and he is right on that point. A reasonable person might say, "Well, the logical argument surely is that if all the powers are identical to ones that exist already, what am I complaining about?" That is a reasonable question. The reason is that the Bill loses many of the checks and balances in the preceding emergency legislation.

I was not quite here for the 1984 legislation, but I was for the later ones, and those of us who put these things through the House fought hard and long to get the proper restrictions on Government power and the proper requirements to bring the legislation back to the House so that the House could approve it. The requirements are all in there, including it having to be cleared in seven days, us having to be recalled in five days if we are in recess and it having to be done through secondary legislation, which makes it capable of judicial review. I know that the Government do not like judicial review, but nowhere is it more important than when the Government exercise powers at the expense of citizens and the courts have to step in.

As the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) said, the six-monthly review that the Government have conceded is an important concession, but only if the House can amend or strike out. Anything else puts the House in the position of having to vote for a Bill that might be horrific in one part because the other three parts are essential—not likeable, not pleasant, not beneficial, but essential—for fighting this real threat.

Do not get me wrong: coronavirus is a real threat. I have made these arguments over the years when the House has considered similar legislation relating to terrorism. We are facing 10 to 100 times the death rate in one year than the death rate from terrorism in 10 years. Of course there is a real threat, but we will be put in a position of saying either we take the whole Bill—three-quarters vital and one quarter horrible—or we strike down something that is vital for protecting the public. That is the position that this House has been in over the 30 years—I am looking straight at the Leader of the Opposition now, because he and I were in the same Lobby time and again—when counter-terrorism regulations were put through on a rubber stamp precisely to protect the public. That is why Labour Members—if they will forgive me for giving them advice—should be pressing for an amendable approval at six months.

Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab): We have already said that.

Mr Davis: Good, excellent. I am glad Opposition Members are learning. Having an amendable approval at six months makes things completely different, because it means the House can say, "We need to prune this. We need to reduce the size of this legislation."

Mr Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend join me in calling on the Opposition also to adopt his amendment putting a sunset on this Bill of one year, not two?

Mr Davis: I will come to that in a moment.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. I confirm that I said in the Second Reading wind-up—I confirm it again—that with the six-monthly votes at six, 12 and 18 months, which are already in the Government amendment, it would be helpful if the Government confirmed that those votable motions are also amendable. If they are amendable, it covers the point being made by the right hon. Gentleman that part of the legislation could then be switched off, but not all of it.

Mr Davis: I am now glad that I teased the hon. Gentleman, because it got something very useful on the record. If I may pick up on the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker), it is why I tabled amendment 6, which recognises that the Government need these new powers and that parliamentary counsel have created a 320-page Bill in what sounds like a matter of days—in truth, they did it in an astonishingly short amount of time. They have done it at a time, however, when scientific evidence is, to put it mildly, fragile and likely to change. It has changed already in the past two weeks and is likely to change again as different tests, different vaccines and so on become available. Scientific evidence will change. Economic analysis of future outcomes is unbelievably uncertain and the societal effects are completely unknown. The Bill is guaranteed to have flaws, even with the best draftsmen in the world.

Amendment 6 therefore proposes that instead of the sunset being two years, which anyway is too long, it would be one year. We invite the Government to write a new Bill in nine months. If they think the Bill is perfect in nine months, put it back again and we will put it through again, but this time, with three months for the House to consider it. Remember, the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 took a whole year to go through both Houses, so with three months we would have proper democratic approval of the process.

Liam Byrne (Birmingham, Hodge Hill) (Lab): The right hon. Gentleman is making an excellent speech. There will, of course, be many things that we learn, not just things we need to take out of the Bill but critical measures that we need to put in, so flexible legislation will be essential as we go through the emergency and learn things.

Mr Davis: I agree. I think the Government have done a pretty good job so far in the face of unbelievably difficult judgments and decisions. The Americans talk about drinking from a fire hose, which is how every Minister in this Government must feel because of the information and problems arriving on their desk every day.

The right hon. Gentleman is right that there will be changes in the science and in the economics. We will also know, frankly, what worked and what did not work in the previous nine months. If we then allow Parliament three months to scrutinise it, we will get good, solid law that is well supported on both sides of the House. We will have the sort of debate we have had today, which has been one of the better debates I have heard in years because both sides are committed to the same cause.

Finally, I recommend that colleagues read the report on this Bill published at lunchtime today by the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee of the House of Lords. That expert Committee considers our legislation and makes recommendations to the other House, and it is led by Lord Blencathra—those who have been here a long time may remember him as David Maclean, a tough, no-nonsense Security Minister at the Home Office. The Committee’s analysis is very clear and very straightforward, and it is not a libertarian fantasy. This is the conclusion, the last five lines of a five-page report:

“We anticipate that the House may well wish to press the Minister for an explanation about why the expiry date was not set at one year, thereby enabling the Government to exercise the powers needed in the immediate future while allowing a further bill to be introduced and subject to parliamentary scrutiny in slower time.”

A House of Lords Committee has arrived at exactly the same conclusion on this Bill as my amendment proposes.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I rise to speak, ostensibly, to amendments 2 to 4 and new clause 4, in my name and in the names of my hon. and right hon. Friends.

This is certainly no criticism of the Public Bill Office, which has worked extraordinarily well under huge pressure, nor of Ministers or, indeed, of officials working under tremendous pressure, but in the past hour and a half, as the Opposition spokesperson, I have been presented with 60 pages covering 61 Government amendments, and there are also 27 Opposition amendments. It is clear that I will not be able to cover every single item in my remarks, but I will try to refer—*[Interruption.]* Not this early in the evening, but who knows? I will try to cover the amendments thematically, referring to them when it would be helpful to the House.

Amendments 2 to 4 relate to the Bill’s emergency powers, which I will deal with first because the right hon. Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis) mentioned them and I want to make our position absolutely clear. New clause 4 would place a duty on the Government to support the basic means of living—food, water, clothing, income and housing—by employing all available statutory and prerogative powers.

Those two themes may be separate on the amendment paper, but they go hand in hand. The public health emergency and the restrictions on freedom must be accompanied by the strongest possible financial measures to ensure people still have the means to get by. I make it clear that I do not intend to divide the House on any of these amendments this evening, but I hope the Government will listen to my points.

The second world war emergency legislation required renewal every year, and the emergency coronavirus legislation in Ireland is subject to six-monthly renewal. We need safeguards. Often, the issue with this type of legislation, which is understandably done in haste, is not so much the intended consequences as the unintended

consequences. That is important because there are vulnerable people across our society whose lives are going to change and who will need protection.

The Bill is subject to the European convention on human rights and does not exclude judicial review; there is no ouster clause in it. These are very important safeguards, and we need more. I welcome the Government’s concession on six-monthly review. I have listened carefully to a number of speeches, and I, like many others, would like it to have been even more frequent, but I accept that that is a reasonable compromise. There are some issues on which I would like reassurance from the Minister, though. First, it is clear that that is subject to a vote in both Houses, but the point made by the right hon. Member for Haltemprice and Howden is crucial: if it is simply an unamendable motion, the House is left with the choice of take it or leave it on everything. It could be that we think four fifths of the Bill is achieving its intended purpose and one fifth is not, but we would have to keep everything operational. If the Minister can confirm that the motion will be amendable, so we can make clear which bits we want to switch off, that would make a significant difference. Even if she gave that as a verbal assurance, it would be a step forward that might increase the degree of consensus across the House. I am not saying that everyone would be satisfied, but it would help us to move forward on the basis of consensus.

As I read the Government amendment, there is a carve-out in relation to devolved matters. Will the Minister make the position clear? If this House switched off powers, would they be automatically switched off for the devolved institutions; or if a power was switched on by the devolved institutions, would they then have the power to switch it off when they saw fit? In those parts of England without formal regional devolution, would it be it switched off automatically for those areas?

More widely, we have to ensure that the measures are temporary and that hard-won rights are not lost forever. In that respect, I want to focus on a number of groups in our society. First, amendments 68 to 71 deal with children with special educational needs and disabilities. I would like more reassurance from the Government. The Bill clearly removes disabled people’s rights to social care and support, and the duty to meet children’s educational requirements is changed to a reasonable endeavours duty. Many hon. and right hon. Members will have received expressions of concern about that. I thank the all-party group on this for raising it over the weekend.

Of course there is a need for flexibility. There will be a need to redeploy staff, and we all understand that, but reassurance is necessary. If we are removing the rights in the Children and Families Act 2014, for example, could consideration be given to the proposal in the amendments to change “reasonable endeavours” to “all practical steps” to ensure that our duty to some of our most vulnerable and youngest people is met?

There is also deep concern in the care sector, to which amendments 57 to 63 and new clause 29 apply. Most statutory duties relating to social care are being suspended under schedule 11. Local authorities will only have to provide services deemed necessary to prevent breaches of people’s human rights. That is clearly not the vision of social care that anyone in this House had in mind when the Care Act 2014 was passed. Of course, the Bill does not prevent local authorities from providing higher

[*Nick Thomas-Symonds*]

levels of care, but there is no longer any duty to carry out assessments or involve user input in care delivery, and local authorities will no longer have to assess the needs of carers. Those are sweeping changes that may reduce the level of support. Will the Government make it clear that they still expect care to be provided to the highest level possible in the circumstances, and that some sort of green light to cut back to the minimum is not provided for in the Bill? There are wider impacts. There are doctors, nurses, NHS staff and key workers who rely on social care for their family members. That new legal minimum level of support cannot become a default. We cannot have care packages automatically cut back to the minimum, and care levels should never be reduced too far or too fast.

8.30 pm

I have referred to a series of amendments, and I would push the Government on this. Can we look at things such as reasonable practicability? Can we look at disrupting existing care in the most minimal way and try at least to ensure, while recognising the pressures on staff, that reductions in care packages are a last resort? There are many unmet care needs, and people are being looked after in their own home by family members, who visit every day. For a start, that unpaid army of carers deserves deep gratitude from all of us, but what if one of those unpaid carers needs to self-isolate? What will the Government look at to protect people in their own home who will still be in need of care? The Government have to make absolutely clear the value of the measures for those who are older, and for disabled and young people who are in need of support. Many people—not just my constituents but people across the country—including disabled rights groups and, indeed, disabled people have contacted me to say that they are very, very concerned about what they regard as the scaling back of their rights under the Bill. We must protect them as best we can for the duration of the emergency powers, but also make it clear that this temporary hiatus does not represent a rolling back of progress over decades.

Turning to mental health and amendments 64 and 65, there are changes in the Bill to the detention regime and a restriction whereby someone can be detained on the say-so of a single doctor, which is a significant change for committal. That is set out in schedule 7. In the first instance, can that be the case only where it is absolutely necessary? Secondly, can we have no single recommendation from a doctor at a private hospital when the patient is detained at that hospital? Can we at least seek to adhere to timetables that are already in place? There are powers in the Bill on extension and removal of time limits, which clearly no Parliament in ordinary circumstances would wish to introduce. Can the Minister at least give some sort of guarantee that timetables will be respected as far as possible?

Mr Mitchell: So that I am certain that I have understood the point that the hon. Gentleman is making, is he saying that once the immediate crisis is over anyone who has been sectioned under that regime should immediately be subject to the existing regime?

Nick Thomas-Symonds: Yes, absolutely. In fact, that should apply not just in the mental health sphere. If these are truly temporary measures, that has to apply across a range of measures.

Mr Kevan Jones (North Durham) (Lab): I accept that there is going to be a lot of pressure on doctors. I understand why the provision has been introduced, so that one doctor can sign documents to commit someone under the Mental Health Act 1983. Would not a better way of doing it be to get one doctor to sign the documents then, within a period of days, have someone else review the case while countersigning the documents?

Nick Thomas-Symonds: My right hon. Friend makes a useful and constructive suggestion. I am in favour of doing all that is reasonably practicable to comply with the existing duty—that is the simple position that the Government should adopt. I do not disagree with my right hon. Friend. He makes a useful suggestion, which is why I also suggest that a single doctor should sign only when absolutely necessary. Even in that case, the point that my right hon. Friend makes is useful. I am sure that the Government understand concern about the proposals, and I hope that the Minister will be able to provide us with reassurance.

Turning to the issue of law and order, I would be grateful if the Minister passed on my gratitude to the Security Minister, who has spoken to me mostly from home, where he is self-isolating, on a number of provisions in clauses 21 and 22 on the appointment of temporary judicial commissioners, changes to urgent warrants under investigative powers, and an additional measure on data retention. I understand that the biometrics commissioner supports that measure, but I hope that he can comment on and deal with those provisions in the next few days.

I also understand that action will be taken to ensure that the temporary judicial commissioners receive the appropriate training, but clearly that will have to be done on a remote basis. It is important that we maintain existing standards as far as possible.

I know that the measure on data retention is an emergency power—of course, we do not want data on people who may wish to do us harm simply to disappear because somebody was not available to carry out the national security determination—but we must say, as the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell) did in relation to the last point, that this can only be a temporary measure. We must return to the existing deadlines as soon as we can.

Courts and tribunals are covered in clauses 51 to 55. Clearly we must look to live links and audio technology, but we must try to secure justice in each and every case. We cannot allow any court user to be in danger of being transmitted the coronavirus. The Lord Chief Justice has said today that there will be no new jury trials, but clearly some jury trials—including some very long-term ones—are still ongoing. Every step must be taken to ensure that social distancing is imposed by the judges in those courts.

Although all Members agree on following advice about self-isolation, in cases of domestic violence self-isolation can create a situation that is favourable to abusers. Therefore, where our courts are functioning, dealing with domestic violence must remain a priority.

Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): It is interesting to note that in Spain, where this issue has been considered, the Government are running a scheme where if an individual goes into a pharmacy and asks for a “mask 19”—that is the code Spain has used—they

are then referred to a domestic violence unit for assistance. I was wondering whether our Government had thought of a similar idea.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: This debate has been carried out in a constructive spirit and I hope that the Government listen to all suggestions, but this issue is a real concern. If this emergency lasts—which I am afraid it is going to—and people are put in situations where they are close to their abusers, we must still have some sort of safeguards in place, particularly in our courts system.

Our prisons cannot become laboratories for transmission, and neither can our immigration detention centres—a point that I hope the Paymaster General will pass on to the Home Secretary.

The issue of burial has clearly caused great controversy. I know that the Paymaster General is one of the people who have come up with the final version on this matter, and I thank her for the efforts that she has made. This issue is clearly vital for Muslims and those of the Jewish faith. Clearly, they need to be in a position where we respect their rights about burial as far as we possibly can. The wording of Government amendment 52 is now much stronger, and I welcome that, but the Government could also communicate with local authorities as to how they want that measure to be interpreted in the days and weeks ahead.

Naz Shah (Bradford West) (Lab): Members have said that a 100% guarantee that nobody will be cremated against their wishes would be very welcome. Does my hon. Friend agree?

Nick Thomas-Symonds: Yes, and I congratulate my hon. Friend on the work that she has been doing on this matter in recent days; it has been most welcome. I am pleased that the Minister has listened to that campaigning work, and I hope that we will be able to get reassurance on that point.

On restricting freedoms—and there are, quite frankly, draconian restrictions of freedom in this Bill including in relation to mass gatherings, the closure of ports and borders, and detention powers over potentially infectious people, which I read as applying to children and adults—the Government must do only what is necessary and proportionate. We must also be wary of restricting the right to protest.

Mr Steve Baker: I was trying to avoid doing this, but while the hon. Gentleman has been on his feet, it seems that the Prime Minister has heard the call of the Opposition Front Bench earlier. It is widely reported online that the Prime Minister has announced that people can now only go out to shop for basic necessities; to exercise once a day; for any medical need; to provide care; and to travel to and from, and do, essential work. I think that we are now substantially constrained, and that may help the hon. Gentleman as he makes his speech.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I am always grateful for updates on the rolling news, so I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. This must be a rare example of a shadow Minister having called for something at the start of a debate and its having appeared before we have finished the debate. The Prime Minister is responsive on that if nothing else.

Even in this situation, proportionality and necessity still apply. It is clear that powers to detain potentially infectious people, including children in isolation facilities, will have to be implemented in a sensitive way. It is necessary to postpone elections, as set out in clause 57, but we still have to do all we can to maintain our democracy. I welcomed the Speaker's statement setting out any moves we can make to vote in a different way and to operate in a far more digital and remote way than has been the case in the past.

Let me turn to new clause 4 and the issues it raises. Quite simply, if we are to ask people to sacrifice their freedom by staying at home and subjecting themselves to the measures set out by the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker), their basic means of living must be catered for as well. There are some specific measures in the Bill, but I commend to the Minister amendments 74 to 78, on lowering the threshold for eligibility for statutory sick pay, and new clauses 32 to 34, on the extension of statutory sick pay to the self-employed and its uprating.

Before I move on to some of the other economic measures, particularly in the Government's new amendment, let me refer to new clause 35. A number of right hon. and hon. Members from all parties have raised the issue of access to personal protective equipment. New clause 35 sets out the importance of that to the Opposition by defining it as part of the Minister's role to make sure that that equipment is provided to everybody who needs it. That is the imperative that the Opposition put on that, and I hope the Government will do all they can to ensure that not one person in this country does not have the personal protective equipment that they need to keep us all safe.

Mr David Davis: To carry on in the context of rolling news referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker), one thing that we need to provide is good healthcare. The new NICE guidelines have just been published. The new guideline on critical care states that all patients with confirmed covid-19 must be assessed on the basis of "frailty" when healthcare professionals are making decisions about whether to admit a patient in need to critical care. That is being interpreted by a large number of mental health organisations as potentially excluding people with learning disability and so on. Will the hon. Gentleman make the point, on behalf of the Opposition, that we need equality of access to healthcare, as well as equality of access to all the things he has talked about?

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I certainly would not disagree with the right hon. Gentleman on equality of access to healthcare—he is absolutely right about that. I am getting worried about how many points I have agreed with him on in this debate, but I certainly agree with him on that.

The Paymaster General (Penny Mordaunt): The point that has just been made is critical. I give my right hon. Friend the Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis) an absolute reassurance: the Government have an advisory committee and ethics committees, but these judgments are made by healthcare professionals, and they make these types of judgments in the course of their work. The period that we are entering is obviously going to be extremely intense, but someone having a learning disability would not be a criterion that they

[Penny Mordaunt]

would look at. I know that from the pandemic exercise that my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Steve Brine) mentioned earlier. I have had experience of that and can absolutely assure my right hon. Friend of that point.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I am grateful to the Minister for that intervention.

Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): On that point, I should emphasise that equality of access to healthcare must surely apply to our excellent healthcare workers. Some concerns have been raised with me that healthcare workers are receiving advice from their national health service trusts that is different from that given to ordinary working people, particularly when it comes to isolation when there are symptoms at home. As one person put it to me, the applause and support for healthcare workers is all very well, but they also want to know that their health and wellbeing is considered to be just as important as everybody else's, if not more so.

8.45 pm

Nick Thomas-Symonds: It is just as important, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention.

Government new clause 16 increases the top threshold for the level of assistance that can be given to industry for the purpose of the economic crisis, and I welcome the proposed change. The Government must do what they can to prevent an economic disaster. However, I would also ask that the Government structure financial assistance to ensure that the Government bail-out supports the workforce, the sustainability of the company and the wider national interest. Perhaps the Minister can confirm, now or subsequently, that the Government will attach restrictions in areas such as staff retention, dividend buy-outs, share buy-backs and executive remuneration for any company receiving financial assistance, and whether the Government will seek equity stakes in those companies that receive significant assistance.

There is also the issue of renters, in respect of which the Government have tabled a new clause, and there is real concern about this. It was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon Central (Sarah Jones) on Second Reading. There is a concern about the Prime Minister and his promises to the country's 20 million renters to protect them from evictions, because this does not seem to be an evictions ban, which is what the Opposition have argued for, and we understood was promised by the Prime Minister. The legislation does not seem to stop people losing their home as a result of coronavirus; it would just give them some extra time to pack their bags. In a sense, that makes us wonder why the Government are not willing to make a very simple change. I understand that my right hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth and Dearne (John Healey) wrote to Ministers to give them the legislation that would provide the protections, banning evictions and suspending rental payments beyond the crisis. There is already welcome help for homeowners, and I hope the Government will look again at their promises to renters. We do not need this public health emergency to become a crisis of housing and homelessness as well.

As the Government disturb people's way of life, they must also sustain everyday existence, and people are anxious about sustaining themselves through this difficult time. There are millions of self-employed people not covered in the way they should be by the measures set out by the Chancellor, as a number of colleagues on both sides of the House have raised.

Bill Esterson (Sefton Central) (Lab): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising the challenges faced by the 4.7 million self-employed people, as quoted by the Federation of Small Businesses. I was sent a screenshot of a claim being made by somebody self-employed this afternoon, and it said that there were 33,383 people ahead of them in the queue to use the claim section of the website. I am sure he will agree that that is a very worrying sign of the ability of the system to cope—

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. I appreciate the hon. Gentleman is making a very important point, and every Member of Parliament has received similar emails from their constituents to the one that he has just described. I am very concerned that we have only an hour and a bit to go—[*Interruption.*] No, I make no criticism of the hon. Gentleman: it is very important in emergency legislation that the official Opposition have a full say in what happens at this point of the Bill, but I implore Members to move a little bit faster. If everybody makes short points, we will get all those points in, which we must do.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I say to my hon. Friend that he is right. One of the issues about making announcements is that people actually have to be able to access what they are being offered.

I have already set out that statutory sick pay is too low at £94.25 a week. Amendments regarding that have been tabled, as well as on people who do not qualify for it, and I urge the Government to look at that again. We must also speak of the businesses laying off workers and not applying for the 80% coverage of wages, which is what they should be doing. There are people who have lost their jobs, and who need help fast. It is a concern that the 80% wages support applies in the April payroll, not the March payroll, and what that will mean is that money will not be available until the end of next month. I appreciate the scale of this and I appreciate that Treasury officials have done a lot of work on it, but as the days pass more and more people are losing their jobs. Every day matters in bringing that help forward.

I have already spoken about renters and mentioned help for homeowners. On businesses, I say to the Government that grants are better than loans. We do not want to build up a stack of debt, and where the Government are relying upon the universal credit system, they must look at the fundamental structural problems in the system and at the five-week waits. Surely we cannot continue with face-to-face assessments in the next few months, with the scale of this crisis.

Mr Steve Baker: It's been changed.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I hear what the hon. Member for Wycombe says, but this has to operate on the ground, and we are all hearing various stories of what is

happening in the universal credit system. It may well be what the Government intend, but that has to be implemented right across the country.

The Government must stand beside each and every person to get through this. We of course support the principle of doing whatever it takes, but that has to mean whatever it takes for each and every person. Let me say a word about the food supply—this is in clauses 23 to 27—and the power to require information. The Government require a strategic approach to the profiteering and unnecessary stockpiling—all of it. We have to ask people to think of others in what they are doing, but I also say to the Minister that the Government may well need a more strategic approach on that.

Liam Byrne: I will be brief. In all emergencies, there is profiteering, and in countries such as the United States, where it has been prevalent for a long time, two thirds of states have legislation in place to stop profiteering. We need it here now because it is hitting the poorest communities hardest now.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right that profiteering is affecting people now. We have heard some examples from across the House and, clearly, that issue needs to be seriously considered.

I turn now to what all this means taken together—I will draw my remarks to a close, Dame Eleanor, because I know that you wish other people to come in. This is an unprecedented change in the relationship between Government and Parliament, and Government and people. First, I say to the Minister that the imperative is to protect everyone and support them in this time of peril. We ask people to make sacrifices and we must support them, too. Secondly, the need for safeguards in this legislation is paramount. I hope that the Minister will look in particular at the suggestion that I made on the six-month review and that being amendable.

We are not seeking to divide the House, but we hope very much that the Government will heed what has been said, and we, of course, reserve the right to pursue these matters further in the other place.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Eleanor Laing): If everyone takes around three to four minutes, they will all get a chance to come in.

Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): I will not detain the House long. I rise to speak to new clause 1, which I understand has been agreed in advance with the Government, and I will move it at the end of this evening's proceedings.

New clause 1 is very straightforward. It enables the elections to the General Synod of the Church of England to be postponed. Quite recently, we postponed all the elections that we in the House are involved in—the mayoral, local government and police and crime commissioner elections—but the General Synod is the National Assembly of the Church of England, and it is a Church that is episcopally led and synodically governed. The General Synod is a devolved body of this Parliament. It is the first devolved body of the Westminster Parliament and has been since 1919. Synods last five years, just as Westminster Parliaments do. The last one was elected in summer 2015 and therefore would expire this summer. There is no legal power to extend the current General Synod. New clause 1 provides that power by allowing

the Archbishops of Canterbury and of York to ask Her Majesty to postpone the date of dissolution by an Order in Council. That order postpones the date of the dissolution of the current Synod for as long as would be necessary by dissolving the convocations of Canterbury and of York. The dissolution of those convocations triggers the dissolution of Synod.

Hon. Members may not know what I mean by convocations, but they are the historical assemblies of bishops and clergy. They go back to the time of Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury, who was enthroned in 668, so convocations give this Parliament a run for its money in terms of historical precedent. That may sound a bit dry, but it is important. This will enable the Synod to deal with important matters, such as the independent inquiry into child sexual abuse. The Church takes that very seriously, and it will need to react to that body's findings. This will also enable the Synod to move forward with the important work on cathedral finances and governance, which also need to be addressed urgently.

The Church is fulfilling an important role today. It is caring for the vulnerable, and it is reaching out in helping with the delivery of food, such as working with food banks and with night shelters. I commend new clause 1 to the Government and to the House.

8.55 pm

Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): I rise to speak to new clause 7 together with the new schedule it introduces, which is new schedule 1. May I start by thanking the Clerks and other staff for their extraordinary work in processing so many amendments in such a short time?

The changes that we propose are designed to ensure that the Government's response is truly for all of society, as the World Health Organisation has urged, and we will do that by seeking to ensure that nobody is excluded from getting the support they need simply by virtue of their immigration status. Our immigration and asylum laws and processes, touching as they do on millions of people right across our country, must be made to help, not hinder, the public health response to coronavirus. If we let down those people who are subject to immigration control, we are letting down the whole country, and if we fail to protect those people, we fail to protect the population as a whole.

The new schedule is in four parts. The first relates to Home Office rules that prevent many people from accessing public funds. Many of this group will already be hugely marginalised, including a very significant proportion of the street homeless and destitute. As matters stand, many more will become destitute because their earnings will stop or sofa-surfing will no longer be possible, and there will be no social security to fall back on. Meanwhile, across the country many shelters providing the only source of refuge are having to close down, either because dormitory conditions are no longer fit for purpose, or because the brilliant volunteers who staff such centres can no longer undertake the necessary work amid this very serious crisis. Suspending the no recourse to public funds rules would be a first but significant step towards allowing everyone to access the financial support and accommodation they need to protect themselves.

The second part of the schedule deals with those who are in immigration detention. At the end of last year, there were about 1,600 people in immigration detention,

[Stuart C. McDonald]

most of them in immigration detention centres, with a small number in prisons. We know from recently published expert advice that detention centres provide ideal conditions for the spread of the coronavirus, and that 60% of those in such facilities could rapidly be infected if the virus got hold there. In fact, one woman tested positive for covid-19 in Yarl's Wood at the weekend. Of course, the detainee population will include a significant number with underlying health conditions.

We know now that there is no realistic prospect of immigration removals taking place imminently, and imminent removal is of course the legal threshold for justifying detention in the first place. The clear consequences of these two facts, when we bring them together, is that continued detention is not only morally wrong, but it undermines the public health response to the coronavirus outbreak and is almost certainly illegal. We welcome the fact that the Home Office has started by releasing about 300 of the current estimate of 1,200 people in immigration detention. We ask it to move faster and urgently in getting the other 900 out of there as well.

Thirdly, we turn to the issue of the asylum process. Those working on behalf of asylum seekers are concerned at the lack of communication with them about what changes are being made to these processes. There was a welcome announcement made ending the requirement to access or re-access the asylum procedure by attending at either Croydon or Liverpool, yet this very afternoon I am reliably informed that a new arrival in Glasgow was told by Home Office staff to get a bus to Croydon, essentially, to make an asylum claim. Without support from the Scottish Refugee Council, that individual would be street homeless tonight. That is clearly undermining, rather than helping, the public health approach.

We need the Home Office to look at all asylum processes and procedures, and reporting requirements, interviews and other appointments must all be suspended. We need to look at the state of the asylum accommodation, and at the rules about why asylum seekers who have medical skills are being prevented from working at this particular time. We need to look at asylum support and at support for providing accommodation to the destitute and the homeless.

Fourthly, the proposed new schedule would make provision for those whose visas are about to run out or whose visas have already run out but are prevented from travelling home. Many Members will have been contacted by constituents with concerns about people in that situation. There were reports today about an 80-year-old Ukrainian woman whose visit visa has just expired. Her solicitor phoned the Home Office and was told that she should consider driving home. Clearly, asking an 80-year-old woman to return to Ukraine by car is simply ludicrous. It is time, as our proposed new schedule suggests, for the Government to put in place an automatic extension of leave to remain, at least until September or later, depending on the advice the Government get from medical officers.

I pay tribute to all those who have pushed the Government to accept a more limited time period for the extraordinary powers provided for by this Bill, including my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry), while at the same time ensuring that there can be an extension, with

appropriate scrutiny and approval by this House. We support the principles behind new clause 2. The provisions that impinge most on civil liberties deserve the greatest of scrutiny. I also pay tribute to the hon. Member for Bradford West (Naz Shah) for tabling amendment 66, and we are grateful to the Government for listening to her concerns.

9 pm

Finally, every Member who has tabled amendments to prompt the Government to go further with their provisions to support workers and the self-employed has our solidarity. The measures announced on Friday by the Chancellor were, of course, hugely significant and very welcome, but we are all being contacted by self-employed people whose costs are not going to disappear in the same way as their incomes in the weeks ahead. We await urgently to hear the Chancellor announce what further support will be provided. Even if the Government cannot accept our amendments, I hope that Ministers will listen carefully to all the constructive advice that has been offered and act on it urgently.

The Paymaster General (Penny Mordaunt): I will attempt to answer the points that I did not answer during Second Reading.

The Bill has been introduced to support public bodies and wider society in responding to a serious emergency. The Bill is required as part of a concerted effort across the whole of the UK to tackle the outbreak. The intention is to get to a position whereby the right people—public agencies in all four countries—take the right action, as set out in the UK coronavirus action plan, at the right time, as a result of decisions taken by the four UK Governments, usually under the auspices of Cobra, using the same powers, at the same time, in the same way.

The action plan sets out the options that can be taken as part of that response. This Bill ensures that the agencies and services involved—schools, hospitals and the police—have the tools and powers they need. They are our front line in our fight against this disease, and they have the right to expect our support for the action they need to take. The Bill provides the possibility for that for the duration of the emergency.

Turning to a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Windsor (Adam Afriyie), we cannot use the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to do this. If we have time to bring forward legislation, it is proper that we do that, and anything we did under the powers of the 2004 Act would apply for only 30 days. He should have the reassurances he asked for earlier on other rules that we follow, such as on the military aid to civil authorities protocol.

Adam Afriyie (Windsor) (Con): It seems to me that the whole purpose of the 30-day provision in the Civil Contingencies Act was for the Executive to be accountable to Parliament. For example, those checks and balances would be needed in a scenario where—I am not suggesting this in any way, shape or form—the Government say that nobody can travel, and Parliament is therefore unable to reconvene. I simply point that out, but I do not intend to divide the Committee.

Penny Mordaunt: My hon. Friend has made my point for me. That is why we need this particular course of action, as opposed to relying on the Civil Contingencies Act.

I turn to the six-month review. I want to reiterate how these decisions will be made in an incredibly dynamic situation. Apart from a few parts of the Bill, these powers are not live at Royal Assent. They will be called upon or drawn down by the appropriate Government in the four nations—it is obviously appropriate that some of these decisions should be for the devolved nations—and they could be applied to very local areas, depending on what is happening in that particular situation.

We are therefore ensuring that the support that people need is there, with regular reports and debates in Parliament, to ensure proportionate accountability that does not itself make the management of this outbreak harder than it already is. These mechanisms currently include Ministers reporting to Parliament every two months on how we have used these powers. There will also be a debate after 12 months and a meaningful vote on renewal after 24.

We have also listened to people's concerns about the need for periodic reviews of these powers. The Government have therefore tabled an amendment to the Bill that will enable the House of Commons to take a view every six months on whether the provisions of the Act need to be reviewed. That will be done within seven days of each six-month period if Parliament is sitting. If the House declines to renew these temporary provisions, the Government will ensure that they expire.

Chris Bryant: Will the Minister give way?

Penny Mordaunt: I will make a little progress, because there is quite a lot that I have not managed to say at the Dispatch Box yet.

We will therefore be able to carry out the will of Parliament quickly and efficiently, and this mechanism gives the House of Commons the final say on how the powers in this Act are to be used. I note the pragmatic suggestions of my right hon. Friend the Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis), but I do not think that anything he says about future legislation or measures that we wish to bring in, or indeed the House being able to express a view, is negated by the way we have set this out. Each of the four countries of the UK has its own set of laws, and these tools and powers differ to varying degrees in each area.

Neale Hanvey (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath) (Ind): Will the Minister give way?

Penny Mordaunt: I will make a little progress; sorry, but I have not had much time.

Consistency of outcome will be achieved by making a range of tools and powers consistent across the UK. That is just one part of the overall solution but a vital part nevertheless. A two-year overall lifespan for this Act has been chosen to ensure that its powers remain available for a reasonable length of time, with the option of provisions in the Act being extended by the relevant national authority. A reasonable worst-case scenario for this outbreak is that it could last for over a year, and therefore some of the provisions in the Bill will need to be in place for up to two years. Equally, the Bill provides a mechanism for early sunset, but we cannot guarantee that one year will be enough nor predict which powers will be required for how long.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: Can the Minister confirm that the votes in Parliament on a six-monthly basis that are already in the Act will be on an amendable motion?

Penny Mordaunt: The hon. Gentleman might wish to say that some of the provisions cannot be applied. We do not wish to do that. The whole purpose of the Bill is that the bulk of the powers—apart from ones that are live at Royal Assent—are at the direction of either the devolved nations or the UK Government, to respond to a very dynamic situation. We do not wish to call on these powers. We only wish to use them in extreme cases. There are several that we think we will never use, particularly on food supply and so forth, but we need to allow that flexibility in what will be an incredibly unpredictable situation. The safeguards we have put in place will allow us to have that flexibility.

Mr David Davis: Let me give the Minister a straightforward, practical example. One element of the Bill allows the delay of the oversight of the Investigatory Powers Act 2016. That is the case because we have 15 commissioners, only one of whom is younger than 70—that is the reasoning behind it. Were the Government to do something sensible, such as appoint 15 deputy commissioners, all under 70, this would no longer be required. But we have seen the Government before resisting attempts to improve accountability, and we know that that they may want to keep it in, whereas we may want to take it out. This is a precise example, so why can we not do that?

Penny Mordaunt: In his earlier remarks, my right hon. Friend was talking about things that we might wish to do in a year's time and so forth. I do not think any of those things are being ruled out, but we think that extensive work has been done on this Bill, which is looking only at powers we know need to be enshrined in primary legislation, not at other issues, many of which have been raised by colleagues. I do not think those very practical options are removed from us by supporting this Bill today.

I also wish to emphasise another point, because in this Bill the Government are legislating for areas of devolved competence. I should highlight that the devolved Administrations could have legislated to create their own powers through their own primary legislation. However, they have agreed, given the urgency of the situation, that the UK Government should do it on their behalf. This Bill consequently engages the legislative consent motion process for all the devolved legislatures. The amendment in the name of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care requires the continued operation of certain key powers contained in the Bill to be reviewed every six months. Unless the UK Parliament consents to their continued operation, UK Ministers would be under an obligation to switch off the relevant powers by way of regulation.

Chris Bryant: Will the Minister give way?

Penny Mordaunt: May I just finish this point? The scrutiny process created by the amendment does not have an equivalent effect in relation to the devolved powers. This is consistent with the devolution settlements. Once these powers have been legislated for in this Bill and are exercisable by the devolved Administrations, the UK Parliament has no further role in relation to them.

[Penny Mordaunt]

It is, rather, for the devolved Administrations to scrutinise the activities of their Ministers. For instance, on Thursday 19 March, Mike Russell, the Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, Europe and External Affairs, made a commitment to the Scottish Parliament that the Scottish Government would institute appropriate reporting on how and when they used these powers in the Bill.

If the House will allow me, I should like to turn to the amendments and set out the Government's reasoning. I sympathise with the intentions of the amendment tabled by the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman). Although we agree with them in principle, there are a number of technical reasons why I believe the amendment we have brought forward is to be preferred.

Chris Bryant: Will the Minister give way?

Penny Mordaunt: I will, but I am just going briefly to go through the amendments—[*Interruption.*] I know, but hon. Members have tabled amendments and I wish to tell them why we have not accepted them. [*Interruption.*]

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. We are getting through this and we are not having interruptions from Members who are sitting down.

Penny Mordaunt: Thank you, Dame Eleanor. The first such reason is that in the event that Parliament is not sitting, we think that the made affirmative procedure would impede our ability to manage efficiently the use of these powers. It may be difficult to make an Order in Council during a pandemic. It may be difficult safely to convene the necessary Privy Council meeting. A made affirmative instrument can be made more, and ensures that there is a vote on the extension of the Act when Parliament returns. Secondly, it is not clear from the proposed amendment whether the Act can be extended more than once. It is the unfortunate situation that with this pandemic possibly lasting longer than a year it is essential that we have the flexibility to keep the important measures in this Bill in force for longer than a year where they are needed.

I am aware of the real policy concerns behind the amendment tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Haltemprice and Howden. I should also point out that without clause 76 we would have no mechanism for extending the life of the Bill, should that be needed, other than by making further primary legislation, so we could be left without vital measures for protecting public health and supporting essential public services while in the middle of the outbreak. Similarly, without clause 76 we would have no simple means of sunseting the legislation at an earlier date if it proves to be no longer necessary.

Finally, colleagues will wish to note that the amendment would impact on the devolved Administrations without their consent.

9.15 pm

Chris Bryant: I have to say to the Minister that she is worrying me more and more with every sentence, because it sounds as if the Government are intending to drive this through for two years, come hell or high water, and to keep all the powers in place for that time. I thought that what they had announced earlier this afternoon

was a concession, which was that in six months' time the House would be able to strike down some of the individual measures if it wished to do so. She no longer seems to be saying that.

Penny Mordaunt: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman understood what I set out at the start. This is how these powers will be activated. Some of them will be for the UK Government with regard to England, but it is absolutely right that it is the devolved nations that will switch the powers on, and it could be in very localised areas. Those decisions will be taken in response to a very dynamic situation, probably in COBRA. Having sat around that table, and knowing some of the decisions that may be coming down the line, I think that is appropriate.

Let me turn to some of the issues raised by the hon. Member for Torfaen (Nick Thomas-Symonds). I touched on social care in my earlier remarks. He is absolutely right that we must have those measures in place, and I hope that what I said about my hon. Friend the Minister for Care has gone some way towards addressing that. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right about domestic violence, and we must be alert to the potential for an increase in demand for those services.

I thank the Second Church Estates Commissioner, my hon. Friend the Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous), for tabling new clause 1, and the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) for supporting it. As my hon. Friend set out, the purpose of the new clause is to make provision for the postponement of the dissolution of the General Synod of the Church of England. The dissolution is to take place in July and will be followed by an election of the new General Synod over the summer. We support the new clause, which is consistent with the approach that the Government have taken to other elections.

Let me turn to other Government amendments, particularly on cremation, which many hon. Members have raised. For their engagement, I want to thank in particular the hon. Members for Bradford West (Naz Shah), for Birmingham, Ladywood (Shabana Mahmood) and for Bradford East (Imran Hussain), and my hon. Friends the Members for Peterborough (Paul Bristow), for Dudley North (Marco Longhi), for Stoke-on-Trent South (Jack Brereton), for Wycombe (Mr Baker), for Wealden (Ms Ghani) and for Meriden (Saqib Bhatti).

The policy that has been developed on dealing with excess deaths has involved all faith groups from the start. The purpose of the provisions is to ensure that people's choices can be adhered to, that the dignity of the deceased is respected and that support services for families are in place, even in times of great stress. There should be no public health reason or capacity reason why someone who wished to be buried would be cremated. I hope that is very clear. I can give the House that reassurance. We have included further measures in the Bill. Local authority leaders will also want to reassure their communities in the coming days—clearly, it is local authority chief executives who will use these powers, if they are ever used. I also want to put on the record my thanks to Councillor Sharon Thompson of Birmingham City Council.

Yasmin Qureshi (Bolton South East) (Lab): The provision states that it is desirable for a local authority or public authority to seek the wishes of the deceased person's

family or a place of worship if there is no next of kin. Saying that it is desirable to take their views into consideration does not mean that those views will apply if a local authority or public authority decides that a cremation is going to take place, under the legislation as it stands. The Government could make an amendment to clearly specify that if somebody does not wish to be cremated, they will not be cremated. That is missing from the Bill at the moment.

Penny Mordaunt: We have brought forward an amendment that gives those guarantees with regard to someone's beliefs, religion or wishes. In addition, I stress that it has never been the case—there has never been any doubt about this—that somebody who wished to be buried would have to be cremated. There is no public health reason or capacity reason why that should be the case. We have worked from the off with all faiths to produce the guidelines, and the amendment was produced through consultation. I see no circumstance—and it certainly would not relate to these powers—in which somebody would be cremated against their wishes. I do not think I can give any more guarantees than that. That is absolutely not the intent of the policy and it is certainly not anything to do with the practice.

Yasmin Qureshi: Will the Minister give way?

Penny Mordaunt: I am going to make progress, but I thank all Members who have spoken to me over the past few days, in particular my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden, who has also been very helpful to me and Public Health England with regard to additional things we may need to do with funeral services.

The Government have tabled a number of other new clauses and amendments. New clause 16 relates to the industrial development cap. New clause 20 removes existing requirements for local authorities and councils to hold annual meetings. New clause 24 touches on issues that the hon. Member for Croydon Central (Sarah Jones) raised earlier in respect of suspending new evictions from social or private rented accommodation. What I said in my previous remarks about that applies. Amendment 27 will indemnify returning officers for the cancellation of polls. Amendments 79 to 82 relate to the use of video in extradition hearings. Amendments 55 and 56, on trading standards enforcement, relate to the enforcement of provisions on gatherings, events and premises. They widen the scope of those who can be given powers and bring proceedings for offences.

New clause 23 is concerned with biometrics, which are a critical tool used daily in support of our national security. The new clause establishes a time-limited power to enable the Home Secretary to make regulations, after consulting the independent Biometrics Commissioner, to extend the statutory retention deadlines for biometrics already held by the police and for national security reasons by up to six months.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: On the issue of data, I understand that the Biometrics Commissioner will publish his assessment of the Government's proposal very soon. Does that remain the case?

Penny Mordaunt: I will certainly let the hon. Gentleman know. As he will appreciate, I am covering several Departments. I would not want to mislead him, but I will find out the timetable for the commissioner to publish the report.

New schedule 2, on medical practitioners in Wales, will enable any practitioners who are registered by the GMC on a temporary basis to start providing health services immediately to a local health board. This is another example of levelling the law up, in this case to the position in England and Northern Ireland, where that is already in place. There are also amendments regarding the mental health review tribunal arrangements for Wales, again bringing them in line with the situation in England and Scotland, and emergency registration fees for doctors, to enable any professionals to be registered under the emergency powers, with the understanding that once the emergency period has passed, their temporary registration status will come to an end.

I am happy to answer any questions that hon. Members have as the debate goes on. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has outlined, the Bill contains vital measures to support citizens, protect our workforce and achieve our goals in beating this dreadful disease. I thank hon. Members for their constructive comments and their attendance today.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: Clearly, the Prime Minister made his announcement in the course of my speech, but just before the Minister winds up, I have a specific query about whether separated and divorced parents who co-parent can still transport their children between homes. Is that essential travel? I appreciate that the Minister might not know that off the top of the head now, but will she undertake to at least provide clarity on that point from the Prime Minister's announcement?

Penny Mordaunt: The hon. Gentleman's comments will have been heard, and I am sure that point will be clarified, but in all this, whether it is about key workers or new policy of this ilk that has been announced, the objective is to keep as many people at home as possible, including children. That principle would underlie any policy on what is actually essential. The bottom line, as the shadow Secretary of State outlined in his remarks, is that if we stay at home, we will be helping to save lives, protecting the NHS and fighting the virus. I commend this Bill to the House.

Naz Shah: I would like first on this occasion to pay my respects and put on record my thanks to our brave NHS staff, our key workers and everyone in our nation playing their part in combating the covid-19 outbreak, and also my advance thanks to the police, who have been given extra responsibilities by the Prime Minister this evening to police people's social distance when they go out.

I will not be moving my amendment, but instead thank the Government for their amendment, which actually strengthened my proposal. However, it is still important to say a few words about that. I have been truly heartened by the cross-party support that I have received in this process from every part of this House. It really does demonstrate how, at times of crisis, democracy can work and can respond positively to the concerns out there in the community. I would like to say thank you for that spirit of unity.

This truly is a difficult time for everyone in our nation. They are not normal times with today's emergency Bill. We know how life as we know it will have to change, and the origins of this Bill have caused huge distress to religious communities, especially those of Muslim and

[Naz Shah]

Jewish background. Death is a sensitive time for everyone, and losing a loved one is difficult for us all. We all want dignity in death for our loved ones, and the idea that, in extreme circumstances, when capacity issues arise, the deceased would have to be cremated was something hard to bear, especially for those from the Muslim and Jewish faiths, which strongly oppose cremation. I further thank the Minister for clarifying in the assurance and the guarantees that she has just given that nobody will be cremated against their wishes.

The aim of my amendment was to give, in such difficult circumstances where capacity issues arise for local authorities, further legal protection and to ensure that the next of kin and the relevant faith institutions were consulted, in order to provide added support and protect the deceased from being cremated. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my hon. Friends the Members for Ilford South (Sam Tarry) and for Bedford (Mohammad Yasin) and the hon. Members for Wycombe (Mr Baker), for Wakefield (Imran Ahmad Khan) and for Bury South (Christian Wakeford) for co-sponsoring my amendment, and the more than 110 cross-party MPs who formally showed their support. I also thank the all-party group on British Muslims for its tireless work behind the scenes, as well as community organisations such as the Muslim Council of Britain, the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board, Wifaqul Ulama, the British Board of Scholars and Imams, and the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

I thank individuals such as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Shabana Mahmood), who could not be here tonight; Qari Asim MBE, the adviser to the Government; Mohammed Shafiq of the Ramadhan Foundation, Vakas Hussain, and all those individuals and organisations who played a huge role silently in the background, influencing and putting in tremendous effort to work through this process. I have never done a campaign like it in 24 hours. I must also put on the record my thanks to Joseph Hayat of British Muslim TV for doing the one-minute video, which was absolutely amazing.

9.30 pm

I also thank the Government and many in the Conservative party for their contributions. Lord Tariq Ahmad made efforts to ensure that concerns were seriously recognised, and my Muslim sister in the House of Lords, Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, ensured that community nerves were calmed while conversations and negotiations with the Government took place. I am grateful to the Paymaster General and to the Minister of State, Cabinet Office, the hon. Member for Norwich North (Chloe Smith), for recognising the concerns of all religious communities and taking them on board through the amendment the Government tabled on this issue. Finally, I would like formally to thank all those from faith communities across the country who lobbied their local MP to support my amendment. I hear from some of my colleagues that their inboxes are rather full, so perhaps we lobbied a bit too much.

This campaign shows that, in times of crisis, we in politics, in Parliament and as a nation can work together to ensure that we support all citizens. From Scotland to Bradford West and right across the nation, faith communities play a vital role as the fourth emergency

service, providing food, medicine and other necessities to those most in need. The Bradford foundation trust in my constituency has developed a coalition of more than 50 local businesses and 30 voluntary and community sector organisations, with support from Bradford4Better, to support our local authority during this difficult time. While faith communities are playing such a vital role, we must not neglect the rights of their deceased. That would have been a grave injustice.

Government amendment 52 recognises those rights and provides legal protection for the deceased of Muslim and Jewish communities, requiring their wishes and faith to be shown due regard, to prevent cremation. In some ways, it is clearer and goes further than my amendment. It provides protection to those from faiths where people choose to be buried and to those who choose to be cremated. I therefore do not press my amendment 66 and will support Government amendment 52 to provide this much-needed addition to the Bill.

Bob Seely (Isle of Wight) (Con): I shall speak to new clause 6, which I tabled to enable quicker action to support Island and isolated communities. I intend to talk briefly about the new clause and to ask some questions of those on the Front Bench.

The Isle of Wight is dependent on three private ferry firms. If staff from one or more of those firms go ill with covid-19 and we have an outbreak, there will be serious consequences for the Island. Competition law currently prevents the firms from talking. That is still the case, despite eight days of efforts to get it moved. In basic terms, the new clause would allow the relevant Secretary of State or devolved Administration to issue directions to allow ferry firms to talk to one other, potentially to plan and implement joint services for the purpose of resilience—for the provision of food, medicine and other essential goods, and of passenger transportation.

Although we are an island, we need to stay open because we need food going out and coming in, we need key workers to go backwards and forwards, and we need people to continue to receive life-saving medical treatment in Southampton and Portsmouth. If the ferry firms fall over, we cannot do that. They are a true lifeline. I think people do not realise that an island separated from a land mass without a fixed link needs ferries.

The Department for Transport understands the lifeline nature of our services and is doing a good job. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has not yet acted on that. I understand that officials are working up a statutory instrument, and apparently there is a letter coming from the Secretary of State at some point. The Competition and Markets Authority says it will not take action, but as of this evening the firms—I am being texted by my ferry firms as we speak—still are not willing to talk because, for compliance purposes, they need a letter from a Government Minister and a Secretary of State.

Critically, I want Ministers to understand that I do not blame the Government. I know how stressed they are across the provision. This new clause is designed to be helpful because a Government diktat—a fiat—means that the Government will allow the ferry firms to talk to each other, avoiding much of the bureaucracy there seems to be at the moment, by getting a statutory instrument in place.

I would be delighted if the Government accepted new clause 6 in its entirety—I thank the Public Bill Office very much for its work. If they are not going to accept it, will a Minister reassure me this evening that a Secretary of State will write a letter with the assurances that I need? Can somebody also give me the assurance that the delegated legislation will be laid before Parliament?

Can somebody reassure me on medical supplies? For example, a consultant at a hospice contacted me today to say, “If we run out of morphine on the Island, can we give out other opiates?” Because of a glitch in the system, nurses can give out morphine, but they cannot give out other opiates.

Penny Mordaunt: Can I just answer that point, because my hon. Friend made it on Second Reading, and I have checked the issue? The Department of Health and NHS England are looking at precisely the issue of being able to authorise healthcare professionals to administer other opiates. I can also assure my hon. Friend that he will shortly get a letter from the relevant Secretary of State with regard to the Isle of Wight ferry issue. I do not know its contents—I am not briefed on that—but his lobbying has worked.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Eleanor Laing): Before I call Jeffrey Donaldson, I should say that we really have to be quick now. I hope the right hon. Gentleman will do three minutes.

Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson (Lagan Valley) (DUP): Thank you Dame Eleanor. I will be brief.

I want to speak to new clause 5, in my name. As we have heard, there have been calls from across the UK to look out for the members of our society who are elderly and vulnerable. I wish to add my voice and to say that the victims of modern slavery must be addressed urgently. I spoke to the Minister’s colleague earlier today, and I have received assurances from the Minister. I welcome the fact that the Department is working closely with the Salvation Army, which is the contractor dealing with these issues. I have faith that it will do the right thing and look after these people, but it is important to issue guidance on this issue when possible.

I recognise that the Department is pressed and that officials are working hard on this issue, but I really hope the Government will be able to address my concerns, particularly to ensure that the victims of modern slavery continue to receive special payments; that where their key worker is off ill due to the virus, someone else will liaise with them and keep in contact; that there are arrangements to address the need to protect them when they are in shared or cramped accommodation, as is often the case; and that the Government will look into these matters and ensure that these vulnerable people, who are already victims, are not further victimised or isolated as a result of a lack of capacity to deal with these issues and concerns at the moment. I am looking for that assurance, and I hope the Government will be able to issue guidance along the lines I have suggested in new clause 5.

Mr Steve Baker: I stand first with my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Bob Seely). We cannot neglect his constituents on the Island. I fear that this issue has gone on for far too long, and I want to say sorry to

him that we did not weigh in behind him sooner. This issue has just got to be dealt with, and I know that my right hon. Friend the Minister knows that.

Secondly, I would like to pay tribute to hon. Member for Bradford West (Naz Shah). She has done an absolutely fantastic job in the last 24 hours. It has been a real privilege to work with her to secure what I think is a fantastic result. At a time like this, matters of the hereafter are close to everybody’s thoughts. They sometimes say that there are no atheists in a foxhole. I certainly would not want to stand by and see my constituents cremated against their wishes, and nor, indeed, would I want to see people buried against their wishes. I really want to congratulate her; she has done a fantastic job, and she has done it in a wonderful cross-party spirit, which has done a lot to reinvigorate my faith in this place and in what we can achieve together when we put our constituents first. Well done to her.

I will pay particular attention to amendments 1 and 6 and Government new clause 19, which relate to the expiry of these powers. When I got into politics, it was with the purpose of enlarging liberty under parliamentary democracy and the rule of law. When I look at this Pandora’s box of enlargement, discretion and extensions of power, I can only say what a dreadful, dreadful thing it is to have had to sit here in silence and nod it through because it is the right thing to do.

My goodness, between this and the Prime Minister’s announcement tonight, what have we ushered in? I am not a good enough historian to put into context the scale of the infringement of our liberties that has been implemented today through the Prime Minister’s announcement and this enormously complicated Bill, which we are enacting with only two hours to think about amendments.

I could speak for the time I have available several times over just on the provisions relating to the retention of DNA, which we addressed in the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012. *[Interruption.]* I see from the expression on the face of the Paymaster General, my right hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth North (Penny Mordaunt), that she understands the anguish—she probably knows it better than any of us—that we are all going through in passing this Bill.

Let me be the first to say that tonight, through this Bill, we are implementing at least a dystopian society. Some will call it totalitarian, which is not quite fair, but it is at least dystopian. The Bill implements a command society under the imperative of saving hundreds of thousands of lives and millions of jobs, and it is worth doing.

By God, I hope the Prime Minister has a clear conscience tonight and sleeps with a good heart, because he deserves to do so. Libertarian though I may be, this is the right thing to do but, my goodness, we ought not to allow this situation to endure one moment longer than is absolutely necessary to save lives and preserve jobs.

Although I welcome new clause 19 to give us a six-month review, I urge upon my hon. and right hon. Friends and the Prime Minister the sunset of this Act, as it will no doubt become, at one year, because there is time to bring forward further primary legislation. If, come the late autumn, it is clear that this epidemic, this pandemic, continues—God help us if that is true, because I fear for the economy and the currency—there

[Mr Steve Baker]

certainly will be time to bring forward further primary legislation and to properly scrutinise provisions to carry forward this enormous range of powers.

Every time I dip into the Bill, I find some objectionable power. There is not enough time to scrutinise the Bill, but I can glance at it—I am doing it now—and see objectionable powers. There would be time to have several days of scrutiny on a proper piece of legislation easily in time for March or April 2021.

I implore my right hon. Friend, for goodness' sake, let us not allow this dystopia to endure one moment longer than is strictly necessary.

Rushanara Ali (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab): I concur with the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker): although supporting this legislation is absolutely the right thing to do, we must make sure that scrutiny remains and that his and the Opposition's warnings are heeded by the Government.

I express my deepest sympathies for those who have already lost their lives in my constituency and around the country, and I pay tribute to the emergency workers around the country who, right now, need our support and direct, immediate action from the Government to give them the PPE they lack.

Here in London, we are at the frontline. There are densely populated areas in my constituency and around the city with huge amounts of overcrowding, intergenerational living and high health risks, which means that, ahead of the challenges spreading around the country, we face challenges now.

We have had several reports of major problems in my constituency in the last week. Doctors and clinicians at the Royal London Hospital have described the situation as being like a warzone, and others have said that they are already having to make devastating decisions—choosing between who to save and who dies. They speak of collateral damage and of doctors having to order equipment online. I echo the importance of making sure that PPE is sent to people immediately.

9.45 pm

Care home outbreaks are of great concern around the country. Vulnerable people are at risk, so I have a few questions for the Minister. First, we need to make sure that Mildmay Mission Hospital does not close on 31 March, as is still being planned. It is utterly scandalous to see AIDS sufferers who need care being thrown out of hospital into the NHS, when the NHS will not be able to cope. I also ask the Secretary of State to ensure that councils such as mine get the help that they need, because they are at breaking point already. My discussions last week have highlighted just how difficult it is for them to be able to feed some of the poorest people in the country. Other councils will have the same problem, with millions living in poverty. Those people will be trapped and left in complete devastation. We need action now for councils.

GPs are reporting that they are running out of inhalers. My colleagues in other constituencies have fed us information so that we could pass it on to Ministers. The Government need to act to ensure that the 1 million or so undocumented workers do not become a risk to public health, because they will continue to work if they

are not stopped and not given an amnesty. I hope that the Government have taken that on board. I imagine that that has not been addressed yet, because that is also a public health emergency.

I welcome what the Government are doing on burial. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford West (Naz Shah) on her leadership on this, but we need to ensure that local authorities work together so that the burial facilities are available.

Finally, Madam Deputy Speaker, many thousands of people will be stranded in other countries. We need an evacuation plan, in the light of the Prime Minister's remarks, to get them back to our country safely. I thank the Minister and the Government for their work.

Richard Fuller (North East Bedfordshire) (Con): I rise to welcome the Government's new clause 19 and to support in spirit the amendments of my right hon. Friend the Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis).

The idea of two years was unconscionable; six months is liveable with, but three months would have been better for this draconian Bill. We need that reduction because it provides a much more reasonable basis not only to assess the unparalleled restrictions that may be imposed on people, but to enable an alignment of timeframes between our medical responses and the impact on the economy.

I wish to make some brief comments on the issue of balance between those two features. At the moment, we are passing this legislation when a monopoly of voices point in one direction—do more, go faster and impose more restrictions. What we need is an environment of balance to understand that all those measures, as we pursue with all of our hearts and heads the medical cures, the support for our NHS workers and the care for the sick, have consequences: consequences for our economy and for the mental health and well-being of our citizenry, and consequences as yet unforeseen.

A restriction in the timeframe for the legislation is absolutely crucial. Embedded in the phrase “whatever it takes” is a blank cheque that has to be paid at some point. It may not be favourable in public discourse to talk in that way. It may appear callous to talk in that way, but, at some point in the future, a reckoning for the decisions that have been made in response to this medical crisis and the economic consequences for families across the country will come. Whether the Government like it or not, the Bill they are passing today—new clause 19 that they are passing today—will become the vehicle on which they are held to account.

Let me give the Minister some suggestions that she may like to pass on to the Government for them to think about in terms of what we might be discussing in six months' time. First, we need to set a clear goal. Secondly, we need to outline the reasonable, measurable benchmarks needed to show that we are making progress in achieving that medical goal.

We need to explain the exit strategy for our medical plan. In six months' time, or at some other time, the Government have to say what considerations they have made if the approach to secure those medical goals has not achieved what they wanted it to achieve, and what the costs and consequences are for the economy. There are no easy answers here, of course, but as we pass this

legislation at this difficult time, it is important that we understand that we will have to do that evaluation in a mood of much more balance than we can today.

Munira Wilson (Twickenham) (LD): I rise to speak in support of the amendment and new clauses that my Liberal Democrat colleagues and I have tabled. We are not seeking to divide the House, but we are keen to put our concerns on the record. In the interests of time, I want to focus on two areas—social care and the self-employed.

There is unanimity in the Chamber about the fact that exceptional times call for exceptional measures. It is strange to find myself in violent agreement with the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker) and, indeed, the right hon. Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis). In these difficult, challenging times, the measures must be proportionate, strictly time-limited and with appropriate safeguards in place. I therefore welcome the Government's concession that the Bill will be reviewed every six months, although our amendment seeks a review every three months, with a full review by both Houses. I note the concerns about whether we can amend or discard parts of the Bill in each review, and I hope that that will be taken on board by Ministers.

The Bill gives the Government sweeping powers over our civil liberties, and impacts on how we look after the most vulnerable in our society, which is dealt with in our amendment 14 and new clause 14. Social care provision is inextricably linked to NHS provision—they are two sides of the same coin. Fast and safe discharge into the community is essential to free up hospital capacity for those who are critically ill.

The system is already stretched to breaking point, and many people think that care standards are on the border line. The Bill seeks potentially to lower standards, which could be dangerously reduced, putting many elderly and disabled people of all ages at risk. Although the Secretary of State told me that the provisions seek to do the opposite by enabling local authorities to prioritise, I fear that the only safeguard is the European convention on human rights, resulting in many vulnerable people being harmed. They must not be cast by the wayside in this crisis.

The Bill has been introduced to tackle a serious threat, but it potentially raises another threat for the most vulnerable people in society. The Chancellor made it clear that he would give the NHS whatever resource it needed to deal with coronavirus. The same commitment must be given to social care, as the sister service to the NHS. Amendment 14 seeks to address that very point.

I turn to new clause 13, on statutory self-employment pay. The Chancellor has rightly stepped in with a far-reaching set of economic measures to support the millions of people across the country whose livelihoods and incomes have been decimated by the pandemic. As many Members from all parts of the House have said, the 5 million self-employed and freelancers feel that they have been completely overlooked. With over 11,000 self-employed people in my constituency I, like many others, have been inundated with hundreds of emails, from childminders to event organisers, to tradesmen and women, to musicians and those who work in the TV industry, begging for action. Many have seen their incomes dry up overnight, with no prospect of knowing when they might be able to work again.

New clause 13 seeks to provide for the self-employed on the same terms as the wage guarantee scheme for employees. I fully understand that the mechanism for delivering such a provision is not straightforward for Government, but let us not let the best be the enemy of the good. The situation is urgent for millions of people across the country who are struggling to put food on the table for their families and keep a roof over their heads right now.

In 2008, the Government stepped in to bail out the banks. Now it is time to do the same for everyone whose livelihood is under threat, whether employed or self-employed. At this time of national crisis, of course we support the Bill with an extremely heavy heart, but I implore Ministers to take on board our grave concerns, particularly on care of the vulnerable and providing for the self-employed. Let us make sure that not one single provision in the Bill is in place for a minute longer than it has to be.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): First, let me thank the Government for their contribution and highlight the plight of the NHS staff who do not have enough protection gear. Will the Minister ascertain whether any factories can be used to assist in the interim? I have also been approached by someone about whether, in relation to new clauses 3 and 4, those with an HGV licence could step in to drive supplies—due to a DVLA technicality, they are precluded from doing so. Can we lift that restriction legally, as it is only a technicality, and allow him and others to step in?

The shadow Minister referred to the 80% of wages being available by 1 April, but may I implore her to make that money available from March?

On new clause 4 and factories producing the food and medication we need, I am thinking of TG Eakin in Comber, producing colostomy bags. They cannot go home; what help is in place for them?

On new clauses 9 and 11, what about the self-employed? I have electricians with no premises because their jobs consist of fixing electricians in homes and businesses; can they access the business grant? I have self-employed café owners who have been asked to close their businesses—their staff are getting a wage, but they are not. What is being done to help them? What about a constituent who has a shop stocking cleaning products and basic groceries who is delivering cleaning products, potatoes, milk and other things free of charge? What help is there for him and his staff in new clauses 9 and 11? The business grant will only pay his rent for a few months, so how does he feed his five children?

Lastly, self-employed people should get a basic wage when we are telling them to close and when they cannot reasonably stay open. Again, I would ask what has been done for those who are self-employed. New clause 8 is about education: what about self-employed coaches who are essential in day-to-day life to the mental health and physical wellbeing of our children? What about agency staff working in colleges and the civil service? Do they qualify for the 80% wages that they should under new clauses 9 and 11?

Helen Hayes: Time is very limited this evening, but I want briefly to return to an issue that I did not have time properly to probe on Second Reading: the question of people with learning disabilities and autistic people

[Helen Hayes]

whose rights are at risk as a consequence of the Bill. As someone who has campaigned on the “Transforming Care” agenda and the Government’s failure to implement it over many years, I know that there are people the autism community and among those who support people with learning disabilities who are very worried that the Bill could result in further unnecessary admissions to hospital. This could happen both indirectly, through the withdrawal of support for autistic people and people with learning disabilities, resulting in a higher incidence of crisis, and directly, through provisions in the Bill that make it easier for people to be detained.

Any institutional setting where large numbers of people live together has increased risk of covid-19 spreading. Families who have battled for years to get their loved ones out of hospital are very frightened that the Bill could mean that their loved ones end up being detained once again, and that if this happens they might also fall victim to covid-19. Once again, I want to seek assurance from the Secretary of State for those families that their loved ones will not end up once again in settings that have been traumatising in the past and where abuse has taken place, as a consequence of the Bill.

Mr Kevan Jones: I ask the Minister to look again at the provisions in the Bill around the Mental Health Act 1983. I accept the reasons why having one doctor to free up capacity might be relevant, but could the Minister consider provisions under which one doctor signs and that is reviewed by a second doctor within a day or a very short period? Without that, some very vulnerable people could be left unprotected.

I accept the reason why elections have been postponed. However, in County Durham, we have a police and crime commissioner by-election due in May because of the death of the PCC. The acting commissioner is only in there for six months, so is there provision to extend his period by up to another 12 months? That will be needed, because the elections will not take place next year.

Lastly, I urge the Minister and the Treasury to do something for self-employed people.

Yasmin Qureshi: Earlier, I asked the Minister about cremation and I know that she gave me the assurance that no one would be cremated or buried against their religious wishes. However, with all due respect, assurances from the Minister are not the same as provisions in the Bill. The Bill still says that it is “desirable” to ask for views and to do something, but unless the body of the Bill actually states that nobody can be buried or cremated against their religious wishes, the law as it stands is that that is not compulsory—the idea is only advisable or only something to do with consultation. I say that because currently the legislation is that someone cannot be cremated without the consent of the person.

The precise reason why the Government introduced the legislation was so that they could circumvent that by putting in the provision saying it is “desirable”. In a court of law, “desirable” is not the same as saying “you must” or “you cannot cremate or bury somebody unless they wish that to be so”. That is the kind of guarantee that is required in the body of the Bill.

10 pm

Six hours having elapsed since the commencement of proceedings, the debate was interrupted (Programme Order, this day).

The Chair put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair (Standing Order No. 83D), That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Clause 1 accordingly ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The Chair then put forthwith the Questions necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at that time (Standing Order No. 83D).

Clauses 2 to 10 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 11

INDEMNITY FOR HEALTH SERVICE ACTIVITY: SCOTLAND

Amendment made: 20, page 6, line 7, leave out “or to the extent that”.—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This amendment brings clause 11(6) about the circumstances in which an indemnity is not available in Scotland because of pre-existing cover into line with clause 10(6) for England and Wales and clause 12(6) for Northern Ireland.

Clause 11, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 12 to 30 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 31

DISAPPLICATION ETC BY WELSH MINISTERS OF DBS PROVISIONS

Amendments made: 21, page 22, line 1, at beginning insert “Subject to subsection (10A),”

This amendment and amendment 22 have the effect that a notice under clause 31 that relates to a person specified by name must be given to a person and that the published version of the notice must not identify an individual without their consent.

Amendment 22, page 22, line 5, at end insert—

“(10A) Where the notice relates to a person specified by name—

- (a) the Welsh Ministers must give a copy of the notice to that person, and*
- (b) the published version of the notice must not identify any individual without their consent.”—(Penny Mordaunt.)*

See the explanatory statement for amendment 21.

Clause 31, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 32 to 36 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 37

STATUTORY SICK PAY: FUNDING OF EMPLOYERS’ LIABILITIES

Amendment made: 40, page 25, line 27, at end insert—

“(2) The Social Security Administration Act 1992 has effect as if in section 113A (statutory sick pay and statutory maternity pay: breach of regulations)—

- (a) in subsection (1)(c), after “153(5)(b)” there were inserted “or 159B”;*
- (b) in subsection (3), after “132” there were inserted “of this Act, or section 159B of the Contributions and Benefits Act”.*

(3) The Social Security Administration Act 1992 has effect as if in section 113B (statutory sick pay and statutory maternity pay: fraud and negligence)—

- (a) in subsection (1)(b)(iii), after “153(5)(b)” there were inserted “or 159B”;
- (b) after subsection (2) there were inserted—“(2A) Where an employer fraudulently or negligently receives a payment in pursuance of regulations under section 159B of the Contributions and Benefits Act (funding of employers’ statutory sick pay liabilities in relation to coronavirus), the employer is liable to a penalty not exceeding £3,000.”—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This amendment makes consequential amendments to the Social Security Administration Act 1992 to apply the enforcement provisions of that Act to the statutory sick pay rebate scheme in new section 159B of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 (as inserted by clause 37). This includes the ability to impose financial penalties for breaches of regulations.

Clause 37, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 38 and 39 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 40

STATUTORY SICK PAY: FUNDING OF EMPLOYERS’
LIABILITIES: NORTHERN IRELAND

Amendment made: 41, page 27, line 33, at end insert—

“(2) The Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992 has effect as if in section 107A (statutory sick pay and statutory maternity pay: breach of regulations)—

- (a) in subsection (1)(c), after “149(5)(b)” there were inserted “or 155B”;
- (b) in subsection (3), after “124” there were inserted “of this Act, or section 155B of the Contributions and Benefits Act”.

(3) The Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992 has effect as if in section 107B (statutory sick pay and statutory maternity pay: fraud and negligence)—

- (a) in subsection (1)(b)(iii), after “149(5)(b)” there were inserted “or 155B”;
- (b) after subsection (2) there were inserted—
“(2A) Where an employer fraudulently or negligently receives a payment in pursuance of regulations under section 155B of the Contributions and Benefits Act (funding of employers’ statutory sick pay liabilities in relation to coronavirus), the employer is liable to a penalty not exceeding £3,000.”—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This amendment makes similar provision in relation to Northern Ireland as is made in relation to Great Britain by amendment 40. It applies the enforcement provisions of the Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992 to the statutory sick pay rebate scheme in new section 155B of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits (Northern Ireland) Act 1992 (as inserted by clause 40). This includes the ability to impose financial penalties for breaches of regulations.

Clause 40, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 41 to 51 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 52

EXPANSION OF AVAILABILITY OF LIVE LINKS IN OTHER
CRIMINAL HEARINGS

Amendment made: 79, page 30, line 27, at end insert—

“(aa) the Extradition Act 2003.”—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This amendment to clause 52, which introduces the Schedule making provision about live links in criminal hearings, is consequential on the amendments to that Schedule.

Clause 52, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 53 to 57 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 58

POWER TO POSTPONE CERTAIN OTHER ELECTIONS AND
REFERENDUMS

Amendment made: 26, page 33, line 2, leave out “the day on which this Act is passed” and insert “16 March 2020”.—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This amendment would extend the period in relation to which regulations under the clause may be made, so that the regulations can reschedule elections and referendums that were required to have been held on or after 16 March 2020 (rather than on or after the day on which the Act is passed).

Clause 58, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 59 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 60

POWER TO MAKE SUPPLEMENTARY ETC PROVISION

Amendments made: 27, page 34, line 42, leave out paragraph (a) and insert—

“(a) acts or omissions in connection with an election, referendum or recall petition prior to its postponement (including provision disapplying any enactment imposing criminal liability in respect of such acts or omissions);”

This amendment would ensure that regulations under this clause are capable of relieving returning officers, presiding officers and others of liability for defaults in relation to postponed elections, referendums or recall petitions.

Amendment 28, page 35, line 14, at end insert—

“(i) the membership or governance arrangements of a local authority in relation to which an order has been made under section 7 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (implementation of structural changes proposals), the membership or governance arrangements of any shadow authority established under such an order, or any other matter dealt with in such an order.”

This amendment would ensure that regulations under this clause are capable of amending structural change orders.

Amendment 29, page 35, line 15, leave out subsection (3) and insert—

“(3) Regulations under subsection (1) may make retrospective provision, including provision having effect in relation to times before the coming into force of this Act.”—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This amendment is to clarify that regulations under this clause can make provision having effect in relation to times before the Bill receives Royal Assent.

Clause 60, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 61 and 62 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 63

POWER TO POSTPONE LOCAL AUTHORITY ELECTIONS IN
WALES FOR CASUAL VACANCIES

Amendment made: 30, page 36, line 30, leave out “the day on which this Act is passed” and insert “16 March 2020”.—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This amendment would extend the period in relation to which regulations under the clause may be made, so that the regulations can reschedule elections that were required to have been held on or after 16 March 2020 (rather than on or after the day on which the Act is passed).

Clause 63, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 64

POWER TO MAKE SUPPLEMENTARY ETC PROVISION

Amendments made: 31, page 37, line 11, leave out paragraph (a) and insert—

“(a) acts or omissions in connection with an election prior to its postponement (including provision disapplying any enactment imposing criminal liability in respect of such acts or omissions);”

This amendment would ensure that regulations under this clause are capable of relieving returning officers, presiding officers and others of liability for defaults in relation to postponed elections.

Amendment 32, page 37, line 25, leave out subsection (3) and insert—“(3) Regulations under subsection (1) may make retrospective provision, including provision having effect in relation to times before the coming into force of this Act.”—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This amendment is to clarify that regulations under this clause can make provision having effect in relation to times before the Bill receives Royal Assent.

Clause 64, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 65 to 73 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 74

POWER TO SUSPEND AND REVIVE PROVISIONS OF THIS ACT

Amendments made: 33, page 44, line 14, leave out “57” and insert “(Elections and referendums due to be held in England in period after 15 March 2020)”.

This amendment provides that NC (Elections and referendums due to be held in England in period after 15 March 2020) is excluded from the scope of the powers to suspend and revive provisions of the Bill.

Amendment 23, page 44, line 15, at end insert—“(xa) section (Disapplication of limit under section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982);”

This amendment provides that the new clause inserted by Amendment NC15 is excluded from the scope of the powers to suspend and revive provisions of the Bill.

Clause 74, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 75

EXPIRY

Amendments made: 34, page 46, line 3, leave out “57” and insert

“(Elections and referendums due to be held in England in period after 15 March 2020)”.

This amendment would ensure that NC (Elections and referendums due to be held in England in period after 15 March 2020) does not expire under the provisions of the Bill providing for expiry.

Amendment 24, page 46, line 4, at end insert—

“(ja) section (Disapplication of limit under section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982)(1);”

This amendment provides that subsection (1) of the new clause inserted by Amendment NC15, which deals with the status of assistance provided in reliance on that clause, will continue to have effect after the expiry of the other provisions of that clause.

Amendment 47, page 46, line 18, at end insert—“() section (HMRC functions).”—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This amendment provides that NC(HMRC functions) does not expire at the end of the period of two years beginning with the day on which any Act resulting from the Bill is passed.

Clause 75, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 76 to 78 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 79

PROCEDURE FOR CERTAIN REGULATIONS MADE BY A MINISTER OF THE CROWN

Amendment made: 37, page 50, line 34, after “76(1)” insert “(other than regulations made in accordance with section (Six-monthly parliamentary review(1)))”.—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This amendment excludes regulations from the affirmative resolution procedure if they are required to be made following a decision of the House of Commons by virtue of Amendment NC19.

Clause 79, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 80 to 82 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 83

REPORTS BY SECRETARY OF STATE ON STATUS OF NON-DEVOLVED PROVISIONS OF THIS ACT

Amendment made: 18, page 54, line 21, leave out “of the power”.—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This amendment is a drafting amendment to remove some unnecessary words.

Clause 83, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 84 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 85

EXTENT

Amendments made: 44, page 55, line 34, at end insert—“(ea) section (Extension of time limits for retention of fingerprints and DNA profiles);”

This amendment provides for New Clause (Extension of time limits for retention of fingerprints and DNA profiles) to extend to the whole of the United Kingdom.

Amendment 80, page 55, line 38, at end insert—

“(ii) section 52, so far as it relates to Part 1A of Schedule 23 (and that Part of that Schedule);”

This amendment to the extent clause is consequential on the amendment being made to the Schedule making provision about live links in criminal hearings.

Amendment 25, page 55, line 45, at end insert—

“(oa) section (Disapplication of limit under section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982);”

This amendment provides that the new clause inserted by Amendment NC15 is to extend to England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Amendment 48, page 55, line 45, at end insert—“() section (HMRC functions);”

This amendment provides that NC(HMRC functions) extends to England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Amendment 49, page 55, line 45, at end insert—“() section (Up-rating of working tax credit etc)(1) and (2);”

This amendment provides that NC(Up-rating of working tax credit etc)(1) and (2) extends to England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Amendment 50, page 56, line 5, at end insert—“() section (Up-rating of working tax credit etc)(3).”

This amendment provides that NC(Up-rating of working tax credit etc)(3) extends to England and Wales and Scotland.

Amendment 38, page 56, line 6, leave out “Section 58 extends” and insert “The following provisions extend”

This is a paving amendment for amendment 39.

Amendment 39, page 56, line 6, at end insert—“(a) section 58; (b) section (Local authority meetings).”

This amendment provides for new clause NC20 (Local authority meetings) to extend to England and Wales and Northern Ireland. (Clause 58 already has that extent.)

Amendment 17, page 56, line 7, at end insert—“(za) section (Emergency arrangements concerning medical practitioners: Wales) (and Schedule (Emergency arrangements concerning medical practitioners: Wales));”

This amendment provides that the new clause and Schedule inserted by Amendments NC15 and NS2 are to extend to England and Wales only (although they only apply in relation to Wales).

Amendment 81, page 56, line 20, leave out “(and Schedule 23)” and insert “, so far as it relates to Parts 1 and 2 of Schedule 23 (and those Parts of that Schedule)”

Amendment 35, page 56, line 24, leave out “57” and insert “(Elections and referendums due to be held in England in period after 15 March 2020), 57, (Elections due to be held in Wales in period after 15 March 2020)”

This amendment gives England and Wales extent to NC (Elections and referendums due to be held in England in period after 15 March 2020) and NC (Elections due to be held in Wales in period after 15 March 2020).

Amendment 36, page 56, line 24, at end insert—
“() section (Postponement of General Synod elections);”

This amendment provides that the new clause inserted by Amendment NC1 extends to England and Wales only.

Amendment 42, page 56, line 24, at end insert—
“() section (Extension of BID arrangements: England);”

This amendment provides for NC[] to extend to England and Wales.

Amendment 45, page 56, line 24, at end insert—

“() section (Residential tenancies: protection from eviction) (and Schedule (Residential tenancies: protection from eviction));”

This amendment provides that NC24 and NS3 extend to England and Wales only.

Amendment 72, page 56, line 24, at end insert—

“() section (Business tenancies in England and Wales: protection from forfeiture etc);”

This amendment provides that NC30 extends to England and Wales only.

Amendment 43, page 57, line 9, at end insert—

“() section (Extension of BID arrangements: Northern Ireland);”

This amendment provides for NC[] to extend to Northern Ireland.

Amendment 73, page 57, line 9, at end insert—

“() section (Business tenancies in Northern Ireland: protection from forfeiture etc);”—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This amendment provides that NC31 extends to Northern Ireland only.

Clause 85, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 86 and 87 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

New Clause 15

EMERGENCY ARRANGEMENTS CONCERNING MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS: WALES

Schedule (Emergency arrangements concerning medical practitioners: Wales) contains temporary modifications of—

(a) the National Health Service (Performers Lists) (Wales) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 2004/1020 (W. 117)), and

(b) the National Health Service (General Medical Services Contracts) (Wales) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 2004/478 (W. 48)).”—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This new clause introduces the new Schedule inserted by NS2

Brought up, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 16

DISAPPLICATION OF LIMIT UNDER SECTION 8 OF THE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ACT 1982

(1) Financial assistance provided under section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 (general power to give selective financial assistance to industry) is not to count towards the limit set by subsections (4) and (5) of that section if the assistance has been designated under subsection (2) as “coronavirus-related”.

(2) The providing authority may make that designation if it appears to the authority that the assistance is provided (wholly or to a significant degree) for the purpose of preventing, reducing, or compensating for any effect or anticipated effect (direct or indirect) of coronavirus or coronavirus disease. “The providing authority” means whichever of the Secretary of State, the Scottish Ministers or the Welsh Ministers provides the assistance.

(3) As soon as reasonably practicable after the end of any quarter in which assistance designated as coronavirus-related is provided by the Secretary of State, the Secretary of State must lay before Parliament a report stating the amount of, and containing such other details as the Secretary of State considers appropriate about—

(a) the designated assistance provided by the Secretary of State in that quarter, and

(b) all designated assistance provided by the Secretary of State from the time when this section came into force until the end of that quarter. “Quarter” means a period of three months ending at the end of March, June, September or December.” —(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

The amendment enables financial assistance to be provided to industry in response to coronavirus without counting towards the total financial limit contained in section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982, and provides for such assistance to be reported to Parliament.

Brought up, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 17

ELECTIONS AND REFERENDUMS DUE TO BE HELD IN ENGLAND IN PERIOD AFTER 15 MARCH 2020

(1) This section applies to the poll for a relevant election or relevant referendum if the poll—

(a) is required to be held on a day falling within the period beginning with 16 March 2020 and ending with the day 30 days after that on which this Act is passed, but

(b) is not held in that period.

(2) Section 39 of the 1983 Act (local elections void etc) does not apply, and is treated as never having applied, in relation to the poll.

(3) Section 63 of that Act (breach of official duty) does not apply, and is treated as never having applied, in relation to any act or omission in connection with the poll.

(4) In determining for the purpose of this section whether a poll has been held, postal votes are to be ignored.

(5) This section does not affect the application of section 39 or 63 of the 1983 Act in relation to a poll the date for which is determined by virtue of section 58 (power to postpone).

(6) In this section—“the 1983 Act” means the Representation of the People Act 1983; “local government area” has the same meaning as in the 1983 Act (see section 203(1) of that Act); “relevant election” means an election of a councillor for any local government area in England to fill a casual vacancy; “relevant referendum” means a referendum under or by virtue of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (referendums on neighbourhood development plans).”—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This new clause makes provision about polls that were required to be held, but were not held, in the period after 15 March. In particular it relieves returning officers, presiding officers and others of liability for defaults in relation to such polls.

Brought up, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 18

ELECTIONS DUE TO BE HELD IN WALES IN PERIOD AFTER 15 MARCH 2020

(1) This section applies to the poll for a relevant election if the poll—

- (a) is required to be held on a day falling within the period beginning with 16 March 2020 and ending with the day 30 days after that on which this Act is passed, but
- (b) is not held in that period.

(2) Section 39 of the 1983 Act (local elections void etc) does not apply, and is treated as never having applied, in relation to the poll.

(3) Section 63 of that Act (breach of official duty) does not apply, and is treated as never having applied, in relation to any act or omission in connection with the poll.

(4) In determining for the purpose of this section whether a poll has been held, postal votes are to be ignored.

(5) This section does not affect the application of section 39 or 63 of the 1983 Act in relation to a poll the date for which is determined by virtue of section 63 (power to postpone).

(6) In this section—

“the 1983 Act” means the Representation of the People Act 1983;

“relevant election” means an election to fill a casual vacancy in the office of councillor in a county council, county borough council or community council in Wales.” —(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This new clause makes provision about polls that were required to be held, but were not held, in the period after 15 March. In particular it relieves returning officers, presiding officers and others of liability for defaults in relation to such polls.

Brought up, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 19

SIX-MONTHLY PARLIAMENTARY REVIEW

(1) If the House of Commons rejects a motion in the form set out in subsection (2), moved in accordance with subsection (3) by a Minister of the Crown, a Minister of the Crown must exercise the power conferred by section (1) so as to ensure that the relevant temporary provisions expire not later than the end of the period of 21 days beginning with the day on which the rejection takes place.

(2)

The form of the motion is—

“That the temporary provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020 should not yet expire.”

(3)

So far as practicable, a Minister of the Crown must make arrangements for the motion mentioned in subsection (1) to be debated and voted on by the House of Commons within a period of 7 sitting days beginning immediately after each 6 month review period.

(4) In this section—

“6 month review period” means—

- (a) the period of 6 months beginning with the day on which this Act is passed, and
- (b) each subsequent period of 6 months,

but only (in each case) if at least one relevant temporary provision still exists at the end of the period (whether or not that provision has ever been brought into force or is at that time suspended);

“relevant temporary provision” means any provision of this Act—

- (a) which is not listed in section (2) (provisions not subject to expiry), and

- (b) in respect of which a Minister of the Crown could make provision under section (1) (early expiry regulations) without the consent of the Welsh Ministers, the Scottish Ministers or a Northern Ireland department;

“sitting day” means a day on which the House of Commons is sitting (and a day is only a day on which the House of Commons is sitting if the House begins to sit on that day).” —(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

The clause provides an opportunity for the House of Commons to express a view on the continued operation of the Bill's temporary provisions every 6 months. If its view is that the provisions should expire, regulations must be made to that effect. The clause does not apply to temporary provisions within the devolved competence of one of the devolved legislatures.

Brought up, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 20

LOCAL AUTHORITY MEETINGS

(1) The relevant national authority may by regulations make provision relating to—

- (a) requirements to hold local authority meetings;
- (b) the times at or by which, periods within which, or frequency with which, local authority meetings are to be held;
- (c) the places at which local authority meetings are to be held;
- (d) the manner in which persons may attend, speak at, vote in, or otherwise participate in, local authority meetings;
- (e) public admission and access to local authority meetings;
- (f) the places at which, and manner in which, documents relating to local authority meetings are to be open to inspection by, or otherwise available to, members of the public.

(2) The provision which may be made by virtue of subsection (1)(d) includes in particular provision for persons to attend, speak at, vote in, or otherwise participate in, local authority meetings without all of the persons, or without any of the persons, being together in the same place.

(3) The regulations may make provision only in relation to local authority meetings required to be held, or held, before 7 May 2021.

(4) The power to make regulations under this section includes power—

- (a) to disapply or modify any provision of an enactment or subordinate legislation;
- (b) to make different provision for different purposes;
- (c) to make consequential, supplementary, incidental, transitional or saving provision.

(5) In this section the “relevant national authority” means—

- (a) in relation to local authorities in England, the Secretary of State;
- (b) in relation to local authorities in Wales, the Welsh Ministers;
- (c) in relation to local authorities in Northern Ireland, the Department for Communities in Northern Ireland.

(6) In this section “local authority meeting” means a meeting of—

- (a) a local authority;
- (b) an executive of a local authority (within the meaning of Part 1A or 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 or Part 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014);
- (c) a joint committee of two or more local authorities;
- (d) a committee or sub-committee of anything within paragraphs (a) to (c).

(7) In this section “local authority”, in relation to England, means—

- (a) a county council;
- (b) a district council;
- (c) a London borough council;
- (d) the Common Council of the City of London;
- (e) the Greater London Authority;
- (f) the Council of the Isles of Scilly;
- (g) a parish council;
- (h) a joint board continued in being by virtue of section 263(1) of the Local Government Act 1972;
- (i) a port health authority constituted under section 2 of the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984;
- (j) an authority established under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1985;
- (k) a joint authority established under Part 4 of the Local Government Act 1985;
- (l) a joint committee constituted to be a local planning authority under section 29 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004;
- (m) a combined authority established under section 103 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009;
- (n) a fire and rescue authority constituted by a scheme under section 2 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 or a scheme to which section 4 of that Act applies, or created by an order under section 4A of that Act;
- (o) a National Park authority established under section 63 of the Environment Act 1995;
- (p) the Broads Authority established by section 1 of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act 1988;
- (q) a conservation board established under section 86 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000;
- (r) an appeal panel constituted under the School Admissions (Appeals Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012 (S.I. 2012/9).

(8) In this section “local authority”, in relation to Wales, means—

- (a) a county council;
- (b) a county borough council;
- (c) a community council;
- (d) a joint board continued in being by virtue of section 263(1) of the Local Government Act 1972;
- (e) a port health authority constituted under section 2 of the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984;
- (f) a joint committee constituted to be a local planning authority under section 29 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004;
- (g) a strategic planning panel established under section 60D of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004;
- (h) a fire and rescue authority constituted by a scheme under section 2 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 or a scheme to which section 4 of that Act applies;
- (i) a National Park authority established under section 63 of the Environment Act 1995;
- (j) an appeal panel constituted under the Education (Admission Appeals Arrangements) (Wales) Regulations 2005 (S.I. 2005/1398).

(9) In this section “local authority”, in relation to Northern Ireland, means a district council.

(10) In this section—

“enactment” includes—

- (a) an enactment comprised in an Act or Measure of the National Assembly for Wales;

(b) an enactment comprised in Northern Ireland legislation;

“subordinate legislation” means—

- (a) subordinate legislation within the meaning of the Interpretation Act 1978;
- (b) an instrument made under an Act or Measure of the National Assembly for Wales;
- (c) an instrument made under Northern Ireland legislation.

(11) Regulations under this section made by the Secretary of State or the Welsh Ministers are to be made by statutory instrument.

(12) A statutory instrument containing regulations under this section made by the Secretary of State is subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

(13) A statutory instrument containing regulations under this section made by the Welsh Ministers is subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of the National Assembly for Wales.

(14) The power of the Department for Communities in Northern Ireland to make regulations under this section is exercisable by statutory rule for the purposes of the Statutory Rules (Northern Ireland) Order 1979 (and not by statutory instrument).

(15) Regulations under this section made by the Department for Communities in Northern Ireland are subject to negative resolution within the meaning of section 41(6) of the Interpretation Act (Northern Ireland) 1954.” —(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This new clause confers power on the Secretary of State, Welsh Ministers and Department for Communities in Northern Ireland to make regulations in relation to meetings of specified local authorities. It may be used, for example, to remove requirements to hold annual meetings, or to allow virtual meetings. It may only be used in relation to meetings taking place before 7 May 2021.

Brought up, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 21

EXTENSION OF BID ARRANGEMENTS: ENGLAND

(1) This section applies to BID arrangements if—

- (a) they are in force on the day on which this Act is passed, and
- (b) the period specified in the arrangements as the period for which they are in force is due to end on a date (“the 2020 expiry date”) that is on or before 31 December 2020.

(2) But this section does not apply to BID arrangements (“current BID arrangements”) if—

(a) a ballot under section 49(1) of the Local Government Act 2003 (“the 2003 Act”) has taken place before the day on which this Act is passed, and—

- (i) the business improvement district for the BID arrangements proposed in the ballot is the same or substantially the same as the business improvement district for which the current BID arrangements are in force, and
- (ii) the date for the coming into force of the proposed BID arrangements is after the day on which this Act is passed, or

(b) a ballot under section 54(2) of the 2003 Act for the renewal of the current BID arrangements has taken place before the day on which this Act is passed.

(3) BID arrangements to which this section applies are to be read as if—

(a) the period specified in the arrangements as the period for which they are in force ended on 31 March 2021,

(b) the arrangements specified a chargeable period beginning on the day after the 2020 expiry date and ending on 31 March 2021 (“the 2021 chargeable period”),

(c) the arrangements provided for the amount of BID levy chargeable for the 2021 chargeable period—

- (i) to be calculated in the same manner as for the last 2020 chargeable period, and
- (ii) to be apportioned on a just and reasonable basis, where the 2021 chargeable period is not the same length as the last 2020 chargeable period, and

(d) the description of non-domestic ratepayers specified in the arrangements as liable for BID levy for the 2021 chargeable period were the same as that specified for the last 2020 chargeable period.

(4) “The last 2020 chargeable period” is the last chargeable period specified in the BID arrangements to end on or before the 2020 expiry date.

(5) The requirement in section 54(1) of the 2003 Act that the period for which BID arrangements have effect may not exceed 5 years does not apply to BID arrangements to which this section applies.

(6) Nothing in this section prevents the termination or alteration of BID arrangements in accordance with regulations under section 54(4) of the 2003 Act.

(7) Expressions used in this section and in Part 4 of the 2003 Act have the same meaning in this section as they have in that Part.

(8) This section binds the Crown.

(9) This section does not apply in relation to Wales.” —(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This amendment inserts a new clause (to be added to Part 1) which provides that BID arrangements in respect of business improvement districts under the Local Government Act 2003 which are to expire in 2020 continue until 31 March 2021. It also provides for the BID levy to continue to be payable under those arrangements.

Brought up, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 22

EXTENSION OF BID ARRANGEMENTS: NORTHERN IRELAND

(1) This section applies to BID arrangements if—

- (a) they are in force on the day on which this Act is passed, and
- (b) the period specified in the arrangements as the period for which they are in force is due to end on a date (“the 2020 expiry date”) that is on or before 31 December 2020.

(2) BID arrangements to which this section applies are to be read as if—

- (a) the period specified in the arrangements as the period for which they are in force ended on 31 March 2021,
- (b) there is a chargeable period in relation to the arrangements beginning on the day after the 2020 expiry date and ending on 31 March 2021 (“the 2021 chargeable period”),

(c) the arrangements provided for the amount of BID levy chargeable for the 2021 chargeable period—

- (i) to be calculated in the same manner as for the last 2020 chargeable period, and
- (ii) to be apportioned on a just and reasonable basis, where the 2021 chargeable period is not the same length as the last 2020 chargeable period, and

(d) the description of eligible ratepayers liable for BID levy in relation to the arrangements for the 2021 chargeable period were the same as that for the last 2020 chargeable period.

(3) “The last 2020 chargeable period” is the last chargeable period in relation to the BID arrangements to end on or before the 2020 expiry date.

(4) The requirement in section 16(1) of the Business Improvement Districts Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 (“the 2013 Act”) that the period for which BID arrangements have effect may not exceed 5 years does not apply to BID arrangements to which this section applies.

(5) Nothing in this section prevents the termination or alteration of BID arrangements in accordance with regulations under section 16(4) of the 2013 Act.

(6) Expressions used in this section and in the 2013 Act have the same meaning in this section as they have in that Act.

(7) This section binds the Crown.” —(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This amendment inserts a new clause (to be added to Part 1) which provides that BID arrangements in respect of business improvement districts in Northern Ireland under the Business Improvement Districts Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 which are to expire in 2020 continue until 31 March 2021. It also provides for the BID levy to continue to be payable under those arrangements.

Brought up, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 23

EXTENSION OF TIME LIMITS FOR RETENTION OF FINGERPRINTS AND DNA PROFILES

(1) This section applies to fingerprints and DNA profiles that are retained—

- (a) in accordance with a national security determination;
- (b) under any of the following provisions—
 - (i) section 63F of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (retention of section 63D material);
 - (ii) paragraph 20B or 20C of Schedule 8 to the Terrorism Act 2000 (retention of paragraph 20A material);
 - (iii) section 18A of the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008 (retention of section 18 material);
 - (iv) paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 6 to the Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures Act 2011 (retention of paragraph 6 material); other than fingerprints and DNA profiles that may be retained indefinitely under the provision in question;

(c) before being destroyed under—

- (i) section 18(3) of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 (destruction of relevant physical data);
- (ii) Article 64(1BA) or (3), 64ZB(2), 64ZC(3), 64ZD(3), 64ZE(3), 64ZF(3), 64ZG(3), 64ZH(3), 64ZI(5) or 64ZJ of the Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 (S.I. 1989/1341 (N.I. 12)) (destruction of fingerprints and samples).

(2) The Secretary of State may make regulations extending, for up to six months, the period for which the fingerprints and DNA profiles may be retained.

(3) The Secretary of State may exercise the power under subsection (2) only if the Secretary of State considers that—

(a) coronavirus is having, or is likely to have, an adverse effect on the capacity of persons responsible for making national security determinations to consider whether to make, or renew, national security determinations, and

(b) it is in the interests of national security to retain the fingerprints or DNA profiles.

(4) The power under subsection (2) may be exercised on more than one occasion, but not so as to extend the period for which any fingerprints or DNA profile may be retained by more than 12 months in total.

(5) The power under subsection (2) may be exercised only in relation to fingerprints and DNA profiles which (ignoring the possibility of an extension otherwise than by regulations under that subsection) would need to be destroyed within the period of 12 months beginning with the day on which this Act is passed.

(6) Before making regulations under this section, the Secretary of State must consult the Commissioner for the Retention and Use of Biometric Material.

(7) If the Secretary of State has not exercised the power under subsection (2) before the end of the period of 3 months beginning with the day on which this Act is passed, this section ceases to have effect.

(8) Regulations under subsection (2) may—

- (a) make different provision for different purposes;
- (b) make consequential, supplementary or transitional provision.

(9) A statutory instrument containing regulations under subsection (2) is subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

(10) In this section—

“DNA profile” means any information derived from any material that has come from a human body and consists of or includes human cells;

“fingerprints”, in relation to any person, means a record (in any form and produced by any method) of the skin pattern and other physical characteristics of—

- (a) any of that person’s fingers, or
- (b) either of the person’s palms;

“national security determination” means a determination made or renewed under—

- (a) section 63M of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (section 63D material retained for purposes of national security);
- (b) paragraph 20E of Schedule 8 to the Terrorism Act 2000 (paragraph 20A material retained for purposes of national security);
- (c) section 18B of the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008 (section 18 material retained for purposes of national security);
- (d) paragraph 11 of Schedule 6 to the Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures Act 2011 (paragraph 6 material retained for purposes of national security);
- (e) section 18G of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 (certain material retained for purposes of national security);
- (f) paragraph 7 of Schedule 1 to the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 (material subject to the Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 retained for purposes of national security);
- (g) Article 64ZK of the Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 (Article 64 material retained for purposes of national security).”—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This new clause allows the Secretary of State to make regulations to secure the retention of fingerprints and DNA samples that would otherwise be destroyed due to the expiry of a time limit, where it is in the interests of national security to retain them.

Brought up, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 24

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES: PROTECTION FROM EVICTION

“Schedule (Residential tenancies: protection from eviction) makes provision about notice periods in relation to possession proceedings in respect of certain residential tenancies etc.”—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This new clause introduces NS3 which contains provision extending, or creating, notice periods in relation to possession proceedings in respect of certain residential tenancies etc.

Brought up, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 25

HMRC FUNCTIONS

Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs are to have such functions as the Treasury may direct in relation to coronavirus or coronavirus disease.”—(*Penny Mordaunt*)

This amendment gives HMRC such functions as the Treasury may direct in relation to coronavirus or coronavirus disease.

Brought up, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 26

UP-RATING OF WORKING TAX CREDIT ETC

(1) In the Working Tax Credit (Entitlement and Maximum Rate) Regulations 2002 (S.I. 2002/2005), in the table in Schedule 2 (maximum rates of the elements of a working tax credit), item 1 (basic element) has effect in relation to the tax year 2020-21 as if the amount specified in the second column (maximum annual rate) were £3,040.

(2) The modification made by subsection (1) does not apply for the purposes of any annual review carried out in accordance with section 41 of the Tax Credits Act 2002.

(3) Where a sum mentioned in section 150(1) of the Social Security Administration Act 1992 (annual review in relation to up-rating of benefits) is modified in relation to the tax year 2020-21 for purposes connected with coronavirus or coronavirus disease, the modification does not apply for the purposes of any annual review carried out in accordance with that subsection.”—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This amendment increases the basic element of working tax credit for the tax year 2020-21 to £3,040 but provides that an annual review relating to this benefit is to be based on the amount it would have been without this increase. It also provides that, if the amounts of certain other benefits are modified for purposes connected with coronavirus or coronavirus disease, annual reviews relating to those benefits are to be based on the amount that the benefits would have been if they had not been modified.

Brought up, and added to the Bill.

New clause 30

BUSINESS TENANCIES IN ENGLAND AND WALES: PROTECTION FROM FORFEITURE ETC

(1) A right of re-entry or forfeiture, under a relevant business tenancy, for non-payment of rent may not be enforced, by action or otherwise, during the relevant period.

(2) During the relevant period, no conduct by or on behalf of a landlord, other than giving an express waiver in writing, is to be regarded as waiving a right of re-entry or forfeiture, under a relevant business tenancy, for non-payment of rent.

(3) Subsections (4) to (6) apply in relation to any proceedings in the High Court commenced before the relevant period to enforce a right of re-entry or forfeiture, under a relevant business tenancy, for non-payment of rent.

(4) Any order made by the High Court during the relevant period to the effect that possession of the property comprised in the relevant business tenancy is to be given to the landlord must ensure that the tenant does not have to give possession of the property to the landlord before the end of the relevant period.

(5) Subsection (6) applies where—

(a) the High Court has made an order which would otherwise have the effect of requiring possession of the property comprised in the relevant business tenancy to be given to the landlord during the relevant period unless the tenant complies with some requirement before a time falling within that period, and

(b) before possession is given to the landlord in accordance with the order, the tenant applies to vary the order.

(6) In dealing with the application, the High Court must ensure that the tenant does not have to give possession of the property to the landlord before the end of the relevant period.

(7) Subsections (8) to (10) apply in relation to any proceedings in the county court commenced before the relevant period to enforce a right of re-entry or forfeiture, under a relevant business tenancy, for non-payment of rent.

(8) The county court may not make an order, during the relevant period, under section 138(3) of the County Courts Act 1984 which specifies a period that expires before the end of the day which is the last day of the relevant period when the order is made.

(9) Subsection (10) applies where—

(a) the period specified in an order made, before or during the relevant period, under section 138(3) of the County Courts Act 1984, or

(b) the period so specified as extended, or in accordance with subsection (10) treated as extended, under section 138(4) of that Act, would otherwise expire during the relevant period.

(10) The period mentioned in paragraph (a) or (as the case may be) (b) of subsection (9) is to be treated as extended, under section 138(4) of that Act, so that it expires at the end of the relevant period.

(11) For the purposes of determining whether the ground mentioned in section 30(1)(b) of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 (persistent delay in paying rent which has become due) is established in relation to a relevant business tenancy, any failure to pay rent under that tenancy during the relevant period (whether rent due before or in that period) is to be disregarded.

(12) In this section— “relevant business tenancy” means —

(a) a tenancy to which Part 2 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 applies, or

(b) a tenancy to which that Part of that Act would apply if any relevant occupier were the tenant;

“relevant national authority” means—

(a) in relation to England, the Secretary of State, and

(b) in relation to Wales, the Welsh Ministers;

“relevant occupier”, in relation to a tenancy, means a person, other than the tenant, who lawfully occupies premises which are, or form part of, the property comprised in the tenancy;

“relevant period” means the period—

(a) beginning with the day after the day on which this Act is passed, and

(b) ending with 30 June 2020 or such later date as may be specified by the relevant national authority in regulations made by statutory instrument (and that power may be exercised on more than one occasion so as to further extend the period);

“rent” includes any sum a tenant is liable to pay under a relevant business tenancy.

(13) A statutory instrument containing regulations of the Secretary of State under subsection (12) is subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

14) A statutory instrument containing regulations of the Welsh Ministers under subsection (12) is subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of the National Assembly for Wales.” —(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This amendment protects business tenants in England and Wales from re-entry or forfeiture of their leases for non-payment of rent for a period of time and provides tenants and landlords with associated protections.

Brought up, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 31

BUSINESS TENANCIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND: PROTECTION FROM FORFEITURE ETC

(1) A right of re-entry or forfeiture, under a relevant business tenancy, for non-payment of rent may not be enforced, by action or otherwise, during the relevant period.

(2) During the relevant period, no conduct by or on behalf of a landlord, other than giving an express waiver in writing, is to be regarded as waiving a right of re-entry or forfeiture, under a relevant business tenancy, for non-payment of rent.

(3) Subsections (4) and (5) apply in relation to any proceedings commenced in any court before the relevant period to enforce a right of re-entry or forfeiture, under a relevant business tenancy, for non-payment of rent.

(4) During the relevant period, the court may not make an order in pursuance of the right of re-entry or forfeiture to the effect that possession of the property comprised in the tenancy is to be given to the landlord before the end of the last day of the relevant period when the order is made.

(5) Where a court has, before or during the relevant period, made an order in pursuance of the right of re-entry or forfeiture to the effect that possession of the property comprised in the tenancy is to be given to the landlord before the end of the last day of the relevant period the order is to be treated as if it specified that the land is to be delivered up immediately after the end of the relevant period.

(6) For the purposes of determining whether the ground mentioned in Article 12(1)(b) of the Business Tenancies (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 (S.I. 1996/725 (N.I. 5)) (persistent delay in paying rent which has become due) is established in relation to a relevant business tenancy, any failure to pay rent under that tenancy during the relevant period (whether rent due before or in that period) is to be disregarded.

(7) In this section—

“court” means the county court or the High Court;

“relevant business tenancy” means—

(a) a tenancy to which the Business Tenancies (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 (S.I. 1996/725 (N.I. 5)) applies, or

(b) a tenancy to which that Order would apply if any relevant occupier were the tenant;

“relevant occupier”, in relation to a tenancy, means a person, other than the tenant, who lawfully occupies premises which are, or form part of, the property comprised in the tenancy;

“relevant period” means the period—

(a) beginning with the day after the day on which this Act is passed, and

(b) ending with 30 June 2020 or such later date as may be specified in regulations made by the Department of Finance (and that power may be exercised on more than one occasion so as to further extend the period);

“rent” includes any sum a tenant is liable to pay under a relevant business tenancy.

(8) The power to make regulations under subsection (7) is exercisable by statutory rule for the purposes of the Statutory Rules (Northern Ireland) Order 1979 (S.I. 1979/1573 (N.I. 12)) (and not by statutory instrument).

(9) Regulations under subsection (7) are subject to negative resolution within the meaning of section 41(6) of the Interpretation Act (Northern Ireland) 1954.” —(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This amendment protects business tenants in Northern Ireland from re-entry or forfeiture of their leases for non-payment of rent for a period of time and provides tenants and landlords with associated protection.

Brought up, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 1

POSTPONEMENT OF GENERAL SYNOD ELECTIONS

(1) Her Majesty may by Order in Council, at the joint request of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, postpone to the date specified in the Order the date on which the Convocations of Canterbury and York stand dissolved for the purposes of the Church of England Convocations Act 1966.

(2) Section 1 of that Act is, accordingly, to be read subject to provision made by an Order under this section.

(3) If either of the Archbishops is unable to exercise the power to join in making a request under subsection (1), or if the see of either of the Archbishops is vacant, the power may be exercised by the senior bishop of the province, with seniority for that purpose being determined in accordance with section 10(4) of the Bishops (Retirement) Measure 1986.

(4) An Order under this section may make consequential, supplementary, incidental, transitional or saving provision.”
—(*Andrew Selous.*)

The new clause would enable elections to the General Synod of the Church of England that are due to take place this summer to be postponed.

Brought up, and added to the Bill.

Schedules 1 to 6 agreed to.

Schedule 7

MENTAL HEALTH: ENGLAND AND WALES

Amendments made: 15, page 92, line 39, after paragraph 10 insert—

“Constitution and proceedings of the Mental Health Review Tribunal for Wales

10A (1) Sub-paragraph (2) applies if the President of the Mental Health Review Tribunal for Wales (“the Tribunal”), or another member of the Tribunal appointed by the President for the purpose referred to in paragraph 4 of Schedule 2 to the 1983 Act, considers that it is impractical or would involve undesirable delay for the Tribunal to be constituted, for the purposes of any proceedings or class or group of proceedings under the 1983 Act, by at least three members as provided for in that paragraph.

(2) The President, or that other member, may instead appoint to constitute the Tribunal, for the purposes of those proceedings or that class or group of proceedings—

- (a) one of the legal members of the Tribunal, or
- (b) one of the legal members of the Tribunal and one other member who is not a legal member.

(3) Where the Tribunal is constituted by one or two members under sub-paragraph (2)(a) or (b), section 65(3) has effect as if the reference to any three or more of its members were a reference to that one member or those two members (as the case may be).

(4) Paragraph 6 of Schedule 2 to the 1983 Act does not apply where the Tribunal is constituted by one or two members under sub-paragraph (2)(a) or (b).

If the Tribunal is constituted by two members, the legal member is to be the chairman.

(5) Where the Tribunal is constituted by a single member under sub-paragraph (2)(a), in rule 11(2) of the Mental Health Review Tribunal for Wales Rules 2008 (S.I. 2008/2705) (“the 2008 Rules”), the reference to the chairman is to be read as a reference to that member.

(6) Where the Tribunal is constituted under sub-paragraph (2) without a medical member, rule 20(1) and (2) of the 2008 Rules does not apply.

10B (1) The Mental Health Review Tribunal for Wales Rules 2008 (“the 2008 Rules”) have effect subject to this paragraph.

(2) The Tribunal may determine an application or reference without a hearing if it considers that—

- (a) holding a hearing is impractical or would involve undesirable delay,
- (b) having regard to the nature of the issues raised in the case, sufficient evidence is available to enable it to come to a decision without a hearing, and
- (c) to dispense with a hearing would not be detrimental to the health of the patient.

(3) The Tribunal must, as soon as reasonably practicable, give notice to each party of—

- (a) its decision to dispense with a hearing under sub-paragraph (2), and
- (b) the earliest time at which it might determine the application or reference in accordance with that sub-paragraph (which must be such as to afford the parties reasonable notice).

(4) Where an application or reference is to be determined in accordance with sub-paragraph (2)—

(a) in rules 4, 15 and 20 of the 2008 Rules, references to a hearing (or its commencement) are to be read as references to the time notified under sub-paragraph (3)(b);

(b) in rule 24(1) and (2) of the 2008 Rules, references to the start of the hearing are to be read as references to the determination of the application or reference;

(c) in rule 28 of the 2008 Rules—
(i) paragraph (1) does not apply, and
(ii) in paragraph (3), references to the hearing are to be read as references to the determination of the application or reference.

(5) The Tribunal may at any time reverse a decision to dispense with a hearing under sub-paragraph (2), and if it does so it must give notice to each party and make such consequential directions as it considers appropriate.

(6) Expressions used in this paragraph and in the 2008 Rules have the same meaning as in those Rules.

10C (1) If the President of the Tribunal is temporarily unable to discharge the functions of the office, the President of the Welsh Tribunals may from time to time nominate another legal member of the Tribunal to act as the temporary deputy of the President of the Tribunal for the purpose of discharging those functions generally or certain of them specifically.

(2) While such a nomination remains in force, any reference to the President of the Tribunal in the 1983 Act or any other enactment or instrument is to be read accordingly.”

This amendment enables the jurisdiction of the Mental Health Review Tribunal for Wales to be exercised by a single member or a two-member panel, rather than a panel of at least three members; enables the Tribunal to deal with proceedings on paper rather than at a hearing in suitable cases; and enables the nomination of a temporary deputy if the President of the Tribunal is temporarily unable to act in the office.

Amendment 16, page 93, line 11, after paragraph 13 insert—

“14 Paragraph 10A(3) to (6) continues to apply after the end of a period for which it has effect in relation to proceedings that are, when the period ends, before a constitution of the Mental Health Review Tribunal for Wales appointed under sub-paragraph (2) of that paragraph.

15 Paragraph 10B continues to apply after the end of a period for which it has effect in relation to any application or reference with respect to which, when the period ends, a decision to dispense with a hearing has been notified by the Mental Health Review Tribunal for Wales under sub-paragraph (3) of that paragraph and remains current.

16 Paragraph 10C continues to apply after the end of a period for which it has effect in relation to any nomination of a temporary deputy that is in force when the period ends.”—(Penny Mordaunt.)

This amendment makes transitional provision in connection with Amendment 15.

Schedule 7, as amended, agreed to.

Schedules 8 to 17 agreed to.

Schedule 18

HEALTH PROTECTION REGULATIONS: SCOTLAND

Amendment made: 19, page 209, line 15, at end insert—

“(2A) Regulations under paragraph 1(1) may not include provision imposing a special restriction or requirement mentioned in paragraph 4(2)(a), (b), (c) or (d).” —(Penny Mordaunt.)

This change brings the provisions in this Schedule relating to Scotland into line with the equivalent provisions relating to Northern Ireland.

Schedule 18, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule 19 agreed to.

Schedule 20

POWERS RELATING TO POTENTIALLY INFECTIOUS PERSONS

Amendments made: 9, page 216, line 30, at end insert—

“(2A) A designation under sub-paragraph (2) may in particular be of a class or description of person.”

This amendment makes it clear that designations of public health officials for the purposes of the Schedule can be generic.

Amendment 10, page 220, line 23, leave out

“of the rank of senior immigration officer or above”

and insert

“not below the rank of chief immigration officer”.

This amendment corrects a reference to the rank of immigration officer who may approve an extension to the period for which a person is kept at a place for screening and assessment.

Amendment 11, page 229, line 31, leave out

“of the rank of senior immigration officer or above”

and insert

“not below the rank of chief immigration officer”.

This amendment corrects a reference to the rank of immigration officer who may approve an extension to the period for which a person is kept at a place for screening and assessment.

Amendment 12, page 238, line 43, leave out

“of the rank of senior immigration officer or above”

and insert

“not below the rank of chief immigration officer”.

This amendment corrects a reference to the rank of immigration officer who may approve an extension to the period for which a person is kept at a place for screening and assessment.

Amendment 13, page 248, line 12, leave out

“of the rank of senior immigration officer or above”

and insert

“not below the rank of chief immigration officer”.—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This amendment corrects a reference to the rank of immigration officer who may approve an extension to the period for which a person is kept at a place for screening and assessment.

Schedule 20, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule 21

POWERS TO ISSUE DIRECTIONS RELATING TO EVENTS, GATHERINGS AND PREMISES

Amendments made: 55, page 257, line 25, at end insert—

“Enforcement and prosecutions

10A (1) A person, or description of person, designated in writing for the purpose of this sub-paragraph by the Secretary of State may take such action as is necessary to enforce compliance with a direction issued under this Part of this Schedule.

(2) Proceedings for an offence under this Part of this Schedule may be brought by a person, or description of person, designated in writing for the purpose of this sub-paragraph by the Secretary of State.

(3) The powers conferred by or under this paragraph do not affect any other power to enforce compliance with a direction issued under this Part of this Schedule or to bring proceedings for an offence under this Part of this Schedule.”

This amendment confers a power on the Secretary of State to designate persons to enforce directions issued by the Secretary of State under Schedule 21 and to bring proceedings for offences in relation to them.

Amendment 56, page 265, line 41, at end insert—

“Enforcement and prosecutions

32A (1) A person, or description of person, designated in writing for the purpose of this sub-paragraph by the Welsh Ministers may take such action as is necessary to enforce compliance with a direction issued under this Part of this Schedule.

(2) Proceedings for an offence under this Part of this Schedule may be brought by a person, or description of person, designated in writing for the purpose of this sub-paragraph by the Welsh Ministers.

(3) The powers conferred by or under this paragraph do not affect any other power to enforce compliance with a direction issued under this Part of this Schedule or to bring proceedings for an offence under this Part of this Schedule.”—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This amendment confers a power on the Welsh Ministers to designate persons to enforce directions issued by the Welsh Ministers under Schedule 21 and to bring proceedings for offences in relation to them.

Schedule 21, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule 22 agreed to.

Schedule 23

LIVE LINKS IN OTHER CRIMINAL HEARINGS

Amendment made: 82, in page 294, line 11, at end insert—

“PART 1A

EXPANSION OF POWERS UNDER THE EXTRADITION ACT 2003

7A The Extradition Act 2003 has effect as if amended in accordance with this Part of this Schedule.

7B (1) Section 206A has effect as if amended as follows.

(2) In the heading, “certain” were omitted.

(3) In subsection (1)—

(a) in paragraph (a), the words from “other” to “56,” were omitted, and

(b) in paragraph (b), the words from “, other” to the end were omitted.

(4) In subsection (2)—

(a) for the words from “the person” to “during the hearing,” there were substituted “it is in the interest of justice to do so,” and

(b) “at any time before the hearing” were omitted.

(5) For subsection (3) there were substituted—

“(3) A live link direction is a direction requiring a person to take part in the hearing through a live link.

(3A) The power to give a live link direction under this section includes the power to give a direction to all or any of the following persons to take part in the hearing through a live link—

the appropriate judge,

(b) the person affected by the extradition claim,

(c) any other party,

(d) the prosecutor or any other legal representative acting in the hearing,

(e) any witnesses in the hearing, and

(f) any interpreter or person appointed by the court to assist in the hearing.”

(6) Subsection (5) were omitted.

(7) For subsection (6) there were substituted—

“(6) A person who takes part in the hearing through a live link is to be treated as present in court for the purposes of the hearing.”

7C (1) Section 206C has effect as if amended as follows.

(2) Subsection (5) were omitted.

(3) In subsection (6)—

- (a) in the opening words, for “, while absent from the place where the hearing is being held,” there were substituted “(P)”;
- (b) in paragraph (a), for the words from “the appropriate” to the end there were substituted “all other persons taking part in the hearing who are not in the same location as P, and”, and
- (c) in paragraph (b), for the words from “the judge” to the end there were substituted “all the other persons taking part in the hearing who are not in the same location as P, ”—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This amendment makes temporary modifications to the Extradition Act 2003 so that the power to direct that persons affected by the extradition claim may take part in certain hearings under that Act by live link is extended so that the power can be exercised in relation to any person who is taking part in any hearing under Part 1 or 2 of that Act.

Schedule 23, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule 24 agreed to.

Schedule 25

LIVE LINKS IN CERTAIN MAGISTRATES’ COURT PROCEEDINGS

Amendment made: 5, page 301, line 36, after “17(1)” insert “or 61(1)”.—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This amendment corrects an inadvertent omission by inserting, after the equivalent cross reference for persons in England, a cross reference to the right given to potentially infectious persons in Wales to appeal to a magistrates’ court against requirements or restrictions imposed under Schedule 20.

Schedule 25, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule 26 agreed to.

Schedule 27

TRANSPORTATION, STORAGE AND DISPOSAL OF DEAD BODIES ETC

Amendments made: 51, page 316, line 41, leave out paragraph 5.

This amendment removes paragraph 5 of Schedule 27, which is replaced by amendment 52.

Amendment 52, page 320, line 15, at end insert—

“PART 3A

DECEASED’S WISHES ETC

“13A(1) In carrying out functions under this Schedule local authorities and the appropriate national authorities must have regard to the desirability of disposing of a dead person’s body or other remains—

- (a) in accordance with the person’s wishes, if known, or
- (b) otherwise in a way that appears consistent with the person’s religion or beliefs, if known.

(2) In carrying out functions under the legislation listed in sub-paragraph (3), designated local authorities must have regard to the desirability of disposing of a dead person’s body or other remains—

- (a) in accordance with the person’s wishes, if known, or
- (b) otherwise in a way that appears consistent with the person’s religion or beliefs, if known.

(3) The legislation is—

- (a) section 46(1) or (2) of the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 (local authority to arrange burial or cremation where no other suitable arrangements being made);
- (b) section 25(1) of the Welfare Services Act (Northern Ireland) 1971 (corresponding provision for Northern Ireland).

(4) The following do not apply to a designated local authority—

- (a) section 46(3) of the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 (local authority not to cause body to be cremated under that section contrary to the wishes of the deceased);
- (b) in section 25(5) of the Welfare Services Act (Northern Ireland) 1971, the words from “and a body” to the end (corresponding provision for Northern Ireland);
- (c) regulation 6 and 13(a) of the Cremation (Belfast) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1961 (S.R. & O. (N.I.) 1961 No. 61) (which provides that it is unlawful to cremate the remains of a person who is known to have left a written direction to the contrary etc).

(5) The appropriate national authority must give guidance as to the discharge by local authorities of duties under this paragraph.

(6) Local authorities must have regard to any guidance given under subparagraph (5).

(7) In this paragraph “designated local authority” means a local authority for the time being designated under paragraph 4.”—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

This amendment ensures that in carrying out functions under Schedule 27 and certain other legislation, local authorities and other public authorities have regard to the desirability of disposing of bodies in accordance with people’s wishes, religions and beliefs (if known).

Schedule 27, as amended, agreed to.

New Schedule 2

EMERGENCY ARRANGEMENTS CONCERNING MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS: WALES

Temporary exception to rule requiring listing in order to perform primary medical services

1 (1) The National Health Service (Performers Lists) (Wales) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 2004/1020 (W. 117)) have effect with the following modifications.

(2) The regulations have effect as if, after regulation 22, there were inserted—

“22A Temporary exception under the Coronavirus Act 2020

(1) A person who is registered in the GP Register by virtue of section 18A of the Medical Act 1983 (temporary registration with regard to emergencies) may perform primary medical services, despite not being included in a medical performers list, provided that—

- (a) the person has made an application to a Local Health Board for inclusion in its medical performers list under regulation 4 or 4A, and
- (b) the person’s application has not been—
 - (i) refused under regulation 6, 22B or 24, or
 - (ii) deferred under regulation 7 or 22B.

(2) Regulation 9 applies to a person who performs primary medical services by virtue of this regulation as it applies to a performer included in a medical performers list.

22B Grounds for refusal and deferral under the Coronavirus Act 2020

(1) This regulation applies where a person who is registered in the GP Register by virtue of section 18A of the Medical Act 1983 has made an application to a Local Health Board for inclusion in its medical performers list.

(2) But this regulation does not affect a Local Health Board’s functions under regulations 6, 7 and 24 in relation to the refusal or deferral of an application by such a person.

(3) A Local Health Board may refuse the person’s application for inclusion in its medical performers list if—

- (a) the Local Health Board has received an allegation (in any manner) about either—

- (i) professional misconduct of the person, or
 - (ii) the person's involvement in a matter which the person would be under a duty to disclose under regulation 9(1) or (2), and
- (b) the nature of the allegation is such that, were the person already included in its list, the Local Health Board would be satisfied that it would be necessary for the protection of members of the public, or otherwise in the public interest, to suspend the person from its list under regulation 13 while it decided whether to remove them from its list.
- (4) A Local Health Board may defer determination of the person's application for inclusion in its medical performers list if—
- (a) the person has declared any matter specified in regulation 9(1) or (2), and
 - (b) the Local Health Board is satisfied that it is necessary for the protection of members of the public, or otherwise in the public interest, to complete its consideration of the person's application before the person is permitted to perform primary medical services.

(5) Unless paragraph (6) applies, a person whose application is refused by a Local Health Board under paragraph (3) may not reapply for inclusion in any medical performers list.

(6) This paragraph applies where a person subsequently becomes registered in the GP Register as a fully registered person, within the meaning given by section 55(1) of the Medical Act 1983, otherwise than by virtue of section 18A of that Act.

(7) A Local Health Board must notify an applicant in writing of a determination made under this regulation, and the reasons for it, within 7 days of making the determination.

(8) An applicant may not appeal any determination made by a Local Health Board under this regulation.”

(3) Regulation 15 (appeals) has effect as if before paragraph (1) there were inserted—

“(A1) This regulation does not apply where a person's application for inclusion in a medical performers list is refused under regulation 22B(3).”

Modification of General Medical Services Contracts Regulations 2004

2 (1) The National Health Service (General Medical Services Contracts) (Wales) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 2004/478 (W. 48)) have effect subject to the following modifications.

(2) In paragraph 52 of Schedule 6 (contractual terms: qualifications of performers), after sub-paragraph (2) insert—

“(2A) Sub-paragraph (1)(a) does not apply in the case of a person who is performing primary medical services by virtue of regulation 22A of the National Health Service (Primary Medical Services Performers Lists) (Wales) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 2004/1020 (W. 117)).”

(3) In paragraph 56 of Schedule 6 (contractual terms: conditions for employment and engagement), after sub-paragraph (4) insert—

“(4A) This paragraph does not apply in the case of a person who is performing primary medical services by virtue of regulation 22A of the National Health Service (Primary Medical Services Performers Lists) (Wales) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 2004/1020 (W. 117)).”

(4) In paragraph 58 of Schedule 6 (contractual terms: conditions for employment and engagement), after sub-paragraph (3) insert—

“(4) This paragraph does not apply in the case of a person who is performing primary medical services by virtue of regulation 22A of the National Health Service (Primary Medical Services Performers Lists) (Wales) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 2004/1020 (W. 117)).”

Power to modify Schedule

3 (1) The Welsh Ministers may by regulations made by statutory instrument modify this Schedule.

(2) A statutory instrument containing regulations under sub-paragraph (1) is subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of the National Assembly for Wales.—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

Brought up, and added to the Bill.

This new Schedule enables temporarily registered GPs to perform primary medical services in Wales in certain circumstances despite not being on the performers list of a Local Health Board. It makes similar provision for Wales to that made by Schedule 2 to the Bill for Scotland.

New Schedule 3

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES: PROTECTION FROM EVICTION

Interpretation

1 (1) In this Schedule “the relevant period” means the period—

- (a) beginning with the day after the day on which this Act is passed, and
- (b) ending with 30 September 2020.

(2) The relevant national authority may by regulations made by statutory instrument amend sub-paragraph (1)(b) to specify a later date than the date for the time being specified there.

(3) In this Schedule “relevant national authority” means—

- (a) in relation to England, the Secretary of State, and
- (b) in relation to Wales, the Welsh Ministers.

Rent Act 1977: protected tenancies and statutory tenancies

2 (1) Section 5(1) of the Protection from Eviction Act 1977 (validity of notices to quit) is to be read, in relation to Rent Act notices to quit given by the landlord during the relevant period, as if the reference to 4 weeks were a reference to 3 months.

(2) In sub-paragraph (1) “Rent Act notice to quit” means a notice to quit relating to a tenancy that is a protected tenancy for the purposes of the Rent Act 1977 (see section 1 of that Act).

(3) Section 3 of the Rent Act 1977 (terms and conditions of statutory tenancies) is to be read as if after subsection (4) there were inserted—

“(4A) Proceedings for an order for a landlord to obtain possession of a dwelling-house as against a statutory tenant may not be commenced during the relevant period (see paragraph 1(1) and (2) of Schedule (*Residential tenancies: protection from eviction*) to the Coronavirus Act 2020) unless—

- (a) the landlord has given the statutory tenant a notice of intention to commence possession proceedings;
- (b) the notice period is a period of at least three months; and
- (c) the proceedings are commenced on or after the intended date for commencing proceedings.

(4B) But the proceedings may be commenced without compliance with subsection (4A) if the court considers it just and equitable to dispense with the requirement to comply.

(4C) For the purposes of this section a “notice of intention to commence possession proceedings”, in relation to a dwelling house and a statutory tenant, is a notice that—

- (a) is in writing;
- (b) describes the statutory tenancy;
- (c) states—
 - (i) the address of the dwelling-house,
 - (ii) the name of the statutory tenant, and
 - (iii) the name and address of the landlord;

(d) states that the landlord intends to commence proceedings to obtain possession of the dwelling-house as against the statutory tenant;

- (e) states—
 - (i) the ground or grounds on which the landlord intends to seek possession of the dwelling-house, and
 - (ii) the reason or reasons why the landlord believes the ground or grounds to be applicable;

(f) states the date on or after which the landlord intends to commence the possession proceedings;

(g) explains that the landlord is prohibited from commencing those proceedings in reliance on the notice—

- (i) unless that date falls at least three months after the date on which the notice is given, and
- (ii) until that date.

(4D) A notice of intention to commence possession proceedings may be given by leaving it at, or sending it by post to, the dwelling-house to which it relates.

(4E) Where subsection (4A) applies and possession proceedings are commenced in reliance on a notice of intention to commence possession proceedings, the court must not make an order for the landlord to obtain possession of the dwelling-house as against the statutory tenant on a particular ground mentioned in Schedule 15 or 16 to this Act unless—

- (a) the notice states the ground and one or more reasons why the landlord believes that the ground is applicable, or
- (b) the court gives permission for the ground to be raised in the proceedings.

(4F) In this section, in relation to a notice of intention to commence possession proceedings—

‘intended date for commencing proceedings’ means the date stated in accordance with subsection (4C)(f);

‘notice period’ means the period that—

- (a) begins with the date on which the notice is given, and
- (b) ends with the intended date for commencing proceedings.”

Secure tenancies

3 Section 83 of the Housing Act 1985 (proceedings for possession etc. of a dwelling-house let under a secure tenancy: general notice requirements) is to be read, in relation to notices served under that section during the relevant period, as if—

(a) subsection (3) were omitted,

(b) in subsection (4) for the words from the beginning to “specified in the notice,” there were substituted “If the proceedings are for an order for the possession of a dwelling-house,”,

(c) after subsection (4A) there were inserted—

“(4B) The date specified in accordance with subsection (4)—

- (a) must not be earlier than three months after the date of service of the notice, and
- (b) in a case where the tenancy is a periodic tenancy, must also not be earlier than the date on which the tenancy could, apart from this Part, be brought to an end by notice to quit given by the landlord on the same date as the notice under this section.”,

(d) in subsection (5) for “subsection (3), (4) or (4A)” there were substituted “subsection (4A)”, and

(e) in subsection (6) for “subsections (3) to (5)” there were substituted “subsections (4B)(b) and (5)”.

4 Section 83ZA of the Housing Act 1985 (notice requirements in relation to proceedings for possession on absolute ground for anti-social behaviour) is to be read, in relation to notices served under that section during the relevant period, as if—

(a) for subsection (10) there were substituted—

“(10) The date specified in accordance with subsection (9)(a)—

- (a) must not be earlier than three months after the date of the service of the notice, and
- (b) in a case where the tenancy is a periodic tenancy, must also not be earlier than the date on which the tenancy could, apart from this Part, be brought to an end by notice to quit given by the landlord on the same day as the notice under this section.”, and

(b) in subsection (11) for “subsection (10)(a)” there were substituted “subsection (10)(b)”.

Flexible tenancies

5 Section 107D of the Housing Act 1985 (recovery of possession on expiry of flexible tenancy) is to be read, in relation to notices given under subsection (4) of that section during the relevant period, as if for “two months’ notice” in that subsection there were substituted “three months’ notice”.

Assured tenancies

6 Section 8 of the Housing Act 1988 (notice of proceedings for possession: assured tenancies) is to be read, in relation to notices served under that section during the relevant period, as if—

- (a) in subsection (3A)— (i) in paragraph (a), for “periodic tenancy,” there were substituted “periodic tenancy— (i) three months after the date on which the notice was served, and (ii) ”, and (ii) in paragraph (b) for “one month” there were substituted “three months”,
- (b) in subsection (4) after “earlier than” there were inserted “three months after”,
- (c) in subsection (4A)(a) for “two months” there were substituted “three months”, and
- (d) in subsection (4B) for “two weeks” there were substituted “three months”.

Assured shorthold tenancies

7 Section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 (recovery of possession on expiry or termination of assured shorthold tenancy) is to be read, in relation to notices given under subsection (1) or (4) of that section during the relevant period, as if—

(a) in subsection (1)(b) for “two months” there were substituted “three months”,

(b) in subsection (4)(a) for “two months” there were substituted “three months”, and

(c) in subsection (4E)(b) for “two months” there were substituted “three months”.

Introductory tenancies

8 Section 128 of the Housing Act 1996 (notice of proceedings for possession of a dwelling-house let under an introductory tenancy) is to be read, in relation to notices served under that section during the relevant period, as if—

(a) in subsection (4) the second sentence were omitted, and

(b) after subsection (4) there were inserted—

“(4A) The date specified in accordance with subsection (4)—

- (a) must not be earlier than the end of the period of three months beginning with the date on which the notice of proceedings is served, and
- (b) must not be earlier than the date on which the tenancy could, apart from this Chapter, be brought to an end by notice to quit given by the landlord on the same date as the notice of proceedings.”

Demoted tenancies

9 Section 143E of the Housing Act 1996 (notice of proceedings for possession of a dwelling-house let under a demoted tenancy) is to be read, in relation to notices served under that section during the relevant period, as if for subsection (3) there were substituted—

“(3) The date specified under subsection (2)(c)—

- (a) must not be earlier than the end of the period of three months beginning with the date on which the notice of proceedings is served, and
- (b) must not be earlier than the date on which the tenancy could (apart from this Chapter) be brought to an end by notice to quit given by the landlord on the same date as the notice of proceedings.”

Consequential modifications in relation to prescribed forms

10 (1) Part 1 of the Schedule to the Secure Tenancies (Notices) Regulations 1987 (S.I. 1987/755) (notice of seeking possession) is to be read, in relation to notices served under section 83 of the Housing Act 1985 during the relevant period, as if—

(a) in the first paragraph 5—

- (i) the words “Cross out this paragraph if possession is being sought on Ground 2 of Schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1985 (whether or not possession is also sought on another Ground)” were omitted,
- (ii) in the first bullet point, for the words from “the date when” to the end there were substituted “three months from the date this Notice is served and also cannot be earlier than the date on which your tenancy or licence could be brought to an end by notice to quit given by the landlord on the same date as this Notice”, and
- (iii) in the second bullet point, for “this date” there were substituted “the date in this paragraph”, and

(b) the second paragraph 5 were omitted.

(2) Part 2 of the Schedule to the Secure Tenancies (Notices) Regulations 1987 (S.I. 1987/755) (notice of seeking termination of tenancy and recovery of possession) is to be read, in relation to notices served under section 83 of the Housing Act 1985 during the relevant period, as if after paragraph 4 there were inserted—

“5 The Court proceedings for possession will not be begun until after ... (give the date after which Court proceedings can be brought)

—Court proceedings cannot be begun until after this date, which cannot be earlier than three months from the date this Notice is served.

—After this date, Court proceedings may be begun at once or at any time during the following twelve months. Once the twelve months are up this Notice will lapse and a new Notice must be served before possession can be sought.”

11 The Schedule to the Assured Tenancies and Agricultural Occupancies (Forms) Regulations 1997 (S.I. 1997/194) (which applies in relation to Wales) is to be read, in relation to notices served under section 8 of the Housing Act 1988 during the relevant period, as if in Form 3 (notice seeking possession of a property let on an assured tenancy or an assured agricultural occupancy), in paragraph 5 (earliest date on which court proceedings can be brought) —

(a) in the first bullet point, for “2 months” there were substituted “3 months”,

(b) in the second bullet point—

- (i) for “2 weeks” there were substituted “3 months”, and
- (ii) for “two months” there were substituted “three months”, and

(c) in the third bullet point, for the words “before the date this notice is served” there were substituted “earlier than 3 months from the date on which this notice is served”.

12 (1) The Schedule to the Assured Tenancies and Agricultural Occupancies (Forms) (England) Regulations 2015 (S.I. 2015/620) is to be read, in relation to notices served under section 8 of the Housing Act 1988 during the relevant period, as if in Form 3 (notice seeking possession of a property let on an assured tenancy or an assured agricultural occupancy), in the notes to paragraph 5 (notes on the earliest date on which court proceedings can be brought)—

(a) in the first bullet point, for “2 months” there were substituted “3 months”,

(b) in the second bullet point—

- (i) for “2 weeks” there were substituted “3 months”, and
- (ii) for “two months” there were substituted “three months”,

(c) in the third bullet point, for “1 month” there were substituted “3 months”, and

(d) in the fourth bullet point, for the words “before the date this notice is served” there were substituted “earlier than 3 months from the date on which this notice is served”.

(2) The Schedule to the Assured Tenancies and Agricultural Occupancies (Forms) (England) Regulations 2015 (S.I. 2015/620) is to be read, in relation to notices given under section 21(1) or (4) of the Housing Act 1988 during the relevant period, as if in Form 6A (notice seeking possession of a property let on an assured shorthold tenancy)—

(a) in the section headed “What to do if this notice is served on you”, in the second paragraph—

- (i) for “two months” there were substituted “three months”, and
- (ii) the words “if you pay rent quarterly, you must be given at least three months’ notice, or,” were omitted, and

(b) in paragraph 3, for “two months” there were substituted “three months”.

Power to alter three month notice periods

13 (1) The relevant national authority may by regulations made by statutory instrument amend this Schedule—

- (a) to alter a reference to three months in this Schedule into—
 - (i) a reference to six months, or
 - (ii) a reference to any other specified period which is less than six months, or
- (b) to alter a reference which has been altered by virtue of paragraph (a) or this paragraph (but not so as to result in the reference being to a specified period of more than six months).

(2) Sub-paragraph (1) applies to references in this Schedule whether or not they are contained in text which is to be treated as if inserted or substituted into another enactment.

Regulations under this Schedule

14 (1) Any power to make regulations under this Schedule—

- (a) may be exercised more than once,
- (b) may be exercised so as to make different provision for different purposes or different areas, and
- (c) includes power to make supplementary, incidental, consequential, transitional, transitory or saving provision (including provision modifying enactments or amending this Schedule).

(2) A statutory instrument containing regulations of the Secretary of State under paragraph 1 or 13 is subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

(3) A statutory instrument containing regulations of the Welsh Ministers under paragraph 1 or 13 is subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of the National Assembly for Wales.—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

Brought up, and added to the Bill.

This Schedule contains provision extending, or creating, notice periods in relation to possession proceedings in respect of certain residential tenancies etc

The Deputy Speaker resumed the Chair.

Bill, as amended, reported.

Bill, as amended in the Committee, considered.

Queen’s and Prince of Wales’s consent signified.

Bill read the Third time and passed.

Helen Hayes (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I know that many Members across the House welcome the Prime Minister’s statement this evening and the clarity that it provides to our constituents in the perilous situation that we face, but I wonder whether you, Madam Deputy Speaker, have received any indication from the Government that they intend to send a Minister to the House to deliver the statement here, to enable Members to question and scrutinise it.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): The hon. Lady raises a perfectly reasonable point of order. The House will understand why, while we were undertaking the proceedings that we have just concluded, the Prime Minister spoke to the nation in a forum other than this Chamber, but Mr Speaker has made it very clear to the Prime Minister that when announcements are made outside this House, they must be made, as soon as is practicable, within this House to this Chamber, to the duly elected representatives of the people here gathered.

A& E Departments: Staffing

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(*James Morris.*)

10.16 pm

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): I should be grateful if Members left quietly, if only because this debate is meant to be about the staffing of accident and emergency departments throughout the whole United Kingdom.

I guess that if general practice is the beating heart of the national health service, A&E departments are the keep-beating heart of the national health service. Everybody in the land has a particular emotional attachment to their local A&E department. Even if they hope that they will never need to go there, many of them will have, from their own family experiences, either a granny, a grumpy, an uncle, an aunt or a child who has had to go to A&E and whose life will have been saved. For them, those will be such heightened moments of strong emotion that the local A&E will be vital and essential to them.

Sometimes, in valleys areas in south Wales and in other rural or semi-rural areas of the United Kingdom, A&E departments feel as if they are even more important, because people feel that they need to be close to home and the geography makes it difficult to get to the A&E in the critical hour to get the support, help and medical intervention that will save somebody's life, so the attachment is felt deeply. There has been a big battle in my local area about the Royal Glamorgan Hospital's A&E department. I am glad that the Cwm Taf Morgannwg health board has decided to put on hold any decision about the future of that A&E during the coronavirus crisis.

There have recently been significant advances in A&E, and we need to praise those who have made those advances. Major trauma centres, which the Government introduced in England—we are soon to have one in Cardiff—have made a dramatic difference in saving literally hundreds of additional lives every year. We should praise all those who have been involved in those decisions.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this Adjournment debate on this very important subject. Does he agree that the staff in A&E departments and across our NHS really should have the protection at work that they deserve? Does he believe that when we look back at the current crisis, one issue that will really come to the fore will be the lack of protective equipment and the lack of testing that has been available up until this point, and I am afraid is still unavailable, for many of our NHS staff?

Chris Bryant: Two things are vital in this key moment when the NHS is fearing a tsunami coming down the road, if that is not a mixed metaphor. The first is personal protective equipment. My view is that, frankly, every single fashion brand in this country should be devoting every minute it has to trying to deliver enough PPE for all the doctors in our A&Es. Secondly, we should be straining every sinew to ensure that testing is available for every staff member in our health service, because apart from anything else, it will mean that they can get back to the frontline faster.

Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): The hon. Member made a good point about PPE—does he welcome the fact that O'Reillys in Northern Ireland is turning its production to just that? A&E is not a static

[Tom Tugendhat]

body or just a building. It is a collection of people who are giving their heart and soul to our community. Will he welcome with me the birth today of Grace Louise Elliott, born at home because her mother could not quite make it to the A&E in time, and yet the staff managed to get the A&E to her home?

Chris Bryant: That is a brilliant moment, and of course I celebrate it. When I was a vicar, I used to be there for quite a lot of births, giving blessings for babies in the special care baby unit. That is a vital part of the business, as it were, of accident and emergency departments.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I am conscious that the A&E close to me at Ulster Hospital in Dundonald is one where there has been an increase in the number of violent attacks on staff. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that we must protect staff by not only providing them with protective gear but having CCTV and police available?

Chris Bryant: My heart wants to sink every time I hear of any assaults on emergency workers. That is why I brought forward a private Member's Bill a few years ago, which I know the hon. Member supported, and I wish the prosecuting authorities used it more frequently. Any attack on our emergency workers is an attack on all of us, because they are there to save our lives and protect us in our most difficult moments.

Rushanara Ali (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend agree that, as well as our emergency service workers, NHS staff urgently need guaranteed accommodation near their workplace and food supplies, and that the Government need to make those practical things available to them immediately, along with PPE?

Chris Bryant: One of the things I have been so angry about over the past few days is the panic buying going on, with people virtually elbowing one another out of the way to get the last remaining courgette or tin of tomatoes. When I see that, I think to myself, what will happen when the poor person coming off their long shift at A&E at 8 or 10 o'clock at night finds that there is literally nothing left in the shop to buy? The person who was so greedy, hoarding and selfish will then turn up at A&E in two weeks' time and be treated by somebody who was unable to get enough food. My fundamental premise is that we can only get through all this together, because in the end we achieve far more by our common endeavour than we do by going it alone.

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): In the presence of an appropriate Minister, can we urge the point that food supplies ought to be made available at the place of work for key workers? When they come off their unduly long shifts, they should not be in the position of not being able to get any food to take home.

Chris Bryant: That is an extremely good point. I wonder whether Tesco, Sainsbury's, Morrisons and all the other supermarkets—once they have managed to recruit more delivery staff—should think about making deliveries specifically to hospitals and other care points, so that there is specific provision for key workers. That could make a significant difference.

What is essential to running a good accident and emergency department is, first, good, strong leadership. That means consultants who are well trained, and not just relying on locums who are on a part-time contract. It requires really strong teamwork. There is just as much value in a calm receptionist or a meticulous cleaner as a well-trained doctor, consultant or a nurse. We need resources and training to make an A&E flourish. We need people with an extraordinary set of skills, including the ability to make swift and yet very important, time-critical decisions. We need a wide range of disciplines that feed into the whole of the rest of the hospital. Those people have to be able to deal with strong emotions, from rage and anger to grief, anguish, upset, fear and love, all mingled in a very difficult situation. Unfortunately, they have to be able to deal with the particularly strange combination of adrenaline and alcohol, which sometimes makes an accident and emergency department—especially on a Friday or Saturday night—a very difficult place to be.

The truth of the matter is that we have a great number of shortages in our A&Es across the country. In terms of consultants, we are somewhere between 1,200 and 1,500 consultants short across the whole of the UK. There is a particular shortage at my local hospital, the Royal Glamorgan, which is why it has had to rely substantially on locums for the last year. That is not a sustainable model for the future, which is why I am determined to make sure that the local health board campaigns to recruit more consultants for local hospitals. Other countries have a much higher number of A&E consultants per 1,000 people than we do in the UK. We are aiming to get to one for every 7,000 people, and in most other countries it is one to every 4,000. We still have not reached one to every 7,000, so that is a problem. I would urge any doctor who is thinking of training now, or any young person who is thinking of going into medicine, to please think about being an A&E doctor. You will see over the next few months that we love our A&E doctors almost more than anybody else in the whole of the NHS.

Beds are another real issue. We have one of the lowest numbers of critical care beds in Europe, fewer than Spain and France, half of those in Italy, and only a fifth of what they have per 1,000 head of population in Germany. That puts us, as we will discover over the next few days, in a really difficult position. Some areas of the country will face even bigger challenges than others. The most rural parts of the country, where there is an older population and where there are significant health problems—in particular, in the south-west and in the semi-rural areas of the south Wales valleys—will face a particular difficulty, because they already have 83% to 90% occupancy of all their intensive care unit beds, and that is before anybody else comes in through the door.

Lots of hospitals have done an amazing job over the past fortnight, trying to turn other wards into intensive care units that can be used specifically for coronavirus patients, and recruiting additional staff who have previously retired to come back into the service. Hospitals are doing a phenomenal job in all of that, but the truth is that across the whole of Wales we have only 153 intensive care unit beds, and 90% occupancy. That will pose a phenomenal difficulty for my constituency, where we have a large number of people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, a large number of people with diabetes

and many with the conditions that make them the most vulnerable—and an ageing population at that. The whole nation will have to think very hard about how, in the long term, that situation is sustainable, even if we do manage to struggle through the next few months. In a sense, in our NHS at the moment, intensive care needs intensive care.

On coronavirus specifically, I praise every single doctor, nurse, cleaner, decorator and builder who has been involved in the process of reshaping intensive care units and emergency departments. The turnaround has been remarkable. Sometimes they have had to devote hours to training to use PPE, and then they have discovered that the equipment is not easy to use, and they have used all the equipment that they had on training in how to put it on and take it off. They have been working at pace, and undoubtedly they have been working many, many more hours than they are contracted to do, and I think we would all want to say thank you to them for that.

I also want to praise all the staff who work in accident and emergency departments, because I know from talking to doctors over the past few days that they know they will have to make some very, very difficult and horrible decisions—decisions that none of us in this House would ever want to make. They know already—they have protocols that were put in place in 2009 when we were looking at the H1N1 strand—that they will have to make decisions about who they can provide ventilator beds for and who they cannot provide ventilator beds for. That will obviously be horrible for the families and the individuals concerned, but just think of the emotional stress and strain for each of the doctors and nurses who at some point over the next few months are going to have to say, on occasion, “I’m sorry, there is no bed for you, because you are not a priority.” That will hurt because that is not what anybody was ever trained to do when they became a doctor or a nurse. The trauma—the emotional trauma—of that for many people will be phenomenally difficult.

My heart is just full of praise for all those doctors, all those nurses, all the cleaners and all the other parts of the A&E teams. Madam Deputy Speaker, I know you know that I do not like clapping in the Chamber, and I am sure you do not like it either, but I think there are very exceptional moments when this House would like to thank people who do a phenomenal job on behalf of all of us, so if you could close your ears for a moment, I am going to applaud the A&E staff up and down the land. *[Applause.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Just for clarification, clapping is not the norm in this Chamber. The reason why it is banned is that if it became the norm and was done many times every day, it would be meaningless once we were in an exceptional situation. This is an exceptional situation, and the hon. Gentleman is right—the whole Chamber and, indeed, our whole Parliament is right—to pay tribute, in a way that will be noticed, to the many people who work in our wonderful health service.

10.31 pm

The Minister for Care (Helen Whately): I thank the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) for calling this debate and for leading us in that tribute to the NHS workforce.

As we stand here, our NHS faces daunting challenges, as it will continue to do for weeks and months to come. I, too, want to take a moment this evening to thank each and every one of our health and care staff and their individual families for all they are doing for our country at this most challenging of times. I know they are making incredible sacrifices, selflessly working at the frontline in looking after our families in our hour of need, while their families are at home concerned for their safety and welfare. They are there on the frontline around the clock, tackling this head-on. As a country, we will be eternally grateful to them, and from us all, thank you.

I will also pause, if I may, to mention some of the heart-warming gestures across our communities, such as small businesses and large multinationals offering staff hot drinks and hot food, supermarkets making specific opening times for NHS and social care staff, and hotels and chains making beds available to staff to use. Thank you to each and every one of you. You do our country proud.

I want to assure everyone this evening and, most importantly, all our NHS staff that we are here to support them, and we will not let them down. First, we know the NHS needs more people to fill the gaps when staff have to stay home and to cope with the particular needs of patients with coronavirus. We have made a call to arms to those who have left the healthcare professions in the last three years. The healthcare regulators have been contacting doctors, nurses, pharmacists, paramedics and others to ask them to return to practise to support the coronavirus response, and the response from the workforce has been amazing. At noon today, 1,930 doctors and 5,630 nurses had responded by indicating that they were willing to return to the NHS. They will help the NHS not only to treat coronavirus patients, but to continue other emergency healthcare, including urgent operations and cancer treatments. We are also working with professional leaders across nursing, midwifery and allied healthcare professionals to see how students in their final year of study can provide support at the frontline. Our nursing leaders, staff representatives and university bodies will put out a joint statement on that tomorrow.

As we welcome so many doctors, nurses and allied healthcare professionals back to the NHS, we must look after them and all those who work in our health service. I know that staff at the frontline are worried and need assurances that there is sufficient personal protective equipment for everyone who should be using it. The safety of those on the frontline is of paramount importance. We have stocks of PPE nationally and NHS England is working to make sure that the NHS frontline has the equipment it needs. I know there have been problems with distribution in some places, but that is now being resolved by NHS England, which has restructured its logistics operations so that equipment should now be getting to those at the frontline who need it.

Jim Shannon: There is some indication in the news today that some of the personal protection equipment and material available is not up to standard. Will the Minister confirm that everything the Government are sourcing is of a standard suitable for the needs of staff at the frontline?

Helen Whately: I have been absolutely assured that the equipment being supplied to the frontline is appropriate and that it has been tested to make sure that it is fit for purpose.

Dr Julian Lewis: Quite a major distribution and logistics firm in my constituency has offered drivers and vehicles for the cause of fighting the virus. Is there some sort of central one-stop shop to which volunteers and offers of that sort can be directed, so that they can be put to best use? I appreciate that the Minister may not be able to answer me immediately, but if she cannot, perhaps she could inform me afterward.

Helen Whately: One of the fantastic things we have seen over the last few days is the number of offers to help from all parts of society and the economy. There are some specific contact details for ways in which people can help, and I will be happy to share them with my right hon. Friend after the debate.

Chris Bryant: Many local authorities say they have no masks, no aprons and no gloves, let alone the training in how to remove them. I am reliably informed by A&E doctors that with some of the material the danger of infection comes when one is taking it off. Are the Government working with all the other Governments in the UK to make sure that there is enough PPE for all our local authorities as well?

Helen Whately: A huge amount of work on PPE is going on. PPE has been distributed to GPs, community pharmacists and dentists, and it is being distributed at the moment to all care providers across England. There is also work going on to make sure we know the other needs for PPE in the system—for example, in local authorities—to make sure that supplies get to where they are needed. We are also doing our best to make sure that there is clear guidance on when people need to use PPE. Sometimes people think they need it all the time, for everything, but that is not the case. We need to make sure it is used when it is needed—for example, during close-contact clinical care of people who have coronavirus symptoms. I must move on now; otherwise, I will spend all my time talking about PPE and there is more to discuss.

I know that testing is very much on people's minds. We in the UK have tested more people than almost any other major economy outside China, South Korea and Italy. We have been increasing testing by the day. This week, we hope to reach 10,000 tests a day, and within four weeks Public Health England and the NHS expect to be conducting up to 25,000 tests a day. After that, the number will continue to increase up to 250,000 tests a day and more. With more testing capacity, we will be able to test more patients and, critically, NHS and social care staff.

Chris Bryant: The former Health Secretary, who is now Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee, said earlier today that the claim 10,000 tests a day are being done now is a myth and that the number is 5,500 a day, where it is stubbornly stuck. Does the Minister disagree with him?

Helen Whately: That is not the data I have received. I have set out the trajectory on the testing, on the basis of the information I have. As I say, our commitment is to keep on ramping up testing, because we know it is an important part of our response.

Rushanara Ali: Will the Minister give way?

Helen Whately: If the hon. Lady will let me, I will make a little progress, as I believe I have less than five minutes left.

We know that we must keep NHS staff safe, but we must also support them and their work. The Government are working with the NHS on a package of support for NHS staff to help them through the coming weeks and months, which includes guidance to their line managers; support for occupational health; and psychological and emotional support, because, as the hon. Member for Rhondda said, they are facing extremely challenging times, and we are very aware of the emotional demands that will place on our frontline staff. I urge every NHS employer to be making sure that staff are getting food supplies—hot meals and hot drinks. Whatever NHS staff need to help them get through each day, they should be getting. The Government have committed to funding for health and social care to support us through the coronavirus. That funding should be being used and we should make sure that staff are being helped in every way that they can be.

Rushanara Ali: I just have a suggestion relating to NHS workers and overcrowded places. London has a lot of underused properties—empty properties owned by foreign investors. Will the Minister consider making sure that local authorities have powers to use those temporarily to house NHS workers who need to be able to be close to work? Will she make sure that there is a sense of urgency, because she is talking about weeks and months, but NHS workers in my constituency need the protective equipment now and many of them do not have it.

Helen Whately: The protective equipment is being distributed at pace and urgently. I talk of weeks and months because we should not think this situation we are coping with will last just a few days. We will need to support our NHS through these weeks and months. I know that NHS trusts are looking at the accommodation that their workforce will need. I wish to make the important point about the measures that the Government have been taking to make sure that the children of key workers, NHS staff and social care staff are included and are cared for at school, so that these staff do not have to worry about their children's education. I also wish to thank each and every teacher and support worker who was at school today looking after children so that our NHS and social care staff can look after us.

Before coronavirus hit us, we had already committed to increasing the NHS workforce, particularly boosting the staff it needs in pressure points such as emergency departments. For instance, we have committed to funding an extra 1,500 undergraduate medical school places per year, which is a 25% increase. We are opening five new medical schools across England, often in areas that currently do not have medical training facilities, so we are going to be able to get doctors to the places that most need them. We have also committed to 50,000 more nurses in the NHS, and we are increasing the funding for nursing, midwifery and some allied health professional students studying at English universities to at least £5,000 per academic year, and up to £8,000 a year.

I would like to thank all Members for their contributions to this debate. The coronavirus outbreak is the biggest public health emergency in a generation. It calls for decisive action, at home and abroad, of the kind not normally seen in peacetime. I wish to end my remarks by again sending our country's thanks and unending support to all our colleagues on the NHS and social care frontline tonight. It is they who will fight back this virus. It is they who are putting themselves in harm's way to help our families. I know each and every Member

of this House, and everyone across the country, will be eternally grateful to them for that. I make this commitment: we are there for you, the NHS staff, and we will do all that we can to support you at this most difficult time in our history.

Question put and agreed to.

10.44 pm

House adjourned.

Written Statements

Monday 23 March 2020

EDUCATION

Covid-19: Summer Exams

The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson):

As I announced to the House on 18 March, in light of the unprecedented public health emergency the Government have taken the difficult decision to cancel all exams due to take place in schools and colleges in England this summer. We recognise that students have been working hard towards these exams, and this is not a decision we have taken lightly.

Our priority is to ensure that students can move on as planned to the next stage of their lives, including starting university, college or sixth form, or an apprenticeship or a job in the autumn. For GCSE, A and AS level students we will also make sure they are awarded a grade which reflects their work. Our intention is that a grade will be awarded this summer, based on the best available evidence, including any non-exam assessment that students have already completed. There will also be an option, for students who do not feel this grade reflects their performance, to sit an exam at the earliest reasonable opportunity once schools are open again.

Ofqual will develop and set out a process that will provide a calculated grade to each student which reflects their performance as fairly as possible, and will work with the exam boards to ensure this is consistently applied for all students. The exam boards will be asking teachers, who know their students well, to submit their judgement about the grade that they believe the student would have received if exams had gone ahead. To produce this, teachers will take into account a range of evidence and data including performance on mock exams and non-exam assessment—clear guidance on how to do this fairly and robustly will be provided to schools and colleges. The exam boards will then combine this information with other relevant data, including prior attainment, and use this information to produce a calculated grade for each student, which will be a best assessment of the work they have put in. Ofqual and exam boards will be discussing with teachers' representatives before finalising an approach, to ensure that it is as fair as possible. More information will be provided as soon as possible.

The aim is to provide these calculated grades to students before the end of July. In terms of a permanent record, the grades will be indistinguishable from those provided in other years. We will also aim to ensure that the distribution of grades follows a similar pattern to that in other years, so that this year's students do not face a systematic disadvantage as a consequence of these extraordinary circumstances. Furthermore, university representatives have confirmed that they expect universities to be flexible and do all they can to support students and ensure they can progress to higher education.

We recognise that some students may nevertheless feel disappointed that they have not been able to sit their exams. If they do not believe the correct process has been followed in their case, they will be able to appeal on that basis. In addition, if they do not feel

their calculated grade reflects their performance, they will have the opportunity to sit an exam at the earliest reasonable opportunity once schools are open again. Students will also have the option to sit their exams in summer 2021.

There is a very wide range of different vocational and technical qualifications as well as other academic qualifications for which students were expecting to sit exams this summer. These are offered by a large number of awarding organisations and have differing assessment approaches—in many cases students will already have completed modules or non-exam assessment which could provide evidence to award a grade. We are encouraging these organisations to show the maximum possible flexibility and pragmatism to ensure students are not disadvantaged. Ofqual is working urgently with the sector to explore options, and we will work with them to provide more details shortly.

The Government will not publish any school or college level educational performance data based on tests, assessments or exams for 2020.

[HCWS176]

TRANSPORT

Rail Franchises: Emergency-measures Agreements

The Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):

In these uncertain times, the railway has a vital role to play in ensuring Britain's key workers can travel and vital supplies are kept moving. My absolute focus is on making sure services continue so that journeys that are vital in tackling this crisis can continue. So today, to make sure our railways stay open, we are providing train operators on franchises let by my Department the opportunity temporarily to transition on to emergency-measures agreements.

These agreements will suspend the normal financial mechanisms of franchise agreements, transferring all revenue and cost risk to the Government. Operators will continue to run day-to-day services for a small, pre-determined management fee. Companies entering into these agreements will see a temporary suspension of their existing franchise agreement's financial mechanisms for an initial period of six months, with options for further extension or earlier cancellation as agreed.

Today's offer will provide greater flexibility to the train operators and the Government, and make sure the railway can continue to react quickly to changing circumstances and play its part in serving the national interest. It will ensure vital services continue to operate for key workers who are keeping the nation running and that we are able to reinstate a normal service quickly when the situation improves.

In the longer term these agreements will also minimise disruption to the rail sector. The railways have already seen up to a 70% drop in passenger numbers—with rail fares revenue reducing as people increasingly work from home and adopt social distancing—and total ticket sales are down by two-thirds from the equivalent date in 2019. Suspending the usual financial mechanisms will not only guarantee that services can be sustained over this difficult period, but provide certainty for staff working

on the railways, many of whom are working hard every day in difficult conditions to make sure we keep the railway running.

This is not a new model; it is a temporary solution, taking the steps necessary to protect services now in a cost-efficient way, and ensuring current events have as little impact as possible on the railway in the longer term. Allowing operators to enter insolvency would cause significantly more disruption to passengers and higher costs to the taxpayer.

Fees will be set at a maximum of 2% of the cost base of the franchise before the covid-19 pandemic began, which is intended to incentivise operators to meet reliability, punctuality and other targets. The maximum fee attainable will be far less than recent profits earned by train operators. In the event that an operator does not wish to accept an emergency-measures agreement, the Government's operator of last resort stands ready to step in.

Alongside our focus on keeping the railways open to support key workers, we recognise there will be many who have heeded Government advice and chosen not to travel. We do not want people to lose money for doing the right thing, so I am also announcing today

that passengers will be able to get refunds for advance tickets they are not able to use while the Government advise against non-essential travel.

We have agreed with all the train operators that passengers who have already purchased an advance ticket will be eligible for a refund without any charge. Those holding a season ticket that they no longer wish to use will also be eligible for a partial refund, determined by the amount of time remaining on the ticket. Ticket holders should contact their operator for further details.

Given the significant timetable changes that have put been in place we are also asking operators to use discretion to allow passengers with advance tickets to travel on an alternative train at a similar time or date if their ticket is technically no longer valid as a result of cancellations but they still wish to travel.

We are operating in extraordinary times, but today's announcement will make sure key workers who depend on our railways are able to travel and carry on their vital roles, that hard-working commuters, who have radically altered their lives to combat the spread of coronavirus, are not left out of pocket. It will also provide certainty to the industry's staff who are still working hard every day to make sure the railway plays its part in tackling this crisis.

[HCWS175]

Petitions

Monday 23 March 2020

OBSERVATIONS

WORK AND PENSIONS

Universal Credit bonus payments

The petition of residents of Glasgow East,

Declares that current rules surrounding bonus salary payments to universal credit claimants are profoundly unfair and lead to unintended reductions in subsequent universal credit payments which perversely disincentivises work.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to revise universal credit rules which would see one off bonus payments treated as capital rather than salary payments.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by David Linden, *Official Report*, 20 January 2020; Vol. 670, c. 141.]

[P002550]

A petition in the same terms was presented by the hon. Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk (Martyn Day) [P002558].

Observations from the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Dr Thérèse Coffey):

Bonuses paid by employers are considered a useful part of the contract between employers and employee. Bonuses are considered to be earnings and are treated in the same way as any other earnings. This is true for tax and other purposes and bonuses are rightfully considered to be earnings in the welfare system, regardless of whether or not an individual is claiming a benefit. As such, all earnings are subject to the principles of the work allowance (where eligible) and the taper rate. This results in a predictable and consistent method for calculating awards of universal credit.

Universal credit has been specifically designed to strike a balance between support for vulnerable claimants whilst being fair to other taxpayers. It incentivises work for those who are able, whilst delivering previously poorly targeted benefits to those who need it most.

Universal credit was introduced to replace six legacy benefits and become the main working age benefit. Since its rollout completed in December 2018, increasing numbers of households are benefiting from the flexible way it supports them whilst in and out of work. Previously, claimants had to navigate different rules across varying benefits, meaning uncertainty surrounding how much could be gained by being in work. It was time consuming too; as it meant engaging with different Government organisations to close down, update, or open up new claims.

The amount of universal credit paid to claimants reflects, as closely as possible, the actual circumstances of a household, which can rise and fall every month. The single, simple taper means that payments reduce in a transparent and predictable way as earnings increase. Work allowances were increased by £1,000 per year from April 2019, allowing 2.4 million households to keep an extra £630 of income each year. Currently claimants with children and/or disabilities benefit from a work allowance which means they can keep either £287 per month if they have support for housing costs included in their universal credit, or £503 per month if they do not have support for housing costs included.

Since 2013 the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) have been working collaboratively to support and inform employers who report earnings to emphasise the importance of timely reporting via the real time information (RTI) system.

Universal credit has transformed the welfare system by making work pay. It has simplified processes for claimants through the convenience of a single online account and can continue to be paid even when a claimant's circumstances have changed. This means it is easier for claimants to predict how universal credit will respond to changes, and ensures they are better off working and better off working more.

ORAL ANSWERS

Monday 23 March 2020

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
HOME DEPARTMENT	1	HOME DEPARTMENT—continued	
County Lines Drugs Gangs.....	7	Knife Crime	6
Covid-19: English Language Testing.....	10	Police Disciplinary Procedures	11
Covid-19: Law and Order.....	2	Settled Status for EU Citizens: Internet Access.....	6
Covid-19: Screening for UK Entry.....	12	Shop Workers: Protection from Violence	15
Crime Hotspots.....	13	Topical Questions	16
Custody Suites	5	Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme	1

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

Monday 23 March 2020

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
EDUCATION	1WS	TRANSPORT	2WS
Covid-19: Summer Exams.....	1WS	Rail Franchises: Emergency-measures Agreements.....	2WS

PETITIONS

Monday 23 March 2020

	<i>Col. No.</i>
WORK AND PENSIONS	1P
Universal Credit bonus payments	1P

No proofs can be supplied. Corrections that Members suggest for the Bound Volume should be clearly marked on a copy of the daily Hansard - not telephoned - and *must be received in the Editor's Room, House of Commons,*

**not later than
Monday 30 March 2020**

STRICT ADHERENCE TO THIS ARRANGEMENT GREATLY FACILITATES THE
PROMPT PUBLICATION OF BOUND VOLUMES

Members may obtain excerpts of their speeches from the Official Report (within one month from the date of publication), by applying to the Editor of the Official Report, House of Commons.

CONTENTS

Monday 23 March 2020

List of Government and Principal Officers of the House

Oral Answers to Questions [Col. 1] [see index inside back page]
Secretary of State for the Home Office

Speaker's Statement [Col. 23]

Business of the House [Col. 25]
Statement—(Mr Rees-Mogg)

Coronavirus [Col. 35]
Business of the House—(Tom Pursglove)—agreed to
Motion for Second Reading—(Matt Hancock)—agreed to
Considered in Committee; as amended; read the Third time and passed

A&E Departments: Staffing [Col. 178]
Debate on motion for Adjournment

Written Statements [Col. 1WS]

Petitions [Col. 1P]
Observations

Written Answers to Questions [The written answers can now be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers>]
