

Monday
4 December 2023

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HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT

PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Monday 4 December 2023

HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

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(FORMED BY THE RT HON. RISHI SUNAK, MP, OCTOBER 2022)

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OFFICIAL REPORT

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

SECOND YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HIS MAJESTY KING CHARLES III

SIXTH SERIES

VOLUME 742

THIRD VOLUME OF SESSION 2023-2024

House of Commons

Monday 4 December 2023

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

The Clerk at the Table having informed the House of the unavoidable absence, through illness, of the Speaker from the sittings of the House this week, the Chairman of Ways and Means took the Chair as Deputy Speaker (Standing Order No. 3).

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Mr Speaker has asked me to let the House know that, unfortunately, he has tested positive for covid and so will not be taking the Chair today. I am happy to tell the House that I have spoken to Mr Speaker and that he is fighting it very well. I am sure that the House will join me in wishing him a speedy recovery.

Oral Answers to Questions

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

The Secretary of State was asked—

Economic Growth: Yorkshire and the North

1. **Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): What steps he is taking to support economic growth in Yorkshire and the north. [900431]

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Michael Gove): For our part, we wish Mr Speaker all the very best, and we hope that he enjoys a speedy recovery—but it is wonderful to have you in the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker. I also welcome the hon. Member for Oldham West and Royton (Jim McMahon)

back to the Front Bench. I know that he, too, was unwell recently, so it is great to see him in his place and looking so well.

We are taking considerable steps to boost economic growth in Yorkshire and the north, including the creation of two investment zones in south and west Yorkshire and, of course, the extension of devolution to the whole of the historic county.

Mr Sheerman: I am sure the whole House wants to see Mr Speaker back and well again very soon.

The Secretary of State must be looking at different data from that which I am looking at. I know he does not like experts, but I have hope that, as Christmas approaches, he will have a Pauline conversion—he will see a flash of light, fall off his camel and realise that, in order to level up expertly and well, he needs local authorities on the ground to deliver those policies. Will he please reconsider his attitude to local government in this country?

Michael Gove: I am grateful to the hon. Member. As the Minister for Local Government has just reminded me, when Saul was on the road to Damascus he was not actually travelling on a camel.

Improving transport links with a new mass transit system for Leeds is critical to the programme that we are undertaking. We are working with local authorities in Leeds; we are working with the Mayor of West Yorkshire, Tracy Brabin, and with the chief executive of Leeds City Council, Tom Riordan. Moreover, in Kirklees we are investing £65 million through round 3 of the levelling-up fund, with a new open market to provide regeneration in Huddersfield and, of course, the upgrade of the Penistone line, for which my hon. Friends the Members for Dewsbury (Mark Eastwood) and for Penistone and Stocksbridge (Miriam Cates) have been such brilliant advocates.

Harriett Baldwin (West Worcestershire) (Con): I, too, convey to Mr Speaker a “Get well soon” message.

In addition to the amenities in Yorkshire and elsewhere in the north, there is a wonderful real ale pub called The Bell Inn at Pensax, in the north of the Malvern Hills. May I put on the record my strong endorsement of its bid to the community ownership fund?

Michael Gove: It sounds as if that particular inn, in the heart of Elgar country, is something behind which all of us on the Front Bench can rally. It sounds like an excellent candidate for the community ownership fund, which has seen scores of buildings taken back into public ownership by their communities for the benefit of all.

Antisemitism

2. **Andrew Percy** (Brigg and Goole) (Con): What recent assessment he has made of trends in the level of antisemitism. [900432]

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Michael Gove): Tragically, we have seen a significant increase in antisemitism since the events of 7 October. The Community Security Trust recorded 1,500 antisemitic incidents between 7 October and 22 November, the highest total in a 47-day period since records began in 1984.

Andrew Percy: Despite the first-hand accounts of survivors such as Yoni Saadon and organisations such as ZAKA—whose members collected the bodies following the Palestinian terror attack of 7 October, and have described mutilated genitals and women's bodies having been so badly abused that their pelvises were broken—there are some in the pro-Palestinian movement who continue to deny that these atrocities took place. Whether we are talking about dead babies or gender-based violence against Jewish women, it appears that Jews do not matter. Does the Secretary of State agree that this risks fuelling further the antisemitism that we have seen in this country since those attacks?

Michael Gove: My hon. Friend is absolutely right; the events of 7 October were uniquely horrific. It was an exercise in calculated, premeditated sadism which everyone in the House condemns. However, as my hon. Friend says, some voices, including some prominent media voices, have considered it appropriate to cavil, to question and to prevaricate in the face of this violence. It is vitally important for us to recognise—even as we recognise that all life is precious, and even as we recognise that it is vital for us to do what we can to minimise casualties in this conflict—that the events of 7 October stand out as the biggest slaughter of Jewish civilians since the holocaust, and for that reason there can be no quibbling when we face such a transparent evil.

John Cryer (Leyton and Wanstead) (Lab): I agree with everything that was said by the previous questioner. Could the Secretary of State engage with his opposite number in the Department for Education and argue for the promotion of education about the events of the holocaust? I have believed for a long time that one of the reasons behind the increase in antisemitism, notwithstanding recent events, is the fact that the holocaust is now slipping from memory into history, and we need to perpetuate the analysis and grasp of that particular period of history.

Michael Gove: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point, and it gives me an opportunity to thank the Holocaust Educational Trust, which enjoys support across the House. The work done by its chief executive, Karen Pollock, is exemplary. As the hon. Gentleman rightly points out, as the voices of survivors fade and the holocaust moves from memory to history, it is vital that we ensure that every successive generation appreciates the unique evil of that event, the origins of antisemitism and the need to be vigilant against its recrudescence.

Sir Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): I thank the Secretary of State for his robust answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Goole (Andrew Percy). Does he agree that the sight this weekend of bereaved family members from both the Muslim and Jewish communities joining together in a combined rally against Islamophobia and antisemitism was an inspiring sight that we should all hold in our hearts and honour? Does that not serve as a lesson to those people from one community or the other who preached hatred against others who are in fact innocent victims?

Michael Gove: My right hon. Friend is absolutely correct. All of us approach any conflict with a sense of horror and foreboding for what it may mean for innocent civilians, and it is in that spirit that the vigil that he mentions was held. It was great to see people from across communities expressing solidarity. I had the opportunity last week to talk to leaders from various Muslim community groups across the United Kingdom, and I pay tribute to them for their work in challenging extremism of all kinds.

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): If we are to tackle the reality of antisemitism in the present, it is vital that we learn from the past. In the summer of 1945, 300 Jewish children who had survived the death camps in Nazi Germany made their lives and were rehabilitated on the banks of Windermere lake at Troutbeck Bridge. They are affectionately and proudly known by all of us as the Windermere boys. As we work together to celebrate their legacy, and to use that legacy to ensure that we fight antisemitism in every part of our country, will the Secretary of State meet me and the people involved with the project to discuss how we can build a lasting memorial to the legacy of those wonderful young children who built a new life in this country and overcame the horrors of Nazi Germany?

Michael Gove: I am really grateful to the hon. Gentleman for reminding us of that episode in our history, and I would be absolutely delighted to work with him to ensure that that signal moment in our history is properly celebrated. It has been a feature of the United Kingdom that we have always recognised the importance of standing up against antisemitism and providing refuge to those fleeing persecution, so I look forward to talking to him in due course.

Sir Michael Ellis (Northampton North) (Con): The London Borough of Havering has now reversed the appalling decision it made last week to cancel its Hanukkah festivities for the Jewish community. It is impossible to imagine any local authority in the country trying to cancel the annual celebrations of any other faith group. Does my right hon. Friend agree that all local authorities

should be careful to avoid any such rash action at this sensitive time, and that they should use intelligence and common sense in their decisions?

Michael Gove: My right hon. and learned Friend is absolutely correct. I understand that the London Borough of Havering has now reversed its decision, but it seems to me that it was based on a misconception, which is that the idea of the celebration of any faith should be seen as provocative at this time. We know that there are individual Jewish citizens who feel uncomfortable wearing the kippah or any outward symbol of their faith, and to have a London borough saying that the menorah should not be lit because it would be provocative at this time is wholly wrong. Freedom of religion—the chance for us all to express our faith—is fundamental to British values, and he is right to say that other local authorities should not go down that same route.

Levelling-up Fund

3. **Stephen Crabb** (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con): What recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the levelling-up fund at distributing funding across all parts of the UK. [900433]

8. **Simon Baynes** (Clwyd South) (Con): What recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the levelling-up fund at distributing funding across all parts of the UK. [900439]

9. **Duncan Baker** (North Norfolk) (Con): What recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the levelling-up fund at distributing funding across all parts of the UK. [900441]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Jacob Young): On Monday 20 November we announced that a further £1 billion will be invested in 55 projects across Great Britain, from Bolton to Elgin, and from Newcastle to Rhyl. In the third round we have targeted funding at places across Great Britain that are most in need, as assessed through our levelling-up needs metrics. We have also ensured the best possible regional spread of projects, so that every part of Great Britain benefits from the fund over its lifetime. Further details are set out in a published methodology note.

Stephen Crabb: With new money helping Pembrokeshire County Council to regenerate Haverfordwest town centre, with community ownership funding enabling the villagers of Hayscastle Cross to save their local pub, and with new investment in Visit Pembrokeshire to improve accessibility for tourists visiting the county, does the Minister agree that, compared with the clunky, difficult-to-access EU funding schemes, these new pots of levelling-up money are being distributed far more effectively to all parts of the United Kingdom?

Jacob Young: My right hon. Friend is right that the efforts we are making in Pembrokeshire, in part thanks to him and other Members of Parliament for the county, demonstrate levelling up in action in his part of Wales. I am delighted to continue working with him on that.

Simon Baynes: Does the Minister agree that Clwyd South's £13.3 million of levelling-up projects in the Trevor basin, Llangollen and Corwen, which I recently visited, and the newly announced £160 million investment zone for Wrexham, Clwyd South and Flintshire are shining examples of the effectiveness of levelling up galvanising investment and activity in north-east Wales?

Jacob Young: My hon. Friend is a fantastic champion for his constituents in Clwyd South, and for constituents in Shropshire as well. I completely agree that the £13.3 million investment from the levelling-up fund will protect a valuable heritage site for north Wales, an area enjoyed by locals, while encouraging visitors to stay longer and spend more in local shops, cafés and campsites. The recently announced investment zone in Wrexham and Flintshire also demonstrates our commitment to levelling up investment in research, innovation and support for economic development in the region.

Duncan Baker: My local council has sadly been unable to attract any levelling-up funding or community renewal funding into North Norfolk. As I have repeatedly requested in this place, I need just £3 million for a roundabout at the top of Holway Road in Sheringham, but £3 million is too small for a levelling-up bid and too much for Norfolk County Council. In the spirit of Christmas, how can the Minister give me a present of £3 million for a roundabout in North Norfolk?

Jacob Young: I wish I could give my hon. Friend a Christmas present. I recognise his work, campaigning on behalf of the people of Sheringham for the improvement of the A148 Holway Road junction. I know he is already engaging closely with Norfolk County Council on the project. The £600 million investment fund, agreed through the Norfolk county deal, will provide the county council with the local means to fund exactly this sort of project, with the first tranche of funding due to be available next year. If there is anything further I can do, I would be delighted to work with him and with colleagues in the Department for Transport to progress this project.

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): The Minister will not have too much difficulty assessing the effectiveness of the levelling-up fund in Northern Ireland, because Northern Ireland is the only country in the United Kingdom not to receive one penny in the last round of levelling-up funding. He will not level with the people of Northern Ireland, giving the spurious excuse that, because an Executive has not been formed, he cannot allocate the money. What discussions does he need to have with the Northern Ireland Executive that he did not have with the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Parliament or any local authority in England before allocating money there?

Jacob Young: The right hon. Gentleman and I have had numerous conversations to that effect. Northern Ireland has benefited from £120 million in rounds 1 and 2 of the levelling-up fund but, in the context of growing pressure on Northern Ireland budgets, it is right that the UK Government should consider their approach to the funding available for Northern Ireland in this round. In LUF3, £30 million has been reserved for Northern Ireland and, as part of our commitment to levelling up, we will work with the restored Executive

to find the best approach to supporting people in Northern Ireland. I again confirm to the right hon. Gentleman that I will work with him and others, once the Executive are back up and running, to see how we can best level up his community.

Helen Morgan (North Shropshire) (LD): Whitchurch in my constituency has not received any levelling-up funding, whether from the levelling-up fund itself, the towns fund or the future high streets fund. Now it has found itself without a civic centre because of dangerous reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete, so it has lost its library, registry office and driving test centre, which was soon to be reopened following a long campaign by myself and others. Will the Minister meet me to work out what we can do to put that important building back into the heart of Whitchurch?

Jacob Young: I would be happy to meet the hon. Member.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): I call the shadow Minister.

Justin Madders (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): The Resolution Foundation's report on economic stagnation, published today, shows how levelling up simply is not happening under this Government. One of the speakers at the event this morning was Andy Haldane, the chair of the Levelling Up Advisory Council, who said that greater financial devolution was needed in all areas, not just in the favoured few. It sounds like he has been taking inspiration from our proposed "take back control" Bill. Does the Minister agree with him that more economic devolution is needed in all areas of the UK?

Jacob Young: I do agree with him. That is why we are following our devolution framework, expanding devolution to more areas in the UK. Under the last Labour Government, the only area in England that had a devolution deal was London. Through devolution, we have been able to expand that offer to more than 60% of England. We have invested more than £13 billion of local growth funding into communities the length and breadth of the country, restoring pride and ensuring that we tackle regional inequality.

If the hon. Gentleman wants to see levelling up in action, he need only look at places such as Teesside, which was left behind under the last Labour Government. It is now being transformed through the UK's largest freeport, Teesside airport and the Treasury in Darlington; town deals in Redcar, Middlesbrough, Thornaby, Darlington and Hartlepool; high street funding in Middlesbrough, Loftus and Stockton; and levelling-up funding for Eston and TS6, Hartlepool, Guisborough, Yarm, Eaglescliffe and Billingham. The Opposition are all talk; we are delivering levelling up in action.

Ms Anum Qaisar (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): Madam Deputy Speaker, please pass on my best wishes to Mr Speaker for a speedy recovery.

Alongside the levelling-up fund, the Department created the community renewal fund in order to alleviate regional disparities. If the Minister is to mark his own homework, how does he think levelling up the country is going?

Jacob Young: As I said in response to a previous question, we have committed more than £13.9 billion of local growth funding to communities across the United Kingdom, including in Scotland. We have committed to publishing the details of the levelling-up missions in due course, and I will ensure that the hon. Lady has an update when we do that.

Ms Qaisar: In fact, academics from the University of Manchester have found that the community renewal fund gave £9.9 million to the south of England at the expense of other regions, which seems to be a trend that we see in levelling up. Does the Minister agree with me that his Department's plans are, simply put, doing little to tackle regional inequalities?

Jacob Young: I completely disagree with the hon. Lady; the facts show something quite different. As I said when I outlined round 3 in the House on 20 November, the biggest recipients of the levelling-up fund have been the north-west, the north-east, and Yorkshire and the Humber. That tells a very different story from the picture painted by the hon. Lady.

Private Rented Sector

4. **Tony Lloyd** (Rochdale) (Lab): What steps he is taking to reform the private rented sector. [900434]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Jacob Young): I am delighted to announce that our Renters (Reform) Bill completed Committee stage in the House last week. Our ambitious and balanced reforms will deliver on our manifesto commitment to abolish section 21 evictions and to reform grounds for possession, so that landlords can recover their properties when they need to.

Tony Lloyd: The Secretary of State moved with admirable speed after the death of Awaab Ishak to ensure that social landlords honour their obligations to tenants in terms of mould and safety, but those in private rented accommodation do not have that protection. Can the Minister tell the House, and the world, why private tenants are put at risk in that way?

Jacob Young: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the work that he did following the tragic and unnecessary death of Awaab Ishak. We have tabled an amendment to the Renters (Reform) Bill to expand the decent homes standard to the private rented sector for the first time. I look forward to working with him to ensure that the Bill is in as good a state as it can be when it leaves this House.

Mr Clive Betts (Sheffield South East) (Lab): The Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee has been taking evidence about local government finances. In the past two years, expenditure on homelessness and temporary accommodation has increased by 50%. The reality is that section 21 notices are a prime driver of that. The Renters (Reform) Bill will abolish section 21, but the Government have not yet announced a timetable for the legislation's implementation or the abolition. The Government have said that we need court reform. I completely agree, but how was that helped by the Chancellor's announcing in the autumn statement a freeze of the budget of the Ministry of Justice for the whole of the next Parliament?

Jacob Young: I can confirm to the Chair of the Select Committee that I met the relevant Minister in the Ministry of Justice just this morning to discuss that point. We are working at pace to ensure that the courts are ready for the biggest change in the private rented sector in over 30 years. The hon. Gentleman talked about local government funding. We are conducting a new burdens assessment for local government to ensure that any additional burdens that are placed on local government are funded properly.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): I call the shadow Secretary of State.

Angela Rayner (Ashton-under-Lyne) (Lab): In the festive spirit, I extend my sympathies to the Secretary of State, who seems to spend his time haunted by the ghost of Christmas past. In 2019, a Tory Prime Minister promised to ban no-fault evictions. Since then, households have been put at risk of homelessness because of a section 21 notice nearly 78,000 times. In 2017, the fifth predecessor of the Secretary of State pledged action to end the medieval practice of leasehold, but just last year another 207,000 homeowners became stuck in that expensive nightmare. All the while, the Secretary of State has been beavering away drawing up what can only be described as Alice in Wonderland legislation: a Bill to ban no-fault evictions that will not ban no-fault evictions, and a Bill to ban leasehold that will not ban leasehold. Is he too scared to stand up to his Back Benchers, or has he truly fallen down the rabbit hole?

Jacob Young: I should remind the right hon. Lady that I am not the Secretary of State. Let me also remind her that the Renters (Reform) Bill is the biggest change to the private rented sector in 30 years—longer than I have been alive. We have to ensure that we get this right both for tenants and for the 2.4 million landlords in this country. She may be willing to brush aside the concerns of landlords and turn her back on what are often small businesses. We are not. We will deliver a Bill that protects renters and ensures a fair system for landlords.

Local Authority Funding: Essex

5. **Priti Patel** (Witham) (Con): What funding he plans to provide to local authorities in Essex in the 2024-25 financial year. [900435]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Simon Hoare): The Government will bring forward our proposals for the 2024-25 local government finance settlement in the usual way, towards the end of the calendar year, but I pledge that it will be before the House rises. We will set out our proposals for the 2024-25 financial year and then invite views in our formal consultation.

Priti Patel: I welcome the Minister to his new responsibilities. He may know—he definitely will now—that Braintree District Council, Colchester City Council, Maldon District Council and Essex County Council provide essential statutory services to my Witham constituents and many more. The costs of statutory services such as adult social care and care for children are rising. I suspect that he will give a nuanced answer, but can he give any indication of how the local government finance settlement will support those local authorities in delivering those vital statutory services?

Simon Hoare: I have never given a nuanced answer in my life and I do not intend to start doing so now. I thank all the councils my right hon. Friend mentioned for the work they do in delivering services for their communities. Local government has seen a real-terms increase in core spending power over the period 2019-20 to 2023-24. I know she knows that, but I assure her and the House that we recognise and understand the pressures on local government. We will look in the round at sector spending when finalising the budget at the upcoming settlement, as we do every year, but I shall certainly bear at the forefront of my mind the representations that she has made.

Leasehold Reform

6. **Alex Cunningham** (Stockton North) (Lab): What steps he is taking to reform the leasehold system. [900436]

10. **Gordon Henderson** (Sittingbourne and Sheppey) (Con): What plans he has for leasehold reform. [900442]

The Minister for Housing, Planning and Building Safety (Lee Rowley): On 27 November the Government introduced the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Bill, which delivers the Government's manifesto commitments on leasehold reform and makes long-term necessary changes to improve home ownership for millions of leaseholders across England and Wales.

Alex Cunningham: In January, the Secretary of State told *The Sunday Times*:

"I don't believe leasehold is fair in any way. It is an outdated feudal system that needs to go. And we need to move to a better system and to liberate people from it."

But the Government's Bill does not sort it, nor does it free my constituents from their feudal masters. Why?

Lee Rowley: As the hon. Gentleman will know if he has read the Bill that was introduced last week, a substantial amount of progress is proposed under it: a substantial number of leaseholders will be much better off and experience a substantial improvement to their lives as a result of the changes that this Government are proposing.

Gordon Henderson: A large number of freehold homeowners in my constituency pay charges to property management companies for maintenance services that are not always carried out. The management companies rarely respond to complaints from residents, who often do not have the money to seek legal advice with a view to taking court action. Will my hon. Friend confirm that the new Leasehold and Freehold Reform Bill will grant freehold homeowners the right to transparency about how their money is spent, to challenge companies when the contracted services are not provided and, where necessary, to have the contract removed from that company?

Lee Rowley: My hon. Friend is right to highlight that issue, and I know that many of us will have heard of similar experiences in our constituencies. That is another example—I return to the point made by the hon. Member for Stockton North (Alex Cunningham)—of reform under this Bill that will significantly improve the lives of leaseholders for the long term.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): I call the shadow Minister.

Matthew Pennycook (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab): As you will no doubt be aware, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Government's Leasehold and Freehold Reform Bill, designed to ban the sale of new leasehold houses, does not actually contain any provisions to ban the sale of new leasehold houses, because the Department apparently did not have time to draft them before publication. If and when the Government rectify their mistake and add the necessary provisions, will they incorporate measures to reinvigorate commonhold by making it accessible and available to both prospective homebuyers and existing leaseholders? If not, why not?

Lee Rowley: As has been outlined, we intend to bring forward further changes to the Bill during the process, as Opposition Members know is normal, because they have sat in the same Committees that we have. We are not proposing to change leasehold to commonhold under the Bill, but that remains part of our long-term approach and we would like to see further reforms as soon as we are able to.

Sir Peter Bottomley (Worthing West) (Con): One outsider and apparently one or two Opposition Members misinterpreted what I understood the Secretary of State to be saying in January. Can the Minister confirm that the opportunities for enfranchisement will take away many of the problems that residential leaseholders now suffer and, in effect, that will get them to commonhold? I will just add that if we had waited to transfer all leaseholds to commonhold, we would not have the Bill now and 6 million leaseholders would have been betrayed.

Lee Rowley: My hon. Friend makes an important point. We all want to see those in leasehold in a much improved situation. We are making huge steps forward with this Bill and we look forward to continuing and augmenting that reform in due course.

Council Funding

7. **Sarah Dyke (Somerton and Frome) (LD):** What assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of council budget shortfalls. [900438]

18. **Kate Hollern (Blackburn) (Lab):** What recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of assessments of relative needs at ensuring the adequacy of council funding. [900453]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Simon Hoare): We are in close and regular contact with sector representative bodies and councils from across the local government family to monitor budgets and service delivery. I have had many discussions with those bodies and organisations since my appointment. As hon. Members will know, the final local government finance settlement for 2023-24 made available up to £59.7 billion for local government in England, an increase in core spending power of up to £5.1 billion, or 9.4%, in cash terms on 2022-23. The Government will continue to look in the round at local government spending ahead of fiscal events, and we will be announcing funding for next year's finance settlement later this month.

Sarah Dyke: May I take this opportunity to wish Mr Speaker a speedy recovery?

I thank the Minister for his response, but I say respectfully that I do not find it satisfactory. I declare an interest as a proudly active Somerset councillor. Councils provide essential services, such as adults' and children's social care, yet increasing costs in social care, alongside inflation, mean that many councils around the country are struggling to provide adequate care. I must warn him that, without action, lives will be foreshortened. The cost of providing services is higher in rural areas than urban areas, yet rural residents will receive 13% less per head in social care support. Will he reassure me that the forthcoming fair funding review will address the unequal way rural councils are funded?

Simon Hoare: The hon. Lady, who is my constituency neighbour in some respects, makes an important point in a serious way. I concur very much on the seriousness of the issue and the challenge that it is presenting to our upper-tier authorities. As I said, we will of course look in the round at all the pressures being placed on local government to see what we can do to help. She rightly mentions the rural services delivery grant, which I have championed. It is very much in my mind to see what we can do during the settlement to address the issue that she raises of the cost disparity of delivering quality services in rural settings, particularly where populations are sparse.

Kate Hollern: Under the current relative needs assessment formula, the poorest fifth of councils receive about 10% below their assessed needs, while the richest fifth get 15% above them. That is hardly levelling up, is it, Minister? A review of the current formula, which is over 10 years old, has been repeatedly postponed. Meanwhile, local authorities such as Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council could be missing out on thousands or perhaps millions of pounds, which could deliver much-needed services in our town. When will the review finally take place?

Simon Hoare: The hon. Lady raises an important point about the formula. I am tempted to say that if the spectre of covid had not, quite rightly, taken up a huge amount of bandwidth in both central Government and local government, we might have been in a different place. We can spend an awful lot of time discussing the minutiae of the formula, and there will be a time when that needs to be done. The crucial task that we have in hand at the current time is to play the cards that we have been dealt, to deliver a settlement that works for local government and to deliver the quality and range of services that all our communities, irrespective of where they are in the country, have a legitimate expectation to receive.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): We are not making terribly fast progress this afternoon. Could everyone who has their question written down cut out the bit at the beginning and just ask the question? This is not speech time; it is Question Time, so let us just have questions. If we get short questions, we can get short answers, too.

Ben Bradley (Mansfield) (Con): Local government finance has been front and centre of our local news given the stark situation in Nottingham. The Minister

will know about Nottingham's unique circumstances following decades of poor decisions and mismanagement, but it will not be lost on him that the whole sector is under significant pressure. I know that he will make the case about finances to the Treasury, but the Government could help significantly by allowing more flexibility in the system. Will he work with colleagues around Government to help us to remove ringfences, particularly in areas, such as public health and transport, in which we could make better decisions if we had more freedom to do so?

Simon Hoare: I am not going to give a running commentary on the situation in Nottingham, save to say that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I keep it under close review. On my hon. Friend's wider point about trust and liberalisation, his call falls on open ears. I am happy to work with anybody who wants to ensure that our local authorities can stand up and deliver, as long as they accept accountability and responsibility for the decisions they take. The Government have a proud record on working in a relationship of trust with our local councillors and councils in order to deliver for people up and down the land.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): I call the shadow Minister.

Jim McMahon (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab/Co-op): In 2018, Tory-led Northamptonshire County Council issued a section 114 notice—as close as a council can come to declaring itself bankrupt. Since then, under this Conservative Government, we have seen a further eight councils from across the political spectrum do exactly the same. In September, the credit agency Moody's warned that more local authorities will

“fail over the near term”

due to high inflation, interest rates and service demand. By the Government's own assessment, how many more councils are at risk between now and budgets being set next year?

Simon Hoare: I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his place and echo the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State; it is great to see him back on the Front Bench.

The hon. Gentleman raises an important point. Nobody is going to doubt that section 114 is a serious issue. As I have said to the Local Government Association and others, I do not think it is right for us to name and shame, point the finger or assign blame. We are intent on working with councils that have already alerted us to see what we can do to help, and on working alongside councils that have concerns to ensure they do not fall into that situation. I am not going to give a running commentary on that, save to make this pledge: we will work with those councils to ensure that they can continue to deliver for their voters.

Land Use: Renewable Energy Generation

12. **Greg Smith (Buckingham) (Con):** What recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero on the use of land for renewable energy generation. [900444]

The Minister for Housing, Planning and Building Safety (Lee Rowley): The Government have in place a framework, developed in collaboration with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, that supports the deployment of renewable energy technologies. That is balanced by national planning policy, which is clear that land assets such as farmland must also be protected.

Greg Smith: On current usage, 2,000 acres of solar panels are required to power around 50,000 homes, whereas a small modular reactor requires just two football pitches and powers 1 million homes. Does my hon. Friend agree that solar is a highly inefficient land use, and can he confirm that the provision to protect land used in food production remains in the new national planning policy framework?

Lee Rowley: I know that my hon. Friend has a long-standing interest in this issue. We will be publishing more on the NPPF shortly, but he is absolutely right that we need a variety of different energy sources that can support the UK's future energy needs.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): As the Minister knows, there is a disparity between the contracts for difference scheme for the mainland and what exists for Northern Ireland. I have made overtures to the Minister responsible to see whether we can get that changed, but that has not happened yet. Will the Minister use his influence to make sure that we in Northern Ireland are treated equally with everybody else in the United Kingdom?

Lee Rowley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his question. He might like to write to me, or I am happy to speak to him separately in order to understand the issue, and either I or my colleagues in the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero will be happy to respond.

Levelling-up Policies: Regional Inequalities

14. **Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP):** What assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Government's levelling-up policies at reducing regional inequalities. [900446]

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Michael Gove): A lot done, a lot still to do, but certainly much more than the Scottish Government.

Patrick Grady: In that case, can the Secretary of State tell us whether Scotland will receive more or less funding to tackle regional inequality than it would have received if we had done as 78% of voters in my constituency did and voted to remain in the European Union?

Michael Gove: We are doing better outside the European Union. If we had followed the hon. Gentleman's advice and remained in the European Union, we would have found that the fishing industry was decimated by the common fisheries policy and we would not have had the opportunity to invest in new levelling-up partnerships in Argyll and Bute, the Western Isles, Dundee and, of course, the west central belt. This UK Government are intervening where the Scottish Government cannot to support local government in Scotland, which is why whenever I address the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, I get a warmer welcome than the First Minister of Scotland does.

Jonathan Gullis (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Con): Does the Secretary of State agree that it is a great shame that Stoke-on-Trent City Council, which is now Labour-run, has scaled back its levelling-up plans by getting rid of the proposed e-sports arena? The first of its kind outside of London, it would have built on Staffordshire University's UK-leading—indeed, world-leading—e-sports courses, as well as the 9,000 jobs created since 2015, the £56 million we got in levelling-up funding, the £17.6 million Kidsgrove town deal, and much more.

Michael Gove: When it comes to levelling up and the e-sports centre, I am always clear that it is my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent North and Kidsgrove who answers the call of duty. He is absolutely right to say that, under the Labour council now in Stoke-on-Trent, the huge progress we were making on levelling up has stalled. What we need are more Conservative elected representatives in Stoke-on-Trent.

Electoral Commission

16. **Chris Elmore** (Ogmore) (Lab): What recent discussions he has had with the Electoral Commission on administering free and fair elections. [900451]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Simon Hoare): Free, fair and resilient elections are pivotal to our society, and if we agree on nothing else in this House, I hope it is on that. The Government regularly meet the Electoral Commission, both at ministerial and official level, to discuss a broad range of electoral issues, and I am due to have my first meeting with it next Tuesday.

Chris Elmore: I thank the Minister for his answer, and I welcome him to his place. He will know that the cyber-attack in October 2021 was not detected until August 2022, and the commission admitted that it had failed a cyber security test in the same year. What work is the Minister doing with the Security Minister to ensure that the defending democracy taskforce has a remit with the Electoral Commission? I agree with the Minister, as should all Members of this House, that we should have free and fair elections without intervention from other states, so what work is he doing to ensure the general election next year is protected from any hostile states?

Simon Hoare: The hon. Gentleman—and, dare I say it, my friend—raises an important point. There is a good range of discussion taking place between my Department and the Home Office and a range of meetings focused on that. Conscious of the role that the commission can play, we must ensure that those who stand in our elections, participate in them and administer them feel safe and secure in their roles, and moreover that the results, whatever they are, stand up and are not open to challenge as a result of cyber-attack or anything else.

Mr Speaker: I call the shadow Minister.

Florence Eshalomi (Vauxhall) (Lab/Co-op): A report from the all-party parliamentary group on democracy and the constitution has found that the photo voter ID scheme creates a real risk of injustice and potential discrimination. The report highlighted the case of an

immunocompromised woman who was denied her right and her voice at the local elections after being told that she needed to take off her mask. Does the Minister agree that denying someone a say in how their community is run because of a disability is completely unacceptable? Can he confirm that any indications of potential discrimination found in the photo voter ID system will be dealt with prior to the next set of elections?

Simon Hoare: The hon. Lady raises a serious point, and let me put it on record that I would be happy to meet her and the APPG to discuss their issues and concerns. We have made great strides—there is a specific workstream—in ensuring we maximise how those who have a disability can vote and do so in a free and unfettered way, and we will continue with that. I am very sorry to hear about the case the hon. Lady raises, but if she wishes to write to me on the issue, I will of course look into it in my discussions with the commission. It is absolutely pivotal that, in all we do with regard to our election rules, access to voting—freedom to vote—is absolutely at the heart of it, and as the Minister responsible for elections, I shall guarantee that.

Topical Questions

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Right, I am going to issue a challenge to the House. We have 10 topical questions and others to get through, we have very little time to do it—and we have a lot of business today—and I would not like Mr Speaker to think that we are going slowly just because he is not here: short questions, short answers!

T1. [900456] **Ruth Jones** (Newport West) (Lab): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Michael Gove): At the autumn statement, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer made available to my Department money for investment in London, Cambridge and Leeds, planning capacity and capability, the local authority housing fund, the local housing allowance, home buying and selling and the affordable homes guarantee scheme—quite a coup.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Brilliant.

Ruth Jones: I think I got most of that. Newport West is home to a thriving and inclusive Muslim community, and I pay tribute to the multi-faith work being done to bring our communities together after the terrible events in the middle east. Can the Minister outline what discussions he has had with the Welsh Government about supporting this multi-faith work, and about eradicating Islamophobia in Wales and the UK once and for all?

Michael Gove: I am very grateful to the hon. Lady. Of course, Newport is one of many cities and towns where there is effective working between representatives of Muslim communities and figures in local government more widely. I had the opportunity to discuss some of these issues with the First Minister of Wales at the British-Irish Council just 10 days ago, but there is much more that we need to do to deal with anti-Muslim hatred.

T2. [900457] **Tom Hunt** (Ipswich) (Con): Over the summer, the Minister for Housing, Planning and Building Safety, my hon. Friend the Member for North East Derbyshire (Lee Rowley) published a non-binding code of practice for cladding remediation works, following intensive discussions with him, and also my highlighting the devastating case of St Francis Tower. Will he update the House on how in practice that non-binding code of practice is working? Has it led to improved behaviour and been a step forward, and has he considered further my view that perhaps that code of practice needs to be legally binding?

The Minister for Housing, Planning and Building Safety (Lee Rowley): My hon. Friend was a driving force behind that code of practice, and we are monitoring it actively. Anecdotally I am seeing fewer issues, although there are still some. I would be happy to receive from him and other Members of the House any information or evidence that suggests there is still a problem.

T4. [900459] **Chi Onwurah** (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): The cost to councils of delivering services will exceed their core funding by £2 billion this year. Newcastle expects a funding gap of £56 million, following £369 million of Conservative cuts to funding and years of Conservative economic failure. Can my constituents rely on council services under a Conservative Government?

Michael Gove: They certainly cannot rely on a Labour Government, because the Leader of the Opposition just this morning has been talking about his admiration for Margaret Thatcher and cost cutting. I am afraid all the hon. Lady is doing is raising false hopes that have no chance of being satisfied under a Labour Government.

T5. [900460] **Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con):[R] My interest is in the Register of Members' Financial Interests. Why is it Government policy to deny a landlord and tenant the ability to agree a mutually convenient fixed-term tenancy?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Jacob Young): Fixed-term tenancies can trap tenants into poor-quality homes, and trap landlords into long-term tenancies with bad tenants. With the abolition of section 21 of the Housing Act 1988, we no longer see such things as necessary, but I am happy to work with my right hon. Friend to ensure that the Renters (Reform) Bill works for his constituents.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): I call the shadow Minister.

Mike Amesbury (Weaver Vale) (Lab): The latest Government figures highlight that a record 139,000 children—children!—are in temporary accommodation in the lead-up to Christmas, which is a 14% increase. Meanwhile, only 9,500 homes for social rent were built last year. If we take into account all the homes built since 2010, that is minus 14,000 each year. Does the Minister regret handing back £1.9 billion of unspent departmental money to the Treasury last year, given that we are in an urgent housing crisis? Why not adopt Labour's plan to get Britain building again, with 1.5 million homes over that parliamentary period?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Felicity Buchan): I remind the hon. Gentleman that our target is 300,000 homes per year which, when multiplied by five, equals 1.5 million. In the autumn statement we had three measures to address the challenges of temporary accommodation: we uprated the local housing allowance to the 30th percentile; there is a new £120 million for a homelessness fund; and an extra £450 million for the local authority housing fund.

T7. [900462] **Jonathan Gullis** (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that Stoke-on-Trent City Council should invest its share of the £200 million that it recently secured from the National Lottery Heritage Fund on one of the three beautiful "beasts" of Burslem, including the indoor market, in order to regenerate the mother town, for which the leader of Stoke-on-Trent City Council is a local ward councillor?

Jacob Young: It is fantastic that Stoke-on-Trent has been chosen as one of the 20 places to benefit from the National Lottery Heritage Fund's £200 million investment in the Heritage Places initiative. The fund will make its funding decisions under that initiative and independent from Government. However, I am sure that the National Lottery has heard my hon. Friend's loud cry for Burslem, and I am sure it will look at it favourably.

T6. [900461] **Mohammad Yasin** (Bedford) (Lab): Sacha from Kempston, Bedford, is one of an increasing number of freeholders who are afflicted by estate maintenance charges. Will the Secretary of State commit to a review into the role of those excessive, unpredictable and often opaque fees and insurance costs that not only treat mostly new homeowners as cash cows, but are putting their homes at risk?

Michael Gove: That is a very important point, and yes, we are on it.

T9. [900464] **Peter Aldous** (Waveney) (Con): The Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft enterprise zone, which was set up in 2012, has been very successful. With no investment zones in the east of England, will my hon. Friend meet my right hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Sir Brandon Lewis) and me to consider how best the enterprise zone can be enhanced, so that it can continue to create jobs in the low-carbon energy sector?

Jacob Young: I would be delighted to meet my hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth. We have no plans at present to amend enterprise zones, but I am keen to ensure that their constituents continue to reap the rewards of levelling up, including the £100 million of investment for Sizewell C and freeport east, which will generate thousands of jobs across his region in new low-carbon technology.

T8. [900463] **Marsha De Cordova** (Battersea) (Lab): Caius House is a small youth charity in Battersea that leases a space in a multi-use high-rise building that includes residential dwellings. Despite its having state-of-the-art fire alarm systems, the charity faces huge waking watch costs. As the Building Safety Act 2022 does not protect registered charities, such as Caius House, will the Secretary of State look into this case? Will he seek to bring forward legislation to protect charities from high costs due to fire safety remediation work?

Lee Rowley: I think we responded to a written question on this matter just a few months ago, but I am happy to meet the hon. Lady to talk about it in more detail, if there still is a problem. I am not aware of one at the moment.

Jeremy Quin (Horsham) (Con): Horsham is suffering severe water stress and is subject to water neutrality. Does the Minister agree that mitigations should be thorough, evidenced and monitored?

Lee Rowley: I absolutely agree. Water neutrality is impacting on small parts of the country, but it needs to be dealt with seriously and proportionately by statutory consultees, and then with a can-do attitude from councils where appropriate.

T10. [900465] **Luke Pollard (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/Co-op):** Does the Minister agree that young people leaving care after their 18th birthday should get more help to get their first home? Will he back my campaign that I am running with Barnado's and Plymouth care leavers for a deposit scheme for care leavers and a rent guarantee scheme, because every single care leaver leaving local authority care deserves a good, decent and safe first home?

Lee Rowley: I know the hon. Gentleman has done a significant amount of work on this matter within Plymouth, and I know that my colleagues in the Department for Work and Pensions are doing a significant amount of work, too, and I would be happy to meet him to talk more about the matter.

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con): Sadly, a second homeless person died over the weekend. The number of rough sleepers is increasing, and the temperatures are falling. Will my hon. Friend take immediate action to ensure that rough sleepers are provided with a decent place to sleep, particularly during this cold weather?

Felicity Buchan: My hon. Friend raises an important point. Clearly, the death in Manchester was tragic. Local authorities can activate the severe weather emergency protocol measures. Manchester did activate those, but sadly the man was not known to local services. I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend, and we will do everything to support rough sleepers over the winter period.

Kate Osamor (Edmonton) (Lab/Co-op): The Government announced in the autumn statement £120 million of new money for homeless prevention for next year, but that is just a drop in the ocean, with Enfield Council alone facing a £9.8 million overspend on temporary accommodation for this year. When will this Government recognise the scale of the crisis and provide top-up funding for the homelessness prevention grant and discretionary housing payments?

Felicity Buchan: I remind the hon. Lady that our total package for homelessness and rough sleeping over three years is £2 billion. The £120 million is in addition to that, but I agree with her that there are real pressures on homelessness, particularly in London, and that is why there were three measures in the autumn statement.

Andy Carter (Warrington South) (Con): It is now 10 weeks since the bins were emptied in Warrington. A national pay dispute has spilled over into a local disagreement. Does the Minister agree that it is now urgent that Labour-run Warrington Borough Council gets round the table with the unions and finds an urgent agreement, before the situation turns into a health emergency?

Michael Gove: Absolutely. Again and again, we find that Labour-run local authorities, despite their much-vaunted relationship with trade unions, are incapable of resolving these disputes. Whether in Birmingham or Warrington, Labour must do better, otherwise working people suffer.

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): On public services, City of York Council area comes 152 out of 152 when it comes to public funding. As a result, services are now having to be cut in the area, as the council has £55 million less than when we last had a Labour Government. How will the Secretary of State ensure that fair funding stretches across all public services when looking at the new funding formula?

Michael Gove: We are absolutely committed to making sure that local authorities receive the resources they need. Having had conversations with the leader of City of York Council, I appreciate the constraints under which it is operating, and we hope to be able to say more in the local government finance settlement.

Siobhan Baillie (Stroud) (Con): I have spoken to Ministers about the work of organisations such as Fromehall Mill and the Sub Rooms, and we have been down to Berkeley town. With them in mind, when will the next round of announcements about the community ownership fund be made?

Jacob Young: I am delighted to confirm to my hon. Friend that the next round of the community ownership fund opens this week, on 6 December. We will have the outcomes of the last window in the coming weeks, but I know that she is very keen on Fromehall Mill and Berkeley Books, which she has been championing.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): The announcement that Edinburgh airport is for sale comes hard on the heels of the announcement last week that Grangemouth is closing the oil refinery. What can the Secretary of State say to reassure my constituents in Edinburgh West that everything possible has been done to ensure that this does not undermine the green enterprise zone in the area?

Michael Gove: The hon. Lady does a fantastic job of standing up for her constituents in Edinburgh West, and she is absolutely right: the UK Government should be, and are, working with the Scottish Government and private sector partners in order to ensure that sustainable growth continues to be part of the plan for Edinburgh and the wider Lothian region.

Neil O'Brien (Harborough) (Con): It is clear that the Government are planning to protect councils during the transition to the new planning system, and are not planning to force councils into having an out-of-date

plan by taking away their right to submit a new, up-to-date plan. Can the Secretary of State help me get this across to my local Lib Dem-run council, which is saying the exact opposite?

Michael Gove: I had the great pleasure of visiting Harborough on Friday, when I was able to see the enormously high regard with which my hon. Friend is held. Unfortunately, that high regard does not extend to Oadby and Wigston Borough Council or Harborough

District Council—two Liberal Democrat authorities that are playing fast and loose with the planning system, and which are not putting in place the protection that their residents deserve. All too often we find that Liberal Democrat local authorities do not have plans in place, do not have planning departments that work, and let their residents down. The Liberal Democrats are the enemies of good housing policy, and that is why we need to make sure that Conservatives are in power in local government.

Gaza: Humanitarian Situation

3.32 pm

Lisa Nandy (Wigan) (Lab) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Secretary of State to make a statement regarding the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Leo Docherty):

A tragedy is unfolding in the middle east. Israel has suffered the worst terror attack in its history, and Palestinian civilians are experiencing a devastating and growing humanitarian crisis. As the Foreign Secretary made clear, last week's agreement was a crucial step towards providing relief to the families of the hostages and addressing the humanitarian emergency in Gaza. This pause has provided an opportunity to ensure that much greater volumes of food, fuel and other lifesaving aid can enter Gaza.

On 24 November, the British Government announced a further £30 million-worth of humanitarian assistance, tripling our existing aid budget for the Occupied Palestinian Territories this financial year and bringing it to a total of £60 million. During the pause, the fourth UK aircraft, carrying 23 tonnes of humanitarian aid for Gaza, arrived in Egypt, bringing the total amount of UK humanitarian aid provided by British aircraft to 74 tonnes. That aid is now being dispersed to the United Nations to support critical food, water, health, shelter and protection needs in Gaza, and to pre-position emergency supplies in the region. We are also actively exploring other aid routes, including by sea.

The pause that ended last week was a crucial step towards providing relief to the families of the hostages and addressing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. We have said repeatedly that we would like to see an extension. UK humanitarian funding will continue to support trusted partners to provide humanitarian assistance, and negotiate humanitarian access, in Gaza. The UK will continue, in conjunction with our international partners, to advocate internationally on humanitarian priorities. These include respect for international humanitarian law, the need for fuel, humanitarian access, humanitarian pauses and an increase in the types of assistance. We are urgently exploring all diplomatic options to increase that, including urging Israel to open other existing land borders, such as Kerem Shalom.

We welcome the intensive international co-operation, including efforts from Qatar and the USA, which led to the agreement, and we thank partners for their continued work. We remain committed to making progress towards a two-state solution.

Britain's long-standing position on the middle east peace process is clear: we support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state. The UK will continue to work with all partners in the region to reach a long-term political solution that enables both Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace.

Lisa Nandy: Given recent events, it is surprising and regrettable that neither the Prime Minister nor the Foreign Secretary is making a statement today. The reality is that this conflict has sadly reached another phase, and many more innocent lives will be lost if we do not act now. We

urge the Government to continue to push for another cessation of hostilities and for all remaining hostages to be freed. To be clear, Israel must not besiege or blockade Gaza. It must comply with international law and protect innocent lives and civilian infrastructure, and ensure that attempts to address the humanitarian catastrophe are ramped up quickly.

In the last few days, partners on the ground have become increasingly concerned about the safe zone at al-Mawasi, with reports suggesting that aid is not reaching those who are there. Have the Government held talks with Israel and others to ensure that it does, and to seek assurances that Palestinians who fled there not will not be moved further still? The Minister will know that that is a key concern of Arab states. Shelters are severely overcrowded, dysentery is spreading, and the risk of cholera is now significant. That must be mitigated now. Is there is serious plan to deal with sewage and to distribute medicine and vaccines? It is winter in Gaza, where nearly 2 million people are displaced; many are in tents or in the open air. I urge the Minister again to follow the US's lead and appoint a humanitarian co-ordinator to get the trucks moving more quickly, to get fuel in and to work towards the opening of Kerem Shalom.

The UK and partners must redouble efforts towards an enduring cessation of hostilities and a lasting political solution. Israel must be assured that Hamas cannot carry out an attack like 7 October ever again. But, to build a lasting peace, we must assure a generation of Palestinians that there is hope: that they, their children and their grandchildren can expect the security and opportunity that is their right, with a plan for children both to prevent their deaths and to prioritise their lives, and a clear message that there can be no reoccupation or reduction of Gazan territory and that those displaced have the right to return home.

I urge the Government to play their part in ending the illegal settlements and settler violence in the west bank and to create a plan for the reconstruction and renewal of Gaza. We must do more without delay to deal with the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in front of us as we simultaneously work towards a better future. Many more lives will be lost if we do not act now.

Leo Docherty: I am grateful for my counterpart's constructive tone. We are in agreement: we are pushing for a further pause, which we regard as imperative. The success, as it were, of the last one showed the utility of a pause in terms of the increased flow of humanitarian support, and we continue to strain every sinew in our diplomacy to aim for that. The Foreign Secretary made that argument to his various ministerial colleagues last week and will continue to do that with his counterpart and ministerial counterparts right across the middle east.

The hon. Member mentioned the safe zone. We continue to monitor that, and officials in the region are seeing how it unfolds with regard to the humanitarian impact. She is right to draw the House's attention to the grievous humanitarian impact of disease. We are confident that channelling our funds through the UN agencies—the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, the Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UNICEF—is the right way to go about that, but the scale of increase of need is hugely alarming, and we are painfully aware that women and children often bear the

most unfortunate brunt of such impacts. I assure her that we are redoubling efforts. Clearly, our financial contribution has tripled, but that goes in hand with our political efforts, because it is only through a lasting peace, which she referred to, that this will be resolved.

The humanitarian component is of utmost urgency, but we must not forget the political component, which runs in tandem. Our stance on the illegal settlements in the west bank and our long-standing support for a sustainable solution with Palestinian statehood at the heart of the region's future are undiminished. In addition to our humanitarian efforts, in our political and diplomatic efforts we will continue to argue for Palestinian statehood as the seed for a long-term solution in the region.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I call the Father of the House.

Sir Peter Bottomley (Worthing West) (Con): The House will welcome the bipartisan support for what the British Government are trying to do. Most of us know that our direct power in the area ended more than 70 years ago. I put to those who want a simple ceasefire that a permanent end to violence would be helped by people around Israel recognising its international boundaries, and by Israel ensuring that it could withdraw to its own boundaries and stop the aggressive settler activity outside its own areas in the west bank.

Leo Docherty: The Father of the House makes a good point. A two-state solution in which both sides respect the other's right to exist and in which there is an end to settler violence is an essential precondition to any long-term peace in the region.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I call the Scottish National party spokesperson.

Brendan O'Hara (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): Exactly as it said it would at the end of the humanitarian pause, Israel has resumed its offensive in Gaza with full force, including an appalling attack on the Médecins Sans Frontières aid convoy. Official figures estimate that 1,000 Palestinians were killed this weekend alone. A massive cull of innocent civilians is taking place right now. It is blatantly obvious that all appeals made by the UK Government and others for Israel to avoid civilian casualties are being ignored. I wonder just how much this Government regret giving Netanyahu that blank cheque, particularly as millions of displaced people are being squeezed into a wasteland on the Egyptian border and the indiscriminate bombing continues. At the weekend, the EU's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, echoed Scotland's First Minister, saying:

"The solution can only be political"

and "centred on two states." And he is correct. What is holding the UK Government back from officially recognising the state of Palestine, as a fundamental first step to achieving a long-term solution to this awful crisis?

Leo Docherty: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's contribution. We are painfully aware of the tragic and significant human impact of the military operation, especially with regards to civilian casualties. But the issue should not be simplified to the degree where we forget that Hamas are a terrorist group that are prosecuting atrocities. We must see the civilian casualties as a product of the terrible conflict resulting from Hamas terrorist

atrocities of 7 October. We continue to argue very strongly to Israel that military operations must be conducted according to humanitarian law, avoiding civilian casualties. On the two-state solution, one of the major obstacles is Hamas—a terrorist group committed to the destruction of Israel. If Hamas were in charge, there would be no two-state solution. A necessary prerequisite is the evolution of a better form of Palestinian leadership in Gaza.

Kit Malthouse (North West Hampshire) (Con): If the RAF can fly surveillance planes over the Gaza strip in the much-needed search for hostages and to help their release, what is to stop us from flying cargo planes over and parachuting food and medicines to a starving population?

Leo Docherty: My right hon. Friend will have heard in my opening statement that a very significant amount of humanitarian aid—74 tonnes—has been delivered via UK aircraft. We are redoubling our efforts. Greater utility lies in assessing whether there can be a maritime route to increase humanitarian supplies.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I call the Chair of the International Development Committee.

Sarah Champion (Rotherham) (Lab): I welcome the responses the Minister is giving, but I want to hear the Foreign Secretary's response. On 16 November, we had a harrowing session with the humanitarian organisations on the ground in Gaza. We wrote to the Foreign Secretary, but have not had a reply. We have not had a reply either about when he will come in front of our Committee. With such a horrific and fast-moving situation in Israel and Gaza, when can this House expect to hear from the Foreign Secretary?

Leo Docherty: I am sure it will be very soon.

Andrew Percy (Brigg and Goole) (Con): The idea that settlements are the reason there is not a two-state solution is just complete and utter tosh. The reason there is not a two-state solution is that Hamas seek the total genocide and ethnic cleansing of the state of Israel. They seek to murder every single Jew. They used the most awful sexual violence against women on 7 October, some reports of which we read in shocking detail in *The Times* this weekend. There has not been a word from either Dispatch Box so far about the information on the abuse of the hostages who have been released, or a condemnation of the violence. That is why there has not been a two-state solution. Will the Minister confirm that the Government will continue to stay strong and support Israel in all its activities to root out this murderous terrorist cult?

Leo Docherty: I do not know if my hon. Friend heard my previous answer, in which I said that a principal blockage to a two-state solution were Hamas themselves. They are a terrorist group who have committed the most heinous terrorist acts. We therefore continue to be supportive of Israel's defending its people and its security.

Mr Ben Bradshaw (Exeter) (Lab): Palestinians have lost all hope of a two-state solution thanks to the policies of the Netanyahu Government in recent years. Would it not give them some hope if we followed other countries' lead and honoured the vote taken in this House nine years ago to recognise Palestinian statehood?

Leo Docherty: Our efforts are focused on a more pragmatic avenue, working with allies in the region to ensure there is sustainable and more meaningful support right across the region for a two-state solution.

Sir Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): If the Government accept that there can be no political solution unless Hamas are removed from control in Gaza, can the Minister explain to us who exactly will remove Hamas from that level of control in Gaza?

Leo Docherty: The political future of the Palestinians is a matter for Palestinians.

Layla Moran (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD): I would like to start by agreeing with the hon. Member for Brigg and Goole (Andrew Percy), who spoke about the rightful condemnation of the genocidal words from Hamas. These are the extremes of the debate, and on the other side of these extremes are Ministers in the Israeli Government who are calling for the dropping of a nuclear bomb on Gaza, and calling the siege of Gaza and the spread of epidemics a good thing. Those extremes do not represent where the majority of Palestinians, Israelis and the population across the world want to be, which is with this Government on two states. My question is simple: two states is all very well to say, but in terms of resources what is the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office actually doing to make it happen?

Leo Docherty: Our considerable resource, by way of humanitarian aid and political and diplomatic effort, is entirely focused on that. We bring a considerable diplomatic heft in our relationships across the region, and we are an important and permanent member of the UN Security Council, so we must not underestimate our ability to bring positive political leverage to this situation. That is something we are resolutely focused on.

Sir Michael Ellis (Northampton North) (Con): Over the weekend, *The Times* carried chilling testimony of Hamas's extreme violence against women on 7 October: gang rape, women found with bloodied underwear, broken bones from rape, beheading, and women found with gunshots to their private parts. What Israeli women hostages held in Hamas captivity have endured, and may still be enduring now, does not bear thinking about. Will my hon. Friend join me in condemning those appalling acts of violence and this aspect of the ongoing humanitarian situation? Does he acknowledge that Hamas terrorists in custody have spoken quite openly about their orders to rape and defile women?

Leo Docherty: I agree with my right hon. and learned Friend that these are deeply shocking reports. They are sadly, and very painfully, characteristic of the kind of terrorist violence that we have come to expect from Hamas, and we deeply condemn them.

Rushanara Ali (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab): Last week, I had the opportunity to visit Qatar with a parliamentary delegation. We met Dr al-Ansari, one of the official spokespersons, with Egypt, the US, Israel and others, involved in the negotiations to release hostages and secure the temporary humanitarian truce. It was clear that this was a fragile truce that required greater pressure from the international community on all relevant

parties—from middle east countries such as Qatar on Hamas, and from the US and the UK on the Israelis—to bring an end to this bloodshed. What are our Government doing, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and a G7 nation, to ensure that work is done to bring an end to the bloodshed and secure a permanent ceasefire? That is what people of all backgrounds and communities need. We need a peacebuilding process; we need our Government to act. What are our Government doing?

Leo Docherty: We continue to use all levers at our disposal to argue for another humanitarian pause. Regrettably, it seems that discussion of a ceasefire is premature, given that Hamas are committed to the destruction of the state of Israel. We are resolutely committed to another humanitarian pause, and we are using all means that are available to us to argue for it.

Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con): May I remind the Minister of the Prime Minister's words at Mansion House? He said that the UK will "act to shape the world, not be shaped by it".

I raise that with the Minister with regard to the loss of life that we have seen across the board. We have to do everything we can to preserve human lives. I supported humanitarian pauses to do that at a very early stage, but the time has come for the UK to take a lead at the UN as a member of the Security Council. Lead at the Security Council; call for a ceasefire with regards—*[Interruption.]* We all have our own views on this matter. I have supported humanitarian pauses before, but the time has come for the UK to work towards a ceasefire, the release of all the hostages, humanitarian assistance and a political solution in line with our own Security Council resolution 242 and the 1967 borders. When will we push that at the Security Council and lead the world on this matter?

Leo Docherty: We are continuing to shape the outcome, and for us the most pragmatic and useful outcome at the moment is a further humanitarian pause, which we are arguing for strongly.

Tony Lloyd (Rochdale) (Lab): If every humanitarian pause is simply a prelude to the further bombing of Gaza by Israel, what will be left other than a refugee camp and a wasteland, and who does the Minister think will govern that?

Leo Docherty: The hon. Member makes a good point. Of course, every civilian death is a tragedy, and the House is painfully aware of the human cost of the unfolding tragedy. As I said, aside from military operations, the political future and the way that Palestinians represent themselves is a question for Palestinians.

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con): I welcome the Government's support for the extension of the humanitarian pauses, so that more aid can get into Gaza and more lives can be saved. May I ask the Minister about post-conflict governance in Gaza? Fatah are not Hamas, and Hamas are not Fatah, clearly—by definition. Fatah are marginally better in the eyes of some Palestinians, but when they have gone to the ballot box, the Palestinians have not voted for Fatah; they have voted for others. I notice that there have been a lot of high-level diplomatic visits to the senior leadership of Fatah. May I encourage

the Government to perhaps look more widely at who might form the Government of Gaza in the future, so that the UK does not repeat the mistakes of the past and Fatah do not return to office only to be thrown out years later and perhaps replaced by a new Hamas?

Leo Docherty: It would be easy for us to prejudge and second-guess political outcomes in the west bank or indeed in Gaza, but we will not do that. What we would seek post-conflict is a democratic renaissance of the ability of Palestinians to represent themselves and govern themselves responsibly, and we must not prejudge or second-guess that.

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): Like many other Members, I have constituents who are British citizens and whose families are trapped in Gaza and desperate for humanitarian visas. One constituent who wrote to me at the weekend said that her 79-year-old mother had been displaced nine times and was now in Rafah. She and her brothers and sisters, who are British citizens and senior professionals, say that they do not want state funds because they can support their family, but surely they can bring their family—my constituent's 79-year-old mother, her sister and her sister's six-month-old baby—to the United Kingdom in order to look after them. What can I tell these people about humanitarian visas, and will the Minister lean on the Home Office to address the question of issuing humanitarian visas?

Leo Docherty: I note the hon. and learned Lady's question with interest. Given that she has cited a specific case—that of her constituent with links to Rafah—we can pursue it individually if she furnishes us with the details.

Mr Tobias Ellwood (Bournemouth East) (Con): With the humanitarian pause now closed, the nightmare is back for the remaining hostages and their families, for the Palestinians in desperate need of aid, and also for all citizens on both sides who are fearful of what falls from the skies. However, with no timeline and no clear plan, the next chapter is likely to be darker and more deadly. Does my hon. Friend agree that Israel will not, indeed cannot, resolve the humanitarian, governance and security issues alone? The international community has a vital role to play, not least to avoid escalation, so would the UK consider co-hosting an international summit with the United States and other stakeholders to begin the discussions that will start to resolve the bigger issues?

Leo Docherty: The international dimension is critical, and what is not in doubt is our ability and our intent to use our international diplomatic network and our connections across the region—because the regional approach is hugely important in this context. We will endeavour to use our connections throughout the Gulf states and the rest of the middle east, and internationally, to seek a just and long-term solution.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): What I want, what my constituents want and what the whole country wants is to stop killing children, stop killing civilians. They do not know who is the best person or group of people to do that, but for God's sake, someone stop this killing of children.

Leo Docherty: The images we have seen of civilian deaths have of course been acutely painful. We continue to use our relationship with Israel to ensure that it is restrained in terms of its application of force, and we are also forthright in our absolute condemnation of the terrorist atrocity perpetrated by Hamas and the grotesque effect that it has had on Israelis of all ages.

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con): Despite the humanitarian pause, the majority—137 hostages—are still held by the terrorists in Gaza. Of those, two are children, 10 are over 75 and 20 are female, and there are 11 foreign nationals. Clearly the negotiations with these terrorists broke down over the weekend, so what action is the FCDO taking to ensure that the hostages are freed and returned to their families?

Leo Docherty: That is at the front and centre of our diplomatic effort internationally. Obviously there is a complex web of negotiation effort on which I will not comment in detail, but we are painfully conscious of the need to exert all our institutional effort to bring those people home safely.

Seema Malhotra (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): The humanitarian crisis in Gaza is unspeakable, with 1.8 million people now displaced, 33,000 injured—and the number of hospital beds down to about 1,400 and dropping—and more than 15,000 dead. My constituent Noura has lost her brother and nephew, who were blown up in their home after they went back when they thought it was safe to do so. Her sister-in-law has lost her limbs, and two other children are in hospital in intensive care.

I need to ask the Minister these questions. What is the plan for humanitarian visas? What is the plan for safe zones, and how serious is it? What is the plan for people who have lost their homes, their family members, and their limbs? What is the plan, seriously, to work with international allies towards a permanent ceasefire, the release of hostages, and a proper political solution?

Leo Docherty: The hon. Lady makes a good point about the impact on hospitals. That is why we have tripled our aid. We are focused on channelling it through the UN agencies that can most effectively help people in hospitals, whether by the provision of fuel or other supplies. That is the groundwork that we hope will eventually unlock the political phase to improve the solution. It is humanitarian first, with the politics in tandem, which we are also doing.

Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): The sexual violence meted out by Hamas on 7 October was horrendous. In the second half of last month, a number of Members on both sides of the House received details passed on by a doctor in Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis, who said that three of his children and three of his grandchildren were among the 45 men, women and children in his house who had all been destroyed that afternoon while he was working a hospital shift. We are piling misery on misery, so as one former infantry soldier to another, I ask my hon. Friend to make sure that the British Government renew their plea for the greatest possible precision in pursuit of the terrorists so that we do not lose more civilian lives in that way.

Leo Docherty: My hon. Friend speaks with experience and knowledge, and we are making exactly those pleas to our Israeli colleagues.

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): Eight weeks after the unjustifiable murder of Jewish people in Israel and the countless rapes of Israeli and Jewish women, is the Minister disappointed that the United Nations women's group made the most facile and mealy-mouthed statement that did not even use the word "rape" in describing what had happened? Will he use his and the Government's influence to draw to the attention of the United Nations the importance of getting on side on this issue and condemning sexual violence against women and the rape of women? Just because they are Jews does not mean that they do not matter, and that point should be made to the United Nations over and over again.

Leo Docherty: Of course these reports are shocking and we certainly condemn it. Rape is rape, and we must call it out.

Steve Double (St Austell and Newquay) (Con): The more details we learn of the barbaric attacks of 7 October and the treatment of the victims, especially the women, the more horrific it becomes. One can only imagine the sheer anguish that the families of the victims go through on a daily basis as more information comes out, so can my hon. Friend tell me what humanitarian support is being provided to the families of the victims of Hamas?

Leo Docherty: That is a terribly good question. A large proportion of our tripled humanitarian aid budget of £60 million will be channelled through UNICEF and the other two UN agencies, UNRWA and OCHA, and a large proportion of it will support women affected by conflict.

Alison McGovern (Wirral South) (Lab): I am sorry, but I must press the Minister because I do not feel that he has answered the question on what the Government's strategy is, particularly the political strategy. We all feel this so strongly: no child should ever be the target of a terrorist or in any conflict, so what is the Government's political strategy to protect the lives of children?

Leo Docherty: Our strategy is to exert all efforts to bring about peace.

Neil O'Brien (Harborough) (Con): I welcome the Minister's growing success in getting aid into Gaza and the tripling of UK aid, but even as he works urgently to get aid to the neediest civilians of Gaza in the shortest possible time, will the Government redouble their efforts to bring about a diplomatic solution, perhaps using a contact group, in order that we can grow the humanitarian pauses into a just and lasting peace and a two-state solution?

Leo Docherty: That is exactly our strategy. It is to use diplomatic efforts in concert with humanitarian efforts to bring about a situation whereby diplomacy can take effect and the foundations can be laid of a long-term peace. We are clearly not there yet, and it will require a huge amount of diplomatic effort right across the region and a close relationship with many parties. That is something to which we can bring a great deal of expertise and utility.

Naz Shah (Bradford West) (Lab): What actions have the Government implemented to integrate their approach to preventing atrocities into the UK's foreign and development policy? How have they involved the Office for Conflict, Stabilisation and Mediation's mass atrocity prevention hub in risk assessing Israel's actions in Gaza?

Leo Docherty: Those issues are woven into the fabric of our diplomacy, and they are hugely important in all our work across the middle east, and nowhere more so than the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): The Committee to Protect Journalists has said that 57 Palestinian journalists have been killed in the Gaza strip since 7 October. It says this is the worst period for the killing of journalists since it started keeping records in 1992. Does that not illustrate the wholly indiscriminate nature of what is being done by the Israel Defence Forces? Will the Minister impress upon the Netanyahu Government the complete unacceptability of this situation?

Leo Docherty: I do not accept the right hon. Gentleman's description of it being "wholly indiscriminate", but of course I take seriously his comment about 57 journalists having been killed. That is tragic, but I take issue with his characterisation of it being "wholly indiscriminate". Of course we make representations to Israel to constrain and focus its operations, and we will continue to do so.

Ruth Jones (Newport West) (Lab): Like so many Members, I again received hundreds of emails this weekend from my constituents who are appalled and horrified at the continuing killing of innocent Palestinian men, women and children. They want the killing to stop, so will the Minister condemn the acts of violence and extremism by Israeli settlers in the west bank and call on the Israeli authorities to prevent settler violence, to ensure accountability for perpetrators and to condemn extremist rhetoric?

Leo Docherty: This Government are on record—I said it in my statement—in condemning settler violence in the west bank, but we must be very clear that this military operation is under way in Gaza because of the terrorist atrocity carried out by Hamas on 7 October. That is the terrible and tragic truth.

Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab): Over 15,000 civilians have now been killed in Gaza, and Israel's military operations have not abated following the pause in fighting. What specific requests are the Government making to their Israeli counterparts to stop the killing? When the Minister says a ceasefire is "premature", it sounds like a tacit acceptance that the disproportionate and indiscriminate destruction of civilian areas is a legitimate means of Israel pursuing its war aims.

Leo Docherty: A ceasefire would only be possible if Hamas had not stated their intent to wipe Israel off the map and to perpetrate another atrocity of the nature of 7 October. We are arguing for a humanitarian pause to allow de-escalation and the further flow of humanitarian aid.

Kim Leadbeater (Batley and Spen) (Lab): I echo the calls for a long-term political solution to this dreadful conflict, and for an end to the international community, including this Government, consigning it to the "too

difficult” pile. In the absence of the permanent ceasefire that I am sure we all want to see, does the Minister recognise, and will he reinforce, the warnings from the United States and others that Israel’s actions in Gaza must be proportionate, otherwise they are in clear breach of international law, as the comprehensive evidence from multiple agencies working on the ground in Gaza strongly suggests? I am sure he cares deeply about humanitarian issues, so will he join me in saying that sending texts or QR codes to advise people to evacuate a war zone, when there is no internet and no power to charge phones, is wholly inadequate and cannot protect civilians and save innocent lives?

Leo Docherty: We have called and continue to call on Israel to abide by international humanitarian law—that is not in doubt. Its military response must be proportionate, and we continue to argue strongly that it should show constraint in its pursuit of Hamas’s terrorist operatives embedded in the Gaza strip.

Apsana Begum (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab): On Friday, the hopes for a permanent ceasefire turned to despair with the continuation of the collective punishment and killing of Palestinian civilians, a large proportion of whom are women and children, in what the United Nations is calling “unprecedented” numbers. The Minister has just said that a ceasefire would be “premature”. Will he clarify whether there is any limit—any limit at all—on the number of Palestinian civilians that this Government support killing before calling for a permanent ceasefire? Will he explain what he understands to be the long-term plan for Gaza and how that plan is in keeping with international law?

Leo Docherty: Regrettably, Hamas do not want a ceasefire. It would be good if that were the case, but it is not. They are a terrorist group committed to the destruction of Israel and they are on record stating their desire to perpetrate another atrocity on the scale of 7 October. While that is a fact, the inevitable consequence is an Israeli military response. We support Israel’s right to protect its sovereignty, but we implore it to show constraint and avoid civilian casualties. Attendant to that, we will argue for a further humanitarian pause to allow humanitarian aid to flow.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Ind): Israel is clearly undertaking an act of cleansing of the entire population of Gaza. It is illegal in international law and in no way is it a proportionate response to the appalling events of 7 October. What does the Minister think is Israel’s long-term objective? Is it to expel the entire population of Gaza into Egypt? What is the role, purpose and military objective of British military participation in the whole area? Can he assure us that there are no British soldiers on the ground in Gaza?

Leo Docherty: It will be no surprise that I do not share the right hon. Gentleman’s assessment or view of the context. It is clear that Israel’s objective is to defend itself against the terrorist group of Hamas.

Julie Elliott (Sunderland Central) (Lab): In an earlier answer, the Minister said that the British Government are “forthright” in their condemnation of the atrocities of 7 October, which everyone agrees with. When will the

British Government be forthright in their condemnation of the murder of innocent Palestinian children? Some 15,000 people have died so far. At the start of the conflict, half the Gazan population were children. When will the British Government call that out and say enough is enough?

Leo Docherty: We continue to argue for constraint, restraint and the application of military power according to humanitarian law.

Florence Eshalomi (Vauxhall) (Lab/Co-op): Jason Lee, Save the Children’s country director for the Occupied Palestinian Territories, has just returned from a five-day trip to Gaza. He writes:

“A young child might not understand what is happening, but they see the destruction around them. They see when their homes, schools and communities are destroyed. They hear everything that is happening around them, the air strikes, the cries for help. And they feel the terror, the insecurity and the helplessness.”

Many right hon. and hon. Members have raised the issue of innocent children, who have no part in what is going on, being killed. We cannot watch while that continues. Does the Minister agree that working towards a definitive ceasefire is the only way to a sustainable peace in the region?

Leo Docherty: The hon. Lady makes a painful allusion to the view of Save the Children; a large proportion of our increased aid budget is going to UNICEF to support children who have been affected. We would all like a de-escalation and ceasefire, but while Hamas remain intent on perpetrating another atrocity, like the one on 7 October, it is hard to see how there can be any other response than the military response of Israel defending its sovereignty.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): The Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court has issued a call for evidence regarding possible breaches of international humanitarian law in Israel and Palestine. Is the UK Government in a position to contribute—indeed, will it be contributing—to that investigation?

Leo Docherty: Not at this stage, but we will continue to take note.

Imran Hussain (Bradford East) (Lab): Blackened by mould, eaten by worms, and mauled by stray dogs. That was the fate of four premature babies who medical staff were forced to leave behind after being forced by the Israeli military to evacuate al-Nasr Hospital in just 30 minutes. What was the crime of those four vulnerable premature babies, who were left to an unimaginable fate, and just how does the Minister plan on telling me that a humanitarian pause helped them when a ceasefire would have saved them?

Leo Docherty: The hon. Gentleman talks painfully about the humanitarian impact. Of course, the tragedy is that Hamas do not want a ceasefire, and therefore the conflict will surely continue.

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): I accept that Hamas are a terrorist organisation and their infrastructure needs to be dismantled so that they cannot commit any more atrocities, but that does not justify the unrelenting bombing that we saw return to Gaza over the weekend. Have the Government satisfied themselves that Israeli bombing

[Clive Efford]

is precision bombing against terrorist targets, and if they have not been able to satisfy themselves of that, why are they not calling for a ceasefire?

Leo Docherty: We have argued, and will continue to argue, for restraint. The whole House will share the anguish that the hon. Gentleman expresses about the humanitarian and human impact. We continue to make the argument to Israel that it must be restrained and it must follow international humanitarian law.

Yasmin Qureshi (Bolton South East) (Lab): The UN Secretary-General recently said:

“We are witnessing a killing of civilians that is unparalleled and unprecedented in any conflict since I have been Secretary-General.”

Over 16,000 Palestinians are dead, 70% of them women and children. Hospitals are being flooded by an influx of dead bodies. Over 41,000 people have been injured, 84,000 have diarrhoea, and 100,000 have acute respiratory distress syndrome. Thousands of people are trapped under the rubble, and 80% of the Gazan population is now internally displaced. There are bombs everywhere in Gaza. There is no safe place for these people to go to, so when will the Government ask for a definitive ceasefire and allow access for humanitarian aid?

Leo Docherty: The hon. Lady paints a moving picture of the terrible human cost. That is why we will continue to call, with renewed effort, for a humanitarian pause so that a greater degree of aid can flow.

Stephen Farry (North Down) (Alliance): I am a strong advocate of a full and proper ceasefire as a prelude to a wider political process. However, work has to be done to create the conditions for a ceasefire, including the potential provision of security guarantees. What plans do the Government have to discuss with their international partners the creation of some form of peacekeeping or monitoring presence, either on the basis of the United Nations or some form of ad hoc arrangement, including in particular the Arab states, in order to provide some form of confidence-building measures?

Leo Docherty: The hon. Gentleman makes an interesting point. We are certainly using our regional network of diplomacy and diplomatic presence to discuss regional solutions that may involve other Arab states, because the political settlement will depend on long-term and sustainable regional support, whatever the outcome might be.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Slough) (Lab): I want to see an end to the violence in Gaza, which is what I recently voted for, along with Labour colleagues. After the end of the fragile ceasefire last week, we desperately need the UK Government to work with international allies and push for peace, with the release of all hostages and an end to the killing of thousands of innocent Palestinians. As winter sets in, does the Minister share my concerns about a potential outbreak of cholera and other waterborne diseases, and the risk of starvation and dehydration? What steps are the Government taking to avert that ongoing crisis?

Leo Docherty: We are acutely aware of the manifold health risk in Gaza. That is why we have tripled our aid budget, a lot of which will be channelled through OCHA, UNICEF and UNRWA to attend to the risk posed by cholera and other diseases. We continue to push for peace, and a humanitarian pause would be the first step towards that.

Beth Winter (Cynon Valley) (Lab): On 30 October, the IDF's evacuation order directed Gaza's civilians southward, triggering mass internal displacement that the IDF said was for their own safety. On 1 December, the IDF ordered people to leave districts in Khan Yunis, where many had gone for their own safety, saying they were in a “dangerous combat zone”. Given that the IDF military action now stretches from Gaza City in the north to Rafah in the south, does the Minister agree with the UN's Volker Türk that “there is no safe place in Gaza”, and that only a permanent ceasefire can end this collective punishment of the Palestinians?

Leo Docherty: The hon. Lady makes a good point, but tragically the reason is that Hamas have often sought to embed themselves among civilian infrastructure, and as long as that is the case, tragedy will ensue. The solution is a de-escalation, the defeat of Hamas and, in the first instance, a humanitarian pause to improve humanitarian access.

Ms Marie Rimmer (St Helens South and Whiston) (Lab): Allegations of breaches of international humanitarian law should always be treated with the utmost seriousness. Assessing specific allegations is the proper task of lawyers in competent international courts. Does the Minister recognise, with Labour, that the International Criminal Court's jurisdiction must address the conduct of all parties in Gaza?

Leo Docherty: We have long been on record as calling for all parties to abide by international humanitarian law.

Mohammad Yasin (Bedford) (Lab): As the Israeli authorities are now bombing south Gaza—the very area they asked civilians to reach in order to be safe—does the Minister agree that the supply of arms to the Israeli Government must be suspended, given that serious violations amounting to crimes under international law are being committed?

Leo Docherty: We support, and are on record as supporting, Israel's right to defend itself, and our relationship with Israel is in accordance with that. That does not mean that we do not at the same time argue for a de-escalation, a humanitarian pause and a return to peace.

Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC): The United Nations Children's Fund says that Gaza is the most dangerous place in the world to be a child. France has offered places in its hospitals to treat the most severely injured children. Will the Minister now make a similar offer to the injured children of Gaza?

Leo Docherty: We need to be supporting children; that is why a significant portion of our humanitarian aid, which we have tripled to £60 billion, will be channelled through UNICEF to attend to the needs of children affected.

Marsha De Cordova (Battersea) (Lab): We know that more than 15,000 Palestinians have been killed, 70% of whom are women and children, and there are still thousands unaccounted for under the rubble. The events of the last two days demonstrate that a pause in fighting was never going to be sufficient. I ask the Minister what on earth it will take for his Government to call for a permanent ceasefire on all sides in order to prevent the bombardment of Gaza's civilian infrastructure, including not only its hospitals and schools—or what is left of them—but its water facilities.

Leo Docherty: The hon. Lady is correct that the pause was not sufficient to meet all the humanitarian needs. That does not stop us arguing for a further pause, because of course that is the first step to a more sustainable path towards peace.

Richard Burgon (Leeds East) (Lab): I must say that the Minister comes across as a passive observer while the further horror unfolds. I wish he would use his agency and his role, because 1.8 million people in Gaza have been forcibly displaced. People were told to go south to avoid the bombing, but now Israel is indiscriminately bombing areas there. The UN says that “there is no safe place in Gaza.”

Above all, this is a war on children. How many more children have to die before the Government add their name to the growing list of countries around the world calling for an immediate and sustained ceasefire?

Leo Docherty: I would say gently to the hon. Gentleman that in actuality this is a war on Hamas.

Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab): Surely the events of the weekend have shown that a temporary pause or cessation of hostilities is just not enough, and that what we need is a permanent ceasefire, which is what many people, including the British public as a whole, want to see. They want to see the release of hostages and a sustainable, credible political process so that we have a safe and secure Palestinian state alongside a safe and secure Israeli state, but it has come across in the statement that the Government have absolutely no plan. How many UK citizens and UK visa holders are still awaiting evacuation from Gaza?

Leo Docherty: The hon. Lady says that one humanitarian pause is not enough. Of course it is not enough; that is why we are arguing for another. That is an important part of our sense of there being a long-term obligation on us all to argue for a sustainable and long-term two-state solution.

Jeff Smith (Manchester, Withington) (Lab): Without a ceasefire or truce in place, there is no safe zone in Gaza. I have expressed concerns before about the inadequacy of Al-Mawasi as a safe zone without any infrastructure or ability to get aid to innocent civilians. Given that there seems to be no place for people to go and no hope for innocent civilians, does the Minister share my worry that the constant bombardment will drive the besieged people of Gaza into the arms of extremists, and what representations are the Government making to the Israeli Government to express those concerns?

Leo Docherty: Frankly, the solution would be for Hamas to come out of their tunnels and surrender so that Gaza can return to normality. That is what we hope might happen.

Janet Daby (Lewisham East) (Lab): I accept that Hamas are a terrorist organisation, but children, journalists, aid workers and innocent civilians have died and continue to be under threat in Gaza. There is now a potential outbreak of airborne and waterborne diseases. Surely it is now time for the UK Government to finally call for a ceasefire as they work towards the release of all hostages and a political peace process.

Leo Docherty: The hon. Lady makes a good point about disease. It is why a large portion of the tripled humanitarian fund of £60 million, channelled through the three UN agencies, will be focused on the prevention of contagious diseases.

Justin Madders (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): We all want the killing to stop, and if we get to a point where there is an end to the violence on a long-term basis, what guarantees can we obtain from the UK Government that the many people who have been displaced will be allowed to return and that there will be sufficient infrastructure in place to ensure that they have something to return to?

Leo Docherty: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point about post-war reconstruction and the return of civilians. Of course, the UK will be at the heart of the international response that will attend to that.

Zarah Sultana (Coventry South) (Lab): Madam Deputy Speaker:

“A night of utterly relentless bombardments”—

the worst of the war so far. Those are the words of a UNICEF spokesperson this morning in Khan Yunis in the south of Gaza, where 1.8 million Palestinians are now trapped as Israeli bombs rain down on them. They were ordered to flee the north, and they are now being slaughtered in the south. Nowhere is safe in Gaza. As even UN experts warn of the grave risk of genocide, the UK Government continue to give their full support to Israel, calling for pauses in the slaughter but not a permanent ceasefire and an end to the slaughter. Is the Minister happy to be part of a Government so deeply complicit in the horrors being inflicted on the Palestinian people?

Leo Docherty: We continue to be forthright in our support for the absolute right of Israel to defend its people and its sovereignty. The tragedy that has unfolded following the Hamas terrorist abomination on 7 October of course brings pain to all sides, but we will continue to be forthright in our commitment to Israel's security and, ultimately, I hope, to Palestinian statehood, in a long-term and sustainable peace in the middle east.

Mr Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab): Many of us absolutely recognise Israel's right to defend itself, and that Hamas and their approach are a barrier to a lasting peace solution, but we also absolutely despair that the Government's calls for restraint are being so ignored by the Israeli Government. Does the Minister agree that

[Mr Toby Perkins]

the international community needs to make it absolutely clear to every combatant in the conflict that the International Criminal Court is watching and people will be held to account for their conduct? His saying, “We call for humanitarian law to be followed” is simply not enough. People will be held to account for their conduct in this war.

Leo Docherty: The hon. Gentleman is stating the fact of the matter: international humanitarian law, which we expect all sides to follow, is there to be upheld.

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): The humanitarian situation is escalating; the disease burden is rising at such a pace that, without intervention, this will end up as a real humanitarian catastrophe. What discussions is the Minister having with the World Health Organisation and the UN to put in place what the aid agencies are calling for—a ceasefire—so that they can get on top on the disease burden across Gaza?

Leo Docherty: The hon. Lady makes a good point about the disease burden. We are arguing for an increased flow of humanitarian support and medical supplies, not just via land but maybe via a seaborne route, and we will continue to do so.

Rachel Hopkins (Luton South) (Lab): So many of my constituents continue to ask me to press the Government regarding their actions towards securing a ceasefire and

to help the suffering of innocent civilians in Gaza. To that end, what recent discussions has the Foreign Secretary held to urge Israel not to besiege or blockade Gaza, and to comply with international law and protect innocent lives?

Leo Docherty: The Foreign Secretary has been hugely active, engaging with many different nations. He was in Israel just some 10 days ago, making the point that we must ensure that the humanitarian impact of this conflict is constrained and limited.

James Murray (Ealing North) (Lab/Co-op): In Gaza, innocent Palestinians are facing an unimaginable nightmare—a humanitarian catastrophe, with thousands of civilians, including children, being killed. Further to his response to my hon. Friend the Member for Luton South (Rachel Hopkins), can the Minister provide more detail about what the UK Government are doing to urge Israel not to besiege or blockade Gaza, and to comply with international law and protect innocent lives?

Leo Docherty: We are pointing out that all sides must abide by international humanitarian law, and that ultimately there cannot be a military solution to political problems in the middle east. Clearly, we hope that the terrorist group Hamas will not have a political role representing the Palestinian people, but de-escalation and peace must come first.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I thank the Minister for answering the urgent question.

Legal Migration

4.31 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (James Cleverly): With permission, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to make a statement on legal migration.

Migration to this country is far too high and needs to come down. Today, we are taking more robust action than any Government have before in order to bring it down. Since my first day in the Home Office, just three weeks ago, I have been determined to crack down on those who try to jump the queue and exploit our immigration system. I have been working closely with my right hon. Friend the Immigration Minister on this subject. The recent figures from the Office for National Statistics show a provisional estimate of net migration for the year ending June 2023 of 672,000. While that is lower than the ONS estimate for net migration for the year ending December 2022, it is still far too high.

When our country voted to leave the European Union, we also voted to take back control of our borders. Thanks to this Conservative Government, we now have a points-based immigration system through which we can control who comes to the UK. We prioritise the skills and talent we need to grow our economy and support our NHS, and we have a competitive visa system for globally mobile talent; for example, last year we expanded health worker visa access to address the urgent need for more social care workers. The whole country can be proud that in the past decade we have also welcomed more than half a million people through humanitarian routes—people from Ukraine, Hong Kong and Afghanistan, including 85,000 from Ukraine and Hong Kong in the past year alone.

The British people will always do the right thing by those in need, but they also, absolutely rightly, want to reduce overall immigration numbers. That means not only stopping the boats and shutting down illegal routes, but a well-managed reduction in legal migration. People are understandably worried about housing, GP appointments, school places and access to other public services when they can see their communities growing quickly in numbers.

From January 2024, the right for international students to bring dependants will be removed unless they are on postgraduate courses designated as research programmes. We always want to attract the global brightest and best. We have also stopped international students switching out of the student route into work routes before their studies have been completed. These changes will have a tangible impact on net migration; around 153,000 visas were granted to dependants of sponsored students in the year ending September 2023.

Today, I can announce that we will go even further, with a five-point plan to further curb immigration abuses that will deliver the biggest ever reduction in net migration. In total, this package, plus our reduction in student dependants, will mean that around 300,000 fewer people will come to the UK in future years than came last year.

These measures are possible because we are building up our domestic workforce and supporting British workers. Thanks to the excellent work of my right hon. Friend the Work and Pensions Secretary, our back to work plan will help people stay healthy, get off benefits and

move into sustainable employment. It builds on the ambitious £7 billion employment package from the spring Budget to help up to 1.1 million people with long-term health conditions or disabilities, or who have been in long-term unemployment, to look for work, get into work and stay in work. We are also investing heavily in helping adults learn valuable skills and prepare for the economy of the future, and of course we have world-class universities that help in that endeavour.

The first point of our five-point plan will be to end the abuse of the health and care visa. We will stop overseas care workers bringing family dependants, and we will require care firms in England to be regulated by the Care Quality Commission in order to sponsor visas. Approximately 120,000 dependants accompanied 100,000 care workers and senior care workers in the year ending September 2023. Only 25% of dependants are estimated to be in work, which means that a significant number are drawing on public services rather than helping to grow the economy. We recognise that foreign workers do great work in our NHS and health sector, but it is also important that migrants make a big enough financial contribution. Therefore, we will increase the annual immigration health surcharge this year by 66%, from £624 to £1,035, to raise on average around £1.3 billion for the health services of this country every year.

Secondly, we will stop immigration undercutting the salaries of British workers. We will increase the skilled worker earnings threshold by a third to £38,700 from next spring, in line with the median full-time wage for those kinds of jobs. Those coming on health and social care visa routes will be exempt, so we can continue to bring in the healthcare workers on which our care sector and NHS rely.

Thirdly, we will scrap cut-price shortage labour from overseas by ending the 20% going rate salary discount for shortage occupations and reforming the shortage occupations list. I have asked the Migration Advisory Committee to review the occupations on the list because of our new higher skilled worker salary threshold, and we will create a new immigration salary list, with a reduced number of occupations, in co-ordination with MAC.

Fourthly, we will ensure that people bring only dependants whom they can support financially, by raising the minimum income for family visas to the same threshold as the minimum salary threshold for skilled workers, which is £38,700. The minimum income requirement is currently £18,600 and has not been increased since 2012. This package of measures will take effect from next spring.

Finally, having already banned overseas master's students from bringing family members to the UK, I have asked the Migration Advisory Committee to review the graduate route to prevent abuse and protect the integrity and quality of the UK's outstanding higher education sector. It needs to work in the best interests of the UK, supporting the pathway into high-quality jobs for the global talent pool, but reducing opportunities for abuse. This package of measures, in addition to the measures on student dependants that we announced in May, will mean that around 300,000 fewer people will be eligible to come to the UK than came last year. That is the largest reduction on record.

[James Cleverly]

Immigration policy must be fair, consistent, legal and sustainable. That is why we are also taking the fight to illegal migration. Our plan to stop the boats is working. Small boat arrivals are down by a third, even as illegal migration across the rest of Europe is on the rise.

Today we have taken decisive action to reduce legal migration with our five-point plan. Enough is enough. We are curbing abuses of the healthcare visa, increasing thresholds, cutting the shortage occupations list discount, increasing family income requirements and cutting the number of student dependants. I commend this statement to the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I call the shadow Home Secretary.

4.41 pm

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): I thank the Home Secretary for advance sight of the statement.

Today's statement is an admission of years of total failure by this Conservative Government—failure on the immigration system and failure on the economy. It is another example of the total chaos at the heart of this Government. Net migration has trebled since the last election, when the Conservatives promised to reduce it, as a result of their policies on the economy and on immigration, including the Prime Minister's policy decisions. In a chaotic panic, the Prime Minister now opposes the policies that he introduced and thinks that the Government's own decisions are a problem. Who does the Home Secretary think has been in charge for the past 13 years? More chaos, more veering all over the place.

Net migration should come down. Labour has called for an end to the 20% unfair discount, for increased salary thresholds to prevent exploitation and for the inclusion of advice from a strengthened Migration Advisory Committee. Most of all, we have called for a proper plan, with clear links between the immigration system, training and the economy, and workforce plans, none of which are in the statement, because the Government have no grip and no proper plan. This is a chaotic approach.

Immigration is important for Britain, and we have rightly helped Ukraine and Hong Kong. We benefit from international talent and students. That is why the immigration system needs to be controlled and managed, so that it is fair and effective, and why net migration should come down from record levels. But there needs to be a proper plan. It was this Conservative Government who brought in the 20% wage discount that allowed employers to recruit at less than the going rate, even though the Migration Advisory Committee warned against it, and even though it is completely unfair. They chose to apply salary thresholds that were lower than the Migration Advisory Committee originally proposed, and to not update them for years. As Chancellor and then as Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Rishi Sunak) repeatedly blocked proposals to tighten the rules, including in May this year, and including when the Government refused Labour's calls to end the unfair 20% discount. They repeatedly failed to listen to warnings about the failure to train or pay properly in the UK. Twelve months ago, I warned that work visas had substantially increased as a result of

major skills shortages in the UK and that the Conservatives were not taking any serious action to address those shortages. The Leader of the Opposition warned 12 months ago that the immigration system should be linked to new requirements to train up workers at home, but the Conservatives did nothing; unbelievably they are still doing nothing.

There is nothing in this statement about training requirements or workforce plans. The Conservatives say that they want fewer shortage occupations, but it was only four months ago that they added bricklayers, roof tilers and plasterers to the shortage list. They have totally failed on construction training, and there are no plans to tackle that. Engineering apprenticeships have halved since 2018, so it is no wonder that engineering visas have gone up. Again, there is nothing to tackle those failures.

Social care visas have gone up from 3,500 a year to more than 100,000 a year because the Government have failed for years to heed warnings about recruitment and retention in social care. They halved the budget for social care workforce recruitment and support back in the spring, and they are still not listening and still refusing to adopt Labour's plan for a proper workforce strategy for social care, including professional standards and a fair pay agreement. They are failing to tackle the delays in the asylum system that have also pushed the net migration figures up. They are failing to tackle NHS waiting lists that are preventing the long-term sick from going back to work.

The Prime Minister is just crashing around all over the place, reversing policies that he introduced, criticising policies he defended six months ago and introducing new immigration policies without any of the economic policies to match. A previous Prime Minister was accused of being a shopping trolley, veering around from one side to another. The current Prime Minister is clearly veering, but he certainly is not steering; he has just climbed into someone else's shopping trolley and is being pushed around all over the place.

Can the Home Secretary tell us where the workforce plan is on social care, on engineering, on bricklaying and on all the shortage occupations that the Government's total economic failure has left us with? Has the Migration Advisory Committee advised on these policies? Where are the reforms to strengthen the committee so that it can do so? Why have the Government still not introduced our requirements on employers or on the Government to address the skills and labour shortages that are driving the increase in net migration in the first place? The Conservatives are in chaos. They have no serious plan for the economy, no serious plan for the immigration system, and no serious plan for the country. Britain deserves better than this.

James Cleverly: I was waiting for the policy announcement from the Labour party, and sadly I am still waiting. The right hon. Lady talks about skills training. Hers was the party which, in government, dissuaded people from investing in their own skills, telling people that the only good job was a graduate job, undermining apprenticeships. That is something we have set about repairing through our entire time in government. Hers was the party that, in government, failed to put transitional measures in place when the EU expanded, importing significant numbers of people in the construction industry, which meant there was a disincentive to investing in people, technology and productivity—a situation

that she now decries. She fails to make reference to the £7 billion employment package announced in the spring Budget that will help 1.1 million people get back into work and stay in work.

When I was at the Dispatch Box in the days after my appointment, I said that Labour had a plan for migration. The problem that Labour Members have is that the plan they are proposing is the plan I am already implementing. Working with the Minister for Immigration, my right hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Robert Jenrick) since the day I was appointed, we have put forward the most substantial package of legal migration reforms that the country has ever seen. Their great idea is already being put in place by this great Government.

Damian Green (Ashford) (Con): I am very pleased to welcome about four and a half of the five announcements that my right hon. Friend has made, particularly the crackdown on abuse of the dependants route, which has proved a weakness in the system over recent years, and the increase in the family visa rate. He was told that this will cause apocalyptic damage, but when I first introduced the visa 10 years ago and set the rate at £18,700, which he now says is too low, I was told it would be apocalyptic for family life in this country. It was not—it was the right protection—and I am glad he is increasing it now.

However, may I ask him about the health and care visa, and particularly about the inability of people to bring dependants with them? How many care workers does he think will be deterred by that? How many fewer will be coming here? There is a shortage of about 150,000 in the care sector at the moment, and I hope that the new approach is not a significant contributor to the reduction in numbers. If it is, it will cause damage to the care sector.

James Cleverly: My right hon. Friend asks an important question. My right hon. Friend the Immigration Minister and I have crunched the numbers in great detail. What we have seen through this scheme is the displacement of British workers. The total number of people in the sector has not increased by anywhere near as much as the number of people who have entered on the family visa route. We also suspect that, globally, there is significant surplus demand. Although an individual with a family might be dissuaded because of the restrictions on family members, someone who does not have those family commitments will almost certainly be willing to put themselves forward, so we do not envisage a significant reduction in demand because of the changes. It will mean, however, that we have the care workers we need and not the estimated 120,000 other people who have come with them in recent years.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I call the SNP spokesperson.

Chris Stephens (Glasgow South West) (SNP): The statement will be judged on whether it is pandering to the right wing of the Home Secretary's party or addressing the needs of the economy—[*Interruption.*] I see them all cheering.

On the 120,000 dependants figure, can the Home Secretary tell me how many of them are children? Is he suggesting that children should be going into work? He mentioned his discussions with the Department of Work

and Pensions, but what discussions has he had with the Health Secretary? The Home Office figures show that 143,990 health and care worker visas were granted in the year ending in September. That is more than double the figure for September next year, which perhaps demonstrates the real impact that creating more barriers and red tape will have on the NHS and care sector. Finally, Professor Brian Bell, chair of the Migration Advisory Committee, recently warned that limits on overseas care worker numbers could see a situation whereby

“lots of people won't get care.”

Does the Home Secretary recognise that his proposals may cause irrevocable harm to the care sector?

James Cleverly: The point about dependants is an incredibly important one. If the hon. Gentleman had listened carefully to the answer I gave to my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Damian Green), I made the point that we do not envisage a reduction in the number of people working in the care sector, but a reduction in the number of people coming with those workers, the vast majority of whom are not in work. Whether they are children or out-of-work adults, the simple truth of the matter is that that creates a burden on the British welfare system, the education system, housing, school places and GP's surgeries. The offer that we are making is clear: we are supporting the health sector and the social care sector, but we are doing so in a way that minimises the additional pressure on communities.

It is incredibly easy for us to say and do things that might superficially be viewed as generous, but the people who disproportionately carry the burden of the decisions we make are those on the lowest salaries, those who are struggling to find housing, and those who are on waiting lists. We should be conscious of their needs. That is why we are being thoughtful and careful about the people we are welcoming into our country.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. Before we go any further, colleagues will recognise that a large number of people want to catch my eye for this statement. We have another statement afterwards, and then we have an important piece of legislation to which a large number of people want to speak, so I urge colleagues to be brief in their questions so that the Home Secretary can be concise in his answers. I will only be calling people who arrived for the beginning of the Home Secretary's statement. I am trusting those who were late not to be standing.

Sir Jacob Rees-Mogg (North East Somerset) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend think it would be a good idea to have a cap on the number coming in?

James Cleverly: Although I understand the calls for a cap, in practical terms, managing a cap is difficult. We want to ensure that we are being as generous as possible to the people who contribute to our society and our economy. We also recognise that not every single individual is the same—a child could count as one person against a cap, as would an investor who may bring a huge number of jobs—and we want a difference between the two to be possible.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I call the Chair of the Home Affairs Committee.

Dame Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): As the Home Secretary will appreciate, the Home Affairs Committee is keen to scrutinise the policies of the Home Office. At our meeting last week, that proved difficult because we could not get information about, for example, the cost of the Rwanda policy, asylum backlogs or the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children still missing from hotels. Can we please have an assurance from the Home Secretary that when the Immigration Minister appears before the Committee next week, we will have the full evidence base and economic impact for the policy announcements made today?

James Cleverly: I have no doubt that the Immigration Minister, who is hugely experienced in this portfolio, will come fully armed with facts and figures at his fingertips.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): We eased the driver shortage by training more people at home and paying them more. Is that not the right model for the scarcity occupations?

James Cleverly: My right hon. Friend is right. What we want is a high-skilled, high-productivity, high-wage economy. These proposals and the work that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced support that. Labour would do the opposite.

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): These proposals—some of them, at least—will be met with absolute horror in the Lake district hospitality and tourism industry, which is a £3.5 billion industry. Twenty million people visit our communities every year, but because of the Government's failure to provide sufficient affordable homes for local people and their stupid visa rules, we now have a massive workforce crisis. Two thirds of our businesses cannot meet demand because of inadequate numbers of workers. Has the Home Secretary spoken to anybody working in or managing the lakes hospitality industry, or does he not care what they think?

James Cleverly: My right hon. Friend the Immigration Minister met the Lake District tourist Board; so, specifically in answer to the hon. Member's question, yes, he has. The simple truth of the matter is that we have analysed the figures, and we know which sectors have brought in the most people. Hospitality in the UK is an incredibly important sector and a fantastic employer of local people. That is what we want to see in that sector.

Tim Loughton (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con): The net immigration figures are unsustainably high, notwithstanding the large element of Ukrainian and Hong Kong people coming here, so I welcome most of the proposals, and particularly the action on dependants, which have gone up sevenfold since 2020, particularly pertaining to care and health workers. We have heard about care workers recruited to homes that do not exist and people traffickers putting together people awarded visas and dependants with whom they have no connection. How will measures be taken to ensure that the proposals are enforced and that such abuses do not continue?

James Cleverly: We have already started to take action, and the plans that we have put forward today will take that further. Ensuring that care homes are registered with the Care Quality Commission goes a long way to addressing the abuses that my hon. Friend discussed. We are putting forward plans that support our economy, our health sector and the British people in a clear, transparent, predictable and fair way.

Neil Coyle (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (Lab): Can the Home Secretary tell us which business groups or trade associations support the proposals and were involved in developing them? I have heard concerns from businesses today that our national economic interest is once again in the hands of Tory head-bangers.

James Cleverly: We continue to work extensively with business to ensure that their need for employees is supported, and to support our economy in a way that does not undermine communities or depress wages but supports the high-skill, high-wage economy that we aspire to. Clearly, the hon. Gentleman does not.

George Eustice (Camborne and Redruth) (Con): Is not the problem with a skills-based immigration policy that it gives preferential access to bankers, lawyers, accountants and economists, even though we have no need for such people in this country? We have plenty of homegrown talent here. That makes it difficult to recruit the people we do need: care workers; people in the food industry and in manufacturing, or producing things generally; or in the tourism industry. Will the Secretary of State consider moving away from the failed skills-based migration policy towards one based on the needs of our economy?

James Cleverly: I have huge respect for my right hon. Friend, but the figures just do not bear out his assessment. The vast majority of people in the last couple of years' worth of immigration figures are in the lower end of the skills spectrum. The figures do not bear out his point.

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): There is no evidence that immigration pushes down wages. I do not know if the Secretary of State has any elderly relatives in care, but I do. I know the invaluable contribution that overseas care workers make. Many are young men and women, for example from the Philippines, who are wonderfully hard-working, caring and very respectful of elderly people. Why should they be forced to leave their dependent children thousands of miles away in the Philippines?

James Cleverly: No one is being forced to do anything. If people choose to come here, they choose to abide by the rules that we put in place. That is completely fair and appropriate. My mother came to work in the NHS in the 1960s. We value the people from around the world who have come to support us, but it is right and fair that we put rules in place, that we let people know those rules and, if they wish to come and join us in this wonderful country and work in our wonderful society, it is right and fair that they abide by those rules.

Sir Simon Clarke (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) (Con): My constituents will warmly welcome today's announcement, because immigration figures in

recent years are clearly unsustainable. Does it not speak volumes that we are described as head-bangers for pointing out what is blindingly obvious to Government Members? What consideration has my right hon. Friend given to an annual migration budget, so that we can all be held accountable in this House for the choices that we make on behalf of our constituents?

James Cleverly: My right hon. Friend makes an important point. Ultimately, the decisions that we make here affect the lives of others. We should always be conscious of the impact of our decisions. That is why we have listened carefully to those who have spoken of housing shortages and school places becoming harder to find in their local areas. With figures significantly higher than promised, they would want us to take action. We are now taking action—that was always part of taking back control. We hear over and over from Opposition Members that they do not want us to take action. They are fundamentally wrong on this issue.

Alex Cunningham (Stockton North) (Lab): When it was raised last week by my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), the shadow Home Secretary, it appeared that the Home Secretary did not even realise that foreign workers were being paid 20% less than UK workers—the so-called “salary discount”—but he has followed her good advice and I welcome the end of that discrepancy. How will the new payroll be applied to those already here?

James Cleverly: It will be brought in in the early part of next year, in close co-ordination with the Migration Advisory Committee. No one who is already here will be disadvantaged. Ultimately, we want a high skilled, high wage, high productivity economy. The shadow Home Secretary says that the Labour party wants to address those issues, but I made a quiet prediction to myself and others that each and every intervention from the Labour Back Benches would be in complete contradiction to her position from the Labour Front Bench. Let us see.

Kelly Tolhurst (Rochester and Strood) (Con): I thank the Home Secretary for his statement on the measures he will be taking to bring down the number, which is too big and unsustainable, particularly for communities in the south-east. Now that he is making the best of being able to change the policy to suit the needs of this country, will he consider an annual review to alter the requirements and rules to suit the needs of this country over time?

James Cleverly: My right hon. Friend makes exactly the right point. Our promise to the British people was to take back control of our immigration system and our borders, a policy that was, at the time and subsequently, opposed by the Labour party. Taking back control means making adjustments, addressing the needs of our economy and our society. The changes I am putting forward today are in response to our economic needs, as well as our social needs.

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): There is a global skills shortage of health and care workers, so they have choices to go to other countries that will accept dependants. What message does the Home Secretary

have for the 7.8 million people currently on the NHS waiting list, when we will not have the skills to provide the care they desperately need?

James Cleverly: As predicted, each and every one of the speakers on the Opposition Benches thus far has opposed the proposals I put forward, despite what the shadow Home Secretary said. As the hon. Lady will have heard me answer on two occasions, we do not envisage a reduction in demand because of the significantly large number of applicants that was originally envisaged when the visa scheme was put in place.

Chris Grayling (Epsom and Ewell) (Con): I find it baffling, given that well over 1 million people came to this country in the past two years, that the Opposition parties do not seem to think it a good idea to scale back. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on this package. Will he also look at the question of those who come here to study? There is an automatic assumption at the moment that those who do so have a right to stay after they have studied and look for a job. There is a case for revisiting that and asking whether that is right in all circumstances.

James Cleverly: My right hon. Friend is right to draw our attention to students. Our university sector is a global success story and widely respected around the world. We want to make sure it maintains that reputation for quality. We want to make sure that the global brightest and best who choose to come to study and work here are genuinely the global brightest and best. Higher education should be a route to study and education, rather than a visa route by the back door.

Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): Since the crew for fishing vessels was added to the shortage occupation list by the Government, only a handful of visas have been granted. That is not because of the earnings threshold—most would meet that requirement comfortably—but because of the requirement for the English language test at level B1. Why does the Home Secretary think that B1 is an appropriate level for somebody working on a fishing boat?

James Cleverly: An inability to speak English would hamper anybody, and it really is entirely reasonable to expect people coming here to work to be able to do so.

Steve Brine (Winchester) (Con): This year, vacancies in adult social care fell a little—the figure now stands at a “mere” 152,000—which was due to a large increase in the number of care workers coming to this country as part of the shortage occupations list. The Library tells me that, as of September, there were 121,000 vacancies in the NHS. What exact changes does the Home Secretary envisage making to the shortage occupations list? Can he please show the workings-out of the changes to family arrangements, for which he said that he has crunched the numbers with the Immigration Minister? Above all, who did Ministers consult in the health and care sector ahead of today’s legal migration announcement?

James Cleverly: We asked the Migration Advisory Committee to look into these things—that is why it exists—however my hon. Friend makes a very important point, which speaks to why we are tightening the system to prevent abuse. Anyone looking at the numbers will see that a significant number of people have come

[James Cleverly]

through the health and social care visa system over the last couple of years, yet we have lost them from health and social care. That is not what any of us needs or wants. The right thing to do is to ensure that those who come are genuinely employed in that sector, which is where we need them—that is the promise that they have made to us, and that we have made to them. Ensuring that that is the case is the right and fair thing to do.

Beth Winter (Cynon Valley) (Lab): The Minister said: “Migration to this country is far too high and needs to come down.” But as others have said, so many of those who come to this country make a critical contribution to our employment sectors, no more so than by filling the gaping holes in our social care and health sector. I would be interested to hear the Minister’s response to Unison, the social care trade union, which says:

“The care system would implode without migrant care staff.”

Does he not agree that a better, more humane approach would be to fund local government to improve social care pay and conditions?

James Cleverly: There we go again. As I have said, while the shadow Home Secretary says that immigration numbers are too high, each and every one of her Back Benchers disagrees with any action to deal with it. We have got to bring these numbers down, we have committed to do so, and we have put forward a thoughtful plan, which takes into consideration the needs of the health and social care sectors.

Rachel Maclean (Redditch) (Con): I think the howls of outrage from the Opposition Benches highlight the inconsistency in Labour’s position, given that it was the party that wanted to overturn the referendum and introduce unlimited free movement of labour. Does the Home Secretary agree that pressure from migration puts pressure on local families and young people who want to buy or rent their own house, and will he consider that every time he grants more visas for people to come to this country?

James Cleverly: This is an incredibly important point, and it is why control of immigration is so important. We are a generous country. We have demonstrated that generosity time and time again, whether it be towards the Ugandan Asians, people from west Africa, people from Hong Kong or people from Ukraine. We are rightly proud, but it is also important that we prove that we are thoughtful about the implications for those who live here, whether they have lived here for decades, for years, or for generations. That is why it is right that we have put forward these proposals, which are carefully calibrated to support our economy and our health and social care needs, but also to bring down those figures.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Slough) (Lab): The net migration figure is now 672,000—three times the level at the 2019 general election, when the Conservatives promised to reduce it. Does the Home Secretary concede that the Tories have failed miserably on immigration policy, along with a whole host of other policies, and that that is why their time is now well and truly up?

James Cleverly: No, I do not.

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): I congratulate the Government on taking a thoroughly common-sense view in raising the threshold to £38,000—and I say that as a senior citizen member of the New Conservatives—but the Home Secretary said in his statement:

“Those coming on health and social care visa routes will be exempt, so we can continue to bring in the healthcare workers on which our care sector and NHS rely.”

What does that phrase mean? Will such action not drive a coach and horses through this measure? Surely the solution is for the care sector to pay proper wages.

James Cleverly: We have recognised the recruitment challenge for domestic workers in the health and social care system, and we have made it clear on a number of occasions that we will not allow those extremely important public services, on which we rely, to be without the staff that they need. What we want to do is bring in the people who are employed in those sectors, but not the dependants whom they have typically brought with them. That will enable us to lower the headline numbers, which we have committed ourselves to doing, while protecting the health and social care sector, which we have also committed ourselves to doing.

Mr Ben Bradshaw (Exeter) (Lab): The Home Secretary has admitted several times that we are losing people from the health and social care sector, both domestic workers and people whom the Government have brought in, but he has said nothing about increasing pay, has he?

James Cleverly: We have said over and over again that we are working towards a higher-productivity, higher-skilled, higher-wage employment sector, across all sectors of employment. What we have said is that the current visa regime has displaced workers, which is why we are changing it.

Jonathan Gullis (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Con): The people of Stoke-on-Trent, North Kidsgrove and Talke will welcome today’s announcements from the Home Secretary and the Immigration Minister, while also recognising the faux outrage of Opposition Members who can talk tough through their rhetoric from the Front Bench. The squirming on the Back Benches of uncomfortableness when it comes to talking about immigration is something that I thoroughly enjoy, especially as we know that they wish to return free movement via the back door. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that future reviews will look to stopping the dependency route for those on one-year Masters by Research degree courses as well?

James Cleverly: We have committed to doing a wider review of the higher education, post-graduate route, and I take my hon. Friend’s point on board. We have already taken action, but I commit to reviewing it, and once we have seen the outcome of the review, I will be able to update my hon. Friend and the House on the decisions that we make.

Layla Moran (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD): A choice could have been made between protecting the flank against Reform UK and backing British business. I do not understand how the Home Secretary can think that the way to create jobs for local people is to starve sectors such as the science industry of, for example, the lab technicians required to drive what they need to do.

How on earth does he think that anyone in Oxford West and Abingdon will be helped to get a job when the industries that employ them are not able to grow?

James Cleverly: It would have been better had the hon. Lady listened to the points that were made about protecting the scientific community in and around Oxford by ensuring that we remain attractive to the global brightest and best, and protecting the people who need our protection in the health and social care sectors by ensuring that those sectors are staffed. The simple fact is, however, that we have committed ourselves to bringing these numbers down. What we are proposing will bring those numbers down, and will do so in a way that reinforces our commitment to a higher-skilled, more productive, higher-wage economy.

Sir Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): Does the Home Secretary accept that, in order for any large-scale immigration policy to succeed, it is necessary for people to wish to integrate? What steps are the Government taking to ensure that there is a smooth path to integration for those large numbers of people who come here?

James Cleverly: My right hon. Friend makes an incredibly important point. I replied earlier about the need for English language. If somebody is denied the ability to communicate in the country that they choose to call home, they will be permanently disadvantaged and find it harder to integrate. We want people to integrate; we want people to be and feel part of our communities. We want the communities that they move into to welcome them and to be confident that the immigration system of this country supports not only those new arrivals who choose to make this country their home but the people who already live here.

Justin Madders (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): After 13 years in power and seven years after we voted to leave the EU, I do not know why anyone would believe that this Government will reduce net migration in the way that is being claimed today. But if we assume the Home Secretary's figures are right, net migration will still be higher than it was in 2019 when his party promised to reduce it. That is right, isn't it?

James Cleverly: The simple truth is that the British people have far more confidence in the party that campaigned to take back control of its immigration system, than they do in the party that would maintain free movement and whose contributions from the Opposition Benches have, unsurprisingly, been in opposition to the decisions that we are taking to bring down the numbers of net migration.

Steve Double (St Austell and Newquay) (Con): I very much welcome the announcement today, and particularly the measures to stop the abuse of the health and care visa. The Home Secretary will be aware of a number of bogus care companies that are charging people tens of thousands of pounds to come to this country, only to find that there is no job. Many of them are ending up in Cornwall. I think I understood him to say that these measures would be introduced in the spring. Can I urge him to look at bringing that forward so that we can end what is effectively people trafficking and ripping people off and the misery that it is causing?

James Cleverly: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The people who are brought here on a false premise are victims of abuses of this system. We are already taking action to address those abuses, and this package of reforms goes further still, with the necessity to be subscribed to the Care Quality Commission. He is absolutely right to say that abuses hurt everybody, and we will continue to take action to address them.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): Net migration figures are also affected by the number of people who choose to leave the country, and since Brexit it has been much more difficult for people from Glasgow North who want to live, study or work in Europe for any extended period of time. What steps are the Government taking to negotiate more visa exchange programmes with the European Union and other countries that could allow the sharing of skills and experience across borders, with at the very least a neutral effect on net migration?

James Cleverly: Without wanting to drift back into my old portfolio, I have, in close co-ordination with my right hon. Friend the Immigration Minister, negotiated a number of youth mobility programmes to attract the brightest and the best. The hon. Gentleman talks about people leaving certain geographies. He might want to reflect on the fact that a significant number of people are leaving Scotland to come south of the border because of the pernicious income tax regime that the Scottish National party Government in Edinburgh have put in place.

Lia Nici (Great Grimsby) (Con): I would like to thank my right hon. Friends the Home Secretary and the Immigration Minister for listening to us. I am sure that the measures he has announced today will be welcomed by constituents in Grimsby, but does he agree that we need these measures to come quickly and that we perhaps need more conditionality? For instance, if people are coming here supposedly to take up skilled or skill-shortage jobs but are not doing so, perhaps we should invite them not to stay.

James Cleverly: I thank my hon. Friend for her comments about these reforms, and I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Immigration Minister, who has been working on this for longer than the three weeks that I have been in this role. My hon. Friend is right to say that we want to bring people here in good faith and that we expect them to act in good faith. If they apply via a certain visa route, we expect them to abide by the conditionality of that visa route. If they contribute, play by the rules and do the right thing, they will always be welcome, but we take a dim view of those people who seek to abuse our hospitality.

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): Immigration figures have trebled since the 2019 general election, and it is worth reminding ourselves that, back then, the Conservatives told us that they were going to reduce immigration to the tens of thousands. The scale of the failure is enormous, as underlined by the Office for National Statistics, which says that 90,000 asylum seekers have been waiting over a year for their asylum cases to be dealt with, so more than 15% of it is due to the sheer incompetence of the Secretary of State's Department. What is he going to do about that? I did not hear any reference to it in his statement.

James Cleverly: We have increased the pace of decision making in our asylum processing system tenfold. I remind the hon. Gentleman that in recent years we have made very generous offers to the people of Hong Kong and Ukraine. I know the British people will recognise which of our two parties will grip immigration, and it certainly is not his.

Neil O'Brien (Harborough) (Con): This excellent package is a big step in the right direction, towards a higher-skill, higher-wage economy with less pressure on our housing and infrastructure. Will my right hon. Friend put in the Library the analysis behind his statement that this package, plus the previously announced reduction in student dependants, will mean that more than 300,000 people who came last year would no longer be able to do so? It would be interesting to understand how much of that is the previously announced reduction in student dependants, how much of it comes from each of the announcements made today and how it compares with the forecast for future migration laid out by the OBR in the most recent economic and fiscal outlook. Will he put that in the Library? A previous Government were rightly mocked for saying that only tens of thousands of people would come from eastern Europe, and they were completely wrong. As well as having a better policy, can we also have more transparency?

James Cleverly: My hon. Friend makes an important point, and I am more than happy to put in the Library our estimates of the impact of these announcements and the previous announcements.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I understand exactly what the Home Secretary is trying to do on migration, and there is a need to do some of those things. I work closely with the Northern Ireland Fish Producers Organisation back home, and fishing is an industry that welcomes foreign workers as there is a clear shortage. When we left the EU, the fishing sector was promised that things would get better, that quotas would make stocks more available and that the fishing sector would therefore grow. The fishing sector welcomed that.

The minimum income was set at £18,600, whereas the average wage of a fisherman in Northern Ireland is £24,000. The English language became the next obstacle, and the fishing sector tried to agree to it. Will there be some realism on the skilled worker threshold of £38,700, which will not give the fishing sector the opportunity it needs to be active in employing people?

James Cleverly: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. We will work with the MAC to ensure that, as we get rid of the shortage occupation list, we do not undermine key industries. I want to ensure that the fishing industry, whether in Northern Ireland or on the east coast of Scotland, can remain viable and profitable. That will always be part of our thinking.

Miriam Cates (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Con): I warmly welcome this statement and these measures. I thank my right hon. Friends, the Home Secretary and the Minister for Immigration, for listening to colleagues on both sides of the House, and especially those in our New Conservatives group. Extraordinary growth in immigration levels over recent years has been masking some long-term structural weaknesses in our economy,

such as low productivity, high debt, falling birth rates and a negative balance of trade, by propping up the OBR's superficial GDP growth figures. Does my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary agree that, in order to bring down immigration numbers permanently, the OBR must instead turn its attention to the kinds of growth that really matter to our constituents: skills growth, wage growth, housing growth and industry growth? In other words, real growth.

James Cleverly: I assure my hon. Friend that the Government remain relentlessly focused on those very issues. Increasing skills, increasing productivity and increasing investment in plant, machinery and technology to unlock the full economic potential of this country is at its heart. We will always make our case to the OBR. We will do what we know to be in the best interests of this country and of the people who work in this country.

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con): I commend my right hon. Friend on at last tackling an unsustainable issue, but was he, like me, a little concerned that two very high-ranking officials were unable to a parliamentary Committee to answer basic questions on migrant issues? Will he assure me that this will not happen in future and that he will push through these five excellent points forthwith?

James Cleverly: I assure my hon. Friend that we will deliver these proposals with alacrity and at pace.

Dr Caroline Johnson (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): My constituents believe migration figures are too high, so I welcome today's statement and thank the Home Secretary and the Immigration Minister for their hard work to develop the proposals. We heard from the Opposition how some large businesses will bemoan the fact that they no longer have access to cheap labour undercutting the British workforce, but does the Home Secretary agree that raising the threshold to £38,000 means that businesses will need to invest in technology, higher wages and better conditions for the domestic workforce?

James Cleverly: To be really profitable, a lot of businesses understand that their best choice is to invest in their own businesses and people. Through the super-deduction policies put forward by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, we are encouraging businesses to invest in technology to unlock productivity and in the people they employ, because we are committed to a high-wage, high-productivity, high-growth economy.

Alexander Stafford (Rother Valley) (Con): I welcome today's announcement, which will cut about 300,000 people off our net migration figures. Does the Home Secretary agree that the number of migrants the UK allows in each year should be directly proportionate to the number of new homes, GPs and school places we have, because at the moment the situation is completely unsustainable?

James Cleverly: An important part of taking back control of our migration processes is to give planners, particularly at local government level, some kind of certainty about the demand. We see the demand from migration fall unevenly across the UK, putting some communities, particularly coastal communities, under great pressure. We want to ensure we have a planned,

controlled immigration system. We are making these changes and bringing the numbers under control so that local government planners and others have more certainty about the future.

Tom Hunt (Ipswich) (Con): I welcome the measures, but it is a shame they have taken so long. They should have been published after the last ONS stats were published, when I suggested a number of ideas about how we could keep our promise to the British public. There is great cynicism among the public about politicians talking about immigration—they have heard it all before. Will the Home Secretary promise that in the months ahead, he will explicitly demonstrate to the British public that this time it is different, we mean it and they will see change?

James Cleverly: I assure my hon. Friend that the Immigration Minister and I had our first conversations on these figures before the ONS figures came out. I discussed the plans, which he had been working on for some time, within hours of being appointed to this role. We are working closely with the Treasury and other Departments on the implications. Across Government, the package is subscribed to and it will be delivered. While we recognise that it will not provide an instant fix—the House has to be realistic about that—we are committed to bringing the figures down and taking back control of our borders.

Brendan Clarke-Smith (Bassetlaw) (Con): I warmly welcome the measures. I thank the Home Secretary for his highly robust statement and the Immigration Minister for his excellent work, which responds to the concerns of my constituents in Bassetlaw and the constituents of other Members. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the measures mean we will continue to bring the brightest and best to this country, as well as those seeking help and refuge, such as those from Ukraine and Hong Kong, but not those who, along with their dependants, do not represent a net benefit to the UK and who consume more than they contribute?

James Cleverly: I visited businesses in my hon. Friend's constituency not long ago, and I could see the desire among the businesses that we met, whether they were traditional metalworking businesses or high-tech drone businesses, for the brightest and the best. They want people who are genuinely committed to contributing to our economy. That is the default setting of the British people. We are generous at heart, and we have a track record of being very generous, but we expect people to play by the rules and to contribute to our society and economy. That is not too much to ask. We are putting those conditions in place—conditions that, unsurprisingly, are opposed over and over again by all Opposition parties.

Mr Rob Roberts (Delyn) (Ind): I declare an interest as the chair of the all-party parliamentary group for the Philippines. After the UK and India, the Philippines provides the third highest number of workers in our health service, and we would be in a very difficult place without their vital work to keep us safe and well. I welcome that people coming on the healthcare visa will be exempt from the increased salary requirements, but the cost of permanent residency remains extremely challenging and a barrier to entry. Given that the Home Secretary has spoken a number of times about integration, and the importance of such people in our communities, will he meet me and representatives of the Philippine Nurses Association to discuss how we might help them to make this country their permanent home as thanks for their amazing work?

James Cleverly: I recognise the contribution that medical professionals from the Philippines make to the UK; indeed, I was in Manila not long ago, just before I was appointed Home Secretary. I value their contribution. We want to ensure that we support the people who want to come here and work, that we fill those roles, and that by using technology—there is technological opportunity in the health and social care sector—we increase productivity to fund wage increases. I will of course speak with the hon. Member, and if my diary commitments allow I will try to find an opportunity to speak with representatives of the Filipino community in the UK as well.

Risk and Resilience: Annual Statement

5.37 pm

The Deputy Prime Minister (Oliver Dowden): We live in a dangerous and volatile world. The risks are more numerous, more complex, and evolving more rapidly than ever before. The aftermath of the global pandemic, Russia's ongoing aggression in Ukraine, extreme weather events, cyber-attacks, malign AI use cases—all those and more threaten the security, safety and stability of our nation. Protecting people is the first duty of government, which is why resilience is a top priority for this Government. It is quite simply the means by which we seek to prevent risks from becoming a reality.

When I published the resilience framework last December, I promised to provide an annual update to the House on our progress. This statement fulfils that commitment. The accompanying paper sets out in full the progress that we have made, but allow me to detail to the House the key improvements that I am confident have greatly improved our resilience. We have made changes to our structures, such as the introduction of the resilience directorate, COBR unit and situation centre. We have initiated new capabilities, such as the new emergency alert system. We have bolstered our resources towards severe threats, such as through our biological security strategy, underpinned by over £1.5 billion of annual investment, and we are embedding a whole-of-society approach to resilience that reflects the fact that everybody has their part to play.

As Deputy Prime Minister, I am the lead Minister for resilience and I chair a new resilience sub-committee of the National Security Council. The Government need to be ready to respond to any and all risks, so we must maintain the flexibility to respond to whatever confronts us. In the last year, as chairman of the UK resilience forum, I have regularly convened blue light and local responders, industry leaders and representatives from the voluntary sectors with Government. We have continued to play an active role with international partners, including the OECD, NATO and Five Eyes, and bilaterally with our allies. Through the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities we are significantly strengthening the capability and capacity of local resilience fora.

The national risk register published this year is the most transparent ever, because it is vital that we all understand the threats that we face—and when I say all of us, I mean the whole of society, from Government to emergency responders, industry, voluntary and community leaders, and citizens. Last week I was at Porton Down—in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General, I believe—to inspect the vital work done there to protect the United Kingdom from chemical, biological and radiological threats. I saw the laboratories where highly skilled staff dedicate themselves to improving our preparedness for future pandemics and to defending our country against malicious attacks such as those we saw in Salisbury.

The people I met at Porton Down and our wider resilience community are on the frontline. They make our people safer and our country stronger. I champion them and pay tribute to them for the work they do. I also pay tribute to the local resilience fora up and down the country, who are there for us when we need them through every kind of crisis, as we saw demonstrated most vividly during the covid pandemic.

Our work to make our country as resilient as possible is a constant endeavour. The resilience framework sets out ambitious plans to continue to strengthen the frameworks, systems and capabilities that underpin the UK's resilience through to 2030, and we are building on those plans. The Government have a role in bringing all the actors together and giving them the skills they need. Today I can announce that we are developing a new UK resilience academy that will improve the skills of those groups. It will provide a range of learning and training opportunities for the whole of society.

For professionals, there will be a curriculum to build skills, knowledge and networks, and a centre of excellence for exercising. For businesses, there will be greater guidance, with particular assistance on threats to critical national infrastructure and cyber. For citizens, there will be a unified Government resilience website, which will provide practical advice on how households can prepare as part of a campaign to raise awareness of the simple steps individuals can take to raise their resilience.

The covid pandemic demonstrated the overwhelming community spirit of our nation, through the vaccine army, the thousands of NHS workers who returned to the frontline and the millions who, through little acts of kindness, sought to protect the vulnerable and the lonely. There will be a new website to provide a volunteering hub—a one-stop shop to help all those who want to help their communities when crises strike.

We are continuing to develop our approach to chronic risks—the challenges that, if left unchecked, will continue to erode our economy, society, community and national security. Building on the national risk register, we are developing new analyses and a programme of action that we will publish next year. As the covid-19 pandemic showed, shocks have impacts across the whole of society, including imposing significant economic consequences. That is why we have allocated an additional £10 million of new funding for research on risks to the economy and to our public finances, to better factor in the savings we can achieve in the long run by spending on resilience today, ensuring the stability of our economy and supporting the sustainability of our public finances well into the future.

We have made considerable progress over the past year and our focus is now firmly on the months, years and, indeed, decades ahead. We are learning the lessons of the covid-19 pandemic, which shone a light on the importance of resilience, as well as the lessons of the UK's world-leading vaccine programme, which set us free again and demonstrated the importance of prevention rather than cure. Resilience is our immunisation against risk. These measures are a shot in the arm for Britain and its national security. The world may be more dangerous than ever, but we will be better prepared than ever. I commend the statement to the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I call the shadow Secretary of State.

5.45 pm

Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab): I thank the Secretary of State for advance sight of his statement. He is right that resilience is a critical function for the Government, local government, public services, business and society in an ever more volatile world.

I congratulate him on surviving the year between the publication of the national resilience framework and the delivery of this statement. That is a rare achievement in a Government in which the principle is that everybody gets to be famous for 15 minutes. I congratulate him on his longevity.

I also welcome the Secretary of State's announcement of the UK resilience academy and the volunteering hub. He is right that, given the chance, the British public will step up to help their fellow citizens. We should have a broad concept of resilience, be it physical, cyber, financial, in supply chains, in the public realm, in our values or in our democracy, so let me ask the Secretary of State about some of that.

The need for greater resilience has been underlined by the recent history of our country. Covid exposed huge flaws in advance planning, which ended up costing the taxpayer billions of pounds, some of which was wasted on dodgy contracts, some lost to downright fraud. Never again should the country be put at the mercy of inside tracks, VIP lanes and special access for those who happen to know ministerial phone numbers. What lessons have the Government learned from the huge degree of waste and fraud in covid contracts, and why has so little taxpayers' money been recovered compared with the vast amount that was lost in the first place?

The invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent energy crisis exposed the short-sightedness of getting rid of gas storage, ditching home insulation programmes and being exposed to hugely volatile energy spot markets. Why is the Government's new policy to roll back on the transition mandated by their own net zero legislation and prolong our reliance on international fossil fuel markets? For those failures, the British public have paid a heavy price.

How will the Government increase resilience in the public estate? Schools' capital budgets were cut back on the Prime Minister's watch when he was Chancellor. School roofs are falling in, disrupting children's education. When will the Government be able to ensure that children do not have to be taught in classrooms in which the ceilings are held up by temporary supports? That should not be too much to ask.

Of course, not all risks are physical, and we have both opportunities and challenges in the development of artificial intelligence. We have seen cyber-attacks in recent years, such as the WannaCry attack on the NHS and the ongoing attack on the British Library. I appreciate that that is a major challenge; the old distinctions between state and non-state actors are blurring. What more can the Government do to protect critical systems from cyber-attacks?

That brings me to perhaps our most important asset: our democracy itself. With an election coming some time in the next year, I am sure that the Secretary of State would agree that we need to do all we can to ensure that it is conducted in a free and fair manner. With that in mind, why have the Government been so slow to implement the recommendations of the Intelligence and Security Committee in its report on Russia, which was published a couple of years ago? The Committee called Russian influence in the UK "the new normal", citing connections at the highest level with

"access to UK companies and political figures,"

and said that Russia carries out

"malicious cyber activity in order to assert itself aggressively,"

for example by interfering in other countries' elections. In the face of those findings, how will the Government ensure that our forthcoming election is protected against interference, either from Russia or by any other actors?

Finally, may I ask the Secretary of State about the governance of the strategy? The perennial question for a cross-departmental strategy such as this one is whether it is driven by the Departments or by the centre. Given the traditional strength of Departments in the Whitehall system, how can he ensure that the centre over which he presides is strong enough to enforce preparedness and deliver the national resilience that Members on both sides of the House want to see?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his words about my longevity—I very much intend for that to continue, and I will take his comments in the spirit in which I am sure he meant them. He asked about a range of issues and I will seek to address as many as I can, but I will be happy to follow up if I miss any.

First, the right hon. Gentleman talked about the range of risks that we face as a nation. He is absolutely right that one of the principal tasks of the Government and, indeed, my Department is to be across all of those risks, which we have done for many years through things such as the national security risk register. However, what we have done differently since covid is to be much more public about those risks through the national risk register, which sets out the range of risks that the nation faces, their likelihood and their impact. We have put an unprecedented amount of information into the public domain to help people prepare, whether as individuals or in businesses, local government or voluntary organisations.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about covid preparedness. That is precisely why we have introduced the biological security strategy, a £1.5 billion annual investment to prepare ourselves for the whole range of biological hazards we might face. The 100-day challenge is part of that strategy. If we have another pandemic, whatever form it takes, the crucial thing will be getting rapidly from the point at which the disease is sequenced to an effective vaccine. We are boosting our capabilities to enable us to do that within 100 days, because we saw during covid that that was the key to setting people free.

Turning to covid contracts, I gently point out to the right hon. Gentleman and the Opposition that at the time of covid, Opposition Members were constantly calling for us to go faster and look at a wider range of suppliers; I think at one point we were urged to seek the services of costumiers and football clubs. Since then, we have recovered huge amounts of money by establishing the Public Sector Fraud Authority, which has recovered double its target in the first year.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned energy resilience. This Government have invested in renewables. We have not only the world's largest offshore wind farm, but the second, third, fourth and now the fifth largest, with many more in the pipeline. I am in constant contact with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, and we continue to work to ensure the resilience of our energy networks this winter.

[The Deputy Prime Minister]

The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to raise the risks around cyber. As I have said to the House previously, it is undoubtedly the case that the risk landscape around cyber continues to increase, not just in this nation but around the world, year in and year out. That is driven by a range of factors, not least, as he highlighted, the grey zone between hostile state actors and cyber-criminals. Against that backdrop, we continue to increase our resilience, including through the creation of the ministerial cyber board and the National Security Council's resilience committee, which I chair.

The right hon. Gentleman also mentioned democracy and how we will prepare ourselves for forthcoming elections. Elections will happen not just in this nation but in many others next year—indeed, in this nation, it could be the year after. That is why we have instructed the defending democracy taskforce to make sure we are fully resilient.

Finally, the right hon. Gentleman talked about governance. For many years, including when he was a Minister, we have been governed by the lead Government Department model, in which each Department takes responsibility for the risks set out in the national risk register. However, this Government have created for the first time a specific committee of the National Security Council—the resilience committee, which I chair—whose task is to hold those Departments to account. That is precisely what we are doing.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I remind colleagues that a lot of right hon. and hon. Members are hoping to participate in the next debate. As such, it would be very helpful if questions were brief, so that the Deputy Prime Minister can be concise in return.

Sir Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): How would a future pandemic be different from the previous ones in terms of strategic stocks of protective equipment, and vaccine research, manufacture and distribution, should we be visited with such a disaster by a Chinese wet market or even a laboratory?

The Deputy Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend tempts me to talk about the origins of covid. I will simply highlight that the World Health Organisation continues its investigation, and we are very much supportive of that.

As for what we are doing differently, the key thing is to move from the establishment of the disease to the vaccine with the 100-day taskforce. We have also overhauled our governance structures. For example, we have split the long-term risks and the short-term risks by creating a totally separate unit that deals with long-term risks, which is headed by a head of resilience. That will enable the Government to deal with the long-term risks but also focus on the short-term challenges. When I was at Porton Down last week, I saw the kind of investment that the UK Health Security Agency is making in precisely this area, whether in capacity to test vaccines' effectiveness or to test the testing equipment. I am confident that while there is more to do, as I set out in my statement, we continue to improve our performance.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I call the SNP spokesperson.

Kirsty Blackman (Aberdeen North) (SNP): The Deputy Prime Minister has talked about resilience, and the requirement that the whole of society steps up and assists. I appreciate and agree with the whole-society approach that he has described; it is right that everybody—every individual, public service and charitable organisation—should assist at times when there are massive public issues, such as during covid.

However, we have had 13 years of austerity and a constant squeeze on the public sector. The public sector is crying out for more help and support, charities are screaming that they can no longer cope with this austerity, and individuals are struggling more than I have seen in my 16 years as an elected representative. I have never seen people struggling to such a level, yet the Deputy Prime Minister is asking them to step up. How can he have the gall to ask them to step up and assist others when they have nothing left to give? It is within the gift of the Government to help and support people, but they are refusing to do so, instead requiring those people to take it upon themselves. How can the Deputy Prime Minister ask that of people today, when I am seeing more people having to choose between heating and eating than I have ever seen before, and more people who are suicidal coming through the doors of my surgeries than ever before, and this Government have it within their power to help people?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The hon. Lady's characterisation is simply false. First, it was because of the discipline the Government showed between 2010 and when the pandemic struck that we had the resources that enabled us to intervene in an unprecedented way, through the covid recovery scheme and other measures, to help over 10 million people keep their jobs. We would not have been able to do that without the fiscal discipline this Government showed.

On measures to support people, we have: the boost to the winter fuel payment of an additional £300 per household; the pensioner cost of living payment of £600 that will help with heating costs over the colder months; a £150 rebate on winter electricity bills through the warm home discount; and I could go on. We are providing support for the vulnerable.

The website and other measures facilitate people's ability to volunteer and help their communities, so I find it odd that the SNP is set against that.

Theresa Villiers (Chipping Barnet) (Con): The reports of disruption at the British Library, and reports in *The Guardian* today that computer systems at Sellafield may have been hacked by foreign actors, are an alarming reminder of how digitally dependent we are and the potential huge risks associated with cyber-security. What single thing since the Deputy Prime Minister's last annual report has changed to make us a more cyber-resilient country?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Since the last report, through the ministerial cyber board we have for the first time mapped the risks across all of Government, and held Departments to account for improving their performance. On the point raised by my right hon. Friend about Sellafield, I assure the House that many of the issues are historical. The regulator has for some time been working with Sellafield to ensure that the necessary improvements are implemented, and we are expecting regular updates on progress.

Sarah Champion (Rotherham) (Lab): The Environment Agency estimates that the number of homes at risk of flooding could double by 2050 due to the impact of climate change. This means that the recent devastating floods in my constituency will become only more common. What are the Government doing to prevent that increase in flood risk and to build defences that will withstand not the current rain levels but the deluge that is anticipated by 2050?

The Deputy Prime Minister: That is exactly why we are investing over £5.2 billion for the period 2021 to 2027, which is double the previous amount. That has already resulted in more than 60,000 properties being better protected, and there is a large pipeline of work arising from that unprecedented investment.

James Wild (North West Norfolk) (Con): I welcome the greater transparency that my right hon. Friend has brought to the threats facing the country. Can he assure me not only that there are robust plans in place to deal with the highest impact risks, but that they are regularly tested through tabletop and proper exercises, including with Ministers? How will the new resilience academy enhance that capability?

The Deputy Prime Minister: My hon. Friend speaks from experience, having previously worked in the Cabinet Office, and he is absolutely right to highlight the importance of exercising. Indeed, we conducted Exercise Mighty Oak, a major national exercising programme in relation to power outages, earlier this year. We are currently developing the forward programme for national exercises, and I will be able to provide an update shortly on our progress. Indeed, it forms part of the national resilience academy to train people in that kind of exercising.

Alistair Strathern (Mid Bedfordshire) (Lab): One big driver of flooding risk from our waterways is raw sewage pollution, which has not improved since 2016. When I was starting out as a maths teacher, it did not take me long to realise that letting some of my classes mark their own homework was quite a naive approach and did not drive performance. When will the Government learn the same lesson and recognise that the current self-reporting regime for raw sewage discharge simply is not working?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The Government have introduced an unprecedented package to address sewage discharge. On resilience more widely, we have put £150 million into the flood and coastal resilience innovation programme to ensure that, as we develop flood defences, we also look at how we protect against, for example, coastal erosion and wider risks to seawater.

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con): I welcome this statement. Although prevention is of course vital, resilience is also about how we respond to crises and fight back. That was well illustrated in the help given by agencies during the massive recent cyber-attack on Gloucester City Council, when not only were our services restored, but our enemy was disrupted. Local authorities are a big target of hackers and ransomware seekers, so will the Deputy Prime Minister look carefully at the suggestion made by the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy that he emulate his predecessor Oliver Letwin's

Flood Re scheme with a new "Cyber Re" to insure those who cannot be insured by the market and provide local authorities with the resilience and the finance to withstand any such attack?

The Deputy Prime Minister: My hon. Friend raises a very important point. First, I pay tribute to the National Cyber Security Centre, which helps councils up and down the country deal with these cyber-attacks when they hit. I am discussing insurance with my right hon. Friend the Security Minister, and we are keeping an open mind. There are arguments for and against it, not least that we do not want to create incentives whereby local authorities and others will not undertake the necessary measures, but there may well be a case for doing so and we are continuing to explore that.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): I welcome, as others have, the recognition that resilience will be crucial if we are to withstand another pandemic or major incident, and that the one thing we have learned is the danger of complacency. However, my constituents in Edinburgh West also want to know what is being done to improve our resilience to those events that hit us every year, such as flooding, heavy snowfalls and storms. Will that be a high priority for this resilience group?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The short answer to that is yes. That is why, for example, we have for the first time introduced cold weather warnings, working with the Met Office, which we have not done before. I have already outlined to the House the unprecedented level of funding we are putting into flood risk prevention. Indeed, when we look at the risks that may face us, the most common risk is likely to be related to severe weather in this country, and it is a big focus for the Government's efforts.

Simon Fell (Barrow and Furness) (Con): Whether it is fraud, threats to cyber-security or the emergent risks of new technologies such as AI, the greatest defence we can have is better education and awareness so that individuals and businesses can better protect themselves, and that is especially true for our children. Could my right hon. Friend talk about how the new academy can play into the curriculum so that children can protect themselves against threats of misinformation, disinformation and criminal attacks, and about how that will help children and families?

The Deputy Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to highlight this. As he says, AI will increase the threat landscape vis-à-vis cyber risks; I hope that we can also apply AI to reduce those risks. We are already working with the National Cyber Security Centre to develop products to inform individuals, and the new academy will work to provide education material. If everyone acted straight away when they got one of those annoying alerts to run the updates on their mobile phone, it would be the single best thing we could do to increase this nation's cyber-resilience.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I very much thank the Deputy Prime Minister for his statement and the answers—every one—that he has given. On encouraging businesses to build resilience in a broad range of operations,

[Jim Shannon]

I believe we must consider the risks in relation to the cost of energy, and others have asked similar questions. What discussions has the Deputy Prime Minister had with devolved Administrations—for example, on ensuring that businesses are able to build resilience on net zero targets and energy commitments—to ensure and secure prosperity for the future for everyone?

The Deputy Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to raise this. Under this Government, we have seen a 68% reduction in carbon emissions, which is faster than the EU, the United States of America and others. We are world leaders in many technologies, not least offshore wind and, I hope shortly, in the next generation of carbon capture and storage. We continue to work very closely with businesses to help them build that resilience.¹

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): I thank the Deputy Prime Minister for his statement and for responding to questions.

BILL PRESENTED

ANIMAL WELFARE (LIVESTOCK EXPORTS) BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Secretary Steve Barclay, supported by the Prime Minister, Secretary Oliver Dowden, Secretary Alister Jack and Secretary David T. C. Davies, presented a Bill to make provision to prohibit the export of certain livestock from Great Britain for slaughter.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed (Bill 17) with explanatory notes (Bill 17—EN).

Victims and Prisoners Bill

Consideration of Bill, as amended in the Public Bill Committee

[Relevant documents: Second Report of the Justice Committee of Session 2022-23, Pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Victims Bill, HC 304, and the Government response, HC 932; Third Report of the Justice Committee of Session 2022-23, IPP sentences, HC 266, and the Government response, HC 933; Oral evidence taken by the Justice Committee on 9 May and 16 May, on the Victims and Prisoners Bill, HC 1340; Correspondence from the Ministry of Justice, on the Victims and Prisoners Bill, reported to the House on 26 June and 28 November 2023; Correspondence from the Chair of the Justice Committee to the Lord Chancellor, on the Victims and Prisoners Bill, reported to the House on 6 June 2023.]

New Clause 20

DOMESTIC ABUSE RELATED DEATH REVIEWS

(1) The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 is amended in accordance with subsections (2) to (4).

(2) After section 8 insert—

“Domestic abuse related death reviews

8A Establishment and conduct of reviews

- (1) In this section “domestic abuse related death review” means a review of the circumstances of the death of a person which is held—
 - (a) where the death has, or appears to have, resulted from domestic abuse towards the person within the meaning of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, and
 - (b) with a view to identifying the lessons to be learned from the death.
- (2) The Secretary of State may in a particular case direct a specified person or body within subsection (6) to establish, or to participate in, a domestic abuse related death review.
- (3) It is the duty of any person or body within subsection (6) establishing or participating in a domestic abuse related death review (whether or not held pursuant to a direction under subsection (2)) to have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State as to the establishment and conduct of such reviews.
- (4) A person or body within subsection (6) that establishes a domestic abuse related death review (whether or not held pursuant to a direction under subsection (2)) must send a copy of any report setting out the conclusions of the review to the Secretary of State and the Domestic Abuse Commissioner.
- (5) The copy must be sent as soon as reasonably practicable after the report is completed.
- (6) The persons and bodies within this subsection are—
 - chief officers of police for police areas in England and Wales;
 - local authorities;
 - NHS England;
 - integrated care boards established under section 14Z25 of the National Health Service Act 2006;
 - providers of probation services;
 - Local Health Boards established under section 11 of the National Health Service (Wales) Act 2006;
 - NHS trusts established under section 25 of the National Health Service Act 2006 or section 18 of the National Health Service (Wales) Act 2006.
- (7) In subsection (6) “local authority” means—
 - (a) in relation to England, the council of a district, county or London borough, the Common Council of the City of London and the Council of the Isles of Scilly;

1. [Official Report, 16 January 2024, Vol. 743, c. 10MC.]

(b) in relation to Wales, the council of a county or county borough.

(8) The Secretary of State may by order amend subsection (6) or (7)."

(3) In section 9 (establishment and conduct of domestic homicide reviews)—

(a) in each of subsections (2) and (3)—

(i) for "Secretary of State" substitute "Department of Justice in Northern Ireland";

(ii) for "(4)" substitute "(4)(b)";

(b) omit subsections (3A), (3B), (3C), (4)(a), (5) and (6).

(4) In section 61 (orders), in subsection (3), for "9(6)" substitute "8A(8)".

(5) In section 26 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (relationship of offensive weapons homicide reviews with other review requirements), in subsection (1)(b)—

(a) after "of a" insert "domestic abuse related death review or";

(b) for "section" substitute "sections 8A and".—(*Edward Argar.*)

This new clause, to be inserted after clause 15, concerns reviews of deaths in England and Wales that may be related to domestic abuse.

Brought up, and read the First time.

6.10 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice (Edward Argar): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): With this it will be convenient to discuss the following:

Government new clause 21—*Information relating to victims: service police etc.*

Government new clause 22—*Meaning of "major incident" etc.*

Government new clause 23—*Appointment of standing advocate.*

Government new clause 24—*Publication of reports.*

Government new clause 25—*Part 2: consequential amendments.*

Government new clause 26—*Imprisonment or detention for public protection: termination of licences.*

Government new clause 37—*Restricting parental responsibility where one parent kills the other.*

New clause 1—*Re-sentencing those serving a sentence of imprisonment for public protection—*

'(1) The Lord Chancellor must make arrangements for, and relating to, the re-sentencing of all prisoners serving IPP sentences within 18 months beginning on the day on which this Act is passed.

(2) Those arrangements must include arrangements relating to the establishment of a committee to provide advice regarding the discharge of the Lord Chancellor's duty under subsection (1).

(3) The committee established by virtue of subsection (2) must include a judge nominated by the Lord Chief Justice.

(4) A court that imposed an IPP sentence has the power to re-sentence the prisoner in relation to the original offence.

(5) But the court may not impose a sentence that is a heavier penalty than the sentence that was imposed for the original offence.

(6) In relation to the exercise of the power in subsection (4)—

(a) that power is to be treated as a power to re-sentence under the Sentencing Code (see section 402(1) of the Sentencing Act 2020);

(b) the Code applies for the purposes of this section (and, accordingly, it does not matter that a person serving an IPP sentence was convicted of an offence before 1 December 2020).

(7) In this section—

"IPP sentence" means a sentence of imprisonment or detention in a young offender institution for public protection under section 225 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 or a sentence of detention for public protection under section 226 of that Act (including such a sentence of imprisonment or detention passed as a result of section 219 or 221 of the Armed Forces Act 2006);

"original offence" means the offence in relation to which the IPP sentence was imposed.

(8) This section comes into force at the end of the period of two months beginning with the day on which this Act is passed."

This new clause would implement the recommendation of the Justice Committee's 2022 Report that there should be a resentencing exercise in relation to all IPP sentenced individuals, and to establish a time-limited expert committee, including a member of the judiciary, to advise on the practical implementation of such an exercise.

New clause 2—Appointment of an advocate to represent IPP prisoners' interests—

'(1) The Secretary of State may, by regulations, establish a list of advocates to further the interests of prisoners serving imprisonment for public protection (IPP) sentences.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1), the Secretary of State may set out minimum qualifications for any person to be appointed as an IPP advocate.

(3) A person may only act as an IPP advocate if the Secretary of State considers that the following conditions are satisfied—

(a) they have had appropriate experience or training or an appropriate combination of experience and training;

(b) they are of integrity and good character; and

(c) they are able to act independently of any other person who is professionally concerned with the qualifying prisoner's continuing imprisonment.

(4) The Secretary of State may pay to, or in respect of, such a person—

(a) amounts by way of remuneration, pensions, allowances or gratuities, and

(b) sums in respect of the expenses of the IPP advocate.

(5) Regulations under this section are to be made by statutory instrument; and an instrument containing regulations made under this section is subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.'

This new clause, and new clause NC3 would allow the Secretary of State to appoint a number of independent advocates to act on behalf of over-tariff prisoners sentenced to imprisonment for public protection.

New clause 3—Functions of an IPP advocate—

'(1) Any IPP prisoner who has exceeded their minimum tariff period is entitled to ask for the assistance of an IPP advocate.

(2) An IPP advocate may not provide legal services or advice to an IPP prisoner.

(3) An IPP advocate may—

(a) visit and advise an IPP prisoner at the facility where they are imprisoned;

(b) subject to subsection (2), appear before the Parole Board on behalf of an IPP prisoner;

(c) visit and advise an IPP prisoner who has been released on licence.

(4) For the purposes of this Act, "IPP prisoner" means a person sentenced to imprisonment for public protection under the Criminal Justice Act, or any successor Act.'

This new clause sets out the functions of an IPP advocate. They will not provide legal advice, but will provide practical advice, support them at the Parole Board and on release.

New clause 4—Parole Board: victim personal statement—

‘(1) It is the duty of the Parole Board to ensure that victims are offered the opportunity to give their views in the criminal justice process by making a personal statement.

(2) Where a victim has opted-in to the Victim Contact Scheme, the Parole Board must record whether the victim has been offered the opportunity to provide a personal statement to the Parole Board before it makes a decision relevant to the victim.

(3) The Parole Board must report annually to the Secretary of State on the data recorded under subsection (2) and on its compliance with the duty under subsection (1).

(4) The Secretary of State must lay a copy of any reports received under this section before Parliament within 15 days of receipt.’

This new clause would place a duty on the Parole Board to ensure that victims are offered the opportunity to give their views in the criminal justice process and require it to report to the Secretary of State on its compliance with that duty.

New clause 5—Duty to develop a single core data set of victims of child sexual abuse—

‘(1) The responsible authority must make arrangements to develop a shared, single core data set concerning victims of child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation in England and Wales.

(2) In accordance with subsection (1) the responsible authority must direct children’s social care and criminal justice agencies to collect consistent and compatible data which includes—

- (a) the characteristics of victims and alleged perpetrators of child sexual abuse, including—
 - (i) age,
 - (ii) sex, and
 - (iii) ethnicity,
- (b) the factors that make victims more vulnerable to child sexual abuse or exploitation, and
- (c) the settings and contexts in which victims have experienced child sexual abuse or exploitation.

(3) The responsible authority must ensure that the data is published each month.

(4) For the purposes of this section, the responsible authority is—

- (a) in England, the Secretary of State; and
- (b) in Wales, the Welsh Ministers.’

New clause 6—Assessment of numbers of independent domestic violence and sexual violence advisors, stalking advocates and specialist support services—

‘Within six months of the passing of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Secretary of State must—

- (a) make an assessment of the adequacy of the number of independent domestic violence and sexual violence advisors, stalking advocates, and specialist support services in each region of England and Wales, having regard to the population in each region, and
- (b) publish that assessment.’

This new clause would require the Secretary of State to make an assessment of the adequacy of the number of ISVAs, IDVAs, stalking advocates and specialist support services in each region of England and Wales.

New clause 7—Improving accessibility and awareness of the Victims’ Code—

‘(1) In preparing the draft of the victims’ code under section 2, the Secretary of State must take all practicable steps to ensure that the code is fully accessible to all victims and to promote awareness of the code among those victims and associated services.

(2) For the purposes of this section the Secretary of State must by regulations prescribe—

- (a) that criminal justice bodies must signpost victims to appropriate support services, and

- (b) that appropriate training is delivered to staff in criminal justice bodies, including by specialist domestic abuse services.

(3) The steps taken under subsection (1) must include steps aimed at ensuring that victims who—

- (a) are deaf,
- (b) are disabled,
- (c) are visually impaired, or
- (d) do not speak English as their first language,

are able to understand their entitlements under the code.’

This new clause seeks to ensure that the victims’ code is accessible to all victims and associated services.

New clause 8—Access to services for victims with no recourse to public funds—

‘(1) Notwithstanding the provisions of any other enactment, a victim of domestic abuse who—

- (a) has leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom which is subject to a condition that they do not have recourse to public funds,
- (b) requires leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom but does not have it,
- (c) has leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom given as a result of a maintenance undertaking,

is entitled to be provided with services in accordance with the victims’ code.

(2) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision that is consequential on this section.

(3) For the purposes of this section—

“domestic abuse” has the same meaning as in section 1 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2020;

“victim” has the meaning given by section 1 of this Act.’

This new clause would ensure that victims of domestic abuse who do not have recourse to public funds are still entitled to be provided with services in accordance with the victims’ code.

New clause 9—Meaning of “honour-based abuse” —

‘(1) The Secretary of State must by regulations made by statutory instrument define the meaning of “honour-based abuse” for the purposes of section 1.

(2) Before making regulations under this section, the Secretary of State must carry out a consultation about—

- (a) what conduct should amount to “honour-based abuse” for the purposes of section 1, and
- (b) any definition of the meaning of “honour-based abuse” proposed by the Secretary of State.

(3) In carrying out a consultation under subsection (2), the Secretary of State must consult—

- (a) organisations that appear to the Secretary of State to represent those who have an interest in the meaning of “honour-based abuse” for the purposes of section 1;
- (b) any other persons that the Secretary of State considers appropriate.

(4) A statutory instrument containing regulations under this section may not be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament.’

New clause 10—Sewage Illness Victim Compensation Scheme—

‘(1) The Secretary of State must by regulations provide for a compensation scheme for victims who have suffered harm as a direct result of criminal conduct in relation to sewage and waste water.

(2) Regulations under subsection (1) must—

- (a) provide for the payment of compensation to people who have become unwell as a result of bathing in water contaminated by sewage,

- (b) make provision in relation to the medical evidence required to support a claim for compensation under the regulations.

(3) Regulations under this section may not be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before and approved by resolution of each House of Parliament.’

New clause 13—Duty to co-operate with Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses—

‘(1) The Commissioner may request a specified public authority to co-operate with the Commissioner in any way that the Commissioner considers necessary for the purposes of monitoring compliance with the victims’ code.

(2) A specified public authority must, so far as reasonably practicable, comply with a request made to it under this section.

(3) In this section “specified public authority” means any of the following—

- (a) a criminal justice body, as defined by subsection 6(6),
- (b) the Parole Board,
- (c) an elected local policing body,
- (d) the British Transport Police Force,
- (e) the Ministry of Defence Police.

(4) The Secretary of State may by regulations amend this section so as to—

- (a) add a public authority as a specified public authority for the purposes of this section;
- (b) remove a public authority added by virtue of paragraph (a);
- (c) vary any description of a public authority.

(5) Before making regulations under subsection (4) the Secretary of State must consult the Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses.

(6) A statutory instrument containing regulations under subsection (4) may not be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before and approved by resolution of each House of Parliament.’

This new clause would place a duty on specified public authorities to co-operate with the Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses.

New clause 14—Major incidents: duty of candour—

‘(1) In discharging their duties in relation to a major incident, public authorities and public servants and officials must at all times act within their powers—

- (a) in the public interest, and
- (b) with transparency, candour and frankness.

(2) If a major incident results in a court proceeding, official inquiry or investigation, public authorities and public servants and officials have a duty to assist—

- (a) relating to their own activities, or
- (b) where their acts or omissions may be relevant.

(3) In discharging the duty under subsection (2), public authorities and public servants and officials shall—

- (a) act with proper expedition;
- (b) act with transparency, candour and frankness,
- (c) act without favour to their own position,
- (d) make full disclosure of relevant documents, material and facts,
- (e) set out their position on the relevant matters at the outset of the proceedings, inquiry or investigation, and
- (f) provide further information and clarification as ordered by a court or inquiry.

(4) In discharging their duty under subsection (2), public authorities and public servants and officials shall have regard to the pleadings, allegations, terms of reference and parameters of the relevant proceedings, inquiry or investigation but shall not be limited by them, in particular where they hold information which might change the ambit of the said proceedings, inquiry or investigation.

(5) The duties in subsections (1) and (2) shall—

- (a) be read subject to existing laws relating to privacy, data protection and national security,
- (b) apply in a qualified way with respect to private law and non-public functions as set out in subsection (6), and
- (c) not be limited by any issue of insurance indemnity.

(6) The duties in subsections (1) and (2) shall be enforceable by application to the relevant court or inquiry chairperson by any person affected by the alleged breach, or the court or inquiry may act of its own motion. Where there are no extant court or inquiry proceedings, the duties may be enforced by judicial review proceedings in the High Court.’

This new clause would require public authorities and public servants and officials to act in the public interest and with transparency, candour and frankness when carrying out their duties in relation to major incidents.

New clause 15—Referral of release decisions to the Court of Appeal: life prisoners—

‘After section 32ZA of the Crime (Sentences) Act 1997 insert—

“Referral of release decisions to Court of Appeal

327ZAA Referral of release decisions to Court of Appeal

(1) This section applies where—

- (a) a prisoner is serving a life sentence imposed in respect of an offence specified or described in section 32ZAB (the “relevant sentence”),
- (b) the Parole Board is required to make a public protection decision about the prisoner under section 28(6)(b) or 32(5A), and
- (c) the public protection decision relates to the relevant sentence.

(2) Where the Parole Board has made a decision in a case to which this section applies—

- (a) the Secretary of State may refer the decision to the criminal division of the Court of Appeal, or
- (b) a victim may apply to the Secretary of State to request that the prisoner’s case be referred to the criminal division of the Court of Appeal.

(3) Within [30 days] of an application being made under paragraph (2)(b), the Secretary of State must—

- (a) exercise the power under subsection (2)(a) and refer the prisoner’s case to the criminal division of the Court of Appeal, or
- (b) provide to the victim a written statement explaining why they have decided not to exercise that power.

(4) This section applies in relation to a prisoner whose sentence was imposed before, as well as after, this section comes into force.

(5) But nothing in this section affects the duty of the Secretary of State to release a prisoner whose release has been directed by the Parole Board before this section comes into force.

(6) In this section, “public protection decision” has the meaning given by section 28ZA(2).

327ZAB Offences for purposes of Court of Appeal referral

(1) The offences specified or described in this section (for the purposes of section 32ZAA) are—

- (a) murder;
- (b) manslaughter;
- (c) an offence under section 5 of the Domestic Violence, Crime 10 and Victims Act 2004, where a child has died as a result of the prisoner’s unlawful act;
- (d) an offence specified in any of paragraphs 41 to 43 of Schedule 18 to the Sentencing Code (specified terrorism offences other than inchoate offences);
- (e) an offence that is not an inchoate offence and was determined to have a terrorist connection, within the meaning given by section 247A(7A) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003;

- (f) an offence under section 1 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (rape);
 - (g) an offence under section 5 of that Act (rape of a child under 13);
 - (h) an offence under section 6 of that Act (assault of a child under 13 by penetration);
 - (i) an offence under section 8 of that Act (causing or inciting a child under 13 to engage in sexual activity);
 - (j) an offence under section 47 of that Act (paying for sexual services of a child) against a person aged under 16;
 - (k) an offence under section 1 of the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009 (asp 9) (rape);
 - (l) an offence under section 18 of that Act (rape of a young child);
 - (m) an offence under section 19 of that Act (sexual assault on a young child by penetration);
 - (n) an offence under section 20 of that Act (sexual assault on a young child);
 - (o) an offence under section 21 of that Act (causing a young child to participate in a sexual activity);
 - (p) an offence under Article 5 of the Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 (S.I. 2008/1769 (N.I. 2)) (rape);
 - (q) an offence under Article 12 of that Order (rape of a child under 13);
 - (r) an offence under Article 13 of that Order (assault of a child under 13 by penetration);
 - (s) an offence under Article 15 of that Order (causing or inciting a child under 13 to engage in sexual activity);
 - (t) an offence that—
 - (i) is abolished, and
 - (ii) would have constituted an offence referred to in paragraphs (a) to (s) if committed on or after the date on which it was abolished.
- (2) A sentence in respect of a service offence is to be treated for the 35 purposes of section 32ZAA as if it were a sentence in respect of the corresponding offence.
- (3) In subsection (2)—
- (a) “service offence” means an offence under—
 - (i) section 42 of the Armed Forces Act 2006,
 - (ii) section 70 of the Army Act 1955 or the Air Force Act 1955, or
 - (iii) section 42 of the Naval Discipline Act 1957;
 - (b) “corresponding offence” means—
 - (i) in relation to an offence under section 42 of the Armed Forces Act 2006, the corresponding offence under the law of England and Wales within the meaning of that section;
 - (ii) in relation to an offence under section 70 of the Army Act 1955 or the Air Force Act 1955, the corresponding civil offence within the meaning of that Act;
 - (iii) in relation to an offence under section 42 of the Naval Discipline Act 1957, the civil offence within the meaning of that section.

327ZAC Powers of the Court of Appeal

- (1) On a referral of a prisoner’s case under section 32ZAA, the Court of Appeal may—
- (a) direct the Secretary of State to release the prisoner on licence as soon as is reasonably practicable in all the circumstances including, in particular, the need to make arrangements in connection with any conditions that are to be included in the licence, or
 - (b) decide that the prisoner should remain confined and direct the Secretary of State accordingly.

- (2) In making a decision under subsection (1), the Court of Appeal must have regard to whether there is no more than a minimal risk that, were the prisoner no longer confined, the prisoner would commit a further offence the commission of which would cause serious harm.
- (2A) In making a decision under subsection (1), the Court of Appeal must consider—
 - (a) any statement made by the Parole Board as to the reasons for its decision,
 - (b) the evidence considered by the Parole Board in reaching its decision,
 - (c) any representations made to the Parole Board by the Secretary of State, by a victim, or on behalf of the prisoner,
 - (d) any transcript made of a Parole Board hearing in respect of the case.
- (3) No judge shall sit as a member of the Court of Appeal on the hearing of a reference under this section in respect of a sentence they passed.”

New clause 16—Referral of release decisions to the Court of Appeal: fixed-term prisoners—

“(1) After section 256AZB of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 insert—

Referral of release decisions to the Court of Appeal

256AZBA Referral of release decisions to the Court of Appeal

- (1) This section applies where—
- (a) a prisoner is serving a fixed-term sentence imposed in respect of an offence specified or described in section 256AZBB (the “relevant sentence”),
 - (b) the Board is required to make a public protection decision about the prisoner under a relevant provision of this Chapter, and
 - (c) the public protection decision relates to the relevant sentence.
- (2) Where the Parole Board has made a decision in a case to which this section applies—
- (a) the Secretary of State may refer the decision to the criminal division of the Court of Appeal, or
 - (b) a victim may apply to the Secretary of State to request that the prisoner’s case be referred to the criminal division of the Court of Appeal.
- (3) Within [30 days] of an application being made under paragraph (2)(b), the Secretary of State must—
- (a) exercise the power under subsection (2)(a) and refer the prisoner’s case to the criminal division of the Court of Appeal, or
 - (b) provide to the victim a written statement explaining why they have decided not to exercise that power.
- (4) This section applies in relation to a prisoner whose sentence was imposed before, as well as after, this section comes into force.
- (5) But nothing in this section affects the duty of the Secretary of State to release a prisoner whose release has been directed by the Parole Board before this section comes into force.
- (6) In this section—
- “corresponding power of direction”, in relation to a relevant provision, is the power of the Board to direct the Secretary of State to release the prisoner, for the purposes of which the public protection decision is made (see section 237B);
 - “public protection decision” has the meaning given by section 237A(2);
 - “relevant provision” has the meaning given by section 237B.

256AZBB Offences for the purpose of Court of Appeal referral

- (1) The offences specified or described in this section (for the purposes of section 256AZBA) are—
- (a) manslaughter;

- (b) an offence under section 5 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004, where a child has died as a result of the prisoner's unlawful act;
 - (c) an offence specified in any of paragraphs 41 to 43 of Schedule 18 to the Sentencing Code (specified terrorism offences other than inchoate offences);
 - (d) an offence that is not an inchoate offence and was determined to have a terrorist connection, within the meaning given by section 247A(7A);
 - (e) an offence under section 1 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (rape);
 - (f) an offence under section 5 of that Act (rape of a child under 13);
 - (g) an offence under sections 6 to 51 of that Act;
 - (h) an offence under section 1 of the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009 (asp 9) (rape);
 - (i) an offence under section 18 of that Act (rape of a young child);
 - (j) an offence under sections 2 to 11 of that Act against a mentally disordered person, as defined by section 17 of that Act;
 - (k) an offence under Part 4 or Part 5 of that Act;
 - (l) an offence under Article 5 of the Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 (S.I. 2008/1769 (N.I. 2)) (rape);
 - (m) an offence under Article 12 of that Order (rape of a child under 13);
 - (n) an offence under Part 3 or Part 4 of that Order;
 - (p) an offence that—
 - (i) is abolished, and
 - (ii) would have constituted an offence referred to in paragraphs (a) to (o) if committed on or after the date on which it was abolished.
- (2) A sentence in respect of a service offence is to be treated for the purposes of section 256AZBA as if it were a sentence in respect of the corresponding offence.
- (3) In subsection (2)—
- (a) “service offence” means an offence under—
 - (i) section 42 of the Armed Forces Act 2006,
 - (ii) section 70 of the Army Act 1955 or the Air Force Act 1955, or
 - (iii) section 42 of the Naval Discipline Act 1957;
 - (b) “corresponding offence” means—
 - (i) in relation to an offence under section 42 of the Armed Forces Act 2006, the corresponding offence under the law of England and Wales within the meaning of that section;
 - (ii) in relation to an offence under section 70 of the Army Act 1955 or the Air Force Act 1955, the corresponding civil offence within the meaning of that Act;
 - (iii) in relation to an offence under section 42 of the Naval Discipline Act 1957, the civil offence within the meaning of that section.

256AZBC Powers of the Court of Appeal

- (1) On a referral of a prisoner's case under section 256AZBA, the Court of Appeal may—
- (a) direct the Secretary of State to release the prisoner on licence as soon as is reasonably practicable in all the circumstances including, in particular, the need to make arrangements in connection with any conditions that are to be included in the licence, or
 - (b) decide that the prisoner should remain confined and direct the Secretary of State accordingly.
- (2) In making a decision under subsection (1), the Court of Appeal must have regard to whether there is no more than a minimal risk that, were the prisoner no longer confined, the prisoner would commit a further offence the commission of which would cause serious harm.

- (3) In making a decision under subsection (1), the Court of Appeal must consider—
- (a) any statement made by the Parole Board as to the reasons for its decision,
 - (b) the evidence considered by the Parole Board in reaching its decision,
 - (c) any representations made to the Parole Board by the Secretary of State, by a victim, or on behalf of the prisoner,
 - (d) any transcript made of a Parole Board hearing in respect of the case.
- (4) No judge shall sit as a member of the Court of Appeal on the hearing of a reference under this section in respect of a sentence they passed.”

New clause 17—Monitoring compliance—

‘(1) All agencies with responsibilities under the victims' code have a duty to monitor and report how relevant services are provided in accordance with the victims' code.

(2) In accordance with the duty in subsection (1), the agencies must provide an annual report to the Secretary of State on their assessment of their compliance with the code.

(3) The Secretary of State must make an annual statement to the House of Commons on the delivery of services provided in accordance with the victims' code.’

This new clause would place a duty on the Secretary of State to make an annual statement on compliance with the victims' code.

New clause 18—Compliance with the code: threshold levels—

‘(1) The Secretary of State must, by regulations, issue minimum threshold levels of compliance with each right of the victims' code.

(2) If a minimum threshold is breached by an organisation in a particular area, the Secretary of State must commission an inspection of that body with regard to that breach.

(3) The Secretary of State must, as soon as is reasonably practicable, lay before Parliament the report of any such inspection.’

This new clause would require the Secretary of State to set minimum threshold levels of compliance with each right of the victims' code.

New clause 19—Non-disclosure of victims' counselling records (No. 2)—

‘(1) Subsection (3) of this clause applies where—

- (a) in connection with any criminal investigation, access to records of a victim's protected confidence in a counselling setting is sought (whether pre- or post-charge), or
- (b) in any criminal proceedings records containing a protected confidence are to be served as evidence or disclosed by the prosecution to the defendant.

(2) In this section—

“protected confidence” means a communication made by a person in confidence to another person when the confidant was acting in a professional capacity providing counselling, psychological or mental health services;

“victim” has the same meaning as in section 1 of this Act.

(3) Permission for access to, service or disclosure of records containing a protected confidence may only be granted by the court.

(4) The court must direct that access should not be granted, or evidence should not be served or disclosed, if the court finds that doing so would disclose a protected confidence.

(5) Subsection (4) does not apply if the court finds—

- (a) that the information is of substantial probative value, and
- (b) that the public interest in disclosure substantially outweighs that of non-disclosure.

(6) In making a determination under subsection (5)(b), the court must take into account—

- (a) the need to encourage victims of sexual offences to seek counselling,
- (b) that the effectiveness of counselling is likely to be dependent on the maintenance of the confidentiality of the counselling relationship,
- (c) the public interest in ensuring that victims of sexual offences receive effective counselling,
- (d) that the disclosure of the protected confidence is likely to damage or undermine the relationship between the counsellor and the counselled person,
- (e) whether disclosure of the protected confidence is sought on the basis of a discriminatory belief or bias, or
- (f) that the adducing of the evidence is likely to infringe a reasonable expectation of privacy.’

New clause 27—*Compensation for victims of the infected blood scandal (No. 2)*—

‘(1) In accordance with section 2(3C), the Secretary of State must, within three months of the passing of this Act, establish a body to administer the compensation scheme for victims of the infected blood scandal.

(2) The body created under this section must be chaired by a judge of High Court or Court of Session with status as sole decision maker.

(3) In exercising its functions, the body must—

- (a) have regard to the need of applicants for speed of provision, simplicity of process, accessibility, involvement, proactive support, fairness and efficiency;
- (b) involve potentially eligible persons and their representatives amongst those in a small advisory board, and in the review and improvement of the scheme;
- (c) permit the hearing of applicants in person; and
- (d) have an independent appeal body which will reconsider decisions of the scheme referred to it.

(4) The Secretary of State may by regulations make further provision about the body established under this section.

(5) For the purposes of this Act, a victim of the infected blood scandal means any infected or affected person whom the Second Interim Report of the Infected Blood Inquiry, as laid before Parliament on 19 April 2023, recommends should be admitted to a compensation scheme.

(6) This section comes into force on the day on which this Act is passed.’

New clause 28—*Report on impact on victims of the UK’s reservation in respect of Article 59 of the Istanbul Convention*—

‘(1) Within six months of the passing of this Act, the Secretary of State must lay before Parliament a report containing an assessment of the impact on victims of the UK’s reservation in respect of Article 59 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (“the Istanbul Convention”).

(2) The report laid under subsection (1) must contain—

- (a) an assessment of the impact on victims of domestic abuse,
- (b) an assessment of the impact on the children of such victims, and
- (c) an assessment of the merits of implementing the measures necessary for compliance with article 59 of the Istanbul Convention.’

New clause 29—*Mandatory training*—

‘(1) The Secretary of State must by regulations require certain police officers and employees of the Crown Prosecution Service to receive training in respect of violence against women and girls.

(2) Regulations under subsection (1) must—

- (a) make provision about the content of mandatory training, including training on the impact of trauma on victims of violence against women and girls, and

(b) make provision about the persons for whom this training is mandatory.

(3) A statutory instrument containing regulations under this section may not be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament.’

New clause 30—*Victims of specified offences: data-sharing for immigration purposes*—

‘(1) The Secretary of State must make arrangements for ensuring that the personal data of a victim of a crime as specified in subsection (3), that is processed for the purpose of that person requesting or receiving support or assistance related to the crime, is not used for any immigration control purpose without the consent of that person.

(2) The Secretary of State must make arrangements for ensuring that the personal data of a witness to a crime as specified in subsection (3), that is processed for the purpose of that person giving information or evidence to assist the investigation or prosecution of the crime, is not used for any immigration control purpose without the consent of that person.

(3) The crimes referred to in subsections (1) and (2) are—

- (a) domestic abuse as defined by section 1 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021,
- (b) an offence under any of sections 2, 2A, 4 or 4A of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 or section 42A (1) of the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001,
- (c) an offence under any of sections 1, 2 or 4 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015,
- (d) an offence under Part 1 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003, or
- (e) such other offences as may be specified in regulations made by the Secretary of State.

(4) Paragraph 4 of Schedule 2 to the Data Protection Act 2018 shall not apply to personal data processed for the purposes of subsection (1) or (2).

(5) For the purposes of this section, the Secretary of State must issue guidance to those persons mentioned in subsection (10) about the effect of subsections (1) and (2).

(6) The Secretary of State may from time to time revise any guidance issued under this section.

(7) Before issuing or revising guidance under this subsection, the Secretary of State must consult—

- (a) the Domestic Abuse Commissioner,
- (b) the Victims’ Commissioner,
- (c) the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, and
- (d) such other persons as the Secretary of State considers appropriate.

(8) Subsection (7) does not apply in relation to any revisions of the guidance issued under this section if the Secretary of State considers the proposed revisions of the guidance are insubstantial.

(9) The Secretary of State must publish—

- (a) any guidance issued under this section, and
- (b) any revisions of that guidance.

(10) The persons mentioned in subsection (5) are—

- (a) persons who are victims of or witnesses to the crimes in subsection (3),
- (b) persons from whom support or assistance may be requested or received by a victim of crime in England and Wales,
- (c) persons providing support to, or conducting investigations or prosecutions with the support of, witnesses of crime in England and Wales,
- (d) persons exercising any function of the Secretary of State in relation to immigration, asylum or nationality and,
- (e) persons exercising any function conferred by or by virtue of the Immigration Acts on an immigration officer.

(11) A person exercising public functions to whom guidance issued under this section relates must have regard to it in the exercise of those functions.

(12) For the purposes of this section—

“consent” means a freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous indication of the individual’s wishes by which the individual, by a statement, signifies agreement to the processing of the personal data;

“immigration control” means the exercise of any functions of the Secretary of State and of immigration officers under the Immigration Acts within the meaning of section 61 of the UK Borders Act 2007;

“support or assistance” includes the provision of accommodation, banking services, education, employment, financial or social assistance, healthcare and policing services and any function of a court or prosecuting authority;

“victim”, in relation to a crime, means the particular person who appears to have been affected by the crime, and their dependent, where that dependent is also affected by the crime.’

New clause 31—*Duty to notify school safeguarding lead of domestic abuse incident*—

‘(1) The police must notify the designated safeguarding lead or officer of a child’s school of any incident that meets the criteria in subsection (2).

(2) Those criteria are that—

(a) the police have attended an incident of domestic abuse, and

(b) the child is a child of an adult party involved in the incident.

(3) A notification under this section must occur before the start of the next school day following the incident.

(4) In this section, “domestic abuse” has the meaning given by section 1 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.’

New clause 32—*Victims’ rights in relation to data*—

‘(1) The UK GDPR is amended as follows.

(2) In Article 21 (right to object), after paragraph 1, insert—

“(1A) The data subject shall have the right to object, on grounds relating to his or her particular situation, at any time to processing of personal data concerning him or her, or a third party where that party is a child for whom they have parental responsibility, which is based on points (a) to (f) of Article 6(1), including profiling based on those provisions, if exceptional circumstances apply

(1B) The exceptional circumstances mentioned in paragraph 1B are—

(a) that the processing of the data was connected to, or reliant upon, conduct which could reasonably be suspected to constitute a criminal offence, or

(b) that the processing of the data was connected to, or reliant upon, conduct which could reasonably be considered as being intended to cause harassment, alarm or distress to the data subject or another living individual.

(1C) The Secretary of State may by regulations subject to the affirmative resolution procedure prescribe other exceptional circumstances where the right to object mentioned in paragraph 1A applies.”

(3) In Article 17 (right to erasure (“right to be forgotten”)), after paragraph 1(c), insert—

(ca) the data subject objects to the processing pursuant to Article 21(1A).”

This new clause would allow victims of third party harassment to request the deletion of any personal data which was gathered or held as part of activity which could be considered criminal conduct – preventing third party reporting from causing ongoing distress to victims.

New clause 33—*Commissioner for Victims: enforcement of victims’ code*—

‘(1) The Commissioner for Victims (“the Commissioner”) may investigate a complaint that a person to whom the code of practice under subsection 2(1) of this Act applies has failed to carry out their duties under the victims’ code.

(2) Where the Commissioner upholds a complaint under subsection (1), the Commissioner may—

(a) recommend action to rectify the breach of the victims’ code, or

(b) impose a fine on the person who has failed to comply with the victims’ code.

(3) The Secretary of State may by regulations make further provision in connection with this section.’

New clause 34—*Funding for domestic abuse services: review*—

‘(1) The Secretary of State must, within 3 months of this Act being passed, conduct a review into the level of funding and provision for domestic abuse services.

(2) The review must, in particular, consider—

(a) counselling and advocacy services, and

(b) refuges in the UK.

(3) Upon completion of the review, the Secretary of State must publish and lay before Parliament a report setting out—

(a) the findings of the review, and

(b) the action that the Secretary of State proposes to take in response to the review.’

New clause 35—*Experiences of victims of domestic abuse in the criminal justice system: review*—

‘(1) The Secretary of State must, within 3 months of this Act being passed, conduct a review into the experiences of victims of domestic abuse in the criminal justice system.

(2) The review must consult, in particular—

(a) victims of domestic abuse who have been through the criminal justice system, specifically ensuring that views are sought from women with protected characteristics, and

(b) organisations, both inside and outside of the criminal justice system, who represent victims of domestic abuse.

(3) Upon completion of the review, the Secretary of State must publish and lay before Parliament a report setting out—

(a) the findings of the review, and

(b) the action that the Secretary of State proposes to take in response to the review.’

New clause 36—*Data collection in relation to children of prisoners*—

‘The Secretary of State must collect and publish annual data identifying—

(a) how many prisoners are the primary carers of a child,

(b) how many children have a primary carer who is a prisoner, and

(c) the ages of those children.’

New clause 38—*Free independent legal advocates for rape victims*—

‘(1) The Secretary of State must develop proposals for a scheme to give victims of rape access to free, independent legal advocates available in every police force area in England and Wales.

(2) For the purposes of this section—

“independent legal advocate for rape victims” means a person who is a qualified solicitor, with experience working with vulnerable people, who provides appropriate legal advice and representation to individuals who are victims of criminal conduct which constitutes rape.’

New clause 39—*Duty to inform victims and families of the Unduly Lenient Sentencing Scheme*—

- (1) The Criminal Justice Act 1988 is amended as follows.
 (2) After section 36, insert—

“36A Duty to inform victims and families of the Unduly Lenient Sentencing Scheme

- (1) The Secretary of State must nominate a Government Department (“relevant body”) to inform victims and their families of their rights under the Unduly Lenient Sentencing Scheme, and such information must include the type of sentence and the time limit for application, and advise that applications must be made to the Attorney General.”

New clause 40—*Unduly lenient sentences: time limit*—

- (1) The Criminal Justice Act 1988 is amended as follows.
 (2) In Schedule 3, paragraph 1, at end insert “, subject to paragraph 1A.”

“(1A) The time limit of 28 days shall be extended in exceptional circumstances, where the relevant body has failed to inform the victim and families of their rights under the Unduly Lenient Sentencing Scheme.”

New clause 41—*Independent legal advice and representation for victims of rape and sexual assault*—

(1) The Secretary of State must establish a Sexual Violence Complainants’ Advocate scheme (“the scheme”).

(2) The scheme must provide free legal advice and representation to victims of rape and sexual offences in England and Wales.

(3) The scheme must—

- (a) provide legal advice to victims in relation to requests for access to their personal data;
 (b) provide victims with advice on their rights under the Victims’ Right to Review scheme, and assist them with making requests under that scheme;
 (c) provide legal advice to victims in relation to sexual history applications under section 41 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999
 (d) provide legal advice to victims in relation to complaints made to justice agencies
 (e) provide legal advice to assist victims to negotiate fully informed consent to access to their personal data; or
 (f) subject to subsection (4), provide legal representation of victims in relation to the police, prosecutors, or court, where that representation is necessary to prevent irrelevant or excessive material being accessed.

(4) Section 3(f) is limited to those circumstances in which a complainant has rights of audience, including hearings on disclosure of third-party materials where a court chooses to invite participation by a complainant under Criminal Procedure Rules 17.4-17.6

(5) The Secretary of State may by regulations make further provision about the scheme”

New clause 42—*Statement on report of Infected Blood Inquiry*—

(1) Within 25 sitting days of the publication of the final report of the Infected Blood Inquiry, the Secretary of State must make an oral statement to the House of Commons responding in full to the recommendations of the report, including—

- (a) how victims of the infected blood scandal will be able to access compensation, and
 (b) what steps will be taken to establish a body to administer the compensation scheme.

(2) In this section, ‘sitting days’ means days on which the House of Commons sits.’

New clause 43—*Victims of major incidents: registration of death*—

(1) The Secretary of State must by regulations make provision for a relative to provide information in the connection with the registration of the death of a person who was a victim of a major incident, even if an investigation is conducted under Part 1 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009.

(2) Regulations under this section must—

(a) amend form 13 in Schedule 2 of the Registration of Births and Deaths Regulations 1987 as follows—

- (i) add an additional section, entitled “victims of major incidents”, to include the name, qualification and usual address of the relative,
 (ii) provide for the signature of the relative to be given under the statement “I certify that the particulars given by me above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief”, and

(b) provide that the relative may provide these details during the five day period beginning with the day on which a registrar completes the form.

(3) The Secretary of State may by regulations make further provision consequential on this section.

(4) The power to make regulations under subsection (3) may (among other things) be exercised by modifying any provision made by or under an enactment.’

This new clause would enable a relative of a person who has died in a major incident to have their details included in the registration of the person’s death.

Amendment 160, page 1, line 7, at end insert—

- “(aa) witnessing criminal conduct,
 (ab) having subsequent responsibility for care because of criminal conduct,
 (ac) experiencing vicarious harm due to criminal conduct.”

Amendment 1, page 1, line 16, at end insert—

“(e) where a person has entered into a non-disclosure agreement that has the effect of preventing that person from speaking about behaviour that may be criminal misconduct.”

Amendment 2, page 1, line 16, at end insert—

- “(e) where the person has experienced, or made allegations that they have experienced—
 (i) sexual abuse, sexual harassment or sexual misconduct, or
 (ii) bullying or harassment not falling within paragraph (i).”

Amendment 5, page 1, line 16, at end insert—

“(e) where the person has experienced adult sexual exploitation.”

Amendment 7, page 1, line 16, at end insert—

“(e) where the person is the child of a person posing sexual risk to children.”

This amendment would include children of a person posing a sexual risk to children (that is, paedophiles (including perpetrators of offences online), suspects or offenders) as victims.

Amendment 27, page 1, line 16, at end insert—

“(e) where the person is a victim of honour-based abuse (see section [Meaning of “honour-based abuse”]).”

Amendment 28, page 1, line 16, at end insert—

“(e) where the person has suffered harm as a direct result of criminal conduct in relation to sewage and waste water”

Amendment 33, page 1, line 16, at end insert—

“(e) where the person has experienced anti-social behaviour, as defined by section 2 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2014, and the conditions necessary for an ASB case review under section 104 of that Act have been met.”

This amendment would include victims of anti-social behaviour in the definition of a victim.

Amendment 144, page 1, line 16, at end insert—

“(e) where the person is a victim of the infected blood scandal, as defined in section (Compensation for victims of the infected blood scandal)(5) of this Act.”

Amendment 147, page 1, Line 16, at end insert—

“(e) where the person has suffered significant harm as a result of, and knows or knew of any other victim of, criminal conduct.”

This amendment would include those who suffer from vicarious trauma after a crime in the scope of the Victims Code.

Amendment 157, page 1, line 16, at end insert—

“(e) where the person has experienced child criminal exploitation;”.

This amendment would include victims of child criminal exploitation in the definition of a victim.

Amendment 148, page 1, Line 16, at end insert—

“(3A) For the purposes of this section, it does not matter whether the criminal conduct happened within the United Kingdom or elsewhere.”

This amendment would explicitly require that victims do not miss out on support as a result of the crime affecting them being carried out outside the UK.

Government amendment 34.

Amendment 8, page 2, line 5, after “that” insert—

“no report of the conduct has been made to a criminal justice body and that”.

This amendment aims to ensure that a person could meet the definition of a victim without needing to make a report to a criminal justice body.

Amendment 6, page 2, line 6, at end insert—

“(c) “adult sexual exploitation” means conduct by which a person manipulates, deceives, coerces or controls another person to undertake sexual activity.”

This amendment creates a statutory definition of adult sexual exploitation.

Amendment 158, page 2, line 6, at end insert—

“(c) “child criminal exploitation” means conduct by which a person manipulates, deceives, coerces or controls a person under 18 to undertake activity which constitutes a criminal offence;”.

This amendment provides a definition for the term “child criminal exploitation”.

Amendment 9, in clause 2, page 2, line 18, leave out paragraph (a) and insert—

“(a) should be provided with information from all state agencies with responsibilities under the victims’ code, including the NHS, to help them understand the criminal justice process and beyond, including grant of leave or discharge.”

This amendment would extend the principle that victims should be given information about the criminal justice process to explicitly include the NHS, in order to bring mental health tribunal decisions in line with the rest of the criminal justice system.

Amendment 10, page 2, line 19, at end insert—

“in a language or format that they can understand;”.

Amendment 11, page 2, line 23, at end insert—

“and should be provided with appropriate support to communicate these views;”.

Amendment 12, page 2, line 23, at end insert—

“and with all state agencies with responsibilities under the victims’ code, including HMCTS and the NHS when considering leave or discharge;”.

This amendment seeks to ensure that the NHS and HM Courts and Tribunals Service are included when victims have a right to be heard in the justice process, bringing mental health tribunals decisions in line with the rest of the criminal justice system.

Amendment 3, page 2, line 25, at end insert—

“(3A) The victims’ code must make provision in relation to people who have experienced, or made allegations that they have experienced—

- (a) sexual abuse, sexual harassment or sexual misconduct, or
- (b) bullying or harassment not falling within paragraph (a).

(3B) Provision under subsection (3A) must include—

- (a) provision relating to the enforcement of non-disclosure agreements signed by such victims, and
- (b) provision about legal advice and other support for such victims in cases where they are asked to sign, or have signed, a non-disclosure agreement.

(3C) In this section—

“non-disclosure agreement” means an agreement which purports to any extent to preclude a victim from—

- (a) publishing information about a relevant complaint, or
- (b) disclosing information about the relevant complaint to any one or more other persons;

“misconduct” means—

- (a) sexual abuse, sexual harassment or sexual misconduct, and
- (b) bullying or harassment not falling within paragraph(a);

“relevant complaint” means a complaint relating to misconduct or alleged misconduct by any person.”

This amendment would require the victims’ code to include specific provision for people who have experienced, or made allegations that they have experienced, sexual abuse, sexual harassment or sexual misconduct, or other bullying or harassment.

Amendment 13, page 2, line 25 at end insert—

“(3A) In accordance with subsection (3)(e), the victims’ code must include provision requiring that—

- (a) all victims of child sexual abuse, including online-based abuse, are entitled to compensation under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme,
- (b) victims with unspent convictions, whose offences are linked to the circumstances of their sexual abuse as a child, are entitled to compensation under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme, and
- (c) victims of child sexual abuse may apply for compensation under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme within a 7 year period of whichever of these two dates is the later—
 - (i) the date the offence was reported to the police, or
 - (ii) if the offence was reported whilst the victim was a child, the date the victim turned 18.”

This amendment would provide that all victims of child sexual abuse (CSA), including online, are entitled to compensation under the CICS and that those with unspent convictions directly linked to the circumstances of their abuse can access compensation. It would also extend the period by which victims can apply.

Amendment 14, page 2, line 25, at end insert—

“(3A) The victims’ code must—

- (a) require criminal justice bodies to take all reasonable steps to identify and record any change of name by a perpetrator, and
- (b) require criminal justice bodies to inform a relevant victim when a perpetrator changes their name.

(3B) For the purposes of subsection (3A)—

“perpetrator” means a person whose conduct or alleged conduct results in another person being a victim as defined by section 1 of this Act;

“relevant victim” means a person who becomes a victim as a result of the perpetrator’s conduct.”

This amendment would require criminal justice bodies to monitor name changes of perpetrators and inform victims of any name changes.

Amendment 15, page 2, line 25 at end insert—

- “(3A) The victims’ code must make provision about pre-trial therapy for victims, including—
- (a) a requirement that all criminal justice agencies inform victims of their right to pre-trial therapy, and
 - (b) a requirement that the Crown Prosecution Service annually review their pre-trial therapy guidance and its implementation.”

This amendment would include in the victims’ code a requirement to inform all victims of their right to access pre-trial therapy, and require the CPS to annually review the implementation of pre-trial therapy guidance.

Amendment 29, page 2, line 25, at end insert—

- “(3A) The victims’ code must make provision about support for victims of burglaries.
- (3B) Provision under subsection (3A) must include a requirement that a victim of a burglary must be visited by a police officer.”

Amendment 142, page 2, line 25, at end insert—

- “(3A) The victims’ code must include provision requiring that all victims of the infected blood scandal, as defined in section (Compensation for victims of the infected blood scandal)(5) of this Act, are entitled to compensation.
- (3B) Subject to subsection (3C), compensation must be administered by a body established for that purpose by the Secretary of State under section (Compensation for victims of the infected blood scandal).
- (3C) The Secretary of State must ensure that an interim compensation payment of £100,000 is made within one month of the passing of this Act in the following circumstances—
- (a) where an infected victim died as a child or died as an adult without a partner or child, the compensation payment should be made to their bereaved parents (split equally if separated);
 - (b) where an infected victim has died and there is no bereaved partner but there is a bereaved child or children (including any adopted child), the compensation payment should be paid to the child or children (split equally); and
 - (c) where an infected victim has died and there is no bereaved partner, child nor parent but there is a bereaved full sibling or siblings, the compensation payment should be paid to the sibling or siblings (split equally).”

Amendment 143, page 2, line 25, at end insert—

- “(3A) Within one month of the passing of this Act, the victims’ code must make specific provision for a bespoke psychological service in England for victims of the infected blood scandal, as defined in section (Compensation for victims of the infected blood scandal)(5) of this Act.”

Amendment 146, page 2, line 25, at end insert—

- “(3A) The victims’ code must include provision about therapy and other support services for victims who are children.
- (3B) Provision under subsection (3A) must include—
- (a) a requirement that support must be provided to such victims within one month of a request for support being made,
 - (b) provision relating to the types of support to which such victims are entitled,
 - (c) minimum standards for the quality of support to which such victims are entitled,
 - (d) a requirement that support should be available to such victims—

- (i) throughout the criminal justice process, and
- (ii) after that process has been completed.”

Amendment 159, page 2, line 25, at end insert—

- “(3A) The victims’ code must provide that, where a victim has signed a non-disclosure agreement relating to criminal conduct to which they have been subjected, nothing in that agreement may prevent them from accessing services to which they are entitled under the code.”

Amendment 26, page 2, line 34, at end insert—

- “(5A) Regulations under subsection (4) must make provision for a person to be able to obtain free of charge, on request, a transcript of a trial in which the person was involved as a victim.”

Amendment 156, in clause 6, page 4, line 38, at end insert—

- “(1A) The Secretary of State must publish and implement, in consultation with the Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses, a strategy for providing training on the impact of crime on victims and on victims’ rights for relevant staff of the following organisations—
- (a) the Police
 - (b) the Crown Prosecution Service;
 - (c) probation services;
 - (d) the Foreign and Commonwealth Office;
 - (e) health and social services;
 - (f) victim support services
 - (g) maintained and independent schools and colleges of further education; and
 - (h) such other bodies as the Secretary of State deems appropriate.
- (1B) The Secretary of State must review and update the strategy published under subsection (1A) every three years.”

Government amendments 35 to 46.

Amendment 4, in clause 12, page 10, line 22, at end insert “(d) stalking.”

Amendment 16, page 10, line 22, at end insert “(d) modern slavery.”

This amendment would extend the duty to collaborate to include victim support services for victims of modern slavery.

Government amendment 47.

Amendment 149, page 10, line 40, at end insert—

- “(10) For the purposes of this section, the relevant authorities for a police area, as defined in subsection (2), must together conduct a joint strategic needs assessment.
- (11) The Secretary of State must provide a National Statement every three years on support for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence, including—
- (a) volume of provision at the time at which the National Statement is provided,
 - (b) levels of need, including a breakdown of demographics, including victims with protected characteristics, and
 - (c) levels of investment in services.
- (12) In preparing a National Statement under subsection (11), the Secretary of State must have regard to the joint strategic needs assessments prepared under subsection 10.
- (13) The Secretary of State must ensure that sufficient funding is provided annually to ensure that the relevant authorities, as defined in subsection (2), are able to commission relevant victim support services, as defined in subsection (4).
- (14) The Secretary of State must provide sufficient funding to enable ‘by and for’ services to deliver services to, and to increase the capacity for delivering services to, victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence.

- (15) In this section, “‘by and for’ services” means services which—
- are designed for and delivered by those that share the same protected characteristic(s) as the victims they are intended to serve, and
 - provide services to Black and minority ethnic, LGBT+, deaf or disabled victims and survivors of domestic abuse.
- (16) The Secretary of State must issue guidance in relation to this section about—
- the production of Joint Strategic Needs Assessments by the relevant authorities,
 - the identification of victims’ need and of gaps in provision by the National Statement,
 - the principles which must be followed in the application and allocation of funding,
 - the conditions under which “‘by and for’” organisations that do not have specialism in domestic abuse service provision may be eligible to apply for funding.
- (17) In preparing guidance under subsection (16), the Secretary of State must consult—
- “‘by and for’” organisations working with victims of domestic abuse and of violence against women and girls,
 - the Domestic Abuse Commissioner,
 - the Commissioner for Victims,
 - the Children’s Commissioner.”

Government amendments 48 to 52.

Amendment 155, in clause 15, page 12, line 3, leave out “Secretary of State” and insert “responsible authority”.

Amendment 17, page 12, line 5, at end insert “(c) independent stalking advocates.”

Amendment 154, page 12, line 5, at end insert—

- “(1A) For the purposes of this section, the responsible authority is—
- in England, the Secretary of State; and
 - in Wales, the Welsh Ministers.”

Amendment 19, page 12, line 5, at end insert—

- “(c) any other specialist community-based services relevant to the criminal conduct .”

Amendment 18, page 12, line 12, at end insert—

- “(c) “independent stalking advocate” means a person who provides a relevant service to individuals who are victims of criminal conduct which constitutes stalking.”

This amendment ensures that the Secretary of State must also provide guidance around stalking advocates, in addition to guidance about ISVAs and IDVAs.

Amendment 20, page 12, line 12, at end insert—

- “(c) specialist community-based service” means a person who provides a relevant service to individuals based on a protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 or the specific nature of the crime faced by the victim.”

Amendment 21, page 12, line 13, leave out “or (b)” and insert “, (b) or (c)”.

Amendment 22, page 12, line 16, leave out subsection (4) and insert—

- “(4) Guidance under this section about service providers under subsection (1) must include provision about—
- the role of such providers;
 - the services they provide to—
 - victims, including (where relevant) victims who are children or have other protected characteristics, or

- persons who are not victims, where that service is provided in connection with a service provided to a victim;
- how such providers and other persons who have functions relating to victims, or any aspect of the criminal justice system, should work together;
- appropriate training and qualifications for such providers.”

Government amendment 53.

Amendment 23, page 12, line 28, leave out from beginning to “must” and insert— “The service providers listed in subsection (1)”.

Amendment 24, in clause 22, page 18, line 26, at end insert—

- “(d) is satisfied that the victim has been informed of their rights in relation to the request.”

Government amendments 54 to 56.

Amendment 25, page 20, line 23, at end insert—

- “(d) including a full statement of the victim’s rights in relation to the request.”

Government amendment 57.

Amendment 145, page 22, line 21, at end insert—

“44F Requirements for training in respect of victim information requests

(1) The Secretary of State must by regulations require certain persons to receive training in respect of victim information requests.

(2) Regulations under subsection (1) must—

- require authorised persons to undertake training relating to the making of victim information requests, including on the meaning of “reasonable line of enquiry”,
- require certain employees of the Crown Prosecution Service to undertake training in respect of victim information requests, including training in the appropriate use of material obtained through such a request,
- require persons who provide services to victims and who may receive victim information requests to undertake training in relation to those requests,
- make provision about the content and delivery of the training required.

(3) A statutory instrument containing regulations under this section may not be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament.”

Government amendments 58 to 99, 150 and 100.

Amendment 152, page 35, line 28, leave out Clause 36.

Government amendments 101 to 112.

Amendment 153, page 38, line 10, leave out Clause 37.

Government amendments 113 to 135, and 151.

Government motion to transfer Clause 51.

Government amendments 136 to 141.

There is a lot of pressure on speakers for this debate, and I would be grateful if people could be conscious of that, particularly on the Front Benches. I am unlikely to impose a time limit from the start, but it would be helpful if those on the Front Benches also gave some consideration to that.

Edward Argar: It is a privilege to open this debate and bring the Bill to the House for Report. This important Bill has been long called for by Members across the House, and in progressing it we are delivering on our manifesto. Its central mission, and indeed that of this Government, is to ensure that victims are not just

[Edward Argar]

spectators in a criminal justice system, but are treated as participants in it. Victims tell us that they want to be treated fairly, properly, and with dignity. They want clear, timely, accurate information, and the opportunity and help to make their voice heard. The Bill aims to do just that. It will amplify victims' voices, ensure that they get the high-quality support they deserve, and make services more joined up better to support them. By putting the overarching principles of the victims code on a statutory footing, we will send a clear signal about the service that victims can expect. We will place a new duty on criminal justice agencies to promote awareness of the code so that victims are better informed. The Bill will also create an independent public advocate to speak up for those involved in major incidents such as the Grenfell or Hillsborough tragedies. It will deliver further safeguards to the parole system to protect the public.

Those are critical reforms, and in the spirit in which we conducted Committee and Second Reading, I take this opportunity to thank the Opposition and all Members for their constructive engagement. Although there may be areas on which we disagree, in some areas we were able to work constructively together. I particularly wish put on record my gratitude to the hon. Member for Rotherham (Sarah Champion) for her determination and engagement with a variety of amendments and issues, and for the depth of that engagement. Even where we were not able to agree, I am grateful for the tone and manner in which the debate has been conducted thus far.

Mr Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab): The Government are fond of saying that they are getting on with the people's priorities, however much opinion polls may suggest the opposite. I agree entirely that all parties believe that the Bill is needed, and all parties want to get it on to the statute book. Does the Minister share my concern that the sheer weight of amendments proposed, and the widespread group of people who are saying that a number of people are being missed by this glorious once-in-a-Parliament opportunity, mean that the Government should be much more ambitious about ensuring that more victims get the support they need?

Edward Argar: It will not surprise the hon. Gentleman to know that I do not share his characterisation of the Bill. We have sought to draw the definition of those entitled to support under the victims code as widely as possible, keeping it to those who are victims of crime, because that is the nature of the Bill, but not being specific in listing a range of different groups or categories of victims. That is precisely because we want the Bill to be inclusive, rather than inadvertently being too prescriptive and leaving people out, thereby excluding them from services. We have tried to be as broad based as possible in our definition and approach.

To return to that core definition, this is about victims of crime and of criminal acts. To conclude my comments about the tone of the debate, I am grateful to everyone, not just right hon. and hon. Members who have engaged with the Bill, but stakeholders across the criminal justice system, including many charities, campaigners and others. Again, although we may not have always reached the same conclusion, the level of their engagement, and its

tone, has been phenomenal and much appreciated, and I think it makes for a better Bill. Indeed, some victims have bravely shared their experiences. It is not easy for someone to share their experience of crime with anyone they do not know, particularly in the context of a much debated Bill, so again, I am grateful to each and every one of them.

6.15 pm

The number of amendments tabled—that is the point made by the hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr Perkins)—and the amount of interest that the Bill's provisions have generated, demonstrates how important it is. It is encouraging to see the number of right hon. and hon. Members who are in the Chamber for the Report stage, which I think speaks well of the House in that respect. It is, of course, vital that we deliver for victims, and for that reason, following points raised by hon. Members and other stakeholders, the Government will be tabling a number of amendments to strengthen the Bill further, to ensure that it delivers what we want it to, as well as reflecting the listening that we have done during its passage.

Part 1 deals with victims of criminal conduct. We will bring forward a legislative requirement for those under the duty to collaborate to carry out a joint assessment of the needs of victims when preparing their joint commissioning strategy for victim support services. That will require local commissioners to work together to assess the needs of victims in their local police area, the services that are available, and whether and how victims' needs are being met. There will be an explicit requirement to have regard to the particular needs of certain victims such as children. That was raised in Committee, and I am particularly grateful to the Domestic Abuse Commissioner and her office, who have continued to raise the importance of joint needs assessments to strengthen the duty to collaborate. I am pleased to accept her recommendations and proposals, and to table the relevant amendment.

We will clarify the drafting of the Bill so that it clearly states and is understood that a crime does not need to have been reported for an individual to be included within the definition of "victim". That was always our intent, but concerns were raised by stakeholders and parliamentarians that that was not explicit or clear enough, which is why we have tabled our new clause. Victims' views are vital if we are to ensure that support services meet their needs. We listened to feedback in Committee on how valuable such insight can be, and our amendment to clause 13 would place a requirement on local commissioners who are under the duty to collaborate to make reasonable efforts to obtain the views of victims when preparing their commissioning strategy. There are also instances where seeking a view from the Victims' Commissioner on those strategies will be useful, given their expertise and insight. However, we should also be conscious that that is not always the most appropriate use of the Victims' Commissioner's office, and may not be necessary in every case. The amendment clarifies that that will not be a requirement, but it is possible for such engagement to take place.

In Committee, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips) raised concerns about support for those who are bereaved by suicide where the cause is domestic abuse. I see her in her place on the Back Bench.

I very much enjoyed debating with her when she was on the Front Bench, and I suspect those debates will continue from her new seat. The content may be the same, it is just the seat that is different, and I welcome her back to the Back Benches and look forward to engaging with her further. I agree it is right that suicides are also recognised as fatalities following domestic abuse. For that reason, new clause 20 will change the name of domestic homicide reviews and the circumstances in which they can be carried out. Domestic homicide reviews are multiagency reviews that seek to identify and implement lessons learned from deaths that have, or appear to have resulted from domestic abuse. We will rename those “domestic abuse related death reviews”, better to reflect the range of deaths that fall within the scope of a review. That name change will emphasise that all deaths linked to domestic abuse should be treated as seriously as a domestic homicide.

I also highlight the specialist support that is available for those bereaved under such circumstances. It may not go as far as the hon. Lady would wish, but I hope she will see it as another step forward. We are committed to developing the evidence base and interventions for suicides that follow domestic abuse, and we will also update current legislation for such reviews, to ensure that a domestic abuse related review is considered when a death has or appears to have resulted from domestic abuse, as defined by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Government new clause 37 concerns Jade’s law. In October this year, the Lord Chancellor announced that the Government would suspend parental rights from parents who murder their partner or ex-partner with whom they share children, and the new clause will give effect to that pledge. It will provide for the suspension of parental responsibility in the tragic situation where one partner has been convicted of killing a partner or ex-partner. The new clauses will allow the family court to review the suspension, which will be facilitated by placing a new duty on the local authority to rapidly initiate and bring such proceedings when there is likely to be no one else holding parental responsibility for a child.

I take this opportunity to offer my most sincere condolences to all families dealing with these tragic circumstances, including the family of Jade Ward, who lost their daughter, mother and friend in such a horrific way. Their tireless campaigning, along with that of the right hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mark Tami), has led to and helped shape this amendment. It is important that where we make these changes, we recognise those in this House—from whichever side of the Chamber they come—who have put in the work to achieve them, and I do that now.

Our amendment will provide that where a parent is convicted of the murder or voluntary manslaughter of their co-parent, the Crown court will make a prohibited steps order. That will prevent that parent from exercising their parental responsibility in respect of any children they share at the point of sentencing. We must ensure that in any decision making, the family court considers the best interests of any children involved and the impact it may have on them. The convicted parent may also make representations. The family court will decide whether the order should remain.

There are some cases where an immediate suspension of parental responsibility by the Crown court would not be appropriate. We will therefore include provision

for the Crown court not to suspend parental responsibility where it concludes that it would not be in the interests of justice. This important amendment will give a clear route to help protect families from additional trauma in their darkest moments.

Before moving on to part 2, I will address a number of other concerns that have been raised by Members and tabled as amendments to part 1. I will not pre-empt what may be said by those Members speaking to or moving those amendments—I wish to hear what they have to say—but I thank them for engaging with me over the summer on their concerns. After careful reflection, there are a number of amendments that we have not brought forward or have sought to address through non-legislative means. Some of them seek to expand the definition of a victim or expand support services to reference specific crime types. Although I understand the rationale for that, as I mentioned to the hon. Member for Chesterfield, and the positive impact on victims that recognising a specific crime in legislation can have, on careful consideration I remain of the view that it is right that the definition of victim in this Bill and for support services remains purposely broad and high-level, ensuring that it captures every victim of crime.

However, I recognise in particular the calls made for non-criminal antisocial behaviour to be referenced in this Bill. I also recognise, as I suspect does every Member of this House, the impact that persistent antisocial behaviour that does not reach a criminal threshold can have on individuals and whole communities. While we remain of the view that this is not the right Bill for these measures, I reassure the House that the Government are committed to supporting this cohort. For that reason, the Criminal Justice Bill—it is currently before the House, with its Second Reading so ably concluded by my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Laura Farris)—contains provisions related to tackling all antisocial behaviour, and we therefore consider it the most appropriate vehicle for any legislative changes and for this debate. It will be supplemented by a suite of non-legislative measures.

The Home Office, as the lead Department, recently relaunched its antisocial behaviour case review, formerly known as the community trigger, and raised awareness of the tool throughout ASB Awareness Week 2023. Additionally, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities is working on a one-stop shop reporting system for ASB, which will ensure that victims of ASB have easy and flexible ways of reporting antisocial behaviour and will receive an update on what has happened as a result. It is also important to remember that a large amount of antisocial behaviour is in fact criminal. While it may not be categorised as antisocial behaviour, the individual offences that are criminal often apply to many of these cases.

Sarah Champion (Rotherham) (Lab): The Minister is aware of the debate we had around child criminal exploitation. Does he believe that that part of the Criminal Justice Bill could cover that definition?

Edward Argar: The point that the hon. Lady raises does not directly relate to antisocial behaviour, because often what she is talking about is criminal in many ways. As I set out in Committee, we believe that where ASB is criminal, it would already be captured under this legislation. I suspect that she may develop that point in her remarks later.

[Edward Argar]

Another area that has been raised, which my right hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Dame Maria Miller) will speak to, is non-disclosure agreements and how they may prevent victims from being able to seek the support they need. I particularly thank her for her constructive engagement on this important topic. I also thank the hon. Member for Oxford West and Abingdon (Layla Moran), although she is not her place. I recognise that non-disclosure agreements are misused if they prevent someone from speaking about what they have experienced, whether it is criminality or equivalent. While this Government recognise that NDAs, also known as confidentiality clauses, can and do serve a valid purpose to protect commercially sensitive information and deliver finality, they should never be used to stop victims of crime getting the support they need. I also note changes in this respect in higher education, if memory serves. I reassure the hon. Lady and my right hon. Friend that we continue to work closely with the Department for Business and Trade, which holds overall policy responsibility for NDAs, to carefully consider how best to address the issues they have raised, including, where appropriate, through legislative options as this legislation progresses.

I will touch on some of the concerns raised by Members that do not require legislation, which we will address by bringing forward non-legislative measures. On code compliance, we will set out a non-legislative notification process that shows clear consequences for non-compliance in guidance. We will publish more detail on that shortly. We will also make updates to the victims code, including adding further information on how victims can access pre-trial therapy and get more timely information about, for example, restorative justice and how victims of crime overseas can access support.

Elliot Colburn (Carshalton and Wallington) (Con): As chair of the all-party parliamentary group on restorative justice, I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. I appreciate that he has said that he does not want to use this Bill as a vehicle to take through legislative changes to access to RJ services, but could he set out in a bit more detail the non-legislative measures that he is planning to bring in to help improve access to restorative justice services for victims?

Edward Argar: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his engagement on this issue. Thanks to his intervention and those of campaigners, and his tireless work to ensure that victims are given the right opportunities to participate in restorative justice, I am pleased today, at the Dispatch Box, to commit to the following changes. I will ensure that our new commissioning guidance for police and crime commissioners due to be published next year will include specific information on restorative justice services so that those responsible for funding services understand these services when considering how best to address local need. I will also consult on a new entitlement in the victims code for victims to be given information about restorative justice services at the point of sentence, rather than the point of reporting, which I appreciate may not be the right time for consideration by either the victims or offenders. I hope that those additional measures will improve awareness and provision of restorative justice, which I recognise

can be extremely valuable for victims and offenders in appropriate cases. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his work in driving forward this change.

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): On the issue of pre-trial therapy, will the Minister be taking on board the recommendations from the Bluestar Project, which has been working to ensure that the victims code is up to date and that pre-trial therapy is readily accessible to all survivors of child sexual abuse?

Edward Argar: In respect of pre-trial therapy, and in addition to what I said, we will be bringing forward a revised victims code and consulting on the detail of it. I am happy to look into the specifics of what she proposes, but I do not want to pre-judge that consultation. I appreciate that on some occasions people may think that the consultations are pre-determined, but I want this to be genuine engagement and consultation. I am happy to read anything that she wants to send me, as always.

I also put on record my thanks to the hon. Member for Richmond Park (Sarah Olney) for raising the important issue of court transcripts. I recognise the cost challenge posed by transcription of every aspect of a case, and the full details of the case and all its proceedings. What I am happy to announce today is that, from next spring, we will run a one-year trial pilot that will enable victims of rape and other serious sexual offences to request Crown court sentencing remarks, which contain a summary of the case and the points that have been made, free of charge. We believe that this approach strikes the right balance between supporting victims of these horrific crimes and providing something that is affordable and achievable, and I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her work on this issue.

I thank the hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron) for his amendments and for raising the issue of criminal conduct relating to sewage and wastewater. Like every Member of the House, I have every sympathy with those who are affected by these offences, and I have made it clear that individuals who have been harmed or impacted by these offences can access support services where the issue for which they are seeking support fits their eligibility. I will say no more than that at the moment, because I want to hear what he says when he speaks to his amendments. I will seek to address them in more detail in my winding-up speech, if that is acceptable to him, because I want to hear what he has to say.

I turn now to part 2 of the Bill, “Victims of Major Incidents,” on which the Government will table a number of amendments relating to the Independent Public Advocate. Before turning to those amendments, I wish to put on the record my thanks for the time and dedication of Bishop James Jones, my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), the right hon. Lord Wills and, of course, the right hon. Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle), who is in her place and who has been phenomenally pragmatic throughout the process. While pushing for what she believes to be the right outcome, she has engaged constructively and pragmatically to try to make improvements, and I am very grateful for the way she has done that. In what I am about to say, she will see some of the fruits of what she has done in that space.

We have engaged with victims directly, we have heard from them about what they most need after a major incident, and we have sought to listen. First, we will establish a permanent Independent Public Advocate for victims of major incidents, who is referred to in the Bill as the standing advocate. This standing advocate will advise the Secretary of State on the interests of victims of major incidents and their treatment by public authorities in response to those major incidents. A major incident will still be declared by the Secretary of State, and I appreciate that some have called for the IPA to be self-deploying. However, we do not believe that would necessarily be the most appropriate or sustainable approach. The Secretary of State is accountable to Parliament, is responsible for spending public money, and can be challenged on their decisions in the courts.

Secondly, our amendments will allow the standing advocate to advise relevant Secretaries of State on the appropriate Government review mechanisms following a major incident. These could include a statutory inquiry or a non-statutory panel model, such as the Hillsborough independent model. Such advice can also cover the scope of any review, and the advocate will make representations for the questions to which victims want answers. Crucially, this advice will be informed by the views and needs of victims themselves, and it will place their voice at the heart of the process.

Continuing with the IPA, Government amendments 76 to 82 will introduce significant changes to the advocate's reporting function and abilities. They will place a duty on the standing advocate to report annually, and confer a discretion on an advocate to report on their own initiative, once appointed, in respect of a major incident. The amendments also make provision for the publication and laying of reports before Parliament.

The amendments will also clarify the grounds on which the Secretary of State can omit material from reports. I am aware that the ability of the Secretary of State to omit material from a report was a cause of concern for some, and I particularly appreciate this given the context of the IPA's establishment. For the avoidance of doubt, we have carefully considered the feedback and have brought forward measures to be more explicit about when a Secretary of State may omit material, and to be more specific than something simply being in the "public interest". We have used the Inquiries Act 2005 as our touchstone. The ability to omit material in certain circumstances is vital to ensure that sensitive materials, such as those relating to national security, are protected.

Amendment 64 will ensure that a lead advocate is appointed if more than one advocate is appointed for the same major incident, and I have reflected on the very helpful and constructive feedback from Lord Wills about the importance of having a clear structure in the Bill. Amendments 84 to 86 allow for the disclosure of information by an advocate, where appropriate, to any person exercising functions of a public nature, or by a person exercising functions of a public nature to an advocate, subject to the Data Protection Act 2018. This two-way flow of information is crucial to ensuring that advocates are able to support victims properly.

I want to make it clear that that does not provide the advocates with any data-compelling powers. We expect strong co-operation between public authorities and the advocates, and an advocate can report to the Secretary of State if they believe there has been a lack of co-operation.

I appreciate that the right hon. Member for Garston and Halewood may try to nudge me to go a little further, but I note that the Hillsborough independent panel, which was rightly credited with securing disclosure of information that showed that fans were not responsible for the disaster, likewise did not have those data-compelling powers.

The final change that the amendments make is to remove the current restriction in the Bill whereby the advocate could share personal data only with the consent of the data subject. By removing that, the advocate now has greater freedom and can rely on a wider range of legal bases to process personal data, as outlined in data protection legislation.

I want to acknowledge the important issue raised by the Manchester Arena families and the hon. Member for—[HON. MEMBERS: "South Shields."] I should have known that, because we have met on a number of occasions, although we may have called each other by our first names on those occasions. I am grateful to the hon. Member for South Shields (Mrs Lewell-Buck) and those families for their tireless campaigning. In respect of having a role for the bereaved in the registration of their loved one's death following an inquest, I will say a little more on this in my closing remarks, once the hon. Lady has had an opportunity to speak to her amendment in the course of this debate, but I want to reassure the House that I am sympathetic and understand what sits behind what the hon. Lady is campaigning for and seeking to do.

I turn to the final part of the Bill, part 3. The measures in respect of parole reforms are designed to protect the public and maintain confidence in the parole system by enabling the Secretary of State to intervene in the release of the most serious offenders. The first duty of any Government is to protect the public, and although the Parole Board has a very good record of assessing risk, this power will give the public additional confidence that when it comes to the release of those who have committed the gravest of crimes, there is an extra safeguard to ensure that prisoners are released only when it is safe to do so and that dangerous offenders remain behind bars.

During the passage of the Bill, I have heard support for that important principle, but I have also heard concerns from parliamentary colleagues and other stakeholders about how the proposed reform will be implemented, and from victims' representatives about the potential for unnecessary delay in the process. I have therefore tabled amendments that will streamline the process to ensure that cases are dealt with as quickly and efficiently as possible, while still guaranteeing that the Secretary of State retains a power to intervene on behalf of the public whenever necessary to do so.

The amendments mean that instead of Ministers being required to carry out the full assessment as to whether a prisoner meets the release test, which will be an onerous process requiring a full review of hundreds of pages of evidence, only for a prisoner to almost certainly challenge that decision in court, Ministers will now be able to send a case directly to a superior court for a judicial decision. In most cases, it will be the upper tribunal. We are also making it clear that the Secretary of State will refer cases that particularly affect public confidence, and where they believe that the court may reach different decisions from those of the board.

[Edward Argar]

The amendments will make the exercising of the power quicker and more cost-effective, removing the need to create a shadow Parole Board within the Ministry of Justice and providing swifter certainty for victims and the public.

We are also proposing two further minor changes to the measures. Clause 36 enables the Parole Board to refer cases to the Secretary of State for a decision where it is unable to reach a decision itself. We have listened carefully to suggestions that this provision may not be required, as it is not easy to envisage the circumstances in which it might apply. We have listened and will remove the clause from the Bill. Secondly, there are a small number of parole cases—usually those where the index offence is terrorism—that involve the consideration of sensitive material relating to national security or closed material. It is usual for legal matters involving closed materials to be heard in the High Court, so we are amending the Bill to enable the Secretary of State to refer any such specific parole cases, which we would expect to be few in number, to that court rather than the upper tribunal. I hope that the changes will be well received and demonstrate our commitment to ensuring swifter outcomes for victims.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): Will the Minister give way?

Edward Argar: I will take a brief intervention. Then I will try to conclude, because I am conscious that many Members wish to speak.

Jim Shannon: I thank the Minister. On many occasions, MPs are asked to refer cases for reconsideration. The Minister has indicated that the appeal board may do that. Can MPs also refer prisoners to be reconsidered for longer sentences or, indeed, for not getting out at all?

Edward Argar: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. The power in the clauses rests with the Secretary of State, acting in his capacity as Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State. Of course, Members of Parliament can put their representations to the Secretary of State, but the referral procedure to the upper tribunal will sit with the Secretary of State, not with individual Members of this House.

We are also proposing amendments to change the period at which those on imprisonment for public protection sentences qualify for their licence to be considered for termination. The Justice Committee published its report on IPP sentences in September 2022, and I thank it for its valuable insights. One of its recommendations was to reduce the qualifying period at which an IPP prisoner in the community is referred to the Parole Board for consideration of licence termination from 10 years to five years. I am pleased to say that, on reflection, Government new clause 26 will reduce the period from 10 years to three years, which we believe strikes an appropriate balance. It will also introduce a provision whereby, for IPP offenders who have reached the three-year qualifying period and the Parole Board has not already directed that the licence be terminated, the Secretary of State must direct that the IPP licence ceases to have effect after a further two years of continuous good behaviour in the community, which is defined as not being recalled to prison in that time.

Secondly, the new clause will remove clause 33(5) from the Bill in order to decouple the test applied by the Parole Board when considering whether to terminate an IPP licence from other Parole Board decisions in clause 33, such as whether to release a prisoner from prison. The test is replaced by that introduced in clause 47(2)(c), setting out a clear presumption for termination of the licence requiring the Parole Board to direct the Secretary of State to make an order that a licence is to cease to have an effect unless it is satisfied that it is necessary for public protection that that licence remains in force.

We are clear throughout that public protection must remain a priority, but that change in presumption—a rebuttable presumption—will mean that when the Parole Board considers a licence termination for an offender who has already been found safe to be released, it will approach that with the presumption in favour of terminating. I appreciate that does not necessarily go as far as my hon. Friend the Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Sir Robert Neill) might wish—that is evidenced by his tabling new clause 1—but I believe that we have made reasonable and balanced progress. Of course, we will carefully consider any further recommendations.

Before I conclude, it is right that I highlight the amendments tabled by the Chair of the Home Affairs Committee, the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Dame Diana Johnson), in respect of the infected blood inquiry. I have considered carefully what she has tabled. She will appreciate that this is a matter for the Cabinet Office. In my opening remarks, I want to acknowledge the huge impact that that scandal has had on people—families and individuals—up and down the country. I do not propose to say much more at this point, because I want to come to that in some detail once I have heard her remarks in moving new clause 27. I have sought to be as comprehensive as possible in my opening remarks—I am grateful to the House for its indulgence—to leave time in my closing remarks to address specific points on that issue and others, once Members have spoken to their amendments.

I am grateful to all who have engaged with the Bill as it has progressed. I will listen carefully to the debate, and I look forward to responding. I commend the Government's amendments to the House.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): Before I call Kevin Brennan, the House can see how many Members are standing. The first few to be called should not be thinking about speaking for longer than six minutes. That limit is very likely to be reduced. I do not want to put the mockers on people intervening on one another—it is a debate—but please be mindful that it will eat into other people's time.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): I rise to speak to the amendments standing in my name and will refer to others. The Opposition acknowledge the significance of the Bill, but even if the new Government amendments that the Minister has just outlined are adopted, we cannot escape the reality that the Bill nevertheless remains a skeletal framework that requires substantial enhancement. For too long—over a period of eight years and an octet of Justice Secretaries, which is an average of one per year—the promise of a comprehensive victims Bill has

been dangled before us, yet still we are here trying to fill in its gaps. That provides little comfort for the victims of crime across the country.

Having picked up the Bill since it was considered in Committee, I wish to pay tribute to my colleagues who worked on it through that stage and did all the heavy lifting: in particular, my predecessors on the Front Bench, my hon. Friends the Members for Cardiff North (Anna McMorrin) and for Lewisham West and Penge (Ellie Reeves), as well as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips), who is in her place on the Back Benches. I also pay tribute to those who have engaged from the Opposition Back Benches, including my right hon. Friends the Members for Kingston upon Hull North (Dame Diana Johnson) and for Alyn and Deeside (Mark Tami) and my hon. Friends the Member for Rotherham (Sarah Champion) and for South Shields (Mrs Lewell-Buck). I also thank those who have tabled amendments for consideration today, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell), my hon. Friends the Members for Poplar and Limehouse (Apsana Begum) and for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy), and my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman). That really shows the amount of interest in the Bill right across the House.

6.45 pm

Throughout the Bill's passage in the Commons, Labour has consistently pushed for a Bill that does more than just acknowledge victims; we seek to empower victims. To that end, we have tabled amendments that are needed to strengthen the Bill into a more robust charter of support for victims. Our key amendments are designed to provide four pillars of justice that would place victims at the centre of the criminal justice system. They would: first, strengthen the powers of the Victims' Commissioner; secondly, add persistent antisocial behaviour to a comprehensive definition of a victim; thirdly, implement a duty of candour requiring public authorities and officials to act in the public interest; and, fourthly, provide independent legal advocates for victims of rape. That is not just about providing a service but about upholding the rights of the most vulnerable in their time of need.

We note that the Government are taking up one of our previous amendments on reforming the powers of the Secretary of State in relation to overturning Parole Board decisions. We also welcome their decision to join us in responding to the dreadful case of Jade Ward by finally agreeing to put Jade's law on the statute book.

However, overall the Government have adopted a somewhat glacial approach to fast-tracking measures to address the plight of victims in the Bill, in a manner that betrays a lack of total focus on and commitment to victims. They have shown us that victims are not the top priority. That is evident in the inclusion of matters relating to prisoners and parole, which dilute the Bill's intended purpose. Our plan is to put victims at the heart of the criminal justice system, ensuring that their voices are not just heard but heeded.

As Labour has said throughout, we will not oppose the Bill—to do so would be to turn away from the potential for progress that it promises—but let us be clear that, however commendable its intentions may be, intentions alone do not suffice. That is why, without the amendments that we have tabled, the Bill is a shadow of what it could be. Let me turn to our amendments.

New clause 13 would impose a duty on specified public authorities to collaborate with the Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses. It would empower the commissioner to require co-operation from designated public authorities to monitor compliance with the victims code, compelling them to comply. Despite the Government's acknowledgment of the commissioner's significance, the role recently remained vacant for more than a year. That stark fact in itself is a practical demonstration of the difference between Government rhetoric and reality when it comes to victims. Having a Victims' Commissioner in post is just the first requirement; strengthening the commissioner's powers is imperative. For there to be effective accountability on behalf of victims, it is essential to grant the necessary powers. Labour is dedicated to putting victims first, including through empowering the Victims' Commissioner to offer maximum support to victims, aligning with previous commissioners' calls for those enhanced powers.

Ministers have suggested during the Bill's passage that past commissioners commanded co-operation without the need for a legal duty to be encoded, but we should not burden commissioners with the expectation of consistently surpassing their role in order to ensure co-operation. The Government's Domestic Abuse Act 2021 granted the Domestic Abuse Commissioner comparable powers, so why the reluctance to afford the same to the Victims' Commissioner? If the Government are genuinely committed to enhancing the experience of victims and ensuring that public authorities are held to account, they should grant the Victims' Commissioner additional powers in line with our new clause.

I turn to new clause 14, which also stands in my name. It is clear that while the Bill is supposed to support victims, it falls short for victims of major incidents. The new clause would compel organisations to face public scrutiny with honesty, especially during inquiries into state-related deaths. It would maintain a duty of candour, which is crucial for public servants to perform their roles with integrity and to call out harmful practices that endanger lives.

Maria Eagle (Garston and Halewood) (Lab) *rose*—

Kevin Brennan: I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member who is about to intervene.

Maria Eagle: New clause 14 is much better than the Government's provision in the Criminal Justice Bill, which relates to producing codes of practice only for the police. Does my hon. Friend agree that his new clause would be a vital part of implementing a full Hillsborough law, which is what our party calls for?

Kevin Brennan: In all candour, I agree. The need for the new clause could not be more urgent. It is rooted in a simple expectation that those in public service, from health to policing, must not only act diligently but expose and challenge dangerous practices. The duty of candour would be not just a guideline but a legal obligation, and it would be particularly vital in tragedies like Hillsborough. I commend my right hon. Friend's campaigning over many years on that subject and on terrible tragedies such as the Grenfell Tower fire.

New clause 14 aims to shift from a culture of defensiveness to one of openness, and would support those who wish to contribute to inquiries but feel pressured

[Kevin Brennan]

to remain silent. The NHS duty of candour has been a step in the right direction, but we need to go further for all public authorities if we are to end the cycle of institutional defensiveness that not only delays justice but fails to safeguard the lives of our citizens.

The new clause seeks to break down those barriers of evasiveness and foster a culture of accountability, where seeking the truth becomes paramount. A statutory duty of candour would circumvent all such issues and direct investigations towards the most pertinent matters promptly and efficiently. Most important of all, it would bring justice to the victims and their families who, for far too long, have been let down by public bodies that are meant to do the right thing.

I turn to amendment 33, which again stands in my name. The Bill intends to improve protections for victims, but it neglects a significant group, which the Minister made reference to in his remarks: individuals plagued by the menace of persistent antisocial behaviour, who are often living in fear in their own homes. The amendment seeks to rectify that oversight by ensuring that the definition of “victim” includes those tormented by antisocial behaviour such that they meet the threshold for an antisocial behaviour case review. There is no good reason why that group of people should have to deal with all the same agencies as other victims without the benefit of the same rights, so they should be added to the victims code.

Members across the House will know of many people in their constituencies suffering from that kind of antisocial behaviour. It is a daily battle for them. It is not the mark of a just society that they should not be included in the code. Currently, those victims are left without the protections and support that the Bill extends to other victims. That is an unacceptable gap in the legislation. We must extend support to those affected by persistent antisocial behaviour. It is our duty to ensure that no victim is left behind. The Bill must demonstrate that our support for those victims is unwavering and our commitment to all victims is absolute. We must ensure that every member of our society can live in dignity and peace, to which they have a right. I heard what the Minister said on this matter, but it is not good enough.

I turn amendments 154 and 155, though I will not dwell on them. They seek to maintain Welsh Ministers’ responsibility for issuing guidance to independent domestic violence advocates and independent sexual violence advocates in Wales. In the Bill, the Secretary of State is slated to provide guidance to outline their roles, the services to victims, and collaboration with the criminal justice system and other victim support entities. We support enhanced victim support, but our concern pertains to the Secretary of State assuming responsibility for the guidance in Wales. The Welsh Senedd did not grant legislative consent to the Bill due to its reservations about the role of the Secretary of State for Justice. Welfare and safeguarding are devolved matters.

I will not go into great detail because of time, but whether by oversight or design, the UK Government’s assumption of responsibility creates a dual system with varying authorities responsible for victim support providers based on the nature of the assistance rendered. That cannot be the right approach for victims in Wales. Elsewhere, the Government have shown a disregard

for devolution. I am not sure that it is deliberate in this case, and I genuinely hope that it is an oversight. The Minister’s raised eyebrows suggest that I might be wrong about that, and that I am being too generous to him and the Government. As he has displayed some willingness to amend the Bill in our direction in other areas, I hope that he will reconsider the drafting to prevent further encroachment on devolved powers and, more importantly, to avoid less clarity for those helping victims in Wales and for victims themselves. If he is not willing to support our amendment on Report, I would welcome at least a commitment from him—I hope he is listening—to give further consideration to this matter when the Bill arrives in the other place.

New clause 38 on independent legal advocates is also significant. It seeks to recognise that the criminal justice system as it stands does not provide an adequate means of upholding the rights of rape victims, who so often feel that they are on trial. The provision of free independent legal advocates for rape victims is not merely beneficial but fundamentally necessary. For far too long, sexual violence victims have navigated the treacherous waters of the criminal justice system alone, often retraumatised by the very process that seeks to deliver justice.

The new clause aims to change that reality, and by tabling it we aim to go further than simply leaving it to the police to ensure that they seek victims’ personal records only when really necessary. The new clause would give victims a real and reliable opportunity to challenge those sorts of requests when they go too far, by having an experienced advocate by their side. The new clause would fundamentally change a centuries-old legal system without endangering the rights of defendants. In doing so, it aims to rebuild the trust of victims—women and girls in particular—because our justice system will cease to function if people do not feel able come forward and report crime.

I turn to new clause 42 in my name and new clause 27 in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North. I pay tribute to her incredible campaigning on this matter over many years and that of other Members who have campaigned alongside her. We have all been moved by the appalling infected blood tragedy. The Labour party wants to help ensure that justice and compensation for victims and their families are delivered urgently. I applaud campaigning advocacy organisations, alongside the all-party parliamentary group on haemophilia and contaminated blood, which have worked so tirelessly to secure justice.

This issue has spanned many years and several Parliaments. The former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), set up the inquiry. Many Members and former Members—including Andy Burnham and the current Chancellor of the Exchequer, when they were Health Secretaries—advocated for such an independent inquiry. The Government have accepted that there is a moral case for compensation. The interim payments to a number of victims is an important recognition of that. I am sure that the Minister has seen the letter that the shadow Chancellor wrote over the weekend to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on this matter.

New clause 27 provides a chance to show that the Commons supports the principle of delivering a compensation scheme and understands the urgency of delivering justice. New clause 42 relates to that, and would establish a deadline of 25 sitting days from the

publication of the final report on infected blood for an oral statement to this House setting out how victims can access the scheme and what steps will be taken to establish a compensation body.

I hope that the Government will accept both new clauses tonight. The aim is to ensure that the Government move urgently after the final report is published. This evening's vote is an important opportunity, and we are willing to work with the Government to ensure that a fair scheme can be set up and administered quickly. There is time before the Bill goes to the Lords for us to work further on that. It is a hugely complex matter. We are keen to work on a cross-party basis to shape a final compensation scheme that can deliver justice urgently. We await the final findings of the independent infected blood inquiry chaired by Sir Brian Langstaff. However, there is no reason for the Government not to move forward, especially as the King's Speech committed to action.

Dame Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): Is my hon. Friend as surprised as I am that the Government are saying it is not possible to set up the compensation scheme and make payments at this time, because we do not have the final report? For the Post Office Horizon scandal, they are already making payments, ahead of the final report of the public inquiry.

7 pm

Kevin Brennan: Yes, and the answer to the last line of my right hon. Friend's intervention is, "What is the difference here?" That is a very pertinent question, which I know the Minister will want to answer when he gets to the Dispatch Box to reply to the debate.

I wish to pay tribute to Sir Brian Langstaff and the inquiry team for their work and their unstinting commitment to deliver justice for those infected. I would be grateful if the Minister could update the House on what work the Government have been doing since the publication of the report. I accept that that is part of the Cabinet Office's responsibility, but it sits with us this evening and, of course, Governments are supposed to be joined up. I know the House would also be grateful for an update on the expected timing of the publication of Sir Brian's final report, as this issue affects Members across the House. In that spirit, let us try to rise to the occasion and find a way to work constructively on a cross-party basis, but crucially at speed. To be clear, I urge my hon. Friends to support new clause 27, tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North, should it be pressed to a Division.

New clause 1 was tabled by the hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Sir Robert Neill), and he is absolutely right that it concerns a very serious matter. Unfortunately, given the impact of the Government's effective destruction of the criminal justice system, we lack the infrastructure and resources to keep the public safe, should his new clause be implemented immediately. Our priority is, and always must be, the safety of the British public. We are concerned that if new clause 1 were enacted without provisioning for significant improvements in probation and parole, we would potentially significantly increase the risk to the public and to the prisoners themselves. The Government's movement on this issue is a welcome first step. I look forward to seeing what further progress can be made by our colleagues in the other place.

On parole, I express our disappointment, generally, regarding part 3 of the Bill, the addition of which diverts attention away from the Bill being a victims Bill. However, I recognise the Government's acceptance of the basis of our argument, which is contained in new clauses 15 and 16. Those new clauses, tabled in my name, would prevent a Justice Secretary from overturning Parole Board decisions and redirect appeals for an independent decision. I emphasise the critical need for the Government to fulfil their duty to protect citizens, rather than pursuing political gains or attempting to exert control over independent quasi-judicial entities.

The Government are right in recognising the gravity of the substantial challenges in parole, many of which, I am afraid, stem from 13 years of their own misrule, marked by systematic underfunding and undermining of our criminal justice system. We are devoted to upholding law and order, pledging to enhance the Parole Board's effectiveness and to reinvest in our criminal justice system. We extend an invitation to the Government to align with our endeavours and aspire to foster improvements for victims and prisoners alike.

On the Government's amendments, there are a lot of them. It is not always the case that the Government are willing to table substantive amendments in the House of Commons. I think it is the right thing to do, rather than keeping them until the Bill arrives in another place. Quite a few of the amendments represent the Government's alignment with our previous amendments, so it would be churlish of me not to welcome them. After all, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Simon Hoare): Sarcasm is the lowest form of wit!

Kevin Brennan: I know the hon. Gentleman is an expert on that subject.

New clauses 22 and 23 represent movement by the Government towards our long-standing campaign for a Hillsborough law. They introduce a statutory definition of "major incident" and "victims", and legislate for a permanent advocate on the side of victims to speak to their best interests and the treatment they receive from public bodies. Ministers will be all too familiar with our commitment to bring in a Hillsborough law. We tabled new clause 14 to push the duty of candour, which we have already discussed.

I understand there is a possibility the House might divide on new clause 10, tabled by the hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron). The Conservatives' failure to prevent illegal sewage leaks has led to a drastic increase in illegal discharges, trashing nature, damaging tourism and putting people's health at risk. They promised us the affluent society; they gave us the effluent society. Labour believes that when Ofwat concludes that the water companies are inflicting the damage, the cost must be paid by the offending companies and not the taxpayer. The polluter should pay.

Finally, I want to refer to Jade's law and the work of my right hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside. His campaigning, along with Jade Ward's family and the community, has been incredible; they have fought to ensure that no family endures what that family did ever again. My right hon. Friend stood by his constituents, who fought their campaign in an incredible and exemplary

[Kevin Brennan]

manner. It is welcome news that the Government will protect children where one parent murdered the other. I must state some disappointment that elements of the amendment that my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham West and Penge tabled in Committee were not carried over, too. None the less, it is a celebratory event for Jade Ward's family and the community, and for my right hon. Friend. We should offer them our thanks and congratulations.

The Government have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to make a real change for victims. I urge them not to waste it. I hope they will support our amendments on that basis, and I hope they continue their trend in following in our footsteps.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): Order. I am introducing a six-minute limit from the very beginning.

Sir Robert Neill (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): Given the time available, I will concentrate on some specific aspects of this very important Bill.

I welcome the approach taken by the Minister and by the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State, whom I am delighted to see on the Front Bench. Their constructive approach has improved the Bill considerably. I am particularly grateful to them for having taken on board, in a large number of aspects, the Justice Committee's pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Victims Bill, as it then was, and our September 2022 report on imprisonment for public protection sentences. They have moved and I very much welcome that. I particularly appreciate the efforts the Lord Chancellor has made personally to engage with me and members of my Committee.

It is worth saying that IPP sentences remain a blot on the justice system—not my words, but those, dare I say it, of my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor. We want to try to remove that blot as much as possible. We need not rehearse the history. Whatever the intentions, the scheme did not have the desired effect. Indeed, it had the effect of creating real injustice to such an extent that this House, with cross-party support, abolished IPP sentences as long ago as 2012. What we did not do was remove the sentences retrospectively, so we now have a situation where there are still some 2,600 people in prison with indeterminate sentences that we as a House think are not appropriate and do not work. The noble Lord Blunkett, the author of the scheme, said in another place, "I got it wrong" and that we need to put it right. Against that honesty from the author of the scheme, I hope the House will reflect that we ought to grasp the nettle.

There have been major changes, and we should recognise the Government's good intent, in relation to the licence situation. As the Minister observed, these go beyond our recommendations. I appreciate that, and it will make a major change for very many prisoners. Our Committee took evidence from more witnesses than for any other inquiry and published a report of some 62 pages about how the licence provisions were setting people up to fail. Because they had a lifelong sword of Damocles over their head, their rehabilitation was inhibited.

Indeed, we heard compelling evidence about the negative impact on their mental health and ability to reintegrate into society.

Reducing the wait for a lifelong licence to be removed from 10 years to three, with the extra possibility after two further years, is a major reform, and I am grateful for it, particularly as there are more people who have been recalled to prison on their licences than there are those serving their original sentences. That is important but, with all due respect to the Government, I do not think it goes far enough, which is why I want to persist, if possible, with my new clause 1—and, in setting out the reasons for doing so, to address the point made by the hon. Member for Cardiff West (Kevin Brennan) from the Opposition Front Bench.

This is not about an immediate opening of the prison gates. I can understand people's perfectly proper concerns about public protection, not least because many of those incarcerated on these sentences will have suffered real mental deterioration while in prison, as the indefinite nature of the sentence gives them no hope, and so will potentially be in a worse state, in terms of public protection, than when they went in. It would be unfair and unrealistic to pretend that new clause 1 would lead to the immediate release of every person in this situation. It is much more considered and modest than that, and would set up a process whereby an independent panel would advise on how best to embark on a resentencing exercise. That is an unusual thing, but the existence of the IPP sentences, without any retrospective change, is an unusual thing, too.

This was recommended to us as the logical option by the noble Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd, a former Lord Chief Justice. Against the background of his eminence, I think the new clause warrants better consideration than we have yet had. If new clause 1 is not supported in this House tonight, I very much hope that the other House will look at it again and that the Government will continue to engage on it, because it would not lead to an immediate release of anybody. It would, though, set in train a process to enable everyone to be given a determinate sentence. That seems to me only fair and just, and I hope that we can look at that going forward. It cannot be just or accord with our sense of fairness that we should have people serving sentences in some cases 10 years in excess of their tariff, which is out of all proportion to the sentence that the judge at the time thought was appropriate for the index offence, as we call it.

There are other important parts of this Bill—which I am afraid I do not have time to touch on—that I also welcome and hope will be taken forward. In particular, I welcome the changes to parole, which are a much more balanced set of measures now than they were when the Bill was originally brought forward. I know that the Lord Chancellor and the Minister have acted personally to improve the Bill in that regard. I thank them for that, but I ask them still to reflect upon the position on IPP sentences.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): I call the SNP Front Bencher.

Chris Stephens (Glasgow South West) (SNP): It is a pleasure to follow the Chair of the Justice Committee, of which I recently became a member. I look forward to working with him.

As this Bill covers most of the devolved competences, I will confine my observations—you will be pleased to hear, Mr Deputy Speaker—to new clause 27, tabled by the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Dame Diana Johnson), and explain why the Scottish National party will be supporting it. It should be noted that over 140 Members, of every political affiliation represented in the House, have signed it, which shows the strength of feeling. Since Sir Brian Langstaff considered the issue of compensation, many of us have had concerns about the Government's sneaking out written statements at recesses or even before Prorogation, which does not give Members the opportunity to ask questions of the Government and the Cabinet Office on the Floor of this House. We have heard the phrase, "working at pace". I referred a couple of weeks ago to moving at a snail's pace, but I am starting to think that the tortoise, from the old story about the race with the hare, would already have lapped the Cabinet Office in dealing with this issue. That is a real frustration.

7.15 pm

As co-chair of the all-party parliamentary group on haemophilia and contaminated blood, the right hon. Member has led with distinction. I thank her for tabling her amendments; it is a pleasure to serve with her as one of the vice-chairs of the APPG. I also pay tribute again to my Glasgow South West constituents, Cathy Young and her daughter Nicola Stewart, who have regularly raised this issue with me to ensure that they get justice. They deserve justice, because we are talking about individuals who have put their careers to the side, or perhaps their academic careers and qualifications to the side, to care for their loved ones. It is now time for compensation to be delivered.

I refer the House to a series of tweets this morning by the *Sunday Times* political editor, Caroline Wheeler, justifying the inclusion of these amendments. It is worth reiterating and building on the arguments, as the shadow Minister did earlier. Sir Brian Langstaff has chastised the Government, telling them that

"there aren't any details. There is no timeline. There is no structure yet in place,"

and that

"if it troubles my conscience I would think it would trouble the conscience of a caring Government and you have said that's what you would wish to be."

I am certainly of the view, along with those supporting the new clause, that the compensation scheme needs to be established immediately and begin its work.

The right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North referred in an intervention to the fact that the Government have overturned the wrongful convictions of Post Office workers for theft and false accounting, and that compensation is being paid while that inquiry is still ongoing. Yet another example of the Government working at pace to meet the demands of the day was seen during the pandemic, when they set up, within days, a complex system of payments under the furlough scheme affecting millions of people. Those of us who were around at that time were given the opportunity to raise issues. If that could be done then and the political will was there, it should be there for this. However, if the Government do not have the political will, it is the responsibility of Members of this House to impose our will on the Government to ensure that that happens.

Justice delayed is justice denied. We need to remember, when considering this issue tonight, that four victims continue to die every four days. If that does not demand quick and immediate action from the Government, nothing will. However, if they believe for one second that delaying compensation will save money, they are completely and utterly wrong, because no money will be saved by delays. Court cases involving the survivors of this scandal will resume within three months of the findings of the inquiry being published, and legal costs will be added to what the Government will pay. Infected blood survivors should be considered not as entries on a spreadsheet, but as people whose lives have been torn apart—people who have been denied opportunities and whose livelihoods have been destroyed. That is why I and my hon. and right hon. Friends will support new clause 27 tonight.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): I call Dame Maria Miller, who has six minutes.

Dame Maria Miller (Basingstoke) (Con): Let me start by thanking my right hon. Friend the Minister for the constructive way in which he has engaged with the Bill since its Second Reading. In the interests of time, I will confine my comments to the two amendments that I have tabled, which have cross-party support and to which I think the Government are listening intently.

Amendment 1 would recognise as victims people who have been silenced by non-disclosure agreements. Those people are victims by virtue of the very fact they have been silenced, not knowing if they can talk to anyone without incurring legal consequences. The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 already deems the use of NDAs to be unlawful when there are allegations of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct in publicly funded universities, and my amendment is intended to do the same in other spheres. Some individuals making such allegations are already treated by the Government as needing protection in law; my amendment would merely apply what is seen as essential legal protection in universities to everyone.

Unfortunately, despite two warning notices issued by the Solicitors Regulation Authority alerting solicitors to NDA misuse, one in three solicitors' firms are still apparently unaware of the issues. I therefore think it is time to act through legislation to change a culture which, seven years on from #MeToo, continues to see it as acceptable for those in the legal and human resources professions to use devices that are so destructive to the individuals concerned. The United States, Canada and Ireland have already legislated in this regard. I listened carefully to the Minister's opening remarks, and I definitely heard a door being left wide open to a change in the Bill. I hope we will see measures to outlaw this bad practice sooner rather than later, because the time to leave it to the regulators is past; that has not worked.

I thank Rape Crisis for helping me to draft new clause 19, which concerns access to counselling records. Rape and sexual abuse are traumatic crimes and survivors need to gain access to therapy, but frontline services are reporting that survivors are being deterred from accessing support because records are routinely requested by the police and trawled through, often unnecessarily. A recent review showed that nearly a third of 342 requests for survivors' records contained requests for counselling records,

[*Dame Maria Miller*]

and nearly a third of those requests related to victims' reliability or credibility rather than aiming to establish the facts of the incident involved.

Sir Robert Buckland (South Swindon) (Con): I signed new clause 19 because, having spent many years as defence and prosecution counsel in such cases, I know the importance of getting to the truth and looking at previous inconsistent statements. Does my right hon. Friend agree that giving a judge discretion to ensure that the disclosed material is truly relevant to the issues in the case would be an excellent safeguard which would protect the wellbeing of victims of crime who are having to relive the circumstances every time those issues are brought up?

Dame Maria Miller: I think it goes to the heart of the case when someone with such extensive experience endorses a change of approach, and my right hon. and learned Friend is entirely right. The new clause calls for a change that would transfer the decision to release records to a judge, but would also ensure that counselling records are disclosed only when they are "of substantial probative value". I would say to my right hon. and learned Friend that I believe, and Rape Crisis believes, that it is not just the involvement of a judge but a heightening of the threshold that will help to improve the system. I believe that judicial oversight at this pre-charge stage will immensely improve the attitude of the police and the Crown Prosecution Service to survivors of rape, and their practice in that regard.

I hope that the Government are able to hear the calls behind amendment 1 and new clause 19. I have already thanked my right hon. Friend the Minister for his positive approach to non-disclosure agreements, and I look forward to hearing more about the action that I hope the Government will take in the future. I also hope that the Minister who winds up the debate will give some indication of the approach that will be taken to counselling records.

Dame Diana Johnson: I rise to speak to new clause 27 and amendments 142 to 144.

There will be women and men, children and families, in every constituency whose lives have been forever touched by the infected blood scandal of the 1970s and 1980s. As we have already heard, one person dies every four days on average as a result of the scandal, and many of those who have spent decades campaigning for justice are no longer alive. It is nearly eight months since, in April this year, Sir Brian Langstaff published the infected blood inquiry's final recommendations on compensation. At the time, he said:

"My conclusion is that wrongs were done at individual, collective and systemic levels."

Most important—I hope the Minister might just listen to this—Sir Brian said in his report:

"I cannot in conscience contribute to that further harm by delaying what I have to say about compensation. This is why I am taking the unusual step of issuing one set of recommendations in advance of all others at this stage."

Sir Brian has said all that he will say about compensation. There is nothing new to learn from the final report, despite the Government's protestations. However, in his

summing up of the Government's work since April 2023 on responding to his recommendation, Sir Brian told the Prime Minister in July:

"there aren't any details. There is no timeline, there is no structure yet in place...if it troubles my conscience I would think it would trouble the conscience of a caring government, and you have said that's what you would wish to be."

That is why I tabled the new clause and amendments, into which I have copied Sir Brian's recommendations.

Amendment 142 would extend interim compensation payments to bereaved parents, children and siblings who have lost loved ones as a result of infected blood but have never received a penny. Amendment 143 would establish a bespoke psychological service in England for those infected and affected, which already exists in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Amendment 144 would ensure that the Bill applied to people infected and affected, as set out in Sir Brian's second interim report.

Finally, let me say something about new clause 27, on which I hope to seek to test the opinion of the House. It has been signed by a further 146 right hon. and hon. Members, for which I am very grateful, and 10 political parties are represented in that group. Many other Members have indicated their support. The new clause requires the Government to set up a body to deliver compensation payments to people infected and affected by the contaminated blood scandal. Let us not forget that the five-year infected blood inquiry was due to publish its final report in November, last month. The Government told me, and the House, numerous times that they had been working "at pace" to that timeline. This should not have been a problem for the Government, because they have done all the work in preparing for the November deadline, but those who have been infected and affected have been told by Ministers that they must accept a further delay, until next March, when Sir Brian will publish his final comments. Sir Brian has made it very clear that there is nothing else to say about compensation, because it was all set out in his second interim report of April 2023.

Let me again reiterate the point about the Government's approach to the victims of the Post Office Horizon scandal. Victims of that appalling injustice are to be compensated before the conclusion of the public inquiry, and I would argue that those infected and affected by the worst treatment disaster in the history of the NHS are equally entitled to compensation before the name plaques come down and the lights go out on the inquiry headquarters, as Sir Brian envisaged in his compensation recommendations in April.

Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con): I fully support the right hon. Lady's new clause. In this regard, I had a constituent that I had to deal with when I was first elected as a Member of Parliament in 2010. Today's Bill is from the Justice Department, but justice delayed is justice denied. It is crucial that all victims are treated with parity and we should not delay any further in ensuring that they get justice. I thank the right hon. Lady for her work and support her new clause.

7.30 pm

Dame Diana Johnson: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comments.

It is important this evening that we show the Government that the will of this Parliament, across the parties, is that that body should be set up to administer compensation payments and to start to deliver justice to those infected and affected by the contaminated blood scandal. I have a great deal of respect for the Minister, but I want to say to him how disappointing it is that his Government are mounting a hard three-line Whip operation to defeat these amendments and new clauses. That is shocking, when Ministers have stood at the Dispatch Box and said clearly that they accept the moral case for compensation. If they accept the moral case for compensation, now is the time for them to do the right thing and support new clause 27. Let us get on with this. Let us get justice to these people who have been waiting decades for justice to be delivered.

Priti Patel (Witham) (Con): I am grateful for the chance to speak in this debate and I want to commend the Minister for the diligent work he has done on the Bill and also the Bill Committee for its scrutiny of the legislation. Some of us have been waiting for over a decade for this Bill to come forward, and a great deal of positive work has taken place.

I welcome the amendments, many of them tabled by the Government, and in particular new clause 37 on Jade's law, which as the Minister has said is incredibly important. As the Bill goes to the other place, I ask the Government to reflect on whether the measure could go further to cover other serious offences. The Minister will be aware of recent reports of a family that spent £30,000 in legal costs to remove the parental rights of a father from his daughter following a conviction of child sexual abuse. These are complex issues, but we should make sure that we are protecting all victims.

I welcome the amendments on the introduction of a standing advocate and the clarification provided by the Government around major incidents. We know from the Manchester Arena terror attacks and other serious incidents how important it is that victims and the families who are affected are given support. I pay tribute to all hon. and right hon. Members who have campaigned hard on this issue. I am afraid that too many of us have spent a lot of time with victims and their families and we know that their voices must be heard. Legislation to ensure that a standing advocate is in place will provide the Government as well as the victims with an extra layer of focus and the protection that we would all welcome.

A number of amendments and new clauses relate to domestic abuse, and I shall comment on them briefly. A great deal of work has taken place on the Bill, and new clause 20 on domestic abuse-related death reviews is particularly welcome as it focuses on ensuring that lessons are learned from these horrific incidents. I know from my previous work as Home Secretary and the work that took place on the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 that so many deaths take place, and it is right that the public services should review these incidents to see whether lessons can be learned and whether any changes can be made to prevent or reduce risk to other victims.

I commend the hon. Member for Rotherham (Sarah Champion) for her new clause 6, which rightly highlights the importance of the role of independent domestic and sexual violence advocates and stalking advocates, and the specialist service that she is asking

for. There are some really strong lessons that could be learned here with these annual reviews, and I hope that the Government will look at these areas and give some assurances on the ongoing work that could take place as this legislation comes forward. There is much more that we could do not only to prevent these horrific crimes but to ensure that the victims and their families are given the support that is needed.

I am pleased to support amendment 14, also tabled by the hon. Member for Rotherham, which has cross-party support and would require criminal justice bodies to ensure not only that records are kept of name changes of perpetrators but that victims are notified of this. This is all about making sure that victims are given representation. I want to pay tribute to Della Wright, who has campaigned for this change with a great deal of personal courage and conviction. I look forward to hearing the Government's approach to this amendment.

I also want to comment on new clause 7, again tabled by the hon. Member for Rotherham, which deals with one of those areas where victims feel that they get a poor service and have many frustrations around a lack of information about their rights and the support that they are entitled to. There is concern that the current victims code is not being promoted enough, and much more work needs to be done in this area.

Sir Robert Buckland: My right hon. Friend and I have campaigned hard to make this a reality and we welcome this day. Does she agree that, alongside awareness of the code, we need to embed training within the police and the other agencies? In that spirit, will she look at my amendment 156, which makes that very point? Does she share with me a keenness to hear a response from the Government that embodies training and awareness to ensure that the code is a reality for victims?

Priti Patel: My right hon. and learned Friend is absolutely right, and I thank him for his intervention. I was going to come to his particular amendment and say how much I agreed with him. It speaks to the work that we have both undertaken in Government on the victims code and on making sure that the structures can provide practical delivery and support for victims. These amendments speak to that, and it would be interesting to hear from the Minister about how this approach will be taken further and how it can be strengthened.

I welcome new clause 43, tabled by the hon. Member for South Shields (Mrs Lewell-Buck), with whom I have had the privilege of discussing her concerns. She has been a strong champion of this cause and I pay tribute to her and in particular to the families she has worked with and chosen to represent on this issue. Our hearts break for parents who want to register the death of a loved one but have been prevented from doing so because coroners' inquiries and other processes have been taking place. We need to find ways to address this, and I would press the Government to look at this with a degree of conviction and also of pure compassion for those family members so that we can find a way to work through this.

I shall conclude in the interests of time. We could say much more about the numerous new clauses and amendments, but I hope that those on the Government Front Bench will listen to our concerns and comments so that we can work collectively to provide support for

[Priti Patel]

victims through the new clauses and Government amendments. Victims of crime have waited a long time for this legislation and it is important that we do everything to stand by them.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): We will now go to a five-minute limit.

Mark Tami (Alyn and Deeside) (Lab): I wish to speak in respect of Government new clause 37. I welcome the fact that the Government have finally changed their mind, despite telling us for so long that Jade's law could not be done. I would like to pay tribute to Jade's parents, Karen Robinson and Paul Ward, to their friend Edwin Duggan and to Jade's siblings for their tireless campaigning and the bravery and tenacity they have shown in what is an incredibly tough situation. On 26 August 2021, Jade, aged just 27, was brutally killed by her estranged husband Russell Marsh. On 12 April last year, Marsh was given a life sentence with a minimum of 25 years in prison. Despite these distressing circumstances, Jade's family was horrified to learn that they face the prospect of continued contact with the man who murdered their daughter. Despite his appalling actions, Russell Marsh, who shared four children with Jade, still retains parental responsibility under law.

The law as it stands allows a parent convicted of the murder of the other parent the power on issues such as where the children go to school and whether they have passports, holidays abroad and medical treatment. These matters often end up in the family court. We can only imagine how traumatic this must be for the families going through this. After having already suffered the unimaginable pain of losing their daughter in the way Jade's family have, the current process compels them to face their daughter's killer and acts as a constant reminder of their darkest moments. In cases where the convicted parent showed long-running obsessive and controlling behaviour prior to their imprisonment, the current process effectively grants them the means to continue the control and coercion of the victim's family in the same way that they did with the victim. It can be extremely traumatic for children to know that the person who killed their mother knows so much about their lives, particularly in cases where the children witnessed the murder. With the introduction of Jade's law, no longer will perpetrators with a history of abusive behaviour be able to force controlling and psychological abuse upon the victim's family from inside their prison cell.

That is why Jade's family and friends have been campaigning to automatically suspend the parental responsibility of a parent found guilty of murdering their child's other parent. The onus is currently on the family to prove why Marsh's parental responsibility should be revoked or restricted, whereas Jade's law will mean that parental responsibility will be automatically suspended in such circumstances, thereby shifting the onus, with the substantial review process that the Government outline in their amendment, to ensure that the suspension of parental responsibility is in the child's best interests.

Last year, Edwin Duggan started a petition to put Jade's law on the agenda, collecting more than 130,000 signatures. Since then, parliamentary colleagues and I

have pushed the Government to make Jade's law a reality. We secured a Westminster Hall debate when the petition surpassed 100,000 signatures, and I thank the Minister, the right hon. Member for Charnwood (Edward Argar), for engaging with us. I thank Labour colleagues who helped with the campaign, including my hon. Friends the Members for Lewisham West and Penge (Ellie Reeves) and for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips).

Unfortunately, as I understand it, the Government amendment does not include provision to apply Jade's law retrospectively, as there will be a duty on the Crown court to make a prohibited steps order only when sentencing an offender. Will the Government look at further steps to ensure that people, like Marsh, who have already been convicted of murder within the specifications of Jade's law are made subject to it? This campaign sprang out of the injuries and injustices faced by Jade's family, and it is only right that Jade's law puts it right for them and for other families.

I conclude by reading a statement issued by Jade's parents after their daughter's killer was sentenced:

"Jade was the sunshine in our lives, she was the glue that held us all together. She was also a devoted mum who would do anything for her children, a much-loved friend, daughter, sister, aunt, niece and granddaughter. Jade's whole life was ahead of her, and her death has left a void in all our lives."

Sadly, it is too late for Jade. But her children, and others in the same situation, still have their whole lives ahead of them. We owe it to them to ensure that the system is on the side of victims. I am pleased that the Government have finally come to terms with the injustice of the current process.

Rachel Maclean (Redditch) (Con): I am delighted to speak in support of the Bill, and I thank the Public Bill Committee and the Minister for their hard work in getting it to this point.

My constituents in Redditch, and the public across the country, expect the law of the land to protect the law-abiding majority, and there is nothing as infuriating or frustrating to them than when perpetrators of crime receive more attention and support than their victims, which is why I welcome the Bill.

Before I begin, I put on record my thanks for the exceptional work of the criminal justice agencies in my Redditch constituency—particularly Inspector Rich Field and his team of officers; the police and crime commissioner, John Campion; and support services such as the Sandycroft centre and its head of wellbeing—who work tirelessly to support victims of crime.

In the interests of time, I will speak about a couple of measures that are of particular interest. I had the privilege of serving as a Minister in the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice, and some of this legislation had its genesis in the end-to-end rape review. I will never lose my strong commitment to serving and speaking up for victims of the most hideous crimes—rape, domestic abuse, sexual assault and child sexual abuse. These crimes have no place in our society, which is why, in relation to the treatment of victims of rape and serious sexual offences, I particularly welcome the measures on disclosure of third-party materials that were added to the Bill in Committee. I am pleased that these measures go further than existing protections, and that they will enable victims to trust that those working to bring perpetrators to justice will do so without violating their

important therapy-room conversations. When does the Minister expect these measures to be rolled out and adopted by all police forces and Crown Prosecution Service areas across the country?

7.45 pm

It is, of course, in our interests that victims are supported throughout their journey through the criminal justice system. We know from countless testimonies that victims will not come forward to report crime if they think the process is burdensome or traumatic. I pay tribute to the many victims who have bravely spoken out about their experiences, which is what motivates all of us to continue to help them by passing further measures to protect them as they go through the system.

I am sorry to say that victims of driving crime are one group of victims who are often overlooked. I have previously spoken about my friend and colleague Councillor Lucy Harrison, who now leads the RoadPeace campaign to strengthen the law on driving crime. Will the Minister meet me to discuss the RoadPeace “remain and report” campaign so that more people who lose their life on the roads get the justice they deserve?

I particularly welcome the measures in the Bill to better protect the public against top-tier criminals, such as murderers and rapists. I know this will come as welcome news to the victims of these crimes and their families. I have previously raised the case of the monster Robert Brown, who hit his wife, Joanna Simpson, over the head at least 15 times with a hammer. He was due to be released from prison, which was a terrifying prospect for his family. I am pleased that the Government are using the powers they introduced to refer his case to the Parole Board, where it can be rightfully assessed. I know that in future the Justice Secretary will be able to do this in more instances.

There is potential to strengthen support services for victims of antisocial behaviour, which is a devastating crime. It is not a victimless crime, and I know that people in Redditch find such crime very traumatic. Even at this late stage, can the Minister assure me that the victims code and other measures will continue to protect victims of antisocial behaviour?

Finally, stalking is an incredibly dangerous crime. It is often linked to the most violent homicides of women at the hands of men, and I note that the Public Bill Committee considered the role of stalking protection orders and specialist support for stalking cases. I hope the Minister can assure us that he is doing everything in his power to ensure that victims of stalking receive the support they need.

I welcome the measures in this Bill. It is vital that we continue to crack down on these types of crimes in order to keep the public safe.

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): I will restrict my remarks to speaking in favour of new clause 10, which stands in my name, which would create a new sewage illness compensation scheme to allow anyone who has been made ill as a direct result of criminal conduct by water companies to claim compensation.

I am indebted to Surfers Against Sewage, whose recent report found that, between October 2022 and September 2023, 1,924 water users reported illness after being in the water. This is just a glimpse of the true number of unreported illnesses. The amendment calls

for these victims to receive some justice for the recklessness of water companies and other polluters. It would ensure that the profits of water companies pay for compensation for people who are made ill after bathing in water illegally contaminated by sewage. It would also make provision to pay for the medical evidence required to support a claim for compensation.

Of course, much of my motivation comes from the fact that it is my privilege to speak for the communities around the English Lake district. Indeed, at first glance, the latest Windermere bathing water results are positive, as all sites are classed as excellent. We are also encouraged by the progress made on Coniston becoming designated bathing water. Yet, as the report shows, 60% of all sickness reports were submitted from bathing waters judged to be excellent. This undermines people’s confidence in the ratings. Communities like mine, particularly those around Windermere, rely on visitors coming to enjoy the beautiful landscapes, as well as for swimming and other water sports. Even with the best ratings possible, there will be a detrimental effect on people’s livelihoods in our communities if a reputation is tarnished.

The report cites Steve Crawford from Scarborough, who was forced to close his surf shop for the whole summer because the water at South Bay beach was deemed to be too poor in quality to surf in. Steve could not give any surfing lessons because no one would go into the sea. His livelihood was ruined by that sewage spill.

In the past, the great north swim at Windermere has been cancelled because of algal blooms, and there are countless other stories of businesses struggling to stay afloat as visitor numbers drop. The report shows that when quality improves on beaches, visitor numbers can rise by up to 52%. In August this year, swimmers in the world triathlon championship series fell ill with E. coli after competing in the sea event off Roker beach in Sunderland. A chance for the world to see the UK as a sporting host was ruined by our inability to keep our waters clean.

The threat of sewage spills does lasting damage to the viability of many businesses but, more importantly, there is enormous personal damage to people’s health and wellbeing. Peter, a visitor to Windermere earlier this year, contracted a campylobacter infection after swimming in the lake. In the report, I refer to Robbie Bowman, who went into the sea in south Wales with a cut on his leg, which became infected by sewage in the water and he was hospitalised for a week. I also refer to Reuben, who had to give up his job as a teacher because he caught the incurable labyrinthitis after surfing in sewage-infested waters off Saunton beach in Devon.

In my own community, swimmers have come forward with parasitic infections and Weil’s disease in the past year. All of these shocking examples of sewage in waterways causing illness point to the reality of what chief medical officer Chris Whitty calls

“a serious public health issue”.

He is clear that the water companies are not doing enough, and that

“where people swim or children play, they should not expect significant doses of human coliforms if they ingest water”.

He says it will inevitably require investment, but it is not just a question of money; it needs

“preventive engineering, better sewer management, innovation, and commitment.”

[Tim Farron]

The amendment should be the first in a series of measures to force the water companies to take responsibility for the decades of neglect they have overseen. Some 7.5 million hours of sewage have been dumped into our waterways over the last three years, and 450,000 hours of sewage have been dumped into designated bathing waters in England. What were the consequences? The top water executives in England were paid £73 million, including £41 million in bonuses, benefits and incentives. It is clear to anyone that these grotesque bonuses and payouts must be stopped until there is sufficient investment in our sewage system, and results are consistently seen in the improvement of the health of our seas, lakes and rivers. In most industries, bonuses are given out for doing a good job. For the water bosses, the opposite is clearly true and that must end.

Speaking on behalf of communities around Windermere, Coniston and Ullswater, the rivers Eden, Kent and Aire, and all the other wonderful waterways it is my privilege to represent, this issue is deeply personal. We should deliver justice for victims and ensure that there is an incentive for the water companies to clean up their act. I commend this amendment to the House.

Richard Fuller (North East Bedfordshire) (Con): I commend the Minister for the excellent Bill and join Opposition Front Benchers in thanking him for bringing forward substantive amendments at this stage, rather than waiting to bring them forward in the other place. This is a good Bill. I will focus on victims of violent sexual crime and talk to my new clause 41, but first I will speak briefly in support of other amendments that I have signed.

New clause 19, proposed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Dame Maria Miller), provides for a presumption of non-disclosure of counselling records for victims of rape and sexual assault, and it makes it clear, for the first time, that counselling is there to explore feelings, not as a source for revealing or investigating facts.

Four amendments are proposed by the hon. Member for Rotherham (Sarah Champion): amendment 15 would include in the victims code a requirement to inform all victims of their right to access pre-trial therapy; new clause 4 would place a statutory duty on the Parole Board to enable victims to make a personal statement; new clause 5 would require the compilation of single core data sets on victims of child sexual abuse, a crucial first step in promoting consistency and enabling a greater degree of insight into that terrible crime; and new clause 6 would require the Secretary of State to assess the adequacy of the number of independent domestic violence and sexual violence advisers. I do not normally support amendments that look for a report in six months, but in this case that is warranted to help give us, here in Parliament, confidence that the right priority is being afforded to such victims.

Taken together, the amendments proposed by the hon. Member for Rotherham would provide a significant strengthening of the rights of victims of sexual violence. I hope that the Minister will reflect positively on her intentions and ours, because they have cross-party support, even if he is not minded to accept them today. Given his earlier comments, I think he has some positive views about them.

I hope that extends to my new clause 41, which would, for the first time across the UK, provide for independent legal advice and representation for victims of rape and sexual assault. My new clause builds on the findings from the scheme trialled in Northumbria, under the leadership of the police and crime commissioners Dame Vera Baird and Kim McGuinness. The findings demonstrate that a significant proportion of requests for information for rape complainants' private data were excessive; that those excessive requests had a significant impact on the wellbeing of victims; and that the legal guidance on the matter was not clearly understood, which led to wide variations in approach.

I believe a national version of the scheme, which could be created at reasonable cost to the taxpayer, would provide for greater confidence for victims as they go through what can be a highly intrusive and painful evidence-gathering process. There are international examples—this path has been trodden by others. There is guidance for it in Australia—in New South Wales—Ireland and, in total, in eight of 14 of the adversarial legal systems. I strongly urge the Minister to look at ways in which that could be put into the Bill.

Under my proposal, this access to independent legal advice would be provided to victims in six specified situations, so we are not creating an open door or a difference that would occur in other cases. That is important because decisions about how credible the victim is deemed to be are often what drive the decision to continue with a criminal case. That is not the case in many other sources of crimes. A national scheme providing victims of rape and sexual assault with independent legal advice and representation will ensure that victims' rights are respected where their interests diverge from those of the police, the CPS and other criminal agencies.

My new clause 41 would ensure that victims, where appropriate, have access to legal advice that will give them the confidence that all that is being sought is all that is needed to enable a fair prosecution, and no more. The clause would provide a mechanism for accessibility and improve the quality, efficiency and consistency of investigations. I hope the Minister will look positively on this initiative.

Maria Eagle: I rise to speak in respect of some of the amendments and new clauses in part two: specifically, Government new clauses 22 and 23; Government amendment 60; Government new clause 24; Government amendments 76 to 82; and new clause 14, introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff West (Kevin Brennan) on behalf of the Opposition, on the Hillsborough law duty of candour.

If these new clauses and amendments are agreed to tonight, the Bill will be better than it was when it began its life at Second Reading, and it will be better than it was even after it had been through a monumental Committee stage. However, the Minister will not be surprised to hear me say that it will not be perfect, and it will not be all that I hoped for in my Public Advocate Bill or my Public Advocate (No. 2) Bill—I have been introducing such legislation since 2016, and my hon. Friend the noble Lord Wills has been introducing similar measures in the other place since 2014—but it will be better than originally drafted.

I welcome the fact that the Minister has conceded that the Independent Public Advocate will be established as a standing appointment on a full-time basis. It is a shame

that he has not seen fit to go a little further to enable the families affected to be the people who call upon the public advocate to act, rather than the Secretary of State. One of the points of my legislation, and that introduced by my noble friend in the other place, was to give the families some agency—some power to act in the earlier stages of the aftermath of a public disaster and affect the way the aftermath is dealt with.

The whole purpose of the legislation that Lord Wills and I proposed was to ensure that things do not go wrong in the aftermath of public disasters, as they have done after Hillsborough and other disasters. One ends up with years and years—sometimes decades and decades—of subsequent campaigns, fights and proceedings, legal and otherwise, that end up costing society millions and costing the families their health and often their lives. Stopping things going wrong in the immediate aftermath of disasters is a good aim for public policy.

8 pm

The changes that the Minister has proposed in the new clauses will go some way to making the independent public advocate something better than it would have been—something more than simply a super-duper signposting service, and more like a person who can try to help the family stop things going wrong—but more could be done in respect of the powers of the public advocate. I still believe in that person having at least the powers of a data controller, to ensure that if public authorities are reluctant to produce documents, there is some power to ensure that those documents are produced. The Hillsborough independent report produced by Bishop James Jones showed that it was transparency that led to the truth coming out 23 years after Hillsborough. That is what we seek to achieve at a much earlier stage in the aftermath of disasters.

It is by providing agency for the families affected, through their collective ability to get the advocate to act; the advocate having the powers of a data controller; and the power to have a Hillsborough independent panel-type process that we will stop things going disastrously wrong sooner than the Hillsborough independent panel could, because it took 23 years in that instance. We want it to happen much faster after subsequent disasters, which will be better for families, public authorities and the Government, cheaper for the taxpayer, and all in all a much better public policy approach to dealing with those who are bereaved in public disasters. I hope that the Minister will listen to what might be done to improve this part of the Bill even further.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Roger Gale): Order. After the next speaker, I am afraid I will have to reduce the time limit to four minutes. At least Members have been forewarned.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck (South Shields) (Lab): I will speak to new clause 43, but first I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle), who has fought tirelessly for that change and for so many more on behalf of victims.

My constituents Chloe Ann Rutherford and Liam Thomas Allen Curry were murdered in the Manchester Arena attack. In 2022, after sitting through the public

inquiry and listening to every agonising detail of what their children went through, Chloe and Liam's parents were told that they would be denied the right to register their children's deaths due to outdated legislation that states that, where deaths require an inquest or inquiry, death registration is to be done solely by the registrar. All those devoted parents wanted to do was to be part of that final official act for their precious children.

After meeting with the then Minister, we had assurances that he would look urgently at whether and how those changes could be made. With each change of Minister, the promises continued, yet nothing has changed. In February this year, the bereaved families attended another meeting with Ministers. In that meeting they were treated with contempt, patronised and insulted. It became clear that they had been misled by the Government for nearly a year, because despite it being entirely possible to change that law, the Government just did not want to do so.

The current Minister suggested in Committee that I strengthen my amendment, so I did, but just last week he said that it was no longer possible due to the Data Protection and Digital Information Bill, which will digitalise death registration. It feels like yet another excuse, because new clause 43 would give the Secretary of State the power to modify any provisions, which would enable the clause to be shifted to a digital state in future.

Lisa, Chloe's mam, has spoken to me about how they were told at the outset that their beloved children did not belong to them but belonged to the state. She said that, despite the rhetoric that we always hear about families coming first, they simply do not. Caroline, Liam's mam, explained that registering Liam's death would have allowed her to begin grieving, and that if she could not do that for him, she would feel like she had failed him. She did not fail him; it was the state that failed him.

In June this year, Chloe and Liam's parents, after six agonising years, watched as their children's deaths were registered by a stranger. Chloe's dad, Mark, said that

"it wasn't the way we wanted this to be, because of our ridiculous government who only change laws to benefit themselves. We had to watch a random person sign it and not her Mam & Dad".

They do not want anyone else to have to go through what they have gone through. Just last week, Caroline reminded me that because she was removed from the process, Liam's name and date of birth were originally recorded wrongly.

The Minister knows that I think he is a fairly decent bloke, and he knows that Chloe and Liam's families deserved better than that, and that families in the future will deserve better too. There is no moral or legal reason to keep on blocking the new clause, or this change. I am hopeful that he will continue to work with me on this, but I am sure that he understands how deeply disappointed I am, and how let down my constituents feel.

Jess Phillips (Birmingham, Yardley) (Lab): I have a bit of a poorly chest, so if my voice goes, that is the reason. I thank the Minister for the tone in which he introduced the debate and the changes that he has tabled around domestic homicide reviews regardless of the reason why somebody died, whether that be suicide, sudden accidental falling or substance misuse and overdose. Those are things that we see all the time that could be

[Jess Phillips]

put down to domestic abuse. I pay tribute to Jhiselle from the Killed Women network, who has fought tirelessly for some justice for her sister Bianca, who fell from a tower block in Birmingham. Nobody has ever paid the price for what happened to her. Certainly she has not been, to date, allowed a domestic homicide review; we hope that that will change.

Obviously I am pleased to see the changes on Jade's law. My right hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mark Tami) has worked so hard, as has my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman), who tabled the amendment on the need to carve out parental responsibility from those who are convicted of child abuse. All children in this country are protected from being near a child abuser—a paedophile—apart from the abuser's own children. The other parent has to go through the family court process in order to keep their children safe.

While I agree with both amendments, and fought very hard for Jade's law, the reality is that we cannot keep carving out little bits where parental responsibility is gifted. It is not just gifted, actually; currently the family courts in our country collude with perpetrators of violence and abuse to a degree that is frightening to anyone who has sat in on those proceedings, as I do regularly.

The Government have had the outcome of the harms review for three years, and have been working towards another review. The presumption of contact for violent parents should not be on our statute book any more. We should not call for victims to fight again and again to keep their children and themselves safe, yet we do.

I am afraid that I will point to another delay that the Minister has referred to: the delay on non-disclosure agreements. I know that he has to sit there and say that the Department for Business and Trade is working on it. Well, I am sorry to say, "Read it and weep," because that is the answer we have been given for five years. For five years, since the recommendation to end the use of non-disclosure agreements in cases of sexual harassment, the Government have repeatedly said, "We're looking at it." Have they lost it? Where are they looking? Look harder!

I want to make it clear that, while I welcome the Bill, there are gaps in it around adult sexual exploitation. If you are a child who is sexually exploited—you might have been repeatedly raped from the age of 10—from the day you turn 18, suddenly the Government have no definition of you and no policy to do anything about you. That is problematic.

This week, the Home Office has announced that it will bring forward emergency legislation on the Rwanda situation. Where is our emergency legislation for the things that we have waited years for, the things that people have died waiting for—including those in the infected blood inquiry? If only we were the emergency.

Sarah Champion: I start by thanking the Minister. He has worked cross party, particularly with me, to turn what was a good, well-intended Bill into something much better, although there is still a lot further to go. I am delighted that the Government have accepted my argument that a victim does not have to report a crime to access support through the victims code, and therefore I will not press amendment 8.

There are victims who are not explicitly listed, but who need recognition. That would be provided through my amendments 5, 6, 157 and 158. When the definition of child sexual exploitation was introduced in 2009, it genuinely transformed services and people's understanding. We now need the same for both adult sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation. It is bizarre to me that, as soon as someone turns 18, sexual exploitation is seen as their making poor lifestyle choices, rather than as grooming, coercion and abuse. Likewise, child criminal exploitation is often unrecognised and the child is seen as a perpetrator. At the very least, I hope the Minister will ensure that there are statutory definitions of those crimes in guidance.

Amendment 7 relates to children whose parents are paedophiles. We need to ensure that those children are treated as secondary victims, in the same way that children born of rape will be once the Bill passes. I urge the Minister to consider rolling out a specialist type of IDVA, as Lincolnshire police are doing so brilliantly. Amendments 19 to 23 would ensure that there is also guidance for all specialist community-based services.

Elder abuse is often under-reported. Hourglass states that the elderly require specialist support due to the nature of the abuse, which often targets their finances, and because they are often digitally excluded. My new clause 6 would require the Government to carry out an assessment of specialist support services across the country to end the postcode lottery.

Amendments 4, 17 and 18 would include stalking in the Bill. Given that there were 1.5 million stalking victims in 2021, it is imperative that they have advocates. The Suzy Lamplugh Trust has shown that victims not supported by advocates have a one in 1,000 chance of their perpetrator being convicted, compared with one in four if they have a stalking advocate.

Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): My hon. Friend is making a powerful case for stalking advocates. Does she also agree that now is the time for a stalking register, to stop this crime in its tracks?

Sarah Champion: I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend, who I know has tabled amendments on that point. We need to do much more about stalking.

One in five referrals through the national referral mechanism in 2022 were for a British child. It is essential that we get the support for that group of victims right and that we improve support for all victims of modern slavery, which is why I have tabled amendment 16, supported by the Centre for Social Justice. Clause 12 is positive, but as drafted it will fail to fully meet the needs of victims and survivors. Amendment 149 seeks to address that.

Another concern is that the Bill will not fully support all migrant victims, especially those facing domestic abuse. Many victims and survivors with insecure immigration status do not report to the police for fear that their information will be passed to immigration enforcement. And that fear is not unfounded: the Domestic Abuse Commissioner recently published Home Office data showing that every single police force in England and Wales had shared data of a victim of domestic abuse with immigration enforcement over a three-year period. To protect migrant victims and survivors, as well as the general public, we need to implement a

data-sharing firewall that bans statutory services from sharing the data of a victim with the Home Office. My new clause 36 seeks to do that.

I have worked with Southall Black Sisters to develop new clause 8 so that all those with no recourse to public funds can be guaranteed access to support. The Government must extend the domestic violence indefinite leave to remain and the destitution domestic violence concession model for those on partner and spousal visas to all migrant victims of domestic abuse, regardless of their immigration status.

8.15 pm

What use is a victims code if people cannot access it? That is another thing I really want the Minister to address. The code needs to be accessible to all, especially those who are deaf, disabled or visually impaired or who do not speak English as their first language. My amendments 10 and 11 and new clause 7 will make sure that accessibility is prioritised.

I have had too many constituents who, despite signing up to the victim contact scheme, were not told the information they needed. New clause 4 seeks to address that. Finally, I have worked with the charity Hundred Families on amendments 9 and 12, which would allow victims to access information from the NHS as well as courts, bringing parity between the courts and mental health tribunals.

Jessica Morden (Newport East) (Lab): I rise to speak in support of new clause 27, and I hope that Conservative Members will support it tonight. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Dame Diana Johnson), who tabled the new clause, for her immense and tireless campaigning with groups that support the victims of the contaminated blood scandal, who have been so badly let down for so many years and have had to fight so hard every step of the way. Today is another one of those days.

Sir Brian Langstaff has already made his recommendations on compensation and said that a scheme should be set up as soon as possible before the infected blood inquiry reports. He has been crystal clear that there is nothing to wait for. New clause 27 would establish a body to make compensation payments to those who are infected and affected. As other hon. Members have said, the Government are rightly making payments to the victims of the Post Office Horizon scandal before the final report of that public inquiry, so we should do the same here.

With one victim of the contaminated blood scandal dying on average every four days, it is expected that a further 22 victims will not live long enough to see the inquiry's full report published. These people cannot wait any longer for the justice that too many have already been denied. We should vote for them tonight, and for those excluded from interim payments, including parents and families such as the Smiths from my constituency, who lost Colin, aged just seven, to AIDS and hepatitis C.

I have told Colin's story often during my time in this place, and his father spoke about him very movingly on the "Today" programme just this morning. I pay tribute to Colin's parents; I just do not understand how they continue to do it. As a baby, Colin was infected with factor VIII blood product from sources in an Arkansas prison, something his family had to fight to disclose.

The family faced loss of employment, bullying, abuse and discrimination every step of the way, at a time when they had lost their beloved son, infected by the NHS. They had to fight every step of the way while watching the friends they met during the campaign die along the way.

The families keep telling these stories, and they have to do so. We need to hear from them, because the Government must remember why they have to act. I say that also for Linda Ashcroft, who lost her husband Bill. After 33 years, she needs closure. The Government have accepted the moral case for compensation, but time is of the essence and the continued wait for redress just adds to the layers of pain, frustration and injustice that the infected and affected feel.

The Government must stop dragging their feet. This group of people have had more than enough experience of waiting; it has been 40 years since information about the dangers of contaminated blood was published. The best tribute we can pay them is to make sure that there are no more delays. I hope we can do what is right today.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Roger Gale): Order. I am afraid that after the next speaker there will still be 10 people waiting to speak. We have to finish this section of proceedings at 8.50 pm in order to allow for the wind-up, so, after the next speech, the limit will be three minutes.

Stella Creasy: I associate myself with the amendments in the names of the right hon. Member for Basingstoke (Dame Maria Miller), my right hon. Friends the Members for Alyn and Deeside (Mark Tami) and for Kingston upon Hull North (Dame Diana Johnson), my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Mrs Lewell-Buck) and, of course, my incomparable hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Sarah Champion). In the time available to me, I will focus on the three amendments that I have tabled to flag issues with the Government.

Amendment 147 is about vicarious trauma. We are in a perverse situation right now—the Minister knows this—where we have to hope that a victim dies if we are to access support for our communities when traumatic things such as stabbings happen. I hope that the Minister will change that so that every child can be supported.

Amendment 148 is about overseas victims. It would simply restore the right that our constituents had when we were members of the European Union to have their rights as a victim upheld if they or a family member were a victim of crime overseas. I hope that the Minister will look at the victims' rights directive, because so many people experience that.

New clause 32 is about a victim's rights in relation to data. I was not sure that I would be able to table the new clause, because the court case that it refers was heard last Thursday. A year ago, a man started emailing my office with his concerns about my politics and the issues that I was working on. Like all Members when we get correspondence from non-constituents, I read the emails and filed them but did not respond. I was then called by my local social services because that man had decided that, because he disagreed with my views, I was not a fit mother for my children. He had reported me, an investigation had taken place, and while it cleared me,

[Stella Creasy]

my children and I now have a social services record. When I went to the police about the matter, they said that he had a right to express his opinions in that way. I challenged it because, due to my work on stalking, I understood that somebody who could use a malicious report to harm someone was clearly dangerous. When I came forward, further reports came out revealing that this man had continued his campaign of harassment.

I am deeply grateful for the cross-party support for new clause 32, because although that man has now been convicted of harassment, his ability to target my family continues because the record continues. At present, there is no way of removing from someone's record a clearly malicious and false accusation made to a third-party organisation. In tabling the new clause, I recognised that it is not just those of us in the public eye who may be targeted in this way; in many cases of stalking, we see people who fixate and use reporting mechanisms to damage their victims.

I have had no support or help from Parliament or anybody within the parliamentary process for my welfare or that of my children, but now I want to stand up for everybody who has been through this process. I ask the Minister to look at this, because victims of clearly malicious reports must have the opportunity to have the record corrected. Too often, people will say, "There is no smoke without fire." I want to stand up for safeguarding—it is clearly a very important process—but if a court recognises that a report is malicious and a victim is being targeted but we cannot act to remove that report, the harassment will continue.

Sarah Champion: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for using a personal case to speak so powerfully. I know that she does so from a position of wanting to change things for people who do not have the platform that she has. I commend her for that.

Stella Creasy: I thank my hon. Friend for that, and yes, the new clause would go much further than tackling the abuse of people in the public eye. I hope that, in other legislation, we will look seriously at what we can do about those who target our families and staff members as a way of intimidating us, because that is not free speech; it is a way of silencing people.

In tabling the new clause, I hoped also to speak up for those who have been targeted through third-party organisations. I know that there are colleagues in the other place who wish to take up that matter up. I hope that cross-party support continues and that the Minister will consider the proposals, which have already secured the support of London's Victims' Commissioner. I apologise to the House for not being able to bring them forward before, but I hope that Members can understand why.

I hope that we send a message today. Many of us do not block people, and many of us engage in robust parliamentary debate, but surely there is a line not to be crossed. That line is our children, our family and our staff, who do not ask to be put in harm's way but will be if we do not act to protect our democracy and protect ourselves from those who would seek to use third-party mechanisms to abuse.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): It is an honour to follow the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy), to whom I pay tribute for her bravery in speaking to us about the horror that was visited on her. It defies belief.

I will focus later in my remarks on my new clauses 28 and 29, but first I will express support for new clause 10, tabled by the hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron), and new clause 27 in the name of the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Dame Diana Johnson). New clause 27 in particular has and deserves a great deal of support. Over the past few years, many of us have sat through seemingly endless debates that seem never to make the progress that the people affected by the infected blood scandal deserve. All I ask is that the Government implement the recommendations of the interim report. For an awful lot of people who have suffered far too much already, that does not seem an awful lot to ask.

I will not seek a Division on my new clauses 28 and 29, but I hope that the Government will take into account the issues that they address. They follow on from the landmark Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and concern the epidemic of violence against women and girls that we still face in this country. Our first Domestic Abuse Commissioner is doing a fantastic job, and I tabled my new clauses following a number of discussions with her. New clause 28 would make it easier for migrant women to make a complaint about domestic abuse without fear that their safety or future in this country is at risk.

We had a damning report earlier this year about the culture of sexism and misogyny in our largest and most high-profile police force, the Met. It is difficult for women to come forward. New clause 29 would create an obligation on those in specific roles in the police and criminal justice system to undergo mandatory training in respect of violence against women, to ensure that they understand it.

Those new clauses would not fix everything in the Bill—a Bill that I think everyone in the House largely welcomes—but they would be a big step towards filling some of the gaps and allowing women once again to trust the authorities on which they depend for their safety.

Mr Perkins: May I start by saying how disappointing it is that a Bill with so much potential to be a force for good should ultimately end in three-minute speeches by Members who have huge contributions to make? The timetabling really wants looking at. It lets victims down, because, as I said earlier, there is so much in the Bill that people who understand this sector have sought to add. The breadth of the amendments demonstrates powerfully how much more there is to be done.

I support many of the amendments, but given the time that we have, I will confine my remarks predominantly to amendments 4, 17 and 18, and to new clause 6, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Sarah Champion) and others, pertaining to the role that stalking advocates can play and the need for them to have recognised status in the Bill, as independent sexual violence and domestic violence advocates do.

On 18 June 2021, people in Chesterfield and right across the country were shocked and appalled by the murder of 23-year-old Gracie Spinks. That grief quickly

turned to anger and despair when it became clear that she had been murdered by a man with whom she had previously worked, who had been stalking her and whom she had reported to the police. Following the internal investigations into how Derbyshire Constabulary had handled that case, it has subsequently taken on a stalking advocate to try to ensure that stalking victims are heard. Gracie's family have launched the Gracie's law campaign to call for all police forces to fund a stalking co-ordinator and stalking advocates. They also say that all officers should regularly have their training signed off and renewed, so that services become more consistent across the country.

The amendments tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham, which are supported by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, are important in this regard. They add the words "independent stalking advocates" to the list of specialist advocates that the Secretary of State must issue guidance about, alongside ISVAs and ISDAs, and define what a stalking advocate is. Those amendments are so important because, for many victims of stalking, it is often the case that the stalking falls some way short of the threshold for police intervention. Only by ensuring that a case has been looked at by a specialist officer can we make sure that intervention happens sooner, preventing it from reaching the tragic and appalling conclusion that it did in Gracie's case. I cannot see any argument for including ISDAs and ISVAs on the face of the Bill, but not stalking advocates. Stalkers are often not known to the victim, and the threat they pose is different from that posed in a case of domestic violence.

Finally, new clause 6 is a very important clause, because we know there is an inconsistency of approach between different police forces, and stalking advocates cannot always get the funding they need.

8.30 pm

Apsana Begum (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab): As co-chair of the all-party parliamentary group on domestic violence and abuse, I will concentrate my remarks on amendments and new clauses relating to domestic abuse.

I recognise that there has been some progress on domestic abuse, but survivors are being failed by the criminal justice system. Repeatedly saying that tackling domestic abuse is a priority does not mean that it is a priority. Survivors deserve much more than posturing and rhetoric; in fact, virtue signalling at the same time as failing us becomes a form of gaslighting in and of itself. Urgent and immediate action is overdue. All too often, survivors do not have faith in the systems that are meant to protect and support them. The situation for black, Asian and minoritised women is even more dire, as they are disproportionately victims of violence against women and girls, yet also experience poorer outcomes in access to justice and support. As such, my new clause 35 would compel the Secretary of State to conduct a review into the experience of victims of domestic abuse in the criminal justice system.

Survivors of domestic abuse currently face overwhelming barriers to justice: we are routinely subject to double standards and outright misogyny in policing, sentencing and imprisonment. I have first-hand experience of the fact that courts are even used by abusers to perpetuate abuse. Police forces share migrant victims' data with immigration enforcement, which stops migrants from

reporting to the police and others out of fear that they will be treated as offenders themselves, facing potential criminalisation, detention and even deportation. I therefore support new clause 30, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Sarah Champion), which would ensure that the personal data of a victim of a crime is not used for any immigration control purpose without the consent of that person. In fact, I believe we need a firewall between all public services and the Home Office, so that every survivor can report abuse and access justice and safety, and perpetrators cannot evade justice.

Recovery is an essential part of justice; the funding of services can mean the difference between life and death, hope and despair, and imprisonment and empowerment. My new clause 34 would compel the Secretary of State to conduct a review into the level of funding and provision for domestic abuse services, considering both counselling and advocacy services and refugees. In light of the impact of the cost of living crisis on domestic abuse survivors, urgent changes to housing, health and social security systems are also needed, and I urge the Government to support new clause 8, which would ensure that victims of domestic abuse who do not have recourse to public funds are still entitled to be supported. I urge them to choose to properly reform the criminal justice system, fund specialist services, and ensure that the social security system is there for people when needed.

Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (Ind): Diolch yn fawr, Mr Deputy Speaker; it is a pleasure to contribute to this debate. I rise to speak to my new clause 33, a probing amendment based on concerns I expressed on Second Reading about the Victims' Commissioner lacking enforcement power, undermining their ability to protect victims. The shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Cardiff West (Kevin Brennan), made similar comments during his contribution. I welcome the fact that Baroness Newlove has been appointed as Victims Commissioner—that is a step forward from where we were on Second Reading. I hope she has had the opportunity to influence the Bill before today's debate.

On Second Reading, I talked about my constituents, the family of the murdered Mike O'Leary. Since Mike's death, the family have become avid campaigners for victims' rights, and the main thing they consider is missing from this much-awaited Bill is the enforcement powers that would give the Victims' Commissioner some teeth. The murder of Mr O'Leary was a particularly heinous crime—his body was desecrated—and I look forward to the Sentencing Bill on Wednesday, when we will have an opportunity to discuss whether a new crime should be introduced and whether sentencing guidelines should be amended to reflect the extra suffering of the bereaved families.

Baroness Newlove, in her response to the King's Speech in the other place, mentioned a sobering survey that her office did on victims' experience of the criminal justice system. Of the 500 people surveyed, 71% were dissatisfied with the approach of the police to the crime they experienced, 34% said they would not report another crime, less than 29% were aware of the victims code, only 29% were offered the opportunity to make a victim's personal statement and only 8% were confident that they received justice by reporting a crime. If the aim of the Bill is to bring victims' experience into the heart of the criminal justice system, it has its work cut out.

[Jonathan Edwards]

The commissioner should be the key role for driving the change that is needed. On Second Reading, I pointed out the powers of the Welsh Language Commissioner under the terms of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, introduced by the Welsh Government. The Welsh Language Commissioner's enforcement powers range from offering advice and training to requiring an organisation to prepare a plan to prevent further continuation or repetition of the failure, requiring an organisation to take concrete steps to prevent further failure, publicising the failure of an organisation to comply with the measure and imposing a civil penalty of up to £5,000. Empowering the Victims' Commissioner along the lines of the enforcement powers of other commissioners would considerably strengthen the hand of victims and help transform the criminal justice system so that victims are at its centre. I hope the other place may take up my new clause in its deliberations.

John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab): I rise to speak to new clause 1, and new clauses 2 and 3 in my name. When we talk about victims, it is important that we also discuss taking responsibility for the victims of Parliament's activities, and some of the victims of Parliament's activities are the IPP—imprisonment for public protection—prisoners. The hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Sir Robert Neill) has campaigned on this matter for years, and the Justice Committee has undertaken detailed investigations and reports, which I think we need to take more seriously in this House because of the urgency of the matter.

There are nearly 3,000 IPP prisoners still in prison. They are in prison under legislation passed in this House by David Blunkett, who now recognises that there is an injustice—there has been a miscarriage of justice—and is appealing to us to correct that injustice by legislating now. There is example after example of people who have gone to prison on small tariffs. Martin Myers was sentenced on an 18-month tariff, and he has served 17 years. Wayne Bell has served 16 years on a two-year tariff, and Aaron Graham has served 18 years on a three-year tariff. This is Kafkaesque. These people have committed relatively minor offences, but are trapped within the prison system and cannot get out.

It therefore behoves us to address this issue, which is why the Justice Committee undertook the review and brought forward not a policy of releasing these prisoners without protection and security, or whatever, but of re-sentencing, with special expertise brought in to assess each prisoner and see whether it is safe at least to give them a determinate sentence so as to give them some hope. That is the problem here: we have lost 88 of these prisoners through suicide because they had no hope. If we listen to the Prison Officers Association, the Prison Reform Trust, Amnesty, Liberty and the families, we can understand why, because it is not just the prisoners who are serving these sentences, but their families.

What have we found in the last year? We have lost another eight prisoners who have committed suicide, with 1,600 self-harm incidents among this group of prisoners over the last 12 months. What we need to do now is to take forward the hon. Member's proposals, and if the Government are not satisfied with them at

the moment, let us work on them until the Bill goes to the House of Lords and see what we can do in the other place. In addition to that, I have put forward minor amendments saying that we should at least offer such prisoners—those inside, but also those on licence—advocacy and mentoring so that they can prepare themselves properly for resettlement and release from prison, but also so that when they are outside they are not recalled, as they are at scale at the moment.

Sarah Olney (Richmond Park) (LD): I rise to speak to amendment 26, which I tabled. It is supported by hon. Members across the House and would enable victims to request a transcript of court proceedings free of charge, as that would be a huge step towards improving the transparency and accessibility of our justice system.

In 2020, my constituent Juliana Terlizzi was drugged and raped in her sleep by her then partner. Two years later, Juliana's attacker was finally convicted, but she can barely remember what was said in the courtroom due to trauma and emotional distress. Following the trial, she was advised by a therapist to apply for a transcript of proceedings to allow her to revisit and process what was said in court. Her application for a free copy of the transcript was rejected, and she was then quoted an astonishing £7,500 by one of the private companies outsourced by the Government to produce transcripts. I soon discovered that Juliana's extortionate quote is not an isolated case. Other victims have faced fees of up to £22,000. How can anyone be expected to pay such a fee? Court transcripts should not be a luxury that only a few victims can afford; they are a vital tool in aiding victims' recovery. As victims and bereaved families do not routinely attend trial, transcripts are often the only means available to them to establish exactly what happened in the courtroom.

I secured an Adjournment debate on the cost of court transcripts last month. During the debate, I was pleased to hear the Under-Secretary of State for Justice, the hon. Member for Finchley and Golders Green (Mike Freer) affirm the Government's commitment to the principle that justice must be open and transparent, and I welcomed his comments regarding the work that officials within the Ministry of Justice are doing to improve access to court transcripts. I welcome the Minister's opening remarks committing to a trial of making sentencing remarks available free of charge. However, it is important to establish that we still need full transcripts to be available, so that victims can have the context within which those sentencing remarks are made. The importance of access to transcripts has been emphasised by the Victims' Commissioner, the Justice Committee, charities such as Rape Crisis, Refuge, and Support after Murder and Manslaughter, and dozens of hon. Members from six different parties across the House.

There are steps the Government could and should be taking to reduce costs, such as utilising new technologies and assessing the value for money of contracts held with transcription services. I have repeatedly raised the idea to Government of enabling victims to request an audio file of court proceedings. That would be a low-cost solution to improving transparency and ensuring that victims can access a record of court proceedings. I welcome the commitment of the Under-Secretary of State for Justice in that Adjournment debate, and in written correspondence to me, that he will look in

greater detail at that issue. Above all, victims and bereaved families need access to full, accurate transcripts of court proceedings at no cost to themselves. Anything less will be an injustice. I urge Ministers in the Ministry of Justice to listen to the concerns of victims, and to look more closely at what further can be done to tackle the injustices faced by victims.

Rachael Maskell: I thank the Minister for what he said about consultation on the victims code. It is important that we get this right, and I trust that he will be attentive to amendments 145 and 146, tabled by me and other hon. Members.

Declan Curran was just 14 years old when he took his life for not being able to access pre-trial therapy. His abuser was eventually sentenced to two years and served just one. Since then his brother, Kev Curran, has taken up the campaign to ensure that all children can access pre-trial therapy, and that is why I stand in this House today.

The challenges around access to pre-trial therapy continue, despite new CPS guidance from 2023 that removed previous restrictions to accessing therapy, as identified by the Home Office-funded Bluestar Project. The wait for court access is extensive. It is often 18 months on average, but it can go beyond three years for a child. Pre-trial therapy services are a specialism that is currently massively overstretched and inconsistent. My amendments would involve training to ensure that services could be expedited judiciously by the CPS, the police, and other people. Currently, there is no trust that information will not be passed on to a trial, so therapists are concerned that the notes they make, and the therapy they provide, could cause a case to collapse. We need absolute clarity within training to ensure that more than just a video is provided, that in-person training is robust so that there can be a reasonable line of inquiry, and that all those involved are properly trained with regard to limitations on the information that is provided to court on content and delivery.

Secondly, there is not enough availability of pre-trial therapy and support. Amendment 146 would ensure that child survivors access therapeutic services. I ask that that is within a month of requesting these services, that they are made aware of the support they are entitled to, that there are minimum standards on the quality of support and that this support should continue throughout the criminal justice process, but also after that process has been completed. I again urge the Minister to look carefully at the amendments I have tabled to ensure that all child survivors can access justice and the vital therapeutic interventions to help them through the criminal justice process and beyond.

8.45 pm

Jim Shannon: First, I commend the hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Sir Robert Neill) on his amendment. If he decides to push it to a vote, I will certainly support him, because it is important that we have a justice system to be proud of.

In Northern Ireland, we have an indeterminate custodial sentence, although it is slightly different. I am a strong believer in just punishment, and that is no secret. I have an issue with people being let back into society when, to some extent, they still pose some risk. The Minister has given us some assurance, which I am glad to get, but

there is a clear difference between a petty crime and a sexual predator who may have served time, but is still potentially a risk to the general public.

I am aware that there were nine self-inflicted deaths of people with sentences of imprisonment for public protection in 2022, and a freedom of information request this year has indicated that this year there have been a further seven. We look to the MOJ for a new action plan that works. Our main objective and focus is that victims are not let down, and that criminals are not let out into the public domain should they pose any type of harm or risk to people. I look forward to hearing further from the Minister, and I sincerely hope that this conversation can be extended to the Department of Justice in Northern Ireland, too.

I also want to speak to new clause 27. I commend the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Dame Diana Johnson) on her dedicated and committed plan, which we are supporting. I hope tonight that we can agree that measure. What bugs me, and probably the right hon. Lady, too, is that the Government are rightly making payments to the victims of the Post Office Horizon scandal before the final report of that public inquiry is published. An independent inquiry into the infected blood scandal was due to publish its final report this autumn, but that document will now be published in March 2024. I am incredulous that we are letting this go any further. If the Government are committed to helping those affected by the Post Office Horizon scandal, they should do the same for those affected by the contaminated blood scandal. That is what the right hon. Lady is asking for, and it is what I want, too. To leave such decisions until March 2024 is disgraceful.

One fact that always seems to be prominent is the number of people who have sadly passed away. I asked a question about that last week. One person affected by this scandal dies every four days, and I am greatly concerned that we will not have answers on that. Has the Minister had an opportunity to speak to the Department of Health back home on ensuring that victims from Northern Ireland can access compensation in the absence of an Assembly? In my estimation, 100 victims in Northern Ireland have had no word whatsoever. They are waiting in this never-never land where they cannot get any help at all. The main priority is urgency. How much longer can we expect victims and their families to wait? The second stage of the inquiry states that the scheme should be set up now and begin work this year. Who are we in this House to delay it any longer? I commend the right hon. Lady, and I hope we push this amendment tonight and win it.

Sarah Dyke (Somerton and Frome) (LD): I am sad to say that I have had several constituents approach me about the conduct of individual police officers on cases of violence against women and girls. That includes grossly inappropriate language, such as saying that one perpetrator of rape had a “reasonable expectation of consent” after drugging and assaulting my constituent to a point of significant bloodshed. I will not be more specific on individual cases, but I do not believe my constituents’ experiences are unique to Somerset.

Operation Soteria Bluestone was pioneered in Avon and Somerset police, and features groundbreaking collaboration between criminologists and police officers, and I was pleased to meet members of the team on

[Sarah Dyke]

Friday to discuss their work. I spoke in this place after the King's Speech calling for Operation Soteria Bluestone to be properly funded and extended to all police forces, with a particular focus on educating officers.

Simple numbers in uniforms is not enough without thorough vetting and training, ensuring that all officers responding to victims and handling investigations do not perpetuate rape myths, accentuate victim trauma and mishandle evidence. My constituents must have the confidence that police and judicial officers have received thorough and appropriate training, and that they will be treated with due respect and regard by our justice apparatus in the most traumatic moments of their life. I therefore urge the Government to back new clause 29, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh West (Christine Jardine), and to support Liberal Democrat policies to improve community trust in police, to create the pipeline of trust by educating police officers, and to fund more community police officers by cutting police and crime commissioners.

Before I close, I would like to talk briefly about new clause 10, which was tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron). I was concerned, but not shocked, to see in the Environment Agency report a large rise in the number of bathing water sites rated as poor quality. It shows the real impact that the Government's neglect of poor behaviour by water firms has had on our health and wellbeing. Our precious rivers and waters bring a multitude of health benefits, as I see in my own constituency, where the wild swimming site in Farleigh Hungerford attracts many swimmers, and Vobster Quay, an inland diving and swimming centre, also brings the same benefits. I know that my constituents will be devastated to lose such an important cultural asset. I therefore support this vital new clause, which will help hold negligent water firms to account and provide compensation to those who have suffered illness as a direct result of criminal conduct in relation to sewage, and I urge the Government to do the same.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Roger Gale): With the leave of the House, I call the Minister to wind up the debate.

Edward Argar: It is a pleasure to bring this debate on the Victims and Prisoners Bill Report stage to a close. I am particularly grateful for the co-operative and constructive spirit in which the debate has taken place, and for the broad support received for the Bill so far. Given the number of contributions that have been made, I will endeavour to cover them thematically. I am afraid I will be brief, and I apologise to any right hon. and hon. Members whose contributions I do not address directly.

The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) spoke with considerable and typical courage, and in her typically forthright way. I say to her that I and the appropriate Minister will be happy to have further discussions with her on the issues she raised.

The hon. Members for Chesterfield (Mr Perkins) and for Rotherham (Sarah Champion) talked about stalking in the context of Gracie Spinks. As a fellow east midlands Member of Parliament, I am very familiar with that case; we see updates on it regularly on "East Midlands Today". The hon. Member for Chesterfield highlighted

the recent work and publication by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, which we will look at very carefully. I know that the Minister for victims, my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Laura Farris), will look carefully at what is contained in the report.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Dame Maria Miller) raised the issue of non-disclosure agreements. We are sympathetic to the concerns raised and will be carefully considering with the Department for Business and Trade how best to take this forward, including considering legislation. We will provide an update in the new year.

The duty of candour was raised by the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Cardiff West (Kevin Brennan), and I am grateful for his typically reasonable tone throughout his contribution. The full position on the duty of candour will be set out shortly in an oral statement setting out the Government's response to Bishop James Jones's report. To respect the process, we cannot pre-empt that statement prior to it taking place on Wednesday. However, the Criminal Justice Bill, which is before the House already, includes an organisational duty of candour aimed at chief officers of police, making them responsible for ensuring that individuals within their remit act appropriately and with candour. We believe that that legislative vehicle, and that legislation, is the right place for that important debate to take place.

My hon. Friend the Member for North East Bedfordshire (Richard Fuller) and the shadow Minister talked about free legal advice for victims of rape. The Law Commission is currently considering the merits of independent legal advice as part of its wider review on the use of evidence in sexual offences prosecutions. This is an important issue, but we believe that we should receive and consider the findings of that extensive piece of work before committing to further action.

I turn now to amendments 142 to 144 and new clauses 27 and 42. I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Dame Diana Johnson) and the shadow Minister for raising this extremely important topic. The infected blood scandal should never have happened. My thoughts, and I believe those of the whole House, remain with those impacted by this appalling tragedy. I confirm on behalf of the Cabinet Office, which is the lead Department, that the Minister for the Cabinet Office will make a statement ahead of the House rising for Christmas on Government progress on the infected blood inquiry, and that we will commit to update Parliament with an oral statement on next steps within 25 sitting days of the final report being published.

We have studied carefully the proposals made by the right hon. Lady, which are supported widely across the House. The Government, as she said, have already accepted the moral case for compensation, and we are grateful for the work of Sir Brian Langstaff. We have great sympathy with new clause 27 and the intention to ensure that the legal groundwork is in place to enable a delivery body to be established. I therefore confirm that, when the Bill reaches the Lords, we will bring forward our own amendment, which will put in place the necessary legislative framework and timescales for a delivery body for compensation for the victims of infected blood to be established, in line with the overall objectives

set out in her new clause. That will ensure that the Government can move quickly, as soon as the inquiry reports.

I turn to IPP prisoners. While I appreciate that the Chair of the Justice Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Sir Robert Neill), would wish us to go further with resentencing, I believe that we have made considerable progress in what we have set out to the House.

Sir Robert Neill: I have listened to what has been said by Front-Bench Members on both sides, but they will have heard what was said by Back-Bench Members and the strength of feeling that more needs to be done. Before the Bill goes to the Lords, where this matter will certainly be raised, will the Minister meet me and other concerned Members to discuss further ways in which we may find a formula that will take this measure further forward?

Edward Argar: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We will listen carefully to what their noble lordships say when the matter comes before them, but I am always happy to meet him to discuss this matter and others.

Amendment 28 and new clause 10 would include people who have suffered harm as a direct result of criminal conduct related to sewage and waste water in the definition of a victim, and introduce a sewage illness compensation scheme. Let me be clear that the Government and the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, as the lead Minister, take the issue of water quality extremely seriously, and sewage being discharged into our waterways is completely unacceptable. That is why we are the first Government to take such significant action on this issue, with record fines, new powers to hold water companies to account and the largest investment programme in water company history to tackle overflows once and for all, totalling £60 billion.

We understand that criminal conduct relating to sewage and waste water can have a significant impact on individuals. Where individuals have been impacted by water quality or suffered harm, they will be able to access support services where the issue fits the eligibility criteria. I reassure the hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron)—we may not always agree, but he knows that I have a lot of respect for him as a Member of this House—that there are existing routes for individuals who suffer harm as a result of criminal conduct to seek compensation where there is evidence of personal injury, loss or damage. Those can be pursued through criminal proceedings, where a compensation order can be sought, or through separate civil proceedings through our legal system. Water companies must not profit from environmental damage. That is why the Government support Ofwat's new rules on water company dividends and bonuses so that consumer bills never reward pollution.

I turn briefly to antisocial behaviour. I, like everyone else, recognise the significant impact that persistent antisocial behaviour can have on individuals and whole communities. We are committed to supporting the victims. That is why we are bringing forward a number of important measures through the Criminal Justice Bill, introduced to the House on 14 November, to tackle the core concerns raised in this Bill's Committee. We consider that the best and most appropriate vehicle in which they can be considered.

Finally, new clause 43 tabled by the hon. Member for South Shields (Mrs Lewell-Buck) would give relatives the ability to register the deaths of their loved ones following a major incident. As she set out, the proposed changes to digitise death registration would mean that the approach adopted of a signature, which we have discussed, would not necessarily work. We cannot support the new clause as drafted, but we are incredibly sympathetic to its purpose. I can confirm that the Government intend to launch a full public consultation on the role of the bereaved in death registration following an inquest, including those impacted by a major disaster. I look forward to working with her and the families who have been so dreadfully impacted in the past. I am grateful to all Members for their positive contributions.

9 pm

Debate interrupted (Programme Order, 15 May).

The Deputy Speaker put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair (Standing Order No. 83E), That the clause be read a Second time.

Question agreed to.

New clause 20 accordingly read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

The Deputy Speaker then put forthwith the Questions necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at that time (Standing Order No. 83E).

New Clause 21

INFORMATION RELATING TO VICTIMS: SERVICE POLICE ETC

“After section 44E of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (inserted by section 22 of this Act), insert—

“44F Application of this Chapter to service police etc

(1) This Chapter applies in relation to a person mentioned in subsection (2) as it applies in relation to an authorised person, with the modifications specified in subsections (3) and (4).

(2) The persons are—

- a member of the Royal Navy Police, the Royal Military Police or the Royal Air Force Police;
- a person designated by the Service Police Complaints Commissioner under regulation 36(2) of the Service Police (Complaints etc) Regulations 2023 (S.I. 2023/624);
- a person who has been engaged to provide services consisting of or including the obtaining of information for the purposes of the exercise of functions by a person mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b).

(3) Section 44A applies as if for subsection (4) there were substituted—

“(4) The reference in subsection (3)(c) to crime is a reference to conduct which constitutes one or more—

- service offences within the meaning of the Armed Forces Act 2006, or
- SDA offences within the meaning of the Armed Forces Act 2006 (Transitional Provisions etc) Order 2009 (S.I. 2009/1059).”

(4) Section 44B applies as if, in subsection (6)—

(a) for the definition of “adult without capacity” there were substituted—

““adult without capacity”—

- in relation to England and Wales, means an adult who, within the meaning of the Mental Capacity Act 2005, lacks capacity in relation to a notice under this section;

- (b) in relation to Scotland, means an adult (within the meaning of this Chapter) who is incapable, within the meaning of the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000, in relation to a notice under this section;
- (c) in relation to Northern Ireland, means an adult who, within the meaning of the Mental Capacity Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, lacks capacity in relation to a notice under this section;”;
- (b) for the definition of “relevant authority” there were substituted—
- ““relevant authority”—
- (a) in relation to England, means a county council, a district council for an area for which there is no county council, a London borough council or the Common Council of the City of London in its capacity as a local authority;
- (b) in relation to Wales, means a county council or a county borough council;
- (c) in relation to Scotland, means a council constituted under section 2 of the Local Government etc (Scotland) Act 1994;
- (d) in relation to Northern Ireland, means an authority within the meaning of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 (S.I. 1995/755 (N.I. 2));”;
- (c) for the definition of “voluntary organisation” there were substituted—
- ““voluntary organisation”—
- (a) in relation to England and Wales, has the same meaning as in the Children Act 1989;
- (b) in relation to Scotland, has the same meaning as in Part 2 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995;
- (c) in relation to Northern Ireland, has the same meaning as in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995.”” —(Edward Argar.)

This new clause, to be inserted after clause 22, provides for that clause to apply with modifications in the case of requests for information about victims of crime made by or on behalf of service police or the Service Police Complaints Commissioner.

Brought up, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 22

MEANING OF “MAJOR INCIDENT” ETC

- “(1) This Part concerns advocates for victims of major incidents.
- (2) In this Part, “major incident” means an incident that—
- (a) occurs in England or Wales after this section comes into force,
- (b) causes the death of, or serious harm to, a significant number of individuals, and
- (c) is declared in writing by the Secretary of State to be a major incident for the purposes of this Part.
- (3) For the purposes of this Part, “harm” includes physical, mental or emotional harm.
- (4) In this Part, “victims”, in relation to a major incident, means—
- (a) individuals who have suffered harm as a direct result of the incident (whether or not that harm is serious harm), and
- (b) close family members or close friends of individuals who have died or suffered serious harm as a direct result of the incident.
- (5) In this Part, “advocate” means—
- (a) the standing advocate appointed under section (Appointment of standing advocate)(1);
- (b) an individual appointed as an advocate in respect of a major incident under section 25(1).

- (6) But a reference in this Part to an advocate appointed in respect of a major incident includes the standing advocate only if the standing advocate has been appointed in respect of that incident under section 25(1).”—(Edward Argar.)

This new clause, to be inserted before clause 25, would make introductory provision for Part 2 in consequence of NC23 and Amendment 60.

Brought up, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 23

APPOINTMENT OF STANDING ADVOCATE

- “(1) The Secretary of State must appoint an individual as the standing advocate for victims of major incidents (in this Part, “the standing advocate”).
- (2) The functions of the standing advocate are—
- (a) to advise the Secretary of State as to the interests of victims of major incidents, and their treatment by public authorities in response to major incidents;
- (b) to advise other advocates as to the exercise of the functions of those advocates;
- (c) to make reports in accordance with section 30.
- (3) The standing advocate may take such steps as the standing advocate considers are—
- (a) appropriate to facilitate the exercise of, or
- (b) incidental or conducive to,
- the functions of the standing advocate or another advocate.
- (4) An individual may be appointed as the standing advocate only if the Secretary of State considers that the individual is qualified, taking into account—
- (a) the individual’s academic, professional or other qualifications, experience or skills;
- (b) any other matter the Secretary of State considers relevant.
- (5) For the purposes of subsection (2)(a), “public authority” includes—
- (a) a court, tribunal, coroner, or inquiry panel within the meaning of section 3 of the Inquiries Act 2005, and
- (b) any other person certain of whose functions are functions of a public nature,

but does not include the Security Service, the Secret Intelligence Service or the Government Communications Headquarters.”—(Edward Argar.)

This new clause, to be inserted before clause 25, would require the Secretary of State to appoint a standing advocate to undertake general functions in relation to victims of major incidents and other advocates appointed in respect of major incidents.

Brought up, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 24

PUBLICATION OF REPORTS

- “(1) The Secretary of State must publish a copy of a report made under section 30 if—
- (a) it is made by the standing advocate under section 30(A1) (annual reports),
- (b) it is made by an advocate under section 30(1) (reports required by the Secretary of State), or
- (c) it is made by an advocate under section 30(4A) (reports at discretion of advocate), and the advocate making the report requests in writing that the report is published.
- (2) The copy may be published in such manner as the Secretary of State thinks fit.
- (3) But material may be omitted from the copy if the Secretary of State considers that the publication of that material would—

- (a) risk death or injury to any person,
- (b) risk damage to national security or international relations,
- (c) risk damage to the economic interests of the United Kingdom or of any part of the United Kingdom,
- (d) risk damage caused by disclosure of commercially sensitive information,
- (e) breach any conditions as to confidentiality subject to which the advocate making the report acquired the material, or
- (f) contravene the data protection legislation (within the meaning given by section 3 of the Data Protection Act 2018).

(4) The Secretary of State must lay a copy of a report as published under this section before Parliament.”—
(Edward Argar.)

This new clause, to be inserted after clause 30, makes provision about the publication of reports made by an advocate.

Brought up, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 25

PART 2: CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

“(1) In paragraph 3 of Schedule 1 to the Public Records Act 1958 (establishments and organisations whose records are public records), in Part 2 of the Table, at the appropriate place insert—

“An advocate for victims of major incidents appointed under Part 2 of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024.”

(2) In Schedule 2 to the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967 (departments etc subject to investigation), at the appropriate place insert—

“An advocate for victims of major incidents appointed under Part 2 of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024.”

(3) In Schedule 1 to the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 (offices disqualifying from membership of the House of Commons), in Part 3, at the appropriate place insert—

“An advocate for victims of major incidents appointed under Part 2 of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024.”

(4) In Schedule 1 to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (public authorities), in Part 6, at the appropriate place insert—

“An advocate for victims of major incidents appointed under Part 2 of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024.”

(5) In Schedule 19 to the Equality Act 2010 (public authorities), in Part 1, after “A government department other than the Security Service, the Secret Intelligence Service or the Government Communications Headquarters.” insert—

“Advocates for victims of major incidents

*An advocate for victims of major incidents appointed under Part 2 of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024.”—
(Edward Argar.)*

This new clause, to be inserted after clause 32, would provide for an advocate appointed under Part 2 to be covered by the legislation referred to.

Brought up, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 26

IMPRISONMENT OR DETENTION FOR PUBLIC PROTECTION: TERMINATION OF LICENCES

“(1) The Crime (Sentences) Act 1997 is amended as follows.

(2) In section 31A (imprisonment or detention for public protection: termination of licences)—

- (a) in subsection (2), in the words after paragraph (b), for “shall” substitute “must”;
- (b) in subsection (3)—
 - (i) at the end of paragraph (a) insert “and”;
 - (ii) omit paragraph (c) and the “and” before it;

(c) for subsection (4) substitute—

“(4) Where a reference is made under subsection (3) above—

- (a) the Parole Board must direct the Secretary of State to make an order that the licence is to cease to have effect, unless paragraph (b) applies;
- (b) if the Parole Board is satisfied that it is necessary for the protection of the public that the licence should remain in force, it must dismiss the reference.”;

(d) omit subsections (4A) to (4C) and insert—

“(4D) The reference under subsection (3) must not be made, and a reference under that subsection must not be determined by the Parole Board under subsection (4), if at the time the reference or determination would otherwise be made the prisoner is in prison having been recalled under section 32.

(4E) Subsection (4F) applies where—

- (a) but for subsection (4D), a reference of the prisoner’s case would have been made under subsection (3) or determined by the Parole Board under subsection (4),
- (b) the Secretary of State has referred the prisoner’s case to the Parole Board under section 28 or 32, and
- (c) the Board is satisfied that it is no longer necessary for the protection of the public that the prisoner should be confined.

(4F) Where this subsection applies—

- (a) the Parole Board must direct the Secretary of State to release the prisoner unconditionally, unless paragraph (b) applies;
- (b) if the Parole Board is satisfied that it is necessary for the protection of the public for the prisoner, when released, to be released on licence in respect of the preventative sentence or sentences, it must not give a direction under paragraph (a).

(4G) Where the Parole Board gives a direction under subsection (4F)(a)—

- (a) section 28(5) has effect in relation to the prisoner as if for “release him on licence” there were substituted “release the prisoner unconditionally”;
- (b) section 32(5) has effect in relation to the prisoner as if for “give effect to the direction” there were substituted “release the prisoner unconditionally”.

(4H) Where—

(a) the prisoner has been released on licence under this Chapter (whether or not the prisoner has subsequently been recalled to prison under section 32),

(b) the qualifying period has expired, and

(c) the prisoner’s licence has remained in force for a continuous period of two years—

(i) beginning not before the qualifying period expired, and

(ii) ending after the coming into force of section (Imprisonment or detention for public protection: termination of licences)(2)(d) of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2023,

the Secretary of State must order that the licence is to cease to have effect.”;

(e) in subsection (5), in the definition of “the qualifying period”, for “ten” substitute “three”;

(f) after subsection (5) insert—

“(6) The Secretary of State may by regulations made by statutory instrument amend subsection (5) to change the length of the qualifying period for the time being specified.

- (7) A statutory instrument containing regulations under subsection (6) may not be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament.”

(3) In section 32 (recall of life prisoners while on licence), after subsection (1) insert—

“(1A) Subsection (1) does not apply in relation to a prisoner in respect of whom the Secretary of State is required to make an order under section 31A(4) or (4H) that the licence is to cease to have effect.”—
(*Edward Argar.*)

This new clause, to be inserted after clause 42, makes provision about the termination of licences imposed in connection with sentences of imprisonment for public protection.

Brought up, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 37

RESTRICTING PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY WHERE ONE PARENT KILLS THE OTHER

“(1) The Children Act 1989 is amended in accordance with subsections (2) to (7).

(2) In section 8 (child arrangements orders and other orders with respect to children), in the closing words of subsection (3), after “include” insert “proceedings in the Crown Court under section 10A or”.

(3) After section 10 insert—

“10A Duty of Crown Court to make prohibited steps order

- (1) This section applies where—
 - (a) a child has two parents at least one of whom has parental responsibility for the child, and
 - (b) a parent who has parental responsibility for the child (“the offender”) is convicted of the murder or, in the circumstances mentioned in subsection (2), manslaughter of the other parent.
- (2) The circumstances are where, but for section 54 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 (loss of control) or section 2 of the Homicide Act 1957 (diminished responsibility), the offender would have been liable to be convicted for murder.
- (3) The Crown Court must make a prohibited steps order when sentencing the offender.
- (4) The order must—
 - (a) specify that no step which could be taken by a parent in meeting their parental responsibility for a child may be taken by the offender with respect to the child without the consent of the High Court or the family court, and
 - (b) be made to have effect until the order is varied or discharged by the High Court or the family court.
- (5) But the Crown Court must not make a prohibited steps order under this section if—
 - (a) a prohibited steps order is already in force that meets the requirements in subsection (4), or
 - (b) in a case where the offender is convicted of manslaughter, it appears to the Crown Court that it would not be in the interests of justice to do so.
- (6) Sections 1, 7 and 11 do not apply where the Crown Court proceeds under this section.
- (7) A prohibited steps order made under this section does not cease to have effect if the offender is acquitted of the murder or manslaughter on appeal (but see section 10B(3) and (4)).
- (8) A prohibited steps order made under this section is to be treated for the purposes of section 31F(6) of the Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984 (proceedings and decisions) as if it were made by the family court.

- (9) The Crown Court does not have jurisdiction to entertain any proceedings in connection with the enforcement of a prohibited steps order made under this section.

10B Review of orders made under section 10A

- (1) This section applies where a prohibited steps order is made under section 10A prohibiting the taking of steps by a parent with respect to a child.
- (2) The local authority that is the relevant local authority at the time the order is made must make an application to the court (see section 92(7)) to review the order.
- (3) Subsection (4) applies if—
 - (a) the application under subsection (2) has been disposed of (whether or not the order was varied), and
 - (b) the parent is acquitted on appeal of the murder or manslaughter that resulted in the making of the order.
- (4) The local authority that is the relevant local authority at the time the verdict of acquittal is entered must make an application to the court to review the order.
- (5) An application under this section must be made as soon as is reasonably practicable and in any event before the end of the period of 14 days beginning with the day after the day on which—
 - (a) in the case of an application under subsection (2), the order was made;
 - (b) in the case of an application under subsection (4), the verdict of acquittal was entered.
- (6) The Secretary of State may by regulations amend the period specified in subsection (5).
- (7) In this section “relevant local authority” means—
 - (a) where the child with respect to whom the order was made is ordinarily resident within the area of a local authority in England or Wales, that local authority;
 - (b) where the child with respect to whom the order was made does not fall within paragraph (a) but is present within the area of a local authority in England or Wales, that local authority.”
- (4) In section 9 (restrictions on making section 8 orders)—
 - (a) in subsection (1), after “applies” insert “or a prohibited steps order made under section 10A”;
 - (b) in subsection (6A), after “applies” insert “or a prohibited steps order made under section 10A”;
 - (c) after subsection (7) insert—

“(8) Subsection (7) does not apply to a prohibited steps order made under section 10A.”
- (5) In section 33 (effect of care order), after subsection (3) insert—

“(3A) Where a prohibited steps order made under section 10A is in force in relation to a parent, the authority may only exercise the power in subsection (3)(b) in relation to the taking of a step by that parent that is not prohibited by that order.”
- (6) In section 91 (effect and duration of orders etc)—
 - (a) in subsection (2), after “section 8 order” insert “(other than a prohibited steps order made under section 10A)”;
 - (b) after subsection (5A) insert—

“(5B) Subsection (5C) applies where—

 - (a) a prohibited steps order (the “existing order”) is in force prohibiting the taking of steps by a parent (“P”) with respect to a child (“C”), and
 - (b) a prohibited steps order is made under section 10A in relation to P with respect to C.
- (5C) The existing order is discharged (except to the extent that it prohibits the taking of steps other than by P with respect to C).”

- (7) In section 104 (regulations and orders)—
- (a) in each of subsections (2) and (3A), after “subsection” insert “(3AZA),”;
- (b) after subsection (3A) insert—
- “(3AZA) Regulations fall within this subsection if they are regulations made in the exercise of the power conferred by section 10B(6).”
- (8) In section 50 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 (meaning of “sentence”), after subsection (2) insert—
- “(2A) A prohibited steps order made under section 10A of the Children Act 1989 is not a sentence for the purposes of this Act.”—(*Edward Argar.*)

This new clause, to be inserted after clause 15, requires the Crown Court to make a prohibited steps order when a parent is convicted of the murder or voluntary manslaughter of the other parent and provides for the order to be reviewed by the family courts.

Brought up, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 10

SEWAGE ILLNESS VICTIM COMPENSATION SCHEME

“(1) The Secretary of State must by regulations provide for a compensation scheme for victims who have suffered harm as a direct result of criminal conduct in relation to sewage and waste water.

- (2) Regulations under subsection (1) must—
- (a) provide for the payment of compensation to people who have become unwell as a result of bathing in water contaminated by sewage,
- (b) make provision in relation to the medical evidence required to support a claim for compensation under the regulations.

(3) Regulations under this section may not be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before and approved by resolution of each House of Parliament.”—(*Tim Farron.*)

Question put, That the clause be added to the Bill.

The House divided: Ayes 27, Noes 267.

Division No. 21]

[9.1 pm

AYES

Campbell, Mr Gregory	Lucas, Caroline
Chamberlain, Wendy	Moran, Layla
Cooper, Daisy	Morgan, Helen
Davey, rh Ed	Olney, Sarah
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.	Paisley, Ian
Dyke, Sarah	Robinson, Gavin
Edwards, Jonathan	Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Farron, Tim	Shannon, Jim
Farry, Stephen	Stone, Jamie
Girvan, Paul	Williams, Hywel
Green, Sarah	Wilson, Munira
Hanna, Claire	Wilson, rh Sammy
Hobhouse, Wera	
Lake, Ben	
Lockhart, Carla	

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr Alistair Carmichael and
Christine Jardine

NOES

Afolami, Bim	Argar, rh Edward
Afriyie, Adam	Atherton, Sarah
Aiken, Nickie	Atkins, rh Victoria
Aldous, Peter	Bacon, Gareth
Allan, Lucy (<i>Proxy vote cast by Mr Marcus Jones</i>)	Badenoch, rh Kemi
Anderson, Lee	Bailey, Shaun
Anderson, Stuart	Baillie, Siobhan
Andrew, rh Stuart	Baker, Duncan
Ansell, Caroline	Baker, rh Mr Steve
	Baldwin, Harriett

Barclay, rh Steve	Fell, Simon
Baynes, Simon	Firth, Anna
Bell, Aaron	Fletcher, Katherine
Beresford, Sir Paul	Fletcher, Mark
Bhatti, Saqib	Fletcher, Nick
Blackman, Bob	Foster, Kevin
Bottomley, Sir Peter	Fox, rh Dr Liam
Bowie, Andrew	Frazer, rh Lucy
Bradley, Ben	Freer, Mike
Bradley, rh Karen	French, Mr Louie
Braverman, rh Suella	Fuller, Richard
Brereton, Jack	Fysh, Mr Marcus
Bridgen, Andrew	Garnier, Mark
Bristow, Paul	Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Britcliffe, Sara	Gibb, rh Nick
Browne, Anthony	Gibson, Peter
Bruce, Fiona	Gideon, Jo
Buchan, Felicity	Glen, rh John
Buckland, rh Sir Robert	Goodwill, rh Sir Robert
Burghart, Alex	Gove, rh Michael
Burns, rh Sir Conor	Graham, Richard
Butler, Rob	Grant, Mrs Helen (<i>Proxy vote cast by Mr Marcus Jones</i>)
Cameron, Dr Lisa	Gray, James
Carter, Andy	Green, Chris
Cartlidge, James	Green, rh Damian
Cash, Sir William	Griffith, Andrew
Cates, Miriam	Gullis, Jonathan
Caulfield, Maria	Halfon, rh Robert
Chalk, rh Alex	Hall, Luke
Chishti, Rehman	Hammond, Stephen
Chope, Sir Christopher	Hands, rh Greg
Churchill, Jo	Harris, Rebecca
Clarke, rh Sir Simon	Harrison, Trudy
Clarke, Theo	Hart, rh Simon
Clarke-Smith, Brendan	Hayes, rh Sir John
Clarkson, Chris	Heaton-Harris, rh Chris
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey	Henderson, Gordon
Collins, Damian	Henry, Darren
Costa, Alberto	Hinds, rh Damian
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey	Hoare, Simon
Crabb, rh Stephen	Hollinrake, Kevin
Crosbie, Virginia	Hollobone, Mr Philip
Daly, James	Holloway, Adam
Davies, rh David T. C.	Holmes, Paul
Davies, Gareth	Huddleston, Nigel
Davies, Dr James	Hudson, Dr Neil
Davies, Mims	Hughes, Eddie
Davies, Philip	Hunt, Jane (<i>Proxy vote cast by Mr Marcus Jones</i>)
Davis, rh Mr David	Hunt, rh Jeremy
Davison, Dehenna	Hunt, Tom
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Jack, rh Mr Alister
Docherty, Leo	Javid, rh Sajid
Donelan, rh Michelle	Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Double, Steve	Jenkinson, Mark
Dowden, rh Oliver	Jenkyns, Dame Andrea
Doyle-Price, Jackie	Jenrick, rh Robert
Drax, Richard	Johnson, Dr Caroline
Drummond, Mrs Flick	Johnson, Gareth
Duddridge, Sir James	Johnston, David
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain	Jones, Andrew
Ellis, rh Sir Michael	Jones, rh Mr David
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias	Jones, Fay
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie	Jones, rh Mr Marcus
Eustice, rh George	Kawczynski, Daniel
Evans, Dr Luke	Kearns, Alicia
Evennett, rh Sir David (<i>Proxy vote cast by Mr Marcus Jones</i>)	Keegan, rh Gillian
Everitt, Ben (<i>Proxy vote cast by Mr Marcus Jones</i>)	Knight, rh Sir Greg
Fabricant, Michael	Kruger, Danny
Farris, Laura	Lamont, John
	Latham, Mrs Pauline

Leadsom, rh Dame Andrea
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Sir Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Loder, Chris
 Logan, Mark
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig (*Proxy vote cast by John Redwood*)
 Maclean, Rachel
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, rh Kit
 Mann, Scott
 Marson, Julie
 Mayhew, Jerome
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Karl
 McVey, rh Esther
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Millar, Robin
 Miller, rh Dame Maria
 Milling, rh Dame Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Moore, Damien
 Moore, Robbie
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, James
 Morrissey, Joy
 Mortimer, Jill
 Mullan, Dr Kieran (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Marcus Jones*)
 Mumby-Croft, Holly
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
 Neill, Sir Robert
 Nici, Lia
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 O'Brien, Neil
 Opperman, Guy
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Philp, rh Chris
 Prentis, rh Victoria
 Pritchard, rh Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, rh Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Randall, Tom
 Redwood, rh John
 Richards, Nicola
 Roberts, Mr Rob
 Rowley, Lee
 Russell, Dean
 Rutley, David
 Sambrook, Gary

Scully, Paul
 Seely, Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Simmonds, David
 Smith, rh Chloe
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Solloway, Amanda
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stephenson, rh Andrew
 Stevenson, Jane
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, rh Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunderland, James
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Throup, Maggie
 Timpson, Edward
 Tolhurst, rh Kelly
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trott, Laura
 Tuckwell, Steve
 Tugendhat, rh Tom
 Vara, rh Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Vickers, Matt
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Sir Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittingdale, rh Sir John
 Wiggin, Sir Bill
 Wild, James
 Williams, rh Craig
 Williamson, rh Sir Gavin
 Wood, Mike
 Wright, rh Sir Jeremy
 Young, Jacob
 Zahawi, rh Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Robert Largan and
Mr Gagan Mohindra

Question accordingly negated.

New Clause 14

MAJOR INCIDENTS: DUTY OF CANDOUR

“(1) In discharging their duties in relation to a major incident, public authorities and public servants and officials must at all times act within their powers—

- (a) in the public interest, and
- (b) with transparency, candour and frankness.

(2) If a major incident results in a court proceeding, official inquiry or investigation, public authorities and public servants and officials have a duty to assist—

- (a) relating to their own activities, or

(b) where their acts or omissions may be relevant.

(3) In discharging the duty under subsection (2), public authorities and public servants and officials shall—

- (a) act with proper expedition;
- (b) act with transparency, candour and frankness,
- (c) act without favour to their own position,
- (d) make full disclosure of relevant documents, material and facts,
- (e) set out their position on the relevant matters at the outset of the proceedings, inquiry or investigation, and
- (f) provide further information and clarification as ordered by a court or inquiry.

(4) In discharging their duty under subsection (2), public authorities and public servants and officials shall have regard to the pleadings, allegations, terms of reference and parameters of the relevant proceedings, inquiry or investigation but shall not be limited by them, in particular where they hold information which might change the ambit of the said proceedings, inquiry or investigation.

(5) The duties in subsections (1) and (2) shall—

- (a) be read subject to existing laws relating to privacy, data protection and national security,
- (b) apply in a qualified way with respect to private law and non-public functions as set out in subsection (6), and
- (c) not be limited by any issue of insurance indemnity.

(6) The duties in subsections (1) and (2) shall be enforceable by application to the relevant court or inquiry chairperson by any person affected by the alleged breach, or the court or inquiry may act of its own motion. Where there are no extant court or inquiry proceedings, the duties may be enforced by judicial review proceedings in the High Court.”—(*Kevin Brennan.*)

This new clause would require public authorities and public servants and officials to act in the public interest and with transparency, candour and frankness when carrying out their duties in relation to major incidents.

Brought up.

Question put, That the clause be added to the Bill.

The House divided: Ayes 193, Noes 279.

Division No. 22]

[9.15 pm

AYES

Abrahams, Debbie	Clark, Feryal
Ali, Rushanara	Cooper, Daisy
Ali, Tahir	Cooper, rh Yvette
Amesbury, Mike	Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Anderson, Fleur	Coyle, Neil
Ashworth, rh Jonathan	Creasy, Stella
Barker, Paula	Cruddas, Jon
Beckett, rh Margaret	Cryer, John
Begum, Apsana	Cummins, Judith
Benn, rh Hilary	Cunningham, Alex
Betts, Mr Clive	Daby, Janet
Blomfield, Paul	Dalton, Ashley
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Davey, rh Ed
Brennan, Kevin	David, Wayne
Brown, Ms Lyn	Davies-Jones, Alex
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Debbonaire, Thangam
Bryant, Sir Chris	Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Buck, Ms Karen	Dixon, Samantha
Burgon, Richard	Dodds, Anneliese
Byrne, Ian	Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Cadbury, Ruth	Doughty, Stephen
Campbell, rh Sir Alan	Dowd, Peter
Campbell, Mr Gregory	Duffield, Rosie
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	Dyke, Sarah
Chamberlain, Wendy	Eagle, Dame Angela
Champion, Sarah	Eagle, rh Maria

Eastwood, Colum
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Edwards, Sarah
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Elmore, Chris
 Eshalomi, Florence
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farron, Tim
 Farry, Stephen
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Girvan, Paul
 Green, Sarah
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Griffith, Dame Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hamilton, Mrs Paulette
 Hanna, Claire
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hillier, Dame Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Howarth, rh Sir George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, rh Dame Diana
 Johnson, Kim
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Ruth
 Jones, Sarah
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Kyle, Peter
 Lake, Ben
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Lightwood, Simon
 Lloyd, Tony
 Lockhart, Carla
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Maskell, Rachael
 Mather, Keir
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 Mearns, Ian
 Mishra, Navendu

Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Helen
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Murray, James
 Nandy, Lisa
 Norris, Alex
 Olney, Sarah
 Onwurah, Chi
 Oppong-Asare, Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Osborne, Kate
 Owen, Sarah
 Paisley, Ian
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Mr Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pollard, Luke
 Powell, Lucy
 Rayner, rh Angela
 Reed, Steve
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, rh Rachel
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Gavin
 Rodda, Matt
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Shanks, Michael
 Shannon, Jim
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Strathern, Alistair
 Stringer, Graham
 Sultana, Zarah
 Tami, rh Mark
 Tarry, Sam
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Sir Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twist, Liz
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 Wakeford, Christian
 West, Catherine
 Western, Andrew
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitley, Mick
 Whittome, Nadia
 Williams, Hywel
 Wilson, Munira
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Winter, Beth
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:

**Mary Glendon and
 Kim Leadbeater**

NOES

Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aiken, Nickie
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy (*Proxy vote cast
 by Mr Marcus Jones*)
 Anderson, Lee
 Anderson, Stuart
 Andrew, rh Stuart
 Ansell, Caroline
 Argar, rh Edward
 Atherton, Sarah
 Atkins, rh Victoria
 Bacon, Gareth
 Badenoch, rh Kemi
 Bailey, Shaun
 Baillie, Siobhan
 Baker, Duncan
 Baker, rh Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Steve
 Baynes, Simon
 Bell, Aaron
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Bhatti, Saqib
 Blackman, Bob
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Braverman, rh Suella
 Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Bristow, Paul
 Britcliffe, Sara
 Browne, Anthony
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buchan, Felicity
 Buckland, rh Sir Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, rh Sir Conor
 Butler, Rob
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Carter, Andy
 Cartlidge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Cates, Miriam
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, rh Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Churchill, Jo
 Clarke, rh Sir Simon
 Clarke, Theo
 Clarke-Smith, Brendan
 Clarkson, Chris
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Colburn, Elliot
 Collins, Damian
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crosbie, Virginia
 Crouch, Tracey
 Daly, James
 Davies, rh David T. C.
 Davies, Gareth
 Davies, Dr James
 Davies, Mims
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Davison, Dehenna
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty, Leo
 Donelan, rh Michelle
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, rh Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Drummond, Mrs Flick
 Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
 Edwards, Ruth
 Ellis, rh Sir Michael
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
 Eustice, rh George
 Evans, Dr Luke
 Evnnett, rh Sir David (*Proxy
 vote cast by Mr Marcus
 Jones*)
 Everitt, Ben (*Proxy vote cast
 by Mr Marcus Jones*)
 Fabricant, Michael
 Farris, Laura
 Fell, Simon
 Firth, Anna
 Fletcher, Katherine
 Fletcher, Mark
 Fletcher, Nick
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Frazer, rh Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 French, Mr Louie
 Fuller, Richard
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Garnier, Mark
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gibson, Peter
 Gideon, Jo
 Glen, rh John
 Goodwill, rh Sir Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Mrs Helen (*Proxy vote
 cast by Mr Marcus Jones*)
 Gray, James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Griffith, Andrew
 Gullis, Jonathan
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, rh Simon
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heaton-Harris, rh Chris
 Henderson, Gordon
 Henry, Darren
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam

Holmes, Paul
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hudson, Dr Neil
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, Jane (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Marcus Jones*)
 Hunt, rh Jeremy
 Hunt, Tom
 Jack, rh Mr Alister
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkinson, Mark
 Jenkyns, Dame Andrea
 Jenrick, rh Robert
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnston, David
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Fay
 Jones, rh Mr Marcus
 Jupp, Simon
 Kearns, Alicia
 Keegan, rh Gillian
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Kruger, Danny
 Lamont, John
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Dame Andrea
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Sir Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Loder, Chris
 Logan, Mark
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig (*Proxy vote cast by John Redwood*)
 Maclean, Rachel
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, rh Kit
 Mann, Scott
 Marson, Julie
 Mayhew, Jerome
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Karl
 McVey, rh Esther
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Millar, Robin
 Miller, rh Dame Maria
 Milling, rh Dame Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Moore, Damien
 Moore, Robbie
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, James
 Morrissey, Joy
 Mortimer, Jill
 Mullan, Dr Kieran (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Marcus Jones*)
 Mumby-Croft, Holly
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
 Neill, Sir Robert
 Nici, Lia
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, rh Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Opperman, Guy
 Patel, rh Priti

Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Philp, rh Chris
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, rh Victoria
 Pritchard, rh Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, rh Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Randall, Tom
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, rh Sir Jacob
 Richards, Nicola
 Richardson, Angela
 Roberts, Mr Rob
 Robinson, Mary
 Rowley, Lee
 Russell, Dean
 Rutley, David
 Sambrook, Gary
 Saxby, Selaine
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Simmonds, David
 Smith, rh Chloe
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Solloway, Amanda
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stephenson, rh Andrew
 Stevenson, Jane
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, rh Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunderland, James
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Throup, Maggie
 Timpson, Edward
 Tolhurst, rh Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trott, Laura
 Tuckwell, Steve
 Tugendhat, rh Tom
 Vara, rh Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Vickers, Matt
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Sir Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittingdale, rh Sir John
 Wiggin, Sir Bill
 Wild, James
 Williams, rh Craig
 Williamson, rh Sir Gavin
 Wood, Mike

Wright, rh Sir Jeremy
 Young, Jacob
 Zahawi, rh Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Robert Largan and
Mr Gagan Mohindra

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 27

COMPENSATION FOR VICTIMS OF THE INFECTED BLOOD SCANDAL (No. 2)

“(1) In accordance with section 2(3C), the Secretary of State must, within three months of the passing of this Act, establish a body to administer the compensation scheme for victims of the infected blood scandal.

(2) The body created under this section must be chaired by a judge of High Court or Court of Session with status as sole decision maker.

(3) In exercising its functions, the body must—

- (a) have regard to the need of applicants for speed of provision, simplicity or process, accessibility, involvement, proactive support, fairness and efficiency;
- (b) involve potentially eligible persons and their representatives amongst those in a small advisory board, and in the review and improvement of the scheme;
- (c) permit the hearing of applicants in person; and
- (d) have an independent appeal body which will reconsider decisions of the scheme referred to it.

(4) The Secretary of State may by regulations make further provision about the body established under this section.

(5) For the purposes of this Act, a victim of the infected blood scandal means any infected or affected person whom the Second Interim Report of the Infected Blood Inquiry, as laid before Parliament on 19 April 2023, recommends should be admitted to a compensation scheme.

(6) This section comes into force on the day on which this Act is passed.”—(*Dame Diana Johnson.*)

Brought up.

Question put, That the clause be added to the Bill.

The House divided: Ayes 246, Noes 242.

Division No. 23]

[9.28 pm

AYES

Abrahams, Debbie	Buckland, rh Sir Robert
Ali, Rushanara	Burgon, Richard
Ali, Tahir	Byrne, Ian
Amesbury, Mike	Cadbury, Ruth
Anderson, Fleur	Callaghan, Amy (<i>Proxy vote cast by Marion Fellows</i>)
Ashworth, rh Jonathan	Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Barker, Paula	Campbell, Mr Gregory
Beckett, rh Margaret	Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Begum, Apsana	Chamberlain, Wendy
Benn, rh Hilary	Champion, Sarah
Betts, Mr Clive	Cherry, Joanna
Blackford, rh Ian	Chishti, Rehman
Blackman, Kirsty	Clark, Feryal
Blomfield, Paul	Cooper, Daisy
Bonnar, Steven	Cooper, rh Yvette
Bottomley, Sir Peter	Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Cowan, Ronnie
Brennan, Kevin	Coyle, Neil
Brock, Deidre	Creasy, Stella
Brown, Alan	Crouch, Tracey
Brown, Ms Lyn	Cruddas, Jon
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Cryer, John
Bryant, Sir Chris	Cummins, Judith
Buck, Ms Karen	

Cunningham, Alex
 Daby, Janet
 Dalton, Ashley
 Davey, rh Ed
 David, Wayne
 Davies-Jones, Alex
 Day, Martyn
 Debonnaire, Thangam
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Dixon, Samantha
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 Dorans, Allan (*Proxy vote cast by Marion Fellows*)
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Duffield, Rosie
 Dyke, Sarah
 Eagle, Dame Angela
 Eagle, rh Maria
 Eastwood, Colum
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Edwards, Sarah
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Elmore, Chris
 Eshalomi, Florence
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farron, Tim
 Farry, Stephen
 Fellows, Marion
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Foster, Kevin
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gibson, Patricia
 Girvan, Paul
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Green, rh Damian
 Green, Sarah
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Griffith, Dame Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hamilton, Mrs Paulette
 Hanna, Claire
 Hanvey, Neale
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hillier, Dame Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Holloway, Adam
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Hosie, rh Stewart
 Howarth, rh Sir George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Jenkyns, Dame Andrea

Johnson, rh Dame Diana
 Johnson, Kim
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Ruth
 Jones, Sarah
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Kyle, Peter
 Lake, Ben
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Lewis, rh Sir Julian
 Lightwood, Simon
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Tony
 Lockhart, Carla
 Loughton, Tim
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Maskell, Rachael
 Mather, Keir
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 Mearns, Ian
 Mills, Nigel
 Mishra, Navendu
 Moore, Damien
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Helen
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, Grahame
 Mumby-Croft, Holly
 Murray, Ian
 Murray, James
 Nandy, Lisa
 Nicolson, John (*Proxy vote cast by Marion Fellows*)
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Olney, Sarah
 Onwurah, Chi
 Oppong-Asare, Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Osborne, Kate
 Oswald, Kirsten
 Owen, Sarah
 Paisley, Ian
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Mr Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pollard, Luke
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin

Rayner, rh Angela
 Reed, Steve
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, rh Rachel
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Roberts, Mr Rob
 Robinson, Gavin
 Rodda, Matt
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Shanks, Michael
 Shannon, Jim
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smith, Alyn
 Smith, rh Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Strathern, Alistair
 Stringer, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sultana, Zarah
 Tami, rh Mark
 Tarry, Sam

Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Sir Stephen
 Tolhurst, rh Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Trickett, Jon
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twist, Liz
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 Wakeford, Christian
 Walker, Mr Robin
 West, Catherine
 Western, Andrew
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitford, Dr Philippa (*Proxy vote cast by Marion Fellows*)
 Whitley, Mick
 Whittome, Nadia
 Williams, Hywel
 Wilson, Munira
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Winter, Beth
 Wishart, Pete
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mary Glindon and
Kim Leadbeater

NOES

Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aiken, Nickie
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Marcus Jones*)
 Anderson, Lee
 Anderson, Stuart
 Andrew, rh Stuart
 Argar, rh Edward
 Atherton, Sarah
 Atkins, rh Victoria
 Bacon, Gareth
 Badenoch, rh Kemi
 Bailey, Shaun
 Baillie, Siobhan
 Baker, Duncan
 Baker, rh Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Steve
 Baynes, Simon
 Bell, Aaron
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Bhatti, Saqib
 Blackman, Bob
 Bowie, Andrew
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Brady, rh Sir Graham
 Braverman, rh Suella
 Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Bristow, Paul
 Britcliffe, Sara
 Browne, Anthony
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buchan, Felicity

Burghart, Alex
 Burns, rh Sir Conor
 Butler, Rob
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Carter, Andy
 Cartledge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Cates, Miriam
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, rh Alex
 Churchill, Jo
 Clarke, rh Sir Simon
 Clarke, Theo
 Clarke-Smith, Brendan
 Clarkson, Chris
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Collins, Damian
 Costa, Alberto
 Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crosbie, Virginia
 Daly, James
 Davies, rh David T. C.
 Davies, Gareth
 Davies, Dr James
 Davies, Mims
 Davison, Dehenna
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty, Leo
 Donelan, rh Michelle
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, rh Oliver
 Drummond, Mrs Flick
 Duddridge, Sir James
 Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
 Edwards, Ruth
 Ellis, rh Sir Michael

Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Eustice, rh George
 Evans, Dr Luke
 Evennett, rh Sir David (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Marcus Jones*)
 Everitt, Ben (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Marcus Jones*)
 Fabricant, Michael
 Farris, Laura
 Fell, Simon
 Firth, Anna
 Fletcher, Katherine
 Fletcher, Mark
 Fletcher, Nick
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Frazer, rh Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 French, Mr Louie
 Garnier, Mark
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gibson, Peter
 Gideon, Jo
 Glen, rh John
 Goodwill, rh Sir Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Mrs Helen (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Marcus Jones*)
 Gray, James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Griffith, Andrew
 Gullis, Jonathan
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, rh Simon
 Heaton-Harris, rh Chris
 Henderson, Gordon
 Henry, Darren
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holmes, Paul
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hudson, Dr Neil
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, Jane (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Marcus Jones*)
 Hunt, rh Jeremy
 Hunt, Tom
 Jack, rh Mr Alister
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkinson, Mark
 Jenrick, rh Robert
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnston, David
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Fay
 Jones, rh Mr Marcus
 Jupp, Simon
 Kawczynski, Daniel

Kearns, Alicia
 Keegan, rh Gillian
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Kruger, Danny
 Lamont, John
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Dame Andrea
 Lewer, Andrew
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Loder, Chris
 Logan, Mark
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Mackinlay, Craig (*Proxy vote cast by John Redwood*)
 Maclean, Rachel
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, rh Kit
 Mann, Scott
 Marson, Julie
 Mayhew, Jerome
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Karl
 McVey, rh Esther
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Millar, Robin
 Miller, rh Dame Maria
 Milling, rh Dame Amanda
 Moore, Robbie
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, James
 Morrissey, Joy
 Mortimer, Jill
 Mullan, Dr Kieran (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Marcus Jones*)
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
 Neill, Sir Robert
 Nici, Lia
 O'Brien, Neil
 Opperman, Guy
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Philp, rh Chris
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, rh Victoria
 Pritchard, rh Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, rh Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Randall, Tom
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, rh Sir Jacob
 Richards, Nicola
 Richardson, Angela
 Robinson, Mary
 Rowley, Lee
 Russell, Dean
 Rutley, David
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Simmonds, David
 Smith, rh Julian
 Solloway, Amanda
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stephenson, rh Andrew
 Stevenson, Jane
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, rh Bob

Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Sunak, rh Rishi
 Sunderland, James
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Throup, Maggie
 Timpson, Edward
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trott, Laura
 Tuckwell, Steve
 Tugendhat, rh Tom
 Vara, rh Shailesh
 Vickers, Matt
 Villiers, rh Theresa

Walker, Sir Charles
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittingdale, rh Sir John
 Wiggin, Sir Bill
 Wild, James
 Williams, rh Craig
 Williamson, rh Sir Gavin
 Wood, Mike
 Young, Jacob
 Zahawi, rh Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Robert Largan and
Mr Gagan Mohindra

Question accordingly agreed to.
New clause 27 added to the Bill.

Clause 1

MEANING OF "VICTIM"

Amendment proposed: 33, page 1, line 16, at end insert—

“(e) where the person has experienced anti-social behaviour, as defined by section 2 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2014, and the conditions necessary for an ASB case review under section 104 of that Act have been met.”—(*Kevin Brennan.*)

This amendment would include victims of anti-social behaviour in the definition of a victim.

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 190, Noes 277.

Division No. 24]

[9.40 pm

AYES

Abrahams, Debbie
 Ali, Rushanara
 Ali, Tahir
 Amesbury, Mike
 Anderson, Fleur
 Ashworth, rh Jonathan
 Barker, Paula
 Begum, Apsana
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Blomfield, Paul
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brown, Ms Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Sir Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burgon, Richard
 Byrne, Ian
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Chamberlain, Wendy
 Champion, Sarah
 Clark, Feryal
 Cooper, Daisy
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Coyle, Neil
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon

Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Daby, Janet
 Dalton, Ashley
 Davey, rh Ed
 David, Wayne
 Davies-Jones, Alex
 Debbonaire, Thangam
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Dixon, Samantha
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Duffield, Rosie
 Dyke, Sarah
 Eagle, Dame Angela
 Eagle, rh Maria
 Eastwood, Colum
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Edwards, Sarah
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Elmore, Chris
 Eshalomi, Florence
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farron, Tim
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky

Girvan, Paul
 Green, Sarah
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Griffith, Dame Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hamilton, Mrs Paulette
 Hanna, Claire
 Hardy, Emma
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hillier, Dame Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Howarth, rh Sir George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, rh Dame Diana
 Johnson, Kim
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Ruth
 Jones, Sarah
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Kyle, Peter
 Lake, Ben
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Lightwood, Simon
 Lloyd, Tony
 Lockhart, Carla
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Maskell, Rachael
 Mather, Keir
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 Mearns, Ian
 Mishra, Navendu
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Helen
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Murray, James
 Nandy, Lisa
 Norris, Alex

Olney, Sarah
 Onwurah, Chi
 Oppong-Asare, Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Osborne, Kate
 Owen, Sarah
 Paisley, Ian
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Mr Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pollard, Luke
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rayner, rh Angela
 Reed, Steve
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, rh Rachel
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Gavin
 Rodda, Matt
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Shanks, Michael
 Shannon, Jim
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Strathern, Alistair
 Stringer, Graham
 Sultana, Zarah
 Tami, rh Mark
 Tarry, Sam
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Sir Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twist, Liz
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 Wakeford, Christian
 West, Catherine
 Western, Andrew
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitley, Mick
 Whittome, Nadia
 Williams, Hywel
 Wilson, Munira
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Winter, Beth
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:

**Mary Glendon and
 Kim Leadbeater**

NOES

Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aiken, Nickie

Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy (*Proxy vote cast
 by Mr Marcus Jones*)

Anderson, Lee
 Anderson, Stuart
 Andrew, rh Stuart
 Ansell, Caroline
 Argar, rh Edward
 Atherton, Sarah
 Atkins, rh Victoria
 Bacon, Gareth
 Badenoch, rh Kemi
 Bailey, Shaun
 Baillie, Siobhan
 Baker, Duncan
 Baker, rh Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Steve
 Baynes, Simon
 Bell, Aaron
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Bhatti, Saqib
 Blackman, Bob
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Brady, rh Sir Graham
 Braverman, rh Suella
 Brereton, Jack
 Bristow, Paul
 Britcliffe, Sara
 Browne, Anthony
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buchan, Felicity
 Buckland, rh Sir Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, rh Sir Conor
 Butler, Rob
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Carter, Andy
 Cartlidge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Cates, Miriam
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, rh Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Churchill, Jo
 Clarke, rh Sir Simon
 Clarke, Theo
 Clarke-Smith, Brendan
 Clarkson, Chris
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Colburn, Elliot
 Collins, Damian
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crosbie, Virginia
 Crouch, Tracey
 Daly, James
 Davies, rh David T. C.
 Davies, Gareth
 Davies, Dr James
 Davies, Mims
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Davison, Dehenna
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty, Leo
 Donelan, rh Michelle
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, rh Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie

Drax, Richard
 Drummond, Mrs Flick
 Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
 Edwards, Ruth
 Ellis, rh Sir Michael
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
 Eustice, rh George
 Evans, Dr Luke
 Evennett, rh Sir David (*Proxy
 vote cast by Mr Marcus
 Jones*)
 Everitt, Ben (*Proxy vote cast
 by Mr Marcus Jones*)
 Fabricant, Michael
 Farris, Laura
 Fell, Simon
 Firth, Anna
 Fletcher, Katherine
 Fletcher, Mark
 Fletcher, Nick
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Frazer, rh Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 French, Mr Louie
 Fuller, Richard
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Garnier, Mark
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gibson, Peter
 Gideon, Jo
 Glen, rh John
 Goodwill, rh Sir Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Mrs Helen (*Proxy vote
 cast by Mr Marcus Jones*)
 Gray, James
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Griffith, Andrew
 Gullis, Jonathan
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, rh Simon
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heaton-Harris, rh Chris
 Henderson, Gordon
 Henry, Darren
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Holmes, Paul
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hudson, Dr Neil
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, Jane (*Proxy vote cast
 by Mr Marcus Jones*)
 Hunt, rh Jeremy
 Hunt, Tom
 Jack, rh Mr Alister
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard

Jenkinson, Mark
 Jenkyns, Dame Andrea
 Jenrick, rh Robert
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnston, David
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Fay
 Jones, rh Mr Marcus
 Jupp, Simon
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kearns, Alicia
 Keegan, rh Gillian
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Kruger, Danny
 Lamont, John
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Dame Andrea
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Sir Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Loder, Chris
 Logan, Mark
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig (*Proxy vote cast by John Redwood*)
 Maclean, Rachel
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, rh Kit
 Mann, Scott
 Marson, Julie
 Mayhew, Jerome
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Karl
 McVey, rh Esther
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Millar, Robin
 Miller, rh Dame Maria
 Milling, rh Dame Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Moore, Damien
 Moore, Robbie
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, James
 Morrissey, Joy
 Mortimer, Jill
 Mullan, Dr Kieran (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Marcus Jones*)
 Mumby-Croft, Holly
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
 Neill, Sir Robert
 Nici, Lia
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, rh Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Opperman, Guy
 Patel, rh Priti
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Philp, rh Chris
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, rh Victoria
 Pritchard, rh Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, rh Jeremy

Quince, Will
 Randall, Tom
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, rh Sir Jacob
 Richardson, Angela
 Roberts, Mr Rob
 Robinson, Mary
 Rowley, Lee
 Russell, Dean
 Rutley, David
 Sambrook, Gary
 Saxby, Selaine
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Simmonds, David
 Smith, rh Chloe
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Solloway, Amanda
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stephenson, rh Andrew
 Stevenson, Jane
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, rh Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunderland, James
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Throup, Maggie
 Timpson, Edward
 Tolhurst, rh Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trott, Laura
 Tuckwell, Steve
 Tugendhat, rh Tom
 Vara, rh Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Vickers, Matt
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Sir Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittingdale, rh Sir John
 Wiggin, Sir Bill
 Wild, James
 Williamson, rh Sir Gavin
 Wood, Mike
 Wright, rh Sir Jeremy
 Young, Jacob
 Zahawi, rh Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Robert Largan and
Mr Gagan Mohindra

Question accordingly negated.

Amendment made: 34, page 2, line 3, leave out from “offence” to end of line 6 and insert—

- “(5) It is immaterial for the purposes of subsection (4)(b) that—
 (a) no person has reported the offence;
 (b) no person has been charged with or convicted of the offence.
 (6) In section 52(3)(a) of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004, for “complaint has been made about” substitute “person has reported”.—(*Edward Argar.*)

This amendment clarifies that conduct which constitutes an offence may be “criminal conduct” for the purposes of Part 1 of the Bill whether or not the offence has been reported. Section 52(3)(a) of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 is amended for consistency.

Clause 6

CODE AWARENESS AND REVIEWING COMPLIANCE:
 CRIMINAL JUSTICE BODIES

Amendments made: 35, page 4, line 37, after “review” insert “whether and”.

This amendment clarifies that criminal justice bodies must keep under review whether they provide services in accordance with the victims’ code, as well as how services are provided.

Amendment 36, page 5, line 17, leave out “provided in accordance with the victims’ code”.

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 35.

Amendment 37, page 5, line 20, leave out “provided in accordance with the victims’ code”.—(*Edward Argar.*)

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 35.

Clause 7

REVIEWING CODE COMPLIANCE:
 ELECTED LOCAL POLICING BODIES

Amendment made: 38, page 6, line 6, at beginning insert “whether and”.—(*Edward Argar.*)

This amendment clarifies that elected local policing bodies must keep under review whether criminal justice bodies in their area provide services in accordance with the victims’ code, as well as how services are provided.

Clause 8

CODE AWARENESS AND REVIEWING COMPLIANCE:
 BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE

Amendments made: 39, page 6, line 39, after “review” insert “whether and”.

This amendment clarifies that the Chief Constable of the British Transport Police Force and the British Transport Police Authority must keep under review whether the Chief Constable provides services in accordance with the victims’ code, as well as how services are provided.

Amendment 40, page 7, line 18, leave out “provided in accordance with the victims’ code”.

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 39.

Amendment 41, page 7, line 21, leave out “provided in accordance with the victims’ code”.—(*Edward Argar.*)

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 39.

Clause 9CODE AWARENESS AND REVIEWING COMPLIANCE:
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE POLICE

Amendments made: 42, page 8, line 1, after “review” insert “whether and”.

This amendment clarifies that the Chief Constable of the Ministry of Defence Police and the Secretary of State must keep under review whether the Chief Constable provides services in accordance with the victims’ code, as well as how services are provided.

Amendment 43, page 8, line 17, leave out “provided in accordance with the victims’ code”.

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 42.

Amendment 44, page 8, line 20, leave out “provided in accordance with the victims’ code”.—(*Edward Argar.*)

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 42.

Clause 11GUIDANCE ON CODE AWARENESS AND
REVIEWING COMPLIANCE

Amendment made: 45, page 9, line 28, leave out “other protected characteristics” and insert

“protected characteristics within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010”.—(*Edward Argar.*)

This amendment clarifies the meaning of “protected characteristics” for the purposes of guidance about reviewing victims’ code compliance.

Clause 12DUTY TO COLLABORATE IN EXERCISE OF VICTIM
SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

Amendments made: 46, page 10, line 5, at end insert—

“(1A) A relevant authority exercises a function in relation to relevant victim support services if it exercises the function in relation to—

- (a) the provision of such services, or
- (b) the commissioning of such services provided by another person.”

This amendment clarifies the functions in relation to which the duties in clauses 12 to 14 apply.

Amendment 47, page 10, line 38, leave out subsection (9).—(*Edward Argar.*)

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 46.

Clause 13STRATEGY FOR COLLABORATION IN EXERCISE OF VICTIM
SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

Amendments made: 48, page 11, line 9, leave out from “must” to first “persons” in line 12 and insert “—

- (a) make reasonable efforts to obtain the views of victims in the police area,
- (b) consult”

This Amendment is consequential on Amendment 48.

Amendment 49, page 11, line 13, after “services” insert “in the police area”.

This amendment clarifies that, when a strategy in relation to victim support services in a police area is being prepared or revised, providers of services outside the area need not be consulted.

Amendment 50, page 11, line 14, at beginning insert “consult”

This Amendment is consequential on Amendment 48.

Amendment 51, page 11, line 15, leave out from “must” to end of line 20 and insert “—

- (a) assess the needs of victims in the police area for relevant victim support services,
- (b) assess whether, and how, those needs are being met by the services which are available (whether or not provided by the relevant authorities), and
- (c) have regard to those assessments.”

This amendment requires authorities preparing a strategy in relation to victim support services in a police area to assess, and have regard to, whether and how the needs of victims are being met.

Amendment 52, page 11, line 20, at end insert—

“(3A) When making an assessment under subsection (3), the relevant authorities must have regard to the particular needs of victims who are children or have protected characteristics within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010.”—(*Edward Argar.*)

This amendment requires authorities undertaking the assessments required by Amendment 51 to have regard to the particular needs of victims who are children or have protected characteristics within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010.

Clause 15GUIDANCE ABOUT INDEPENDENT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE ADVISORS

Amendment made: 53, page 12, line 21, leave out “other protected characteristics” and insert

“protected characteristics within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010”—(*Edward Argar.*)

This amendment clarifies the meaning of “protected characteristics” for the purposes of guidance about independent domestic violence advisers and independent sexual violence advisers.

Clause 22

INFORMATION RELATING TO VICTIMS

Amendments made: 54, page 19, leave out lines 6 to 11.

This amendment is consequential on NC21.

Amendment 55, page 20, line 9, leave out “to understand” and insert “in relation to”.

This amendment is consequential on NC21.

Amendment 56, page 20, leave out lines 14 and 15 and insert—

““relevant authority” —

- (a) in relation to England, means a county council, a district council for an area for which there is no county council, a London borough council or the Common Council of the City of London in its capacity as a local authority;
- (b) in relation to Wales, means a county council or a county borough council;”

This amendment is consequential on NC21.

Amendment made: 57, page 21, leave out lines 38 and 39.—(*Edward Argar.*)

This amendment is consequential on NC21.

Clause 25

APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PUBLIC ADVOCATE

Amendments made: 58, page 23, line 15, leave out “independent public”.

This amendment is consequential on NC22.

Amendment 59, page 23, line 16, leave out from “incident” to end of line 22.

This amendment is consequential on NC22.

Amendment 60, page 23, line 24, after “if” insert “—
(a) the individual is the standing advocate, or”.

This amendment would enable the Secretary of State to appoint the standing advocate appointed under NC23 as an advocate in respect of a specific major incident.

Amendment 61, page 23, line 25, leave out “to act as an advocate”.

This amendment is consequential on NC22.

Amendment 62, page 23, line 38, leave out subsection (7).—(*Edward Argar.*)

This amendment is consequential on NC22.

Clause 26

TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

Amendment made: 63, page 24, line 25, leave out “appointed in respect of a major incident”.—(*Edward Argar.*)

This amendment is consequential on NC23.

Clause 27APPOINTMENT OF MULTIPLE
INDEPENDENT PUBLIC ADVOCATES

Amendments made: 64, page 24, line 31, leave out “may” and insert “must”.

This amendment would require the Secretary of State to appoint a lead advocate where more than one advocate is appointed in respect of a major incident.

Amendment 65, page 24, line 33, after first “advocate” insert

“appointed in respect of the incident”.

This amendment is consequential on NC22.

Amendment 66, page 24, line 35, leave out subsection (4).—(*Edward Argar.*)

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 67.

Clause 28

FUNCTIONS OF AN INDEPENDENT PUBLIC ADVOCATE

Amendments made: 67, page 25, line 2, at end insert—

“(A1) This section applies where an advocate is appointed in respect of a major incident.

(A2) Where more than one advocate is appointed in respect of the incident, references in this section to “the advocate” are to each advocate individually and any number of them (including all of them) acting jointly.”

This amendment is consequential on NC22.

Amendment 68, page 25, line 3, leave out “in respect of a major incident, an” and insert “, the”.

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 67.

Amendment 69, page 25, line 23, leave out “An” and insert “The”.

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 67.

Amendment 70, page 25, line 26, leave out “an” and insert “the”.

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 67.

Amendment 71, page 25, line 33, leave out “An” and insert “The”.

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 67.

Amendment 72, page 25, line 37, leave out “an” and insert “the”.

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 67.

Amendment 73, page 26, leave out lines 3 and 4.

This amendment is consequential on NC23.

Amendment 74, page 26, leave out lines 7 to 10 and insert—

““public authority” has the same meaning as in section (Appointment of standing advocate)(2)(a) (see section (Appointment of standing advocate)(5)).”—(*Edward Argar.*)

This amendment is consequential on NC23.

Clause 29ROLE OF ADVOCATES UNDER PART 1 OF THE
CORONERS AND JUSTICE ACT 2009

Amendment made: 75, page 26, line 14, leave out from “paragraph” to end of line 18 and insert “(ka) insert—

“(kb) where an advocate has been appointed under section 25(1) of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 in respect of an incident which may have caused or contributed to the death of the deceased—

- (i) each advocate that has been appointed under that section in respect of that incident, and
- (ii) the standing advocate appointed under section (Appointment of standing advocate) of that Act;”.—(*Edward Argar.*)

This amendment is consequential on NC22.

Clause 30

REPORTS TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Amendments made: 76, page 26, line 19, at end insert—

“(A1) The standing advocate must, in respect of each calendar year, report to the Secretary of State as to—

- (a) the exercise of the standing advocate’s functions in that year;
- (b) such matters as the Secretary of State may require in writing;
- (c) such other matters as the standing advocate considers relevant to their functions or the functions of another advocate.

(A2) A report under subsection (A1) must be made by 1 July in the calendar year following the year in respect of which the report is made.”

This amendment would require the standing advocate appointed under NC23 to make annual reports.

Amendment 77, page 26, line 20, leave out “sends a” and insert “gives”.

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 81.

Amendment 78, page 26, line 28, leave out “this section” and insert “subsection (1)”.

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 76.

Amendment 79, page 26, line 32, leave out “this section” and insert “subsection (1)”.

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 76.

Amendment 80, page 26, line 33, leave out “the incident in respect of which they are appointed” and insert “—

- (a) a major incident in respect of which they are appointed, or
- (b) in the case of the standing advocate, any major incident.”

This amendment is consequential on NC23.

Amendment 81, page 26, line 34, at end insert—

- “(4A) An advocate may, at their discretion and at any time, report to the Secretary of State such matters as the advocate considers relevant to—
- (a) a major incident in respect of which they are appointed, or
 - (b) in the case of the standing advocate, any major incident.
- (4B) If more than one advocate has been appointed in respect of the same major incident—
- (a) the Secretary of State may give notice under subsection (2) in relation to the incident only to the lead advocate;
 - (b) only the lead advocate may make a report under subsection (4A) in relation to the incident.”

This amendment would enable an advocate (or the lead advocate where multiple advocates are appointed in respect of the same incident) to report at their discretion.

Amendment 82, page 26, line 35, leave out subsections (5) to (7).—(*Edward Argar.*)

This amendment is consequential on NC24 and Amendment 81.

Clause 31

INFORMATION SHARING AND DATA PROTECTION

Amendments made: 83, page 27, line 8, at end insert—

“(za) the standing advocate;”

This amendment is consequential on NC22.

Amendment 84, page 27, line 11, leave out paragraphs (c) and (d) and insert—

“(c) any other person exercising functions of a public nature; (d) a victim of a major incident in respect of which the advocate is appointed.”

This amendment would expressly allow an advocate to share information with any person exercising functions of a public nature and clarify the victims with whom information may be shared.

Amendment 85, page 27, line 13, leave out first “The Secretary of State” and insert

“A person exercising functions of a public nature”.

This amendment would expressly allow persons exercising functions of a public nature as well as the Secretary of State to share information with an advocate.

Amendment 86, page 27, line 13, leave out second “Secretary of State” and insert “person”.

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 85.

Amendment 87, page 27, line 16, leave out first “the”.

This amendment would clarify that clause 31(3) relates to any information received in the exercise of an advocate’s functions rather than specific information.

Amendment 88, page 27, line 17, leave out “those” and insert “their”.

This amendment would clarify that an advocate may use information received in the exercise of an advocate’s functions for any of their functions.

Amendment 89, page 27, line 20, leave out subsection (5).

This amendment would allow an advocate to share personal data without consent where it is necessary to do so (consistently with data protection legislation).

Amendment 90, page 27, line 22, at end insert—

“(5A) This section does not limit the circumstances in which information may be disclosed apart from this Part.

(5B) Except as provided by subsection (6), a disclosure of information under this Part does not breach—

- (a) any obligation of confidence owed by the person disclosing the information, or
- (b) any other restriction on the disclosure of information (however imposed).”

This amendment would provide that clause 31 does not limit other powers to disclose information and that a disclosure of information under Part 2 does not breach other obligations (subject to data protection legislation).

Amendment 91, page 27, line 28, leave out ““data subject”,”.

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 89.

Amendment 92, page 27, leave out line 31.—(*Edward Argar.*)

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 84.

Clause 32

GUIDANCE FOR INDEPENDENT PUBLIC ADVOCATES

Amendments made: 93, page 27, line 35, after “advocate” insert

“appointed in respect of a major incident”.

This amendment is consequential on NC22.

Amendment 94, page 28, line 2, after “advocate” insert

“appointed in respect of a major incident”.—(*Edward Argar.*)

This amendment is consequential on NC22.

Clause 33

PUBLIC PROTECTION DECISIONS: LIFE PRISONERS

Amendments made: 95, page 29, leave out line 26 and insert—

“(c) subsection (1) of section 32ZAC, for the purposes of that subsection.”

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 96, page 29, line 31, leave out “32ZAC(2), the Secretary of State”

and insert

“32ZAC(1), the Upper Tribunal or High Court (as the case may be)”.

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 97, page 30, line 12, leave out subsection (5).—(*Edward Argar.*)

This amendment is consequential on Amendment NC26.

Clause 34

PUBLIC PROTECTION DECISIONS: FIXED-TERM PRISONERS

Amendments made: 98, page 31, line 40, leave out “256AZBC(2), the Secretary of State”

and insert

“256AZBC(1), the Upper Tribunal or High Court (as the case may be)”.

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 99, page 32, line 26, leave out “256AZBC(2)” and insert “256AZBC(1)”.

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment made: 150, page 33, line 32, leave out from “of,” to end of line 36 and insert

“section 256AZBC(1) (powers on referral of release decisions).”—(*Edward Argar.*)

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Clause 35AMENDMENT OF POWER TO CHANGE TEST FOR RELEASE
ON LICENCE OF CERTAIN PRISONERS

Amendment made: 100, page 35, leave out lines 19 to 26 and insert—

“(a) section 32ZAC(1) of the Crime (Sentences) Act 1997 (powers on referral of release decisions);

(b) section 256AZBC(1) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (powers on referral of release decisions).”—(*Edward Argar.*)

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Clause 36

REFERRAL OF RELEASE DECISIONS: LIFE PRISONERS

Amendments made: 101, page 35, line 30, leave out “Secretary of State” and insert “relevant court”.

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 102, page 35, line 31, leave out “Secretary of State” and insert “relevant court”.

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 103, page 35, line 34, leave out from “32ZAB” to end of line 11 on page 36 and insert

“, and (b) the Parole Board directs the prisoner’s release under section 28(5) or 32(5).”

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 104, page 36, line 13, leave out “Secretary of State” and insert

“relevant court if the Secretary of State considers that—

(a) the release of the prisoner would be likely to undermine public confidence in the parole system, and

(b) if the case were referred, the relevant court might not be satisfied that it is no longer necessary for the protection of the public that the prisoner should be confined (see section 32ZAC(1)).”

This amendment, and the other Government amendments to clauses 33 to 42 and 47, enable the Secretary of State to direct the Parole Board to refer certain prisoner release decisions to the Upper Tribunal or, where sensitive material may be relevant, the High Court.

Amendment 105, page 36, line 13, at end insert—

“(5A) “Relevant court” means—

(a) if the Secretary of State certifies that sensitive

material may be relevant to the prisoner’s case, the High Court;

(b) in any other case, the Upper Tribunal.

(5B) For the purposes of subsection (5A), “sensitive material” means material the disclosure of which would, in the opinion of the Secretary of State, be damaging to the interests of national security.”

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 106, page 36, leave out lines 15 and 16 and insert

“the Secretary of State—

(a) must notify the prisoner of the direction and the reasons for giving it, and

(b) pending determination of the prisoner’s case under section 32ZAC(1), is not required to give effect to the Parole Board’s direction to release the prisoner.”

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 107, page 36, leave out lines 22 and 23.

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 108, page 36, line 24, leave out “Offences for purposes of Secretary of State referral” and insert “Specified offences”.

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 109, page 37, line 31, leave out “Secretary of State” and insert “relevant court”.

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 110, page 37, line 32, leave out from “the” to end of line 38 and insert

“relevant court—

(a) must, if satisfied that it is no longer necessary for the protection of the public that the prisoner should be confined, make an order requiring the Secretary of State to give effect to the Parole Board’s direction to release the prisoner on licence;

(b) otherwise, must make an order quashing the Parole Board’s direction to release the prisoner on licence.”

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 111, page 37, line 39, leave out from beginning to end of line 9 on page 38 and insert—

“(2) An order under subsection (1)(a) may include directions as to the conditions to be included in the prisoner’s licence on release.

(3) An order under subsection (1)(b) has effect as if the prisoner’s case were disposed of by the Parole Board on the date on which the order was made.

(4) In this section “relevant court” has the meaning given by section 32ZAA(5A).”

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 112, page 38, line 9, at end insert—

“(2) In section 32ZB of the Crime (Sentences) Act 1997 (release at direction of Parole Board: timing), in subsection (1), at the end insert “(including where the Upper Tribunal or High Court makes an order under section 32ZAC(1)(a) requiring the Secretary of State to give effect to such a direction).”—(*Edward Argar.*)

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Clause 37REFERRAL OF RELEASE DECISIONS:
FIXED-TERM PRISONERS

Amendments made: 113, page 38, line 12, leave out “Secretary of State” and insert “relevant court”.

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 114, page 38, line 13, leave out “Secretary of State” and insert “relevant court”.

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 115, page 38, line 16, leave out from “256AZBB” to end of line 33 and insert

“, and (b) the Board directs the prisoner’s release under a provision mentioned in the second column of the table in section 237B.”

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 116, page 38, line 35, leave out “Secretary of State” and insert

“relevant court if the Secretary of State considers that—

- (a) the release of the prisoner would be likely to undermine public confidence in the parole system, and
- (b) if the case were referred, the relevant court might not be satisfied that it is no longer necessary for the protection of the public that the prisoner should be confined (see section 256AZBC(1)).”

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 117, page 38, line 35, at end insert—

“(5A) “Relevant court” means—

- (a) if the Secretary of State certifies that sensitive material may be relevant to the prisoner’s case, the High Court;
 - (b) in any other case, the Upper Tribunal.
- (5B) For the purposes of subsection (5A), “sensitive material” means material the disclosure of which would, in the opinion of the Secretary of State, be damaging to the interests of national security.”

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 118, page 38, leave out lines 37 and 38 and insert

“the Secretary of State—

- (a) must notify the prisoner of the direction and the reasons for giving it, and
- (b) pending determination of the prisoner’s case under section 256AZBC(1), is not required to give effect to the Parole Board’s direction to release the prisoner.”

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 119, page 39, leave out lines 4 to 11.

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 120, page 39, line 12, leave out “Offences for purposes of Secretary of State referral” and insert “Specified offences”.

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 121, page 40, line 17, leave out “Secretary of State” and insert “relevant court”.

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 122, page 40, line 18, leave out from “the” to end of line 24 and insert

“relevant court—

- (a) must, if satisfied that it is no longer necessary for the protection of the public that the prisoner should be confined, make an order requiring the Secretary of State to give effect to the Parole Board’s direction to release the prisoner on licence;
- (b) otherwise, must make an order quashing the direction.”

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 123, page 40, leave out lines 25 to 37 and insert—

- “(2) An order under subsection (1)(a) may include directions as to the conditions to be included in the prisoner’s licence on release.

- (3) An order under subsection (1)(b) has effect as if the prisoner’s case were disposed of by the Parole Board on the date on which the order was made.

- (4) In this section, “relevant court” has the meaning given by section 256AZBA(5A).”

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 124, page 40, line 38, leave out “Secretary of State” and insert “relevant court”.

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 125, page 40, line 39, leave out “(2)” and insert “(1)(a)”.

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 126, page 40, line 41, at end insert—

- “(2) In section 256AZC of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (release at direction of Parole Board: timing), in subsection (1), at the end insert “(including where the Upper Tribunal or High Court makes an order under section 256AZBC(1)(a) requiring the Secretary of State to give effect to such a direction)”.—(Edward Argar.)

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Clause 38

PROCEDURE ON REFERRAL OF RELEASE DECISIONS

Amendment made: 127, page 41, line 1, leave out clause 38.—(Edward Argar.)

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Clause 39

APPEAL TO UPPER TRIBUNAL OF DECISIONS ON REFERRAL: LIFE PRISONERS

Amendment made: 128, page 41, line 27, leave out clause 39.—(Edward Argar.)

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Clause 40

APPEAL TO UPPER TRIBUNAL OF DECISIONS ON REFERRAL: FIXED-TERM PRISONERS

Amendment made: 129, page 43, line 1, leave out clause 40.—(Edward Argar.)

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Clause 41

LICENCE CONDITIONS OF LIFE PRISONERS RELEASED FOLLOWING REFERRAL

Amendments made: 130, page 44, line 13, leave out from beginning to “, or” on line 14.

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 131, page 44, leave out lines 17 to 20 and insert—

- “(3A) Where the Upper Tribunal or High Court gives a direction under section 32ZAC(2) as to the conditions to be included in a life prisoner’s licence on release, the Secretary of State—

- (a) must include the conditions in the prisoner’s licence on release;”—(Edward Argar.)

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Clause 42LICENCE CONDITIONS OF FIXED-TERM PRISONERS
RELEASED FOLLOWING REFERRAL

Amendment made: 132, page 44, leave out lines 24 to 36 and insert—

- “(1) Section 250 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (licence conditions) is amended as follows.
- (2) In subsection (5A), at the beginning insert “Subject to subsection (5D),”.
- (3) After subsection (5C) insert—
- “(5D) Where the Upper Tribunal or High Court gives a direction under section 256AZBC(2) as to the conditions to be included in a prisoner’s licence on release, the Secretary of State—
- (a) must include the conditions in the prisoner’s licence on release;
- (b) may subsequently insert a condition in such a licence or vary or cancel a condition of such a licence.”.—(*Edward Argar.*)

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Clause 47

PAROLE BOARD RULES

Amendments made: 133, page 46, line 30, leave out subsection (1).

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 134, page 46, line 32, leave out “subsection (5)” and insert

“section 239(5) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (power to make rules for Parole Board proceedings)”.

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Amendment 135, page 47, line 1, leave out subsection (3).—(*Edward Argar.*)

See the explanatory statement to Amendment 104.

Clause 51

POWER TO MAKE CONSEQUENTIAL PROVISION

Amendment made: 151, page 51, line 6, after “section” insert

“(Restricting parental responsibility where one parent kills the other),”.

This amendment enables the Secretary of State to make provision consequential on NC37.

Ordered,

That Clause 51 be transferred to the end of line 24 on page 51.—(*Edward Argar.*)

This amendment is consequential on Amendment 150.

Clause 54

EXTENT

Amendments made: 136, page 52, line 3, leave out “to subsection (2)” and insert “as follows”.

This amendment is consequential on other amendments to clause 54.

Amendment 137, page 52, line 3, at end insert—

“(1A) Section (Part 2: consequential amendments)(5) also extends to Scotland.”

This amendment is consequential on NC25.

Amendment 138, page 52, line 3, at end insert—

“(1A) Section (Domestic abuse related death reviews)(3) and (4) also extends to Northern Ireland.”

This amendment is consequential on NC20.

Amendment 139, page 52, line 5, at end insert—

“(aa) section (Information relating to victims: service police etc);”

This amendment is consequential on NC21.

Amendment 140, page 52, line 6, at end insert—

“(ba) section (Part 2: consequential amendments)(1) to (4);”.—(*Edward Argar.*)

This amendment is consequential on NC25.

Title

Amendment made: 141, title, line 3, leave out

“individuals to act as independent public”.—(*Edward Argar.*)

This amendment is consequential on NC22.

Third Reading

9.55 pm

Edward Argar: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

As is appropriate on these occasions, I want to put on record, if I may, my gratitude and my thanks to the officials who have worked on this Bill in the Ministry of Justice and my private office; the fantastic Nikki Jones, who has managed this Bill through the Commons as an official; the Whips, the Parliamentary Business and Legislation Committee and the Lord President of the Council for her assistance; and my Parliamentary Private Secretary until he was made a Whip a few short weeks ago, my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Aaron Bell). Most importantly, I would like to thank the victims who have contributed to this, as well as the stakeholders, the organisations and the campaigners. I should also express once again my gratitude to Opposition Front Benchers for their constructive approach and tone throughout, particularly on those long days in Committee, and I congratulate the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Dame Diana Johnson).

This Bill has as a central objective to ensure that victims are treated like participants in the justice process rather than bystanders. It is no less than they deserve, and it represents a major step forward, building on the progress made for victims in the last decade. The Bill has been a long time in the making, but getting it into law will strengthen the voice of victims of crime and major incidents in our criminal justice system so that they can be supported to recover and see justice done. It is not only the right thing to do; our hope and belief is that it will also enable us to bring more criminals to justice, keeping the British people safe and providing them with the support they need.

This Bill in many ways represents the very best of this House and its ability to make meaningful change for the people who send us here and the people we serve, and I pay tribute to Members on both sides for their contributions in getting us to this point. Mindful of the tone and spirit in which these debates have been conducted, I will conclude to allow the shadow Secretary of State to put her thanks to her team on record as well.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Sir Roger Gale): I call the shadow Justice Secretary.

9.57 pm

Shabana Mahmood (Birmingham, Ladywood) (Lab): It is a pleasure to speak in this somewhat short Third Reading debate on this Bill. I start by paying tribute to my colleagues who did the lion's share of the work before my team and I came into post, particularly my predecessor my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon North (Steve Reed), as well as my hon. Friends the Members for Cardiff North (Anna McMorrin) and for Lewisham West and Penge (Ellie Reeves) and the entire shadow Justice team.

I thank the Clerks, the House staff and Library specialists for facilitating all the debates on this Bill, and all the external organisations and individuals—including Dame Vera Baird, Nicole Jacobs, Claire Waxman, Ken Sutton, Women's Aid, SafeLives, Rape Crisis and Hillsborough Law Now—that have engaged extensively with the shadow Front-Bench team on this Bill. I acknowledge the constructive tone with which the Minister has approached the legislation, as well as that of hon. Members who have contributed to our proceedings, particularly those who took the Bill through Committee. May I also congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull North (Dame Diana Johnson) on her relentless and persistent campaign on behalf of the victims of the infected blood scandal? She has won a tremendous victory for them this evening.

We will support the passage of the Bill. We have been calling on the Government to bring forward a victims Bill for over eight years. We do believe it is some progress, but it does not go far enough, and the Government could and should have gone further. I am sure we will return to those debates in the other place.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time and passed.

Business without Debate

DEFERRED DIVISIONS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 41A(3)),

That, at this day's sitting, Standing Order No. 41A (Deferred divisions) shall not apply to the Motion in the name of Secretary Mark Harper relating to Climate Change.—(*Aaron Bell.*)

Question agreed to.

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

CLIMATE CHANGE

That the draft Vehicle Emissions Trading Schemes Order 2023, which was laid before this House on 16 October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.—(*Aaron Bell.*)

The House divided: Ayes 381, Noes 37.

Division No. 25]

[9.59 pm

AYES

Abrahams, Debbie	Ali, Tahir
Afolami, Bim	Allan, Lucy (<i>Proxy vote cast by Mr Marcus Jones</i>)
Aiken, Nickie	Anderson, Fleur
Aldous, Peter	Anderson, Lee
Ali, Rushanara	

Anderson, Stuart	Daby, Janet
Andrew, rh Stuart	Dalton, Ashley
Ansell, Caroline	Daly, James
Argar, rh Edward	David, Wayne
Ashworth, rh Jonathan	Davies, rh David T. C.
Atherton, Sarah	Davies, Gareth
Atkins, rh Victoria	Davies, Dr James
Bacon, Gareth	Davies, Mims
Bailey, Shaun	Davies-Jones, Alex
Baker, Duncan	Davison, Dehenna
Baker, rh Mr Steve	Debbonaire, Thangam
Baldwin, Harriett	Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Barclay, rh Steve	Dixon, Samantha
Barker, Paula	Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Baynes, Simon	Docherty, Leo
Bell, Aaron	Dodds, Anneliese
Benn, rh Hilary	Donelan, rh Michelle
Beresford, Sir Paul	Double, Steve
Betts, Mr Clive	Doughty, Stephen
Bhatti, Saqib	Dowd, Peter
Blackman, Bob	Dowden, rh Oliver
Blomfield, Paul	Drummond, Mrs Flick
Bottomley, Sir Peter	Duffield, Rosie
Bowie, Andrew	Eagle, Dame Angela
Bradley, rh Karen	Eagle, rh Maria
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Edwards, Jonathan
Brady, rh Sir Graham	Edwards, Ruth
Brennan, Kevin	Edwards, Sarah
Brereton, Jack	Efford, Clive
Bristow, Paul	Elliott, Julie
Britcliffe, Sara	Ellis, rh Sir Michael
Brown, Ms Lyn	Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Elmore, Chris
Browne, Anthony	Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
Bruce, Fiona	Eshalomi, Florence
Bryant, Sir Chris	Esterson, Bill
Buchan, Felicity	Eustice, rh George
Buckland, rh Sir Robert	Evans, Chris
Burghart, Alex	Evans, Dr Luke
Burgon, Richard	Evennett, rh Sir David (<i>Proxy vote cast by Mr Marcus Jones</i>)
Butler, Rob	Everitt, Ben (<i>Proxy vote cast by Mr Marcus Jones</i>)
Byrne, Ian	Fabricant, Michael
Cadbury, Ruth	Farris, Laura
Cameron, Dr Lisa	Fell, Simon
Campbell, rh Sir Alan	Firth, Anna
Carter, Andy	Fletcher, Colleen
Cartledge, James	Fletcher, Katherine
Cash, Sir William	Fletcher, Nick
Caulfield, Maria	Foster, Kevin
Chalk, rh Alex	Fovargue, Yvonne
Champion, Sarah	Fox, rh Dr Liam
Churchill, Jo	Foxcroft, Vicky
Clarke, rh Sir Simon	Frazer, rh Lucy
Clarke, Theo	Freeman, George
Clarke-Smith, Brendan	Freer, Mike
Clarkson, Chris	French, Mr Louie
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey	Fuller, Richard
Colburn, Elliot	Garnier, Mark
Collins, Damian	Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Corbyn, rh Jeremy	Gibb, rh Nick
Costa, Alberto	Gibson, Peter
Courts, Robert	Gideon, Jo
Coyle, Neil	Glen, rh John
Creasy, Stella	Glendon, Mary
Crosbie, Virginia	Goodwill, rh Sir Robert
Cryer, John	Gove, rh Michael
Cummins, Judith	Graham, Richard
Cunningham, Alex	Grant, Mrs Helen (<i>Proxy vote cast by Mr Marcus Jones</i>)

Green, rh Damian
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Griffith, Andrew
 Griffith, Dame Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hamilton, Mrs Paulette
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hands, rh Greg
 Hanna, Claire
 Hardy, Emma
 Harris, Carolyn
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, rh Simon
 Hayes, Helen
 Healey, rh John
 Heaton-Harris, rh Chris
 Henderson, Gordon
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Henry, Darren
 Hillier, Dame Meg
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holmes, Paul
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Howarth, rh Sir George
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hudson, Dr Neil
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, Jane (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Marcus Jones*)
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jack, rh Mr Alistair
 Jarvis, Dan
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkinson, Mark
 Johnson, rh Dame Diana
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Kim
 Johnston, David
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Fay
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, rh Mr Marcus
 Jones, Ruth
 Jones, Sarah
 Jupp, Simon
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kearns, Alicia
 Keegan, rh Gillian
 Keeley, Barbara
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Kyle, Peter
 Lake, Ben
 Lamont, John
 Langan, Robert
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadbeater, Kim
 Leadsom, rh Dame Andrea
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lightwood, Simon
 Loder, Chris

Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 Maclean, Rachel
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Mak, Alan
 Malhotra, Seema
 Malthouse, rh Kit
 Mann, Scott
 Marson, Julie
 Maskell, Rachael
 Mather, Keir
 Mayhew, Jerome
 Maynard, Paul
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonnell, rh John
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 Mearns, Ian
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Dame Maria
 Milling, rh Dame Amanda
 Mishra, Navendu
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan
 Moore, Robbie
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, James
 Morrissey, Joy
 Mortimer, Jill
 Mullan, Dr Kieran (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Marcus Jones*)
 Mumby-Croft, Holly
 Murray, Ian
 Murray, James
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
 Nandy, Lisa
 Neill, Sir Robert
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, rh Jesse
 Norris, Alex
 O'Brien, Neil
 Onwurah, Chi
 Opperman, Guy
 Oppong-Asare, Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Osborne, Kate
 Owen, Sarah
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Penrose, John
 Perkins, Mr Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Philp, rh Chris
 Pollard, Luke
 Powell, Lucy
 Prentis, rh Victoria
 Pritchard, rh Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, rh Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Randall, Tom
 Rayner, rh Angela
 Reed, Steve
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, rh Rachel
 Reynolds, Jonathan

Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
 Richards, Nicola
 Richardson, Angela
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Mary
 Rodda, Matt
 Rowley, Lee
 Russell, Dean
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Rutley, David
 Sambrook, Gary
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Saxby, Selaine
 Scully, Paul
 Selous, Andrew
 Shah, Naz
 Shanks, Michael
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Simmonds, David
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smith, rh Chloe
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stephenson, rh Andrew
 Stevens, Jo
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, rh Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Strathern, Alistair
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sultana, Zarah
 Sunderland, James
 Tami, rh Mark
 Tarry, Sam
 Thomas, Gareth

Throup, Maggie
 Timpson, Edward
 Tolhurst, rh Kelly
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trickett, Jon
 Trott, Laura
 Tuckwell, Steve
 Tugendhat, rh Tom
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twist, Liz
 Vara, rh Shailesh
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 Vickers, Martin
 Vickers, Matt
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Wakeford, Christian
 Walker, Sir Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warman, Matt
 Webb, Suzanne
 West, Catherine
 Western, Andrew
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whittingdale, rh Sir John
 Whittome, Nadia
 Wild, James
 Williams, Hywel
 Williamson, rh Sir Gavin
 Winter, Beth
 Wood, Mike
 Wright, rh Sir Jeremy
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Young, Jacob
 Zahawi, rh Nadhim
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Amanda Solloway and
Mark Fletcher

NOES

Afriyie, Adam
 Bradley, Ben
 Braverman, rh Suella
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Cash, Sir William
 Cates, Miriam
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Davies, Philip
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 Drax, Richard
 Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Girvan, Paul
 Green, Chris
 Gullis, Jonathan
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Holloway, Adam
 Jenkyns, Dame Andrea
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian

Lockhart, Carla
 Mackinlay, Craig (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Marcus Jones*)
 Mills, Nigel
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Nici, Lia
 Paisley, Ian
 Patel, rh Priti
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, rh Sir Jacob
 Roberts, Mr Rob
 Robinson, Gavin
 Shannon, Jim
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Wiggan, Sir Bill
 Wilson, rh Sammy

Tellers for the Noes:
Greg Smith and
Karl McCartney

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

NATIONAL SECURITY

That the draft Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019 (Port Examination Code of Practice) Regulations 2023, which were laid before this House on 16 October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.—(*Aaron Bell.*)

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

NATIONAL SECURITY

That the draft National Security Act 2023 (Video Recording with Sound of Interviews and Associated Code of Practice) Regulations 2023, which were laid before this House on 16 October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.—(*Aaron Bell.*)

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

NATIONAL SECURITY

That the draft National Security Act 2023 (Consequential Amendments of Primary Legislation) Regulations 2023, which were laid before this House on 16 October, in the last session of Parliament, be approved.—(*Aaron Bell.*)

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

RETAINED EU LAW REFORM

That the draft Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 (Consequential Amendment) Regulations 2023, which were laid before this House on 16 October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.—(*Aaron Bell.*)

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS

Ordered,

That Andy Carter and Sir Charles Walker be discharged from the Committee on Standards and Philip Dunne and Sir Michael Ellis be added.—(*Marcus Jones.*)

COMMITTEE OF PRIVILEGES

Ordered,

That Andy Carter and Sir Charles Walker be discharged from the Committee of Privileges and Philip Dunne and Sir Michael Ellis be added.—(*Marcus Jones.*)

HOUSE OF COMMONS MEMBERS' FUND

Ordered,

That Nicholas Brown be removed as a Trustee of the House of Commons Members' Fund and Marcus Jones and Holly Lynch be appointed as Trustees in pursuance of section 2 of the House of Commons Members' Fund Act 2016.—(*Penny Mordaunt.*)

People with Learning Disabilities: Employment

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(*Aaron Bell.*)

10.15 pm

Lee Anderson (Ashfield) (Con): I thank the House for allowing me to have this important Adjournment debate on a subject that is close to my heart and those of my constituents and my family. When the welfare state was introduced in 1949, just a few years after the second world war, probably over 90% of disabled people in this country had a job—they went to work. There were a number of reasons for that. I think it was mainly because we were short of labour after the war—a lot of men did not come back—and there was a need for people to rebuild the country, so lots of people had to go into the workplace. But there was also a lot of support in place for people to go to work under the new welfare state system.

We have some similar challenges right now. We have probably got over a million vacancies, and we have lots of people out there who are quite prepared to do the work but need a little bit of extra support in getting the skills and doing the job from day to day. Nowadays—the Minister may correct me later—the proportion of disabled people in the workplace is probably about 60% to 65%. That is a lot less than back in the 1940s, so maybe we could learn some lessons from the past.

We can talk about physical disabilities because we can see them. We can see people who are injured—those who have got a bad back or a bad leg—and all sorts of physical disabilities. Governments and employers have come on a long way in the past 20 or 30 years to make reasonable adjustments in the workplace to ensure that people can do a decent day's work, have a decent job and play a part. In this debate, I want to concentrate on people with learning difficulties.

Whenever I talk about stuff like this, I always think about this young lady in Ashfield. Her name is Jossie. She is seven, and this month—I think on 17 December—she will be eight. Jossie has Down's syndrome. Jossie is not alone—she will not be alone, because probably 900,000 people of working age in this country have learning difficulties. Jossie's mum tells me that although great strides have been made in our educational system throughout the years, there are still a lot of problems and barriers when it comes to transitioning from education to the workplace. She says that more needs to be done.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on bringing this matter forward. I spoke to him before the debate. He is right that there are 870,000 working-age adults with a learning disability in the UK. Only 26.7% of them are in the workforce, so less than a third are in paid work. There is often a stigma whereby those suffering from certain types of disabilities feel that they are not capable of applying for certain jobs. Does he agree—I am sure he will say yes—that more can be done in schools to instil in young people with disabilities that their future career choices are not limited just because they have a disability? That could be taught through work experience opportunities. In other words, give them a chance to do better—we can do that.

Lee Anderson: I thank the hon. Member—my friend—for that. He makes, as usual, an intelligent contribution, and I totally agree. I am a strong believer that everybody in this country, regardless of disability or background, is good at something and that they can make a contribution to this great country of ours and to society. They can go to work, or they can work from home—they can do something.

Historically, far too many people with learning difficulties have had a label given to them. I have seen—a lot of people in this place have probably seen this—people who have been called “stupid”, “thick” or “not worthy”, or it has been said, “They can’t have a job like the rest of us. They can’t communicate properly.” That is just wrong. Like I said before, everybody can make a contribution. Everybody can do something and have a stake in society.

Jossie’s mum Steph told me that the most important thing for young people with learning difficulties is that each person be individually assessed to ensure that the right opportunities are provided in accordance with their abilities, and she is right. She said that it is important to get the balance right, not to under or overestimate a person’s capabilities and to make sure that the right opportunities are available. That is right; we should ensure that the right opportunities are available, especially for young people, to make the transition from education to the workplace. There has to be more support for those people. People with a learning disability have a right to work and to have a stake in society. They have a right to equal pay, opportunities, career progression and support at work.

As the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) said, more than 870,000 working-age adults in the UK have a learning disability, but less than a third—26.7%—are in paid work. That is the lowest employment rate for any health condition or disability. Many people with a learning disability want to go to work. On a weekly basis, I see people who want that extra bit of support to go into the workplace. Mencap, a charity I support, does some great work in this area. One of its surveys found that 86% of unemployed people with a learning disability wanted a paid job. That is a staggering number of people. They do not want to stay at home and do nothing; they want to make a contribution.

Some 45% of respondents who did not have a paid job cited worry about their benefits as a barrier to getting one. I completely understand that. Some 35% of respondents who did not have a paid job cited lack of support to look for work as a barrier. Some 23% of those without a paid job who would like one identified inaccessible application forms as preventing them from getting work. It is terrible that people with disabilities who want to go to work find barriers in the way. Hopefully, the Minister can address that in his speech.

Sir Robert Buckland (South Swindon) (Con): I am listening with great interest to my hon. Friend’s speech. He is right to talk about the barriers, which include interview processes and retaining people with disabilities. Does he agree that common-sense changes to interview procedures, such as practical, show-and-tell interviews rather than an inquisitorial ordeal, would suit the talents of people with learning disabilities far better than the old-fashioned, conventional ways, which are real barriers to fulfilling their potential?

Lee Anderson: My right hon. and learned Friend is spot on. People of any age with learning difficulties face barriers. When we interview people, we should not always treat people equally; we should treat them fairly. What might be a fair interview for one person is not always fair for another.

We have some great initiatives in this country. I do not agree with the idea peddled by certain groups and some politicians that people with any disabilities will be forced into a certain group and forced into paid employment, or have their benefits sanctioned or income reduced. That is scaremongering and political point scoring. We need to rise above that, because this is about encouraging people with disabilities to be in the workplace. Work is not a punishment; it gives us all a stake in society and is a good thing. On the whole in this country, people might not enjoy their job so much some days, but they enjoy getting up in the morning, going to work and having the routine. Why should people with disabilities be any different? Why should we treat them differently?

Carla Lockhart (Upper Bann) (DUP): The hon. Member is making a powerful contribution. In my constituency, we have a number of good examples of companies and organisations that have embraced the spirit of employing those with disabilities. Café IncredABLE is a social enterprise that is leading the way in facilitating training, employment and meaningful daytime activity for individuals with a learning difficulty or autism. Given the benefit that social enterprises bring to the lives of those who participate in them, does the hon. Member agree that the Government should further support them so that more can be rolled out across our constituencies?

Lee Anderson: The hon. Lady makes a valid point. There is always more that Governments and local authorities can do, and thank goodness for the charity sector. Charities that support people with learning disabilities do great work.

We have a project called Rumbles in Nottinghamshire that runs two cafés, one outside my constituency and one in Ashfield on Sutton Lawn. It has been running for about 15, 16 or maybe 17 years and was set up to help people with learning disabilities. There are a couple of paid staff who train young people with special educational needs or learning difficulties in cooking, cleaning, doing the washing, serving people and operating the till. Those are great skills for young people with learning difficulties. It gets them out of the house, and gives their parents and families some respite. They get out and learn new skills and mix with people, making new friends. It is absolutely brilliant that we have these initiatives locally.

However, we have a slight problem and the Minister might be able to help me with it, because he came to visit the café earlier this year. This service, which is a lifeline to people and their families, faces the axe. This brilliant facility is facing closure after about 17 years in operation. The charity was paying the council a peppercorn rent of just a few hundred quid a year, I believe it was, but the council decided that it is such a good business it wants to put the rent up to £7,000 a year and it also expects the charity to maintain the public toilets next door at a cost of £10,000 a year. The charity has agreed to pay the £7,000 and it has some extra support to do that, but that is still not good enough for the local authority. The local authority does not realise that if

this place closes and goes into the private sector, the young people with learning disabilities will have nowhere else to go. If this place goes, they cannot do their training and their work or meet their friends. I hope the Minister might be able to help and steer me in the right direction on how to convince our local authority to keep this lifeline open.

Ben Bradley (Mansfield) (Con): My hon. Friend makes a really good point. Rumbles café—there are several across Nottinghamshire—does fantastic work with young people with learning disabilities, getting them into the workplace and supporting them. Does he agree that it is slightly strange that Ashfield District Council says that the closure of the café and kicking them out of the building is about the money, when only a few years ago the councillors spent five or six times as much to give themselves extra cabinet jobs and put it in their own pockets?

Lee Anderson: My hon. Friend is quite right—I forgot about this—that just a few years back, this same bunch of councillors created five extra cabinet positions when they first got elected, at a cost of about £60,000 and then created a political officer position at a cost of another £30,000. That is £80,000 or £90,000 there, so their maths do not stack up. In fact, their maths do stack up when it comes to giving themselves hefty pay rises, so maybe they should take a long, hard look in the mirror. I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention.

Rumbles café has helped literally hundreds of people across Ashfield over the years. I want to give a special mention to a lady called Helen Storer. She is 60 years old, bless her, and she lives in Selston. She has special educational needs—she says herself that she has her own difficulties—but she lives independently, on her own. She relies on the support of good neighbours and good friends in the community—it is a cracking community—and she worked at Rumbles. She volunteered there, learned new skills and made friends. She learned how to cook and other life skills, such as how to do housework and stuff like that, and she absolutely loved the place. It brought her on leaps and bounds.

Places like this are a lifeline. It should not be about making huge amounts of money. We should put people before profit in these sorts of situations. Look—it does make money, but it goes back into the caff to help support people to learn those new skills to live independent lives. It has no shareholders, just honest hard-working folk who are doing the best for people with special educational needs in the community.

I have said it before, and sometimes I get a little bit of opposition to trying to get people into work, especially disabled people. It is not cruel to get disabled people back into work. Most people, as we know from Mencap's own figures, want to work and want to get into the workplace. It is up to us as a responsible society to try to give the support they need to get in the workplace and have a stake in society. I often think about little Jossie and her mum and dad, and the challenges they face. When parents have a little girl of six or seven who has got her difficulties, they are always thinking, "What's going to happen to that little girl when she leaves school?" They want that little girl to have lots of opportunities. They want her to live independently and to be able to make some of her own decisions and just

do the simple things in life—to go out and shop, run the house, budget, have friends and have a social life. That is so important. Not everybody like Jossie can live an independent life, but a lot can, and it is important that as a society we support these people.

We are very good at giving benefits away in this country to people, and rightly so—people need that financial support. With rent and council tax support, personal independence payment or disability living allowance, employment and support allowance and other bits and bobs, a single person with learning difficulties can maybe get up to 25 grand a year through the benefits system. I always say that if we can pay somebody on benefits 25 grand a year for being sat at home, surely we can pay them that for going to work, whether the support is from a charity, a Government-funded agency or whatever.

I am going to close on that. Once again, Mr Deputy Speaker, thank you for allowing me to speak tonight. This is a subject close to my heart, and I know from my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for South Swindon (Sir Robert Buckland) that it is close to his heart as well. I look forward to seeing what the Minister has to say.

10.31 pm

The Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work (Tom Pursglove): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Lee Anderson) for securing this important debate and for speaking with such great passion. He very much shares my determination to do better in this area to help and support more disabled people into work and unlock all that potential that we know exists.

In 2017, the Government set the goal of seeing a million more disabled people in employment between 2017 and 2027. I am proud to say that, by the first quarter of 2022, the number of disabled people in employment had increased by 1.3 million, which means that the goal was met after only five years. By the first quarter of 2023, disability employment had risen by 1.6 million in total since the goal was announced, but we are aware that this progress has not been even. Those early successes must be a catalyst for further change. We know that most learning-disabled people want to have a job, and evidence shows that they bring many positive benefits to their employers. That is something I hear time and again, as I go round the country meeting employers and meeting disabled people experiencing the benefits of work.

But we also know that less than three in 10 working-age people with severe and specific learning disabilities are currently in employment. That means that more than seven in 10 of this group are still unable to access the independence and sense of fulfilment that employment can bring, and that many employers are not benefiting from the enthusiasm, skills and commitment that they can bring to their workplaces. We are therefore working hard in Government, as an enabler and with others, to support learning-disabled people to secure, sustain and succeed in employment.

We are continuing to improve the general support available to learning-disabled claimants when they attend the jobcentre. Additional work coach support provides disabled people and those with health conditions with increased one-to-one personalised support from their work coach to help them move towards and into work.

[Tom Pursglove]

That support is already available in two thirds of jobcentres in England, Scotland, and Wales. It will be available nationally in 2024. We have strengthened our disability employment adviser role, delivering direct support to claimants who require additional work-related support and supporting all work coaches to deliver tailored, personalised support to claimants with a disability or health condition, including those with a learning disability.

As well as this general support, we are providing a range of special programmes that can help learning-disabled people to access employment. They will have priority access to the work and health programme in England and Wales. Intensive personalised employment support provision has also been available in England and Wales, providing highly personalised packages of specialist employment support for disabled people and people with health conditions to achieve sustained employment.

The local supported employment programme helps people with learning difficulties and/or autism to find and retain work through intensive one-to-one support and an evidence-based approach to supported employment. Local supported employment aims to develop a sustainable model by giving intensive one-to-one support to those faced with significant barriers to work. We have funded 23 lead local authorities to deliver local supported employment in 28 local authority areas in England and Wales from November 2022 until March 2025. Over that period, LSE will help about 2,000 people to move into and stay in work. An average of 90 participants in each of the 28 local authority areas are set to benefit from £7.4 million in grant funding and support which will include the assignment of job coaches who can carry out vocational profiling, engage employers and provide in-work support to enable this group to enter and maintain employment in the open labour market.

The spring Budget confirmed funding for a new employment programme called universal support, which will use the proven supported employment model to help inactive disabled people, people with health conditions and those facing additional barriers to employment into sustained work—doing more of what we know succeeds in securing meaningful outcomes for people. One of the aspects of the coverage of this issue that frustrates me the most is the failure to recognise that it is as important to focus on retention as it is to focus on job starts, and that both must be seen in tandem. That is precisely what universal support will help us to do. Eligible learning-disabled people will be able to opt into receiving up to 12 months of “place and train” support helping them to move quickly into suitable work, followed by wraparound support to help them to sustain that employment in the longer term. I am pleased to confirm that following the announcement in the latest autumn statement, we are expanding the universal support scheme to enable it to provide support for 100,000 people a year once it has been fully rolled out, an increase on the 50,000 places a year announced in the spring Budget.

We know that many learning-disabled people will require workplace adjustments to secure and retain employment, and the Access to Work scheme can undoubtedly help with the extra costs of working, beyond those involved in standard workplace adjustments. Access to Work contributes to the disability-related extra costs of working faced by disabled people and

those with a health condition in the workplace that are beyond the costs of standard reasonable adjustments, and includes the provision of support workers, specialist aids and equipment, and help with travel to and from work. As part of the scheme, we are testing an “adjustments passport” in a variety of settings to establish whether it can reduce the need for assessments when the requirements remain the same and need to be “passport” around to help a person enter into a role and then make progress within it, as well as making conversations with employers easier.

We recently launched an Access to Work adjustments planner, which will be rolled out to all universities and higher education colleges. The planner collects key information about a student’s adjustment needs which can be easily shared with prospective employers. Trial results show that disabled students using the planner are more confident about entering employment. We are also testing Access to Work Plus, a new employer offer that can offer additional support to employers who are willing to think differently about their vacancies and consider whether they can adapt, shape or flex a job to enable a disabled person to retain, return to or move into employment. That is relevant to my hon. Friend’s point about the key support that needs to be available to aid people’s transition into work, and available at various points in their lives when they want to enter the workplace or increase their educational opportunities, and to maximise those life chances.

During their transition to employment, learning-disabled young people can benefit from supported internships, which are aimed at those with a learning disability or autism who have an education, health and care plan. Supported Internships usually last for 12 months, contributing to the long-term career goals of young people and matching their capabilities. Alongside their time with an employer, supported interns receive support from a specialist job coach and complete a personalised study programme delivered by the school or college, which includes the chance to study for relevant qualifications, if appropriate, and to receive English and maths tuition at an appropriate level. While the Department for Education leads on this in England, the Department for Work and Pensions provides support for Access to Work where needed and I would be happy to ask colleagues in the Department for Education to provide further details to my hon. Friend about the opportunities that supported internships can provide.

Separately, the autism employment review, led by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for South Swindon (Sir Robert Buckland), has been receiving evidence this year about the barriers preventing autistic people from starting, staying and succeeding in employment and how those barriers can be overcome. Although the review focuses specifically on autistic people, many of the adjustments and initiatives that will benefit them will also benefit a wider group of people including learning-disabled people and people with other disabilities. I am hugely grateful to him for all his efforts.

Sir Robert Buckland: I am grateful to the Minister and the departmental officials who are here for their close work on the independent review. I am glad that he has made the point that, although we focus on autism, the wider point about neurodiversity must not escape us. As the evidence has emerged, the concept of a more

universal approach to the way in which employers interview people generally seems to be the real answer, when dealing not just with people who are diagnosed but with those who perhaps do not even realise they might have a condition or issue that has not been diagnosed or acknowledged.

Tom Pursglove: My right hon. and learned Friend raises an important point and I look forward to receiving the final recommendations from the review, which will help to inform the forward decisions that we take as a Department. I would be keen to pick up with him on that specific point separately from this evening. I also want to thank every Disability Confident employer out there for the enormous contribution that they make and for their commitment to supporting the important goals that we have been debating this evening.

I am aware that my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield has a particular and very praiseworthy interest in helping people with Down's syndrome to succeed in work and in life. He referred to Jossie, an inspirational young lady with Down's syndrome in his constituency. He also referred to the great work being done by the Rumbles charity in his constituency, and it was an honour for me to visit Rumbles with him earlier in the year to see its magnificent work for myself and to meet Gina and Tamar and the energetic team at Rumbles who bring so much to that community and help to provide so much opportunity. I wish them every success in their work.

I am keen to help this group and I have been speaking to the Down's Syndrome Association about its WorkFit programme. On Wednesday, I will visit its site to visit two of its WorkFit candidates who will share with me their experiences of the workplace and how they were supported to find and maintain their jobs. As my hon. Friend points out, the key to the success of the WorkFit programme is a bespoke person-centred approach for each candidate and bespoke advice, resources and training for each employer taking part.

As we develop and roll out our new programmes, we will be keeping this need for a personalised approach very much in mind, because—touching on the points

made by the hon. Members for Upper Bann (Carla Lockhart) and for Strangford (Jim Shannon)—that provision is so helpful to people in beginning to provide those early opportunities, precisely as Rumbles does and as the Step and Stone Bakery in Bristol does, which I have also had the privilege of visiting. I met the inspirational women who run it, Jane Kippax and Jane Chong. I also visited Tapestry by Props Brewery in Bristol, run by the enthusiastic chief executive officer of that organisation, Colin Fletcher, and his team. And only last week, I visited the Fair Shot Café in Covent Garden, run by its founder and CEO, Bianca Tavella. These are amazing organisations providing early opportunities for people to develop their skills, and that is a model I want to look at to see what more we can do to help to support them. All those organisations and many others across the country can be enormously proud of the contribution they make to supporting employment opportunities.

My message to the Ashfield Independents who run the local authority in my hon. Friend's area would be that they ought to look at this issue in the round. The support that services such as these can provide is an invaluable resource, not just for improving the life chances and opportunities of the individuals who work in those cafés but for doing right by the taxpayer and helping to minimise costs elsewhere in the round. I hope that they will find a common-sense solution to support that brilliant provision for the years to come. I just could not be clearer: these opportunities are life-changing. Work has such a positive benefit for people in so many respects, and those opportunities should be extended to all who wish to have them. That is our clear mission as a Government and I am grateful to Members across the House for their support in that endeavour.

Question put and agreed to.

10.44 pm

House adjourned.

Written Statements

Monday 4 December 2023

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Telegraph Media Group: Public Interest Intervention Notice

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Lucy Frazer): My Department has written to the Barclay family and RedBird IMI, the current and proposed owners of Telegraph Media Group (TMG), to inform them of my decision to issue a Public Interest Intervention Notice (PIIN) in relation to the anticipated acquisition of TMG by Redbird IMI.

This relates to concerns I have that there may be public interest considerations—as set out in section 58 of the Enterprise Act 2002—that are relevant to the anticipated acquisition of TMG by RedBird IMI and that these concerns warrant further investigation.

At this stage, my decision to issue the PIIN triggers the requirement for the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to report to me on jurisdictional and competition matters; and for Ofcom to report to me on the media public interest considerations in section 58(2A) of the Enterprise Act 2002—namely, the need for accurate presentation of news and free expression of opinion in newspapers. I have asked both the CMA and Ofcom to report back to me by 26 January 2024.

I have also made an order to prevent actions by the parties to the merger that might prejudice the process or impede my ability to protect the public interest during the period in which the intervention notice is in force. It prohibits transfer of the ownership of the business without my prior written consent. It also requires the parties to ensure that steps are not taken to integrate the business with any other enterprise, to take action to ensure that no significant changes are made to the management and oversight of the business, and to do what is within their power to ensure that key editorial staff within the business are not removed or transferred without my prior written consent, or they are at least encouraged to remain.

This order came into force at 10 am on 1 December 2023. It will remain in force until the PIIN ceases to be in force.

I reserve the right to take such further action under the Act as I consider appropriate, which may include exercising my powers under section 42 of the Act in relation to any other relevant merger situation. My decision to issue a PIIN is without prejudice to my ability to take any such additional action in accordance with the Act.

My role as the Secretary of State in this process is quasi-judicial and procedures are in place to ensure that I act independently and follow a process which is scrupulously fair, transparent and impartial.

DCMS will update Parliament after both reports from the regulators have been received and considered.

[HCWS86]

Independent Review of Women's Football

The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Lucy Frazer): I wish to inform the House that the Government have today published their response to the recommendations made by the independent review of women's football.

Women's football has developed rapidly in recent years and there is no doubt that we are at a defining moment. The Lionesses' win at the UEFA Euro 2022 final and their journey to the final of the FIFA World cup earlier this year has continued to raise the profile of women's football, both domestically and internationally. It is vital that we continue to build on these successes to ensure a long-lasting and sustainable future for women's football in this country.

The review of women's football examined the opportunities and challenges for the women's and girls' game. The review made 10 strategic recommendations which would lift minimum standards and deliver bold and sustainable growth at elite and grassroots levels. The Government support all 10 of the recommendations in the review, and believe that these must be acted on as a priority to ensure the women's game propels itself to the next level. I want to take this opportunity to thank Karen Carney again for the enormous amount of hard work and commitment that went into producing such a prominent review. I am grateful for her continued support for the women's game and I very much look forward to working with her going forward.

Responsibility for driving forward the recommendations sits across multiple stakeholders, including the Football Association; NewCo, the new independent entity that will be responsible for the management of the women's professional game; clubs; the Premier League; the English Football League; broadcasters; the Football Foundation; the Sports Grounds Safety Authority; Sport England; and the Government. The Government will continue to drive forward the recommendations requiring Government action while working with other key organisations to ensure implementation across the board.

In order to hold all stakeholders accountable, the Government will be convening an implementation group, which will be responsible for ensuring the delivery of each recommendation.

The Government have announced a further £25 million for the Lionesses Futures Fund, in addition to £5 million from the FA. This £30 million fund will deliver up to 30 3G pitches in England, with gold-standard provision for women and girls. These state-of-the-art artificial grass pitches will be built around women's and girls' priority use, using reserved peak-time slots, women-and-girls-only evenings, and priority booking for women's and girls' teams to drive up participation and create pathways for growth. The funding will also provide safe and necessary grassroots facilities, such as women's and girls' changing rooms and showers, to welcome the next generation of players both on and off the pitch. All this builds on our investment of over £300 million in similar facilities across the UK, which also substantially benefits the women's and girls' game at a grassroots level.

The ambition has always been for the review's recommendations to go beyond women's football and apply to women's sport more widely—sharing best practice

and giving women and girls equal opportunities to play the sport they love. With this in mind, the Government will be convening a roundtable discussion with industry leaders across all women's sports.

By collectively implementing the recommendations from the review, the women's game in this country can become a world-leading sport that not only generates immense economic and social value, but sets the standards for women's professional sport globally that allow others to follow.

The full text of the Government's response to the review of women's football can be found at www.gov.uk.

[HCWS85]

DEFENCE

Defence Equipment Plan

The Secretary of State for Defence (Grant Shapps): I wish to inform Parliament that the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Defence has written to the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee with our 2023 update on the affordability of the 2023 defence equipment plan as at the end of financial year 2022-23, which details the Department's spending plans in equipment procurement and support projects over a period of 10 years.

I am placing a copy of his letter and the supplementary tables in the Library of the House and they have been published online. This more concise update takes the place of the usual equipment plan financial summary report and maintains continuity of financial reporting ahead of implementing the outcomes of the Integrated Review Refresh and the Defence Command Paper 2023 (DCP23). I welcome the continued engagement of the National Audit Office (NAO) which has today published its independent assessment of our plans.

The world is increasingly dangerous and the transition into a multipolar, fragmented and contested world had happened more quickly and definitively than anticipated in the original Integrated Review. The risk of escalation is greater than at any time in decades.

This year's equipment plan comes at a time of significant financial pressures due to pivotal world events, including the ongoing war in Ukraine, and the plan recognises the significant impact inflation has had on defence's budget.

We have increased the budget for the equipment plan to £288.6 billion. Against this assumption we estimated there was a 6% pressure, but there are other reasonable scenarios in which the Department has a surplus over 10 years. The position reported in the plan and by the NAO does not reflect the Government's aspiration to increase defence spending to 2.5% of GDP as soon as economic and fiscal conditions allow.

While we are currently forecasting a pressure, the Department is confident it can live within its equipment budget, with only 25% of the equipment plan committed over the next decade, providing the headroom to adjust the programme as needed and ensuring we can remain responsive to emerging events. We have also made significant changes to how we manage the nuclear enterprise which will support us in delivering the nuclear deterrent on schedule.

We published DCP23 this summer and work is already underway to develop proposals to deliver its intent within our current budget. The additional funding from the 2022 autumn statement and 2023 spring budget is already allowing us to make new investments in stockpiles and munitions.

While we recognise the affordability challenge of the 2023-2033 equipment plan, it is only right that the choices we make to address this reflect the Government's priorities as set out in DCP23, as the Department focuses more on artificial intelligence, digital capabilities and assuring supply chains to modernise our armed forces. We continue to work on reform to our acquisition processes including more iterative development of capabilities.

[HCWS87]

AUKUS Defence Partnership

The Secretary of State for Defence (Grant Shapps): Just over two years ago, the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia launched the ground-breaking new strategic partnership—known as AUKUS. As we have seen over the last two years or so, the world has become more dangerous. That is why Defence partnerships like AUKUS only become more important in ensuring that the UK and our allies maintain a strategic advantage.

For more than a century, our nations have stood shoulder to shoulder, along with other allies and partners, to help sustain peace, stability, and prosperity around the world.

On Friday, I was delighted to meet the US Secretary for Defence, Lloyd Austin, and the Australian Defence Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, Richard Maries at the Defence Innovation Unit in California for the annual AUKUS Defence Ministers' Meeting.

For Australia's acquisition of conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines (Pillar I), we are collaborating to deliver this capability at the earliest possible date while upholding the highest nuclear non-proliferation standard.

For Advanced Capabilities (Pillar II), we are significantly deepening co-operation on a range of security and defence capabilities, making sure that each nation has the capabilities needed to defend against rapidly evolving threats.

Through these efforts, AUKUS contributes to integrated deterrence by pursuing layered and asymmetric capabilities that promote deterrence and stability.

We reflected on the exceptional progress made as part of delivering on the optimal pathway to develop a conventionally armed, nuclear powered, submarine capability to the Royal Navy and Royal Australian Navy, as announced by the AUKUS leaders in March this year. This includes increased training opportunities for Australian sailors in the UK and US, and the introduction of enabling legislation to the US Congress and Australian Parliament. We reaffirmed our shared commitment to upholding the highest standard for nuclear non-proliferation. Our industry is supporting Australia in this endeavour. Both BAE Systems in Barrow and Rolls Royce in Derby are playing a key role in the delivery of this world-class capability.

We also reflected on how the strategic alignment of our national defence strategies, anchored by our shared values, is facilitating unprecedented collaboration in advanced technologies. Through Pillar II, we are accelerating and deepening the development and delivery of advanced military capabilities, based on the most important challenges we face. This progress will improve our shared ability to tackle emerging threats.

We are significantly scaling up our co-operation on maritime capabilities and have committed to test these through a landmark maritime autonomy experimentation and exercise series. This will help us test our interoperability and increase the sophistication and scale of autonomous systems in the maritime domain. There will be significant opportunities for UK industry to engage.

We are advancing our trilateral anti-submarine warfare activities and undersea vehicle launch and recovery. These capabilities help to increase the range and capability of our undersea forces and will also support SSN-AUKUS. This follows our successful trials last month, where HMS Tamar played a key role in combined exercises off the east coast of Australia.

We are strengthening cyber capabilities across the three AUKUS partners, ensuring that we are working hand in hand with our industry partners across all our supply chains and protecting this endeavour for the future.

We are developing quantum technologies to increase resilience for our trilateral forces in Global Positioning System-degraded environments and enhance stealth in the undersea domain, including on future SSN-AUKUS submarines.

Critical to all of our capability development is our ability to facilitate faster and deeper defence trade between our nations. These efforts will increase private-sector co-operation across our nations, which is crucial to our ambition in emerging technologies. The Advanced Capabilities Industry Forum will provide a mechanism for industry-industry and Government-industry consultation on how to transfer the necessary technology, data, and know-how needed to deliver capability quickly. We have also previewed our first AUKUS Innovation Challenge.

In addition, we have confirmed our trilateral co-operation on the Deep Space Advanced Radar Capability (DARC) programme. This will provide 24/7, all-weather capabilities that will increase AUKUS nations' ability to characterise objects deep in space up to 22,000 miles—36,000 kilometres—away from earth, supporting His Majesty's Government's commitments to be a meaningful actor in space under the National Space Strategy (2021). Cawdor Barracks in South-West Wales has been identified as the UK's preferred host site, which will progress subject to planning permission.

Together, these initiatives provide us with a solid foundation to enhance our collective security and deterrence to keep all three nations' safe in a world that is becoming more dangerous by the day.

For additional detail, I refer members to the AUKUS Defence Ministers' communique <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3604511/aukus-defense-ministers-meeting-joint-statement/>.

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Horizon Europe and Copernicus Programmes: UK's Association

The Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology (Michelle Donelan): On Monday 4 December the UK and EU will sign our bespoke new agreement finalising the UK's association to the Horizon Europe and Copernicus programmes. This deal is set to create and support thousands of new jobs as part of the next generation of research talent. It will help deliver the Prime Minister's ambition to grow the economy and cement the UK as a science and technology superpower by 2030.

As part of the new deal negotiated over the last six months, the Prime Minister secured improved financial terms of association to Horizon Europe that are right for the UK—increasing the benefits to UK scientists, value for money for the UK taxpayer. It ensures:

UK taxpayers will not pay for the time where UK researchers have been excluded since 2021, with costs starting from January 2024.

The UK will have a new automatic clawback that protects the UK as participation recovers from the effects of the last two and a half years. It means the UK will be compensated should UK scientists receive significantly less money than the UK puts into the programme. This was not the case under the original terms of association.

Later today we expect UK and EU representatives to meet in the format of the Specialised Committee on Participation in Union Programmes, where they are due to sign a decision to adopt Protocols I and II and amend Annex 47 of the Trade and Co-operation Agreement, thereby formalising the UK's association to Horizon Europe and Copernicus.

I will meet in Brussels with EU Research and Innovation Commissioner Iliana Ivanova and members of the UK and EU R&D sectors to discuss and promote efforts to boost UK participation in Horizon Europe and Copernicus.

My visit to Brussels marks the start of joint UK-EU work to ensure that UK businesses and researchers and their international counterparts come together and seize the opportunity that UK association to the programmes brings.

Researchers, academics, and businesses of all sizes can confidently bid for a share of the more than £80 billion available through the two programmes, with calls for the 2024 work programme already open. It builds on the Government's record-breaking backing for R&D, with a commitment to invest £20 billion in UK R&D by 2024-25, borne out in recent announcements like the £500 million boost to the AI research resource and £50 million for battery manufacturing R&D, announced in the autumn statement.

DSIT will shortly launch a communications campaign to maximise participation in Horizon Europe and Copernicus from researchers, academics and businesses of all sizes in the UK. Encouraging smaller businesses to pitch for, and win, Horizon and Copernicus funding supports DSIT's aim to help the UK's promising science and tech firms scale-up and grow. Officials will work closely with key sector stakeholders to ensure this message reaches businesses of all kinds, who might not have previously considered applying, as well as researchers and academics in every part of the country.

[HCWS88]

Petitions

Monday 4 December 2023

OBSERVATIONS

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Dental provision in North Devon

The petition of residents of the constituency of North Devon,

Declares that the sustained lack of dental provision in North Devon has led to critical reduction in health outcomes; notes that access to dental services has worsened since the pandemic and despite ongoing from Government Ministers, the NHS, the County Council and Integrated Care Board the situation continues to get worse, not better; further declares that to ensure that the people of North Devon's health is not negatively affected any further, concrete steps need to be taken now to bring more dental provision our constituency.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to assist with emergency dental provision in North Devon.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Selaine Saxby, *Official Report*, 24 October 2023; Vol. 738, c. 804.]

[P002867]

Observations from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Dame Andrea Leadsom):

NHS England and the Devon integrated care board are aware of the particular challenges in North Devon and are working with local dentists to enable practices to take on more NHS patients.

NHS England recently procured additional primary care dental capacity in Devon which means an increase in access to dental services for those patients who do not currently have a dentist. A dedicated helpline has been developed for Devon and Cornwall to assist patients in finding an NHS dentist for routine care and arranging urgent NHS dental treatment for people who do not have a dentist. When places become available, they are allocated to those patients who are on the helpline's list.

The Access Dental helpline also manages out-of-hours appointments for urgent care. They allocate appointments at the weekends and on bank holidays from clinics in Plymouth, Newton Abbot, Exeter and Barnstaple. NHS Devon has recently agreed an uplift in the helpline contract, to reflect the enhanced numbers of patients seeking advice and care. In Devon, 369,393 adults were seen by an NHS dentist in the 24 months up to 30 June 2023 in the Devon integrated care board—38% of the adult population. This is an increase of 10,444 (2.9%) compared to the previous year.

NHS dentists are required to keep their NHS.UK profiles up to date so that patients can find a dentist more easily. Patients can approach any NHS dental practice and request care regardless of geographical

location. If a patient's dental condition changes or deteriorates, they are advised to contact NHS 111 for assistance.

The Government are taking significant steps to improve access for dental patients across the country. In July 2022, we announced an initial package of dental system reform to ensure that dentists are more fairly rewarded for the NHS care that they deliver. However, we know that we must go further to address the remaining challenges facing NHS dentistry across the country. Our dentistry recovery plan, to recover and support NHS dentistry, will be published shortly, to build upon the first package of reforms.

As set out in the “NHS Long Term Workforce Plan”, we are going to increase dentistry training places by 40% so that there are over 1,100 places by 2031-32. To support this ambition, we will expand places 24% by 2028-29, taking the overall number that year to 1,000 places.

TRANSPORT

A5 Traffic Volume Hockliffe

The petition of the residents of the village of Hockliffe,

Declares that the unacceptable volume of traffic now using the A5 trunk road through the village of Hockliffe endangers the health, safety and well being of residents and negatively impacts local businesses; further declares that Hockliffe, with over 400 homes, uniquely has the A5 trunk road passing through its centre; notes that the 2017 M1A5 link road provided relief for Dunstable but the impact on Hockliffe was greatly underestimated with over 20,000 vehicles now passing daily through the village; many of them HGVs; further notes that the 4-way traffic lights in the centre of Hockliffe cannot cope with this volume of traffic, leading to constant congestion and lengthy tailbacks in all directions, with noise and fumes from stationary traffic affecting the health and well being of residents; notes that pedestrians and motorists suffer dangers from frustrated drivers mounting pavements, racing to beat the lights or performing U turns to avoid the stationary or slow moving traffic; further notes that many M1 closures, due to accidents or maintenance, divert traffic to the A5 and this leads to gridlock through Hockliffe, day or night; further declares that Hockliffe residents often suffer sleep disruption due to HGV traffic, especially during M1 closures or restrictions that, when completed, the new A6/M1 link road, and a growing number of HGV logistics parks and new homes in the local area, will all add to an already unacceptable traffic problem affecting the A5 through the village of Hockliffe.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to convene all appropriate and necessary parties in order to find an early solution to the unacceptable traffic volume, congestion and associated dangers on the A5 trunk road through the village of Hockliffe, Bedfordshire and that this is urgently progressed.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Andrew Selous, *Official Report*, 14 November 2023; Vol. 740, c. 620.]

[P002874]

Observations from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Guy Opperman):

Thank you to my hon. Friend the Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous) and residents of Hockliffe for raising this issue. On receiving this petition my officials raised the concerns with National Highways (NH). NH is aware of the issues that residents and businesses in Hockliffe have been facing over a number of years. NH began construction of the A5-M1 Dunstable northern bypass project in 2015 as part of its first five-year road investment strategy. Before the project, very high daily traffic volumes on an out-dated road design produced congestion, long delays and slower journey times on both the strategic and local road network.

The project aimed to provide a range of measures to increase capacity, reduce congestion and improve safety. The dual two-lane carriageway created a new link between the A5—western end—and the M1—eastern end—with a new junction at 11 A. The project opened to traffic in May 2017.

NH monitored the impact of this and found that in the first 12 months after opening, traffic on the A5 north of the bypass substantially increased by around 28%. The average weekly traffic count rose from 17,800 to 22,000 vehicles. These changes indicated road users were now opting to exit the M1 at junction 11a to use the A5. This was corroborated by the 28% growth that occurred on the A5 north of the link road, compared with an average annual growth of 1% before the project opened, and by the 25% increase on Sundon Road, which lies at the exit to junction 11a.

NH representatives have corresponded with my hon. Friend the Member for South West Bedfordshire on this matter and have held meetings with Hockliffe Parish Council and my hon. Friend on several occasions to discuss concerns about increased traffic levels through Hockliffe. NH continues to be open to further engagement about concerns.

NH, as a direct result of interactions with residents, the parish council and my hon. Friend, has taken remedial action to improve the safety and reduce the noise disturbance caused by the traffic using the A5 through Hockliffe and has:

- Resurfaced the A5 through Hockliffe (2018)

- Reduced the speed limit through Hockliffe to 30mph (2020)

- Introduced average speed cameras (summer 2023)

Additionally, NH no longer routinely uses the A5 through Hockliffe as a diversion route following representations made by the parish council, residents and the local MP. NH has also made agreements with Milton Keynes Council and Central Bedfordshire Council to use the A4146 and A505 on a case-by-case basis as an alternative diversion route. National Highways informs residents, businesses and the parish council of roadworks in the vicinity and provides information about relevant diversion routes.

Although NH recognises that the A5 is subject to heavy traffic use, it has no significant safety concerns about the A5 through Hockliffe being used as a diversion route if the M1 is closed. NH also does not currently have concerns about the air quality in Hockliffe. Central Bedfordshire Council is responsible for monitoring air quality at Hockliffe. While it does not specifically monitor air quality at Hockliffe, it does have a monitoring station within its Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), at Dunstable. More information can be found on the council's website at:

https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/52/types_of_pollution/292/air_quality/3.

There are no plans to restrict traffic movements through Hockliffe while it is part of the strategic road network, which would be the only way to achieve the desired traffic reduction. National Highways is considering the case to detrunk this section of the A5, including the section through Hockliffe, in consultation with the Department for Transport and relevant local authorities. This is part of considerations around the next road investment period (2025-30).

Ministerial Correction

Monday 4 December 2023

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

Debt in Africa

The following is an extract from the Westminster Hall debate on Debt in Africa on 21 November 2023.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: The hon. Member for Slough highlighted the critical challenge that we all face in supporting women and girls, who are so often at the end of the line on funding, education, healthcare and, indeed, tools and investments to help them make the climate adaptation they need in their communities. That is why the international women and girls strategy, which we published earlier in the year, sets out clear commitments with more than £2.5 billion of live official development aid programmes at the moment for women and girls in Africa. The strategy also commits at least 30% of the FCDO's bilateral aid programmes to focus on gender

and equality through to 2030, which is absolutely at the heart of our commitment to the way we want to deliver those development aims.

[Official Report, 21 November 2023, Vol. 741, c. 62WH.]

Letter of correction from the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Anne-Marie Trevelyan):

An error has been identified in my response to the hon. Member for Slough (Mr Dhesi) in the Westminster Hall debate on Debt in Africa. The response should have been as follows:

Anne-Marie Trevelyan: The hon. Member for Slough highlighted the critical challenge that we all face in supporting women and girls, who are so often at the end of the line on funding, education, healthcare and, indeed, tools and investments to help them make the climate adaptation they need in their communities. That is why the international women and girls strategy, which we published earlier in the year, sets out clear commitments with more than £2.5 billion of live official development aid programmes at the moment for women and girls in Africa. The strategy also commits at least **80%** of the FCDO's bilateral aid programmes to focus on gender and equality through to 2030, which is absolutely at the heart of our commitment to the way we want to deliver those development aims.

ORAL ANSWERS

Monday 4 December 2023

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MINISTERIAL CORRECTION

Monday 4 December 2023

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Debt in Africa	1MC

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**not later than
Monday 11 December 2023**

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