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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

OFFICIAL REPORT

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

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House of Lords

Thursday 16 May 2019

11 am

Prayers—read by the Lord Bishop of Portsmouth.

Royal Assent

11.06 am

The following Acts were given Royal Assent:

Offensive Weapons Act 2019,
Mental Capacity (Amendment) Act 2019.

Social Workers: Recruitment and Retention Question

11.06 am

Asked by **Baroness Donaghy**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their strategy for increasing the number of social workers and improving their retention rate.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care (Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford) (Con): My Lords, the Government remain committed to supporting local authorities and other social work employers to meet their duties regarding social work workforce planning and helping them to understand best practice in recruiting, retaining and developing staff. We have invested over £1.2 billion since 2010 in supporting both mainstream and fast-track qualifying routes into the profession, and our improvements to the supervision and leadership that social workers receive support people to remain and progress in social work.

Baroness Donaghy (Lab): I thank the Minister for that Answer but I do not think that they can fulfil their requirements or their responsibilities. Particularly for directly employed local authority social workers, workloads must be at red on the risk register and must have been like that for some years. Stress levels, staff shortages and the inability of some areas to recruit—there is a 26% vacancy rate in London—indicate that this must have a much higher priority than this Government are prepared to give. Will she give some more practical answers on how to stop the increasing numbers of social workers leaving the profession, how to recruit more—there has been a 6% drop—and how to get some support for a very pressed service?

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: I thank the noble Baroness for what is a very important Question. She is absolutely right that we have to ensure that we recruit and retain the social work workforce: it is vital and, like any employers, local authorities are responsible for ensuring that they have the right staff with the right skills. The Government also recognise that we have a role in supporting them. That is why we provide financial support to students who qualify as social workers. We make sure that those entering social work receive the best training possible, with some new programmes to support those who are newly qualified, such as the assessed supported year in employment, so

that those who come in with quite a significant workload can be supported in their first year. We understand that high caseloads can be a challenge. Local authorities are responsible for the recruitment and deployment of social workers, but we work with them to think about how they can best manage the delivery of services and make caseloads manageable so that we retain those social workers who are vital to delivering care and support for some of the most vulnerable in our society.

Baroness Manzoor (Con): My Lords, social work can be a very rewarding career but it can also be very stressful, as has been said, so can my noble friend say exactly how we are supporting young graduate social workers? She said a bit about that but how, in their first, second and third year, can we actually retain them?

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: My noble friend is absolutely right that social workers do vital jobs and that it is an attractive career choice. More than 4,000 students enrol in social work courses every year, and we have introduced a fast-track graduate programme that has brought 2,000 more into the social work programme. However, it will work only if we retain those within the system, so we have developed some post-qualifying standards for social workers at key stages of their career to create a consistent, practice-based career progression. In particular, we have introduced the assessed year in the workforce to provide that key level of support in the first year, so that those who experience the shock of the caseload in their first year have the support that they need to remain in the profession and develop the key skills to be able to manage that workload.

Baroness Butler-Sloss (CB): My Lords, as a former family judge, I have worked very closely with social workers. Will the Minister consider the aspect of lack of respect and status? If they were given a better status, they would be much easier to recruit and retain.

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: The noble and learned Baroness makes an excellent point. Social workers play a crucial role in our society and should have the respect and status they deserve. One way in which that can be achieved is through the increasing professional standards being brought into the service. As I have said, these include key reforms such as improving leadership and providing high-quality continuous professional development, through which we seek to improve the quality of social workers' professional lives while raising standards and recognition for the profession.

Baroness Jolly (LD): My Lords, the named social worker programme demonstrates a new way to support particularly vulnerable people. Social workers and their clients felt more confident and supported; social workers felt more job satisfaction, and we have just heard how important that is. What plans are there to expand this programme to more areas?

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: The noble Baroness is absolutely right: that is a vital part of the programme. It is part of a wider suite of programmes

[**BARONESS BLACKWOOD OF NORTH OXFORD**] that have been introduced so that we can bring individuals into social work at different points within the system. This has included the new social work degree apprenticeship scheme and, as I have said, we have 4,000 a year entering the normal degree programme. We have also introduced the fast-track training programme for high-potential graduates and the Think Ahead graduate programme for mental health social work. We are trying to attack this challenge from all angles, as well as guaranteeing that we retain those in the system through continuous professional development. This will ensure that it is a rewarding profession, as she rightly says, but also one in which people feel supported and that they have the skills to deliver for the most vulnerable in our community.

Baroness Wheeler (Lab): My Lords, the Minister said earlier this week that the need to ensure that we recruit, retain and build on workforce development will be at the heart of the social care Green Paper when it arrives. Has she anything further to say about when we will actually get the Green Paper, other than that it will be very important? In view of the chronic problems of low morale, inadequate pay in the face of unmanageable caseloads and resulting problems in providing key services to vulnerable people, as we have heard about today, can she assure the House that making sure that social care work is valued is recognised as a top priority in the Green Paper?

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: The noble Baroness will know that we discussed this two days ago. I am happy to reassure her that social work and the social care workforce will be core not only to the social work Green Paper but to the workforce strategy, which will come forward imminently. She is absolutely right that we must ensure that we have the right models to retain and recruit the social care workforce, but we must also have the right funding. That is one reason why the Government have invested £9.4 billion in social work over the last few years, why we have to make sure that we integrate the long-term plan and the social care Green Paper alongside the funding settlement for local authority funding, and partly why we are working in the way we are to bring these papers forward.

Education: Climate Change Science Question

11.14 am

Asked by **Lord Redesdale**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to increase the priority given to teaching climate change science.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education (Lord Agnew of Oulton) (Con): My Lords, the Government believe that it is vital that children are well informed about climate change. For this reason, relevant topics are included throughout the geography and science national curriculum and associated qualifications. For example, in secondary school science, pupils consider

the evidence for the human causes of climate change, and as part of GCSE geography they study spatial and temporal characteristics of climatic change and evidence for different causes, including human activity.

Lord Redesdale (LD): My Lords, head teachers have an obligation not to teach push causes, which are seen as party political, and therefore feel that teaching on climate change may cause problems. Will the Government categorically state that teaching on climate change is not a party-political issue, and would they be prepared to meet representatives of the teaching unions and head teachers to make sure that they understand this?

Lord Agnew of Oulton: I absolutely agree with the noble Lord that this is not party-political but a generational issue, and it is our responsibility as the older generation to protect the environment for the young people of tomorrow. We do not in any way suggest that teaching these issues is party political. We have such things as the Green Great Britain Week, which took place for the first time last year, to raise awareness of how businesses, universities, schools and the public can contribute to tackling climate change, and we will be doing another one of these in November. I am certainly happy to meet the unions and the stakeholders the noble Lord referred to.

Lord Rooker (Lab): In which case, will the Minister locate some tip-top teachers in schools who are providing the science on climate change to our young citizens, and invite them to come to this place for a day to teach the climate change deniers in this House what the young people are being taught? They were conspicuous by their absence in the recent debate; clearly they do not have the confidence to put their case. The fact is that the science is there, and it would be a suitable opportunity across the generations to deliver the science to them.

Lord Agnew of Oulton: My Lords, there is absolutely no suggestion that there is denial of climate change by this Government. Indeed, we have seen some of the most dramatic improvements in dealing with decarbonisation of the economy over the last 10 years. We are leading the way in the G20, we have reduced carbon in the economy by 4.7% per year, which is double the G7 average, and we have some of the highest levels of wind generation in the world—so I can assure the noble Lord that we are not anti or against it. However, we also have to remember that we should be worried not just about climate change but about environmental contamination.

Lord Lilley (Con): My Lords, I draw attention to my interests in the register. Will my noble friend ensure that climate change is taught within the context of the scientific method, which requires predictions based on hypothesis to be tested against observations? Therefore, let children know that the impact of CO₂ is well established by observations and can be measured, and that the direct effect of doubling the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere will be a one degree centigrade increase in the average temperature of the globe. However,

higher estimates, based on much less certain feedbacks for which there is not observational confirmation, and all the forecasts based on climate models, assume very high feedbacks that have been falsified by observations. Therefore, those models need to be amended.

Lord Agnew of Oulton: I assure the noble Lord that we are improving the curriculum all the time. For example, in 2018, 96% of pupils in state-funded schools were entered for the science component of the EBacc. The proportion of pupils taking GCSE geography increased from 26% in 2010 to 41% last year. We have also seen increases in participation in A-level chemistry and physics. These are all science and evidence-based subjects.

Lord Singh of Wimbledon (CB): My Lords, could the Government get the United States President to drop in on one of those classes during his visit?

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The noble Lord makes a very interesting suggestion, which I shall pass on to the Foreign Office.

Lord Watson of Invergowrie (Lab): My Lords, the noble Lord commented on science and geography being taught in schools. Clearly that is not effective enough, because students in Oxford have started a national petition to make climate change a core part of the curriculum. So far it has attracted 71,000 signatures. So young people are getting the message, and it seems that MPs are as well, because two weeks ago a Labour Motion in another place to formally declare a climate and environment emergency was endorsed without a vote. I should add that the Environment Secretary responded to that debate by saying that the situation we face is an emergency. That endorses the Minister's point about this not being party political; I very much welcome that. Given Mr Gove's wise words, perhaps I might build on the point made by the noble Lord, Lord Singh. Does the Minister know whether Mr Gove will raise with Donald Trump during his visit the fact that climate change is a very real threat and that ignoring international agreements and action on the climate crisis is something that he can no longer do?

Lord Agnew of Oulton: My Lords, I am not sure whether my right honourable friend Michael Gove will be meeting Mr Trump, but I am sure that he would raise those issues with him. I want to put a slightly different slant on things. We are making enormous progress in this country to combat climate change. As I mentioned, we are leading the world in offshore wind power generation, the cost of which per kilowatt hour has dropped dramatically in the past five years. We have created a Green Finance Institute. A record proportion of our energy is generated by low-carbon sources. In the past few weeks, we have had the first evidence of generation of electricity without any use of coal at all. We have dramatically reduced the role of coal-fired energy in generation. So we must remember that we are doing an enormous amount. My priority on climate change is that we should adapt to deal with its consequences.

Baroness Hayman (CB): My Lords, the Minister is absolutely correct to lay out the measures that the Government have already taken—but was the noble Lord, Lord Rooker, not right to say that young people are aware and frightened of the effects of climate change and environmental degradation and that they are asking us, the generations represented in this House, to make a step change in what we are doing? Resting on our laurels will not protect our grandchildren.

Lord Agnew of Oulton: I respectfully disagree with the noble Baroness; we are not resting on our laurels. I just gave some examples of the things we are doing and how we are leading the developed world with our carbon-reduced economy. We have only recently introduced the 25-year environment plan, which encourages children to participate. We are on track, but we have to keep this in the public eye.

Japanese Knotweed *Question*

11.23 am

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent steps they have taken to eradicate Japanese knotweed.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Lord Gardiner of Kimble) (Con): My Lords, we are trialling biocontrol methods to control Japanese knotweed. The Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International is working to establish the highly specific psyllid, *Aphalara itadori*, into the United Kingdom. This summer, a population of a more climatically suitable psyllid from Japan will be brought here. It is hoped that this will be the key to unlocking the potential of this agent to reduce the effort and cost of managing Japanese knotweed and its invasive capacity.

Lord Greaves (LD): My Lords, it is 30 years since Lady Sharples started asking questions about Japanese knotweed, and about 12 or 15 since I joined her, but all we get is the same answer every time: that this wonderful psyllid, *Aphalara*, will come galloping over the horizon and solve everything. It is absolutely clear that the problem of Japanese knotweed is getting worse and worse and causing more and more problems, and it is simply not being tackled. Do the Government agree that two things need doing? First, owners of land need to be put under a legal obligation to eradicate Japanese knotweed, and allowing it to grow should be an offence. Secondly, when transactions or contracts are made relating to land that has Japanese knotweed on it, or when people walk on it and may spread it, they should be notified that this dreadful, awful weed exists or has recently existed on that land.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, trials often take longer than we wish, but I assure the noble Lord that we are collaborating with Canada, because it has a similar problem, and with experts across Europe and the United States. I agree: it is frustrating that the psyllid has not established as we wished. We are working on another form of control, which is also under evaluation: a mycoherbicide. This is all part of using the science. I

[LORD GARDINER OF KIMBLE]

agree with the noble Lord that it is very invasive. That is why I will read some of the advice in the Science and Technology Committee report that came out this morning. We need to attend to this. The problem with the noble Lord's first point is that, if someone fly-tips spoil with elements of Japanese knotweed, will the landowner really be required to remove that fly-tip? That is the problem if you make it a legal liability on the landowner to remove it.

Lord Tebbit (Con): My Lords, could my noble friend have a word or two with the highways agency? It has recently been spraying all over the place to kill insects. The effects of that are rather dubious, apart from keeping our car windscreens rather cleaner. But there is knotweed, and other noxious weeds which are surely covered by the Weeds Act, all the way along the sides of our motorways. Why not get it to do something?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: We are strongly of the view that we need to look after our pollinators and insects, so we should not cut verges unless it is necessary for safety. This is certainly an issue I will take up with my Department for Transport colleagues, but I know that both Highways England and Network Rail are conscious of their responsibilities. Indeed, there have been cases in which Network Rail has been required to attend to Japanese knotweed. This is a real problem, and I encourage landowners to attend to it.

Lord Clark of Windermere (Lab): My Lords, we are all indebted to the noble Lord for continuing to raise this issue. It is very serious, and many thousands of people have difficulty selling their houses because of the existence of Japanese knotweed. We all hope the bio approach works, but it will take several years. The Government cannot deal with it; it remains with the local authorities to handle it. Can they step up their efforts and advice on the herbicide approach to tackle the problem today and fill the gap before the bio approach comes in?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The noble Lord raises something really important. A very good practice manual has been published as part of a RAPID LIFE project, showing the varying ways in which this can be dealt with. They all have their issues because of the rhizome's ability to continue, even dormant, for 20 years. Glyphosate, properly used by trained people—I emphasise “properly”—can kill Japanese knotweed in about two or three years. Biocontrol would obviously be preferable for reducing the aggressiveness of the growth, but there is a whole range of issues. I am happy to share the manual with the noble Lord.

The Earl of Kinnoull (CB): My Lords, I draw attention to my interests in the register. Of course, knotweed is not the only invasive alien species around. This is Invasive Species Week; indeed, the Minister has been seen in the newspapers digging up skunk cabbages. Can he confirm that the Government are intensifying their efforts to combat invasive alien species in general, and in particular the grey squirrel, which is doing so much, so distressingly, to kill our broad-leaf trees?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, it is indeed Invasive Species Week, and I would very much have enjoyed it if your Lordships had been with me in a ditch in Kent digging up American skunk cabbage. This is being undertaken by volunteers working in local action groups. Anyone who googles “Invasive Species Week” will find all the places they can go to help and work with the teams. Grey squirrels are one of the reasons people are not planting trees. If we do not find ways of controlling the grey squirrel, we will not have the treescape for future generations. That is why we think the investment in fertility research—I know the noble Earl has been working hard on this—that will make the grey squirrel infertile has a lot of prospects and will be a way of helping to control this very invasive species.

Brexit: Cross-party Discussions Question

11.29 am

Asked by **Lord Dykes**

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they expect to report to Parliament on the outcome of discussions on Brexit with the Official Opposition.

The Minister of State, Department for Exiting the European Union (Lord Callanan) (Con): My Lords, the Government and Opposition are continuing discussions to try to find a way forward on EU exit that could command a majority in Parliament and which would allow for the UK's smooth and orderly exit from the EU. Meetings with the Opposition have been constructive, with many areas of consensus. The Government have committed to bringing forward the withdrawal agreement Bill in the week commencing 3 June.

Lord Dykes (CB): Did the Minister notice the huge dismay that greeted Theresa May's astounding proposal to prolong the Brexit agony—a dismay which was led by her own MPs? Rather than leading this miserable and unhappy country through further parliamentary nightmares, is it not high time that the Prime Minister had the wisdom to restore national morale by promising either the revocation of Article 50 or a people's vote with the Electoral Commission in charge?

Lord Callanan: As I have responded to the noble Lord on this issue a number of times, let me repeat that we are not in favour of revoking Article 50 and we believe that any second referendum would be divisive without being decisive.

Lord Cormack (Con): My Lords, could my noble friend remind those in the ERG and those on the opposite side who say that they want to see some kind of Brexit enacted that there is a golden opportunity—half a loaf is better than no bread—by voting for that Bill when it comes before the other House?

Lord Callanan: I totally agree with my noble friend. I am sure that they are taking careful note of his words.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire (LD): My Lords, democracy is a dialogue and it requires Governments to carry their public with them and to continue to explain the rationales for their policies. Part of the problem we are now in is that we are getting from different members of the Cabinet a range of different opinions. We are not getting any clear message about what is and is not possible in getting out of the hole we are now in on Brexit. When can we expect the Government to return to Parliament and explain what they think is or is not a possible exit from where we are?

Lord Callanan: What we think is possible is the agreement that we have negotiated. The EU has said that it is the only agreement possible. I know that the noble Lord's party do not believe in respecting the result of the referendum, but we do, and if we want to implement it the agreement that we have negotiated is the best way of achieving it.

Lord Tomlinson (Lab): I remind the Minister that the Question asks him about reporting to Parliament the outcome of these deliberations. Once again, he is avoiding the Question. He is answering questions from his imagination and not the Question that Parliament wants an answer on. When will he learn his responsibility to Parliament—the Parliament that held a referendum, in which his side argued that we must take back control?

Lord Callanan: Like the Opposition, we want to respect the confidentiality of those talks. I am sure that when and if we reach an agreement, both sides will want to report back to Parliament in full on it.

Lord Elton (Con): The noble Lord, Lord Tomlinson, makes a statement from within Parliament which we all understand and we see the complexities of what is going on. However, it is important to remember, is it not, that from the outside what people see is that the population voted to go out of the Union and Parliament is vigorously obstructing it? That is not democracy and it will bring the whole organisation down fairly quickly unless we get into tune with the population that the House of Commons is supposed to represent.

Lord Callanan: As ever, my noble friend speaks wisely on these matters. I agree that not implementing the result of the referendum would be disastrous for our democracy. It must seem to people outside—going back to a previous answer from my noble friend Lord Gardiner—that leaving the EU is as difficult as eradicating Japanese knotweed.

Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town (Lab): My Lords, it is not the question of whether we leave that is in front of us, but the question of how we leave. As we have kept saying, the withdrawal deal is not the right one to bring us out. We have now heard from Mr Fox, for example, that the deal we have in front of us at the moment has to involve checks at or near the Northern Ireland border, so the question is not whether or not we respect the referendum but that the Government have not come forward with a deal that is acceptable to most of his party or to mine.

Lord Callanan: I thank the noble Baroness for the implication in her question that Labour respects the referendum result. Obviously, I totally agree with that. If that is the case, it is beholden on the Labour Party to tell us which bits of the withdrawal agreement it does not like. Is it the citizens' rights protections, the financial settlement, the implementation period or the Northern Ireland protocol? Which bits does it not like?

Lord Anderson of Swansea (Lab): How do the Government respond to the concern that any potential agreement is likely to be repudiated by any successor to the Prime Minister?

Lord Callanan: I think the noble Lord is getting ahead of himself. The withdrawal agreement has been negotiated by the Government. We stand by that. The EU has made it clear that it is the only and best agreement available, and that will be reflected in the legislation that we bring forward, which I hope Parliament will consider in all seriousness.

Lord Newby (LD): My Lords, everybody knows that the withdrawal agreement Bill stands no chance of passing its Second Reading in the House of Commons so, first, why are the Government bringing it forward anyway and, secondly, when they have lost that vote, what do they plan to do then?

Lord Callanan: The noble Lord is asking me hypothetical questions. I remain confident that Parliament will want to reflect the result of the referendum, that it will see the messages that are being transmitted by the electorate and that it will want to make sure that the referendum result is honoured and that we leave the EU in a smooth and orderly manner.

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock (Lab Co-op): I wonder whether the Minister can confirm that the Brexit shambles is one of the few fiascos that we cannot blame on Chris Grayling.

Noble Lords: Oh!

Lord Callanan: I worked very closely with Chris Grayling in the Department for Transport and I disagree with the noble Lord. I think Chris Grayling is doing an excellent job as Secretary of State for Transport.

Business of the House

Timing of Debates

11.37 am

Moved by **Baroness Evans of Bowes Park**

That the debates on the Motions in the names of Baroness Royall of Blaisdon and Baroness Grender set down for today shall each be limited to two and a half hours.

Motion agreed.

Mental Health of Children and Young Adults

Motion to Take Note

11.38 am

Moved by Baroness Royall of Blaisdon

That this House takes note of the mental health of children and young adults in the United Kingdom.

Baroness Royall of Blaisdon (Lab): My Lords, I am delighted that today we are focusing on the mental health of children and young people. I declare an interest as principal of Somerville College, Oxford, and I am particularly pleased that the Minister replying to this debate is the noble Baroness, Lady Blackwood of North Oxford, a Somervillian.

Like everyone working in higher education in universities and colleges, I am acutely aware of and deeply disturbed by the ever-increasing number of students with mental health problems. I was glad to hear the commitment made by the Prime Minister at Prime Minister's Questions yesterday that the Secretaries of State for Health and for Education will work together to provide a specific fund for universities to develop new and innovative ways to help students with mental health pressures. I trust that whoever is the next Prime Minister will pursue this further.

In 2012, it was in response to pressure from this House, and specifically from these Benches, that the coalition Government committed to parity of esteem between physical and mental health services but, to date, the warm words have little substance. If there were real parity of esteem for children and young people, and if there were early intervention with proper diagnosis and treatment, so much misery could be averted and so much money could be saved in the NHS and other services. For example, in Oxfordshire 40% of police time is devoted to mental health issues.

The statistics are stark. One in four of us will suffer from a mental health problem during our life. The reasons are complex but we know that many of the difficulties begin in childhood and adolescence. Fifty per cent of the problems are established by the age of 14 and 75% by the age of 24, yet only 25% of children in need of treatment receive it and, of those, only 31% referred to child and adolescent mental health services—CAMHS—last year received treatment within that year. CAMHS continues to be what Luciana Berger has described as,

“a Cinderella service within a Cinderella service”.

The House of Commons Education Committee and Health and Social Care Committee published a joint report on the Government's Green Paper, *Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision*. It was entitled *Failing a Generation*, and that encapsulates the state of our mental health services for young people.

Stigma continues to be a big challenge and still too many children and young people suffer in silence, sometimes because they fear stigma and sometimes because those who love them do not notice the signs. As someone who has frequently talked the talk on

mental health, I have to say that I have not always walked the walk. I am ashamed to say that I failed to notice my daughter's mental health problems when she was a teenager. She courageously sought help but later suffered the most appalling consequences of postnatal depression, some of which I believe could perhaps have been avoided. She will probably have mental health problems throughout her life but these have been contained and she is now working for a brilliant charity, Artlift, which provides arts on prescription.

Many young people today have a good understanding of mental health issues but, sadly, in many areas the welcome rise in awareness has not been matched by service improvement. Rather, greater demand is matched by fewer staff and overstretched services, while some of the causes of mental illness are ignored. Mental health is no respecter of gender, race or class, but, as ever, it is the disadvantaged who are disproportionately affected. Just last week we welcomed the Timpson report into school exclusions. It demonstrated that a huge proportion of those excluded have special educational needs and many of those will have mental health issues. Children who end up in custody are three times more likely to have mental health problems than those who do not.

In universities, there is a well-documented, exponential rise in the number of students with mental health problems. At Oxford, for example, over the past five years there has been a fivefold increase in individuals reporting long-term mental health conditions. Of course, some people who, rightly, seek advice do so due to low levels of well-being or stress, anxiety and even loneliness rather than mental illness, but we have to ensure that these issues are addressed before they escalate in some way. The university is currently consulting on a new student well-being and mental health strategy with the full participation of students and the whole university, from the vice-chancellor downwards. There is a real determination to ensure that every part of the university is committed to implementing the necessary policy changes and practices so that the needs of all students are met. At Somerville, specifically, we have what I believe to be a good system. It includes peer supporters, a part-time counsellor, a nurse, junior deans and a full-time welfare support officer, but we can always do better. We also have a development programme which helps to build resilience and addresses issues such as time management, which can be the cause of huge anxiety in the run-up to exams.

The statistics are clear but the reasons for the increase in numbers are complex. Students are sometimes referred to as “snowflakes”—delicate individuals who melt when the temperature rises. That is absolutely not the case, but it is the case that the challenges they face are increasing.

Many people arrive at university with established mental health problems, some of which have been diagnosed, but not all. Those who are already in the system may well have had a painful transition from CAMHS to adult mental health services. I know that there is great awareness in government as well as Parliament about this problem, which causes great pain and stress, but to date the need to address it in a comprehensive way has not been met and the 10-year

plan lacks the necessary centralised system. The consequence is that young people, at a time of great vulnerability, fall through the net.

The transition from home to university is also a major life change and can be overwhelming. Research is being undertaken to ensure a better understanding of the health and mental health needs of first-year students, which might lead to system change. Yes, transition to university has always been challenging, but it is now more difficult than it might have been before. For some, there is a knock-on effect of a parental divorce. Parents stay together while the children are at home, then, once A-levels or the international baccalaureate are over, they announce their separation. The children, on top of other emotions, have a sense of guilt at having been responsible for keeping their parents together in an unhappy marriage.

LGBT young people experience disproportionately high rates of poor mental health. The freedom of leaving home is a time when some LGBT young people come out—a wonderful and liberating step for them, but one that can be extremely difficult emotionally and can have an impact on their mental health.

There is the stress of the unprecedented financial burden from student loans and increased tuition fees, which adds to the pressure of having to succeed. Some question this pressure, but it is undoubtedly a reality. A new poll today found that more than half of 20-somethings said that finances had taken a toll on their mental well-being. It is felt at university that to get a good job you have to get a good degree, and the pressure of succeeding sometimes throws the work/life balance out of kilter. A man who graduated in the 1950s recently commented to me that when he was at university the libraries closed at 6 pm, but many are now open and populated 24/7.

Then there is social media. The recent social media summit is welcome, but we now need to see action and results. Social media is an advance in many ways, but it is also a torment for many young people who cannot escape their foes—the people who bully them or demean them, who wreck their self-confidence and make their lives a misery. The impact of, for example, Instagram and Snapchat on self-esteem is enormous, because of the way in which they feed obsession about the way that we look and dress, our weight and our physical attributes. It is no wonder that more and more young women, and some young men, have eating disorders when they believe that their self-worth rests on the way that they look, and to be other than a size 6 is not acceptable.

I am delighted that the theme of this year's Mental Health Awareness Week is body image. I meet many brilliant young people whose lives are blighted by eating disorders or an obsession with hours in the gym. When they are diagnosed it then takes months, perhaps years, to get into a system that is desperately overstretched and underresourced. This devastating disease strikes rich and poor alike, the difference being that if you are wealthy you can usually access treatment more swiftly, as in the case with all mental health problems.

However, money is not always the solution. We should talk about and take responsibility for our well-being, but it is absolutely clear that, despite the Government's words and some actions, our mental

health services are desperate for more investment. I am sure that the Minister will point to increased spending on CAMHS provision, but this barely scratches the surface when you consider the resources that have been taken out of the system. I would be grateful for an assurance from the Minister that the additional money going into CAMHS is reaching front-line services, and an explanation of why we are lagging so far behind other EU countries. I wonder whether she is aware of a recent report showing that we are 21st in the EU for the number of CAMHS psychiatrists, with just 4.5 psychiatrists per 100,000 young people. The top-ranking country, Finland, provides eight times as many psychiatrists for its young people.

Mental health trusts have less money to spend on patient care in real terms than they did in 2012, according to the Royal College of Psychiatrists. The IPPR has found that mental health budgets must rise by more than £4 billion by 2023-24 to achieve parity of esteem with physical health. Last month the Secretary of State announced that budgets would rise, but by only half this amount. So I ask the Minister: how do the Government intend to achieve parity of esteem?

Mental health services need proper staffing, but there are 2,000 mental health staff leaving their posts in the NHS every month, and Brexit is exacerbating the problem. There is a particular issue on in-patient wards, where many agency and bank staff are being used and specialist CAMHS practitioners are at a premium. There has been speculation that this is because of the high workload, poor work conditions and poor pay of CAMHS staff. With regard to staff, the government response to transforming children and young people's mental health provision fails to mention social workers and the positive role that they play in improving children and young people's mental health.

The statistics are dry, but their impact on individual lives is mighty. Young people's lives are disintegrating because they are having to wait for diagnosis and treatment. This in turn has an impact on families, friends, schools, colleges, universities and the workplace, not to mention the economy. It also has a profound effect on charities—wonderful organisations without which the whole system would crumble. The number of charities and volunteers on whom we rely is vast, and there will always be a place for them. However, they should not be expected to fulfil tasks and obligations that are rightfully the duty of the state—a state that at the moment is abdicating its responsibilities in this and so many other areas.

In addition to more people presenting to services, their needs are increasingly complex. Across the country we have seen local authorities having to reduce their expenditure. As a result, youth services, libraries and community outreach workers have been stripped to the bone. These services traditionally provided a safety net for young people, allowing professionals to spot signs of mental ill health early, as well as giving young people a chance to build resilience skills and coping mechanisms. As more young people struggle to get help early on, more of them are approaching CAMHS at a more acute stage of their illness. Of course, some people do not at first want to address their problems face to face, either with friends or professionals, and

[BARONESS ROYALL OF BLAISDON]

the new mental health text messaging service launched by the young Royals is an important means of finding help, as is the invaluable, well-established initiative, Childline, founded by Dame Esther Rantzen, another Somervillian.

It is encouraging to see that the Government clearly acknowledge the significance of early years mental health provision. Poverty, neglect and exam pressure all have a role to play in children's mental health. A YoungMinds survey showed that more than 90% of teachers have seen a rise in students with mental health problems in the last five years. I would be grateful for an update from the Minister on the rollout of the Youth Mental Health First Aid in Schools programme. What percentage of schools are now part of this programme, under which trained staff become champions for improved mental health and well-being outcomes in schools?

I pay tribute to Poppy Jaman, one of the founders of Mental Health First Aid, who led and grew the movement. Two years ago, Poppy suggested that a "wave of change" was coming in mental health, and she is still of that view, although she is concerned about funding. I trust Poppy and she makes me slightly optimistic. Change is coming, but it is coming too slowly.

In their Green Paper, the Government had good proposals, but they are rolling out their plans for only a fifth to a quarter of the country by 2022-23. This lacks not only ambition but a real understanding of the devastation that poor mental health will have on the hundreds of thousands of children and young people who will not benefit from the strategy because its implementation will come too late.

As in every other area of healthcare, innovation must be one of the keys to transforming the provision of mental health care. I know that in our universities, including Oxford, the most extraordinary research is being undertaken. So I end by asking the Minister for her assurance that there is a real joined-up approach between the NHS and our universities. I hope that she will come to Oxford in the near future to discuss innovation, especially in relation to diagnosing, treating and safeguarding the mental health of our children and young people.

11.53 am

Lord Storey (LD): My Lords, I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Royall, for this debate and for her opening speech, which was fantastic.

As the Royal College of Psychiatrists says:

"A mental health crisis in our children is developing".

So let me ask the Minister straight off: why then are we seeing a 3.7% fall in the number of child and adolescent mental health services providers in our schools?

The Government have responded to the mental health crisis in much the same way that most Governments react to problems or crises. The *NHS Long Term Plan*, which includes children's mental health, is excellent. The Government have set targets in their *Five Year Forward View for Mental Health*. The Green Paper proposes to bring schools and NHS services closer together. Mental health support teams have been set

up and pilot schemes rolled out. Champions have been appointed. Targets have been set. That is all very laudable, but we need action for all children and young people.

As we have heard, one in eight children and young people aged between five and 19 has a mental health disorder in England, and 400,000 children and young people are not getting any professional help or support at all. We can establish mental health champions in schools, train staff to be able to identify mental health issues and embed mental health in teacher training programmes, and it is vital that we do so, but if the resources are not there it is all for naught. It is like pulling a lever and it does not connect with anything. Nothing happens. If a child or young person is diagnosed with a mental health problem, we must have the resources to respond and to support them immediately.

The *NHS Long Term Plan* says:

"Mental health support for children and young people will be embedded in schools and colleges".

The Government claim a success in that,

"We are delivering on our commitments to expand mental health services for children and young people",

as set out in the *Five Year Forward View for Mental Health*. That may be true, if success is defined as 30% of those with mental health conditions being able to benefit from treatment and support, which is still less than one-third of those who need treatment. Could noble Lords imagine the headlines and the outcry if only 30% of people with serious heart conditions were being treated?

I go back to the NHS plan. The NHS will be funding new mental health support teams working in schools and colleges, which is welcome, but not until 2023—nearly five years from now. Only one-quarter, at most, of schools and colleges will have such a team. There is no indication of when, if ever, there will be a team in every school and college. Will the Government be encouraging schools to add a section to their school prospectus and website along the lines of, "Our academy is the only one in this area to have a Mental Health Support Team. If your son or daughter has a mental health problem, or you think that he or she may develop a mental health problem in the next five years, make this academy your choice"? While this idea is obviously ridiculous, what will the 75% of schools without a mental health support team be able to tell parents when a student needs support? I look forward to the Minister's reply.

The lack of robust data about the mental health of children and young people is a matter that should shame the Government and, indeed, all of us. The teenagers who were part of the last exercise in, I think, 2004 are now in their 30s. The Department of Health claimed repeatedly that there was not enough money to undertake a full-scale assessment, and undoubtedly money was tight. Another explanation of failure to collect robust data is that the Government were content for the true picture to remain a "known unknown", because knowing the extent of the challenge would have proved uncomfortable and expensive.

The past decade has seen a whole range of new pressures on children and young people—we have heard some of them from the noble Baroness, Lady Royall—many of which contribute to more of them

suffering from mental health issues. The internet, which admittedly has opened up the world to children and young people, also has a dark side. The ubiquity of social media can lead to children being bullied by their friends or groomed by predators. Social media also promotes an image of perfection to which no ordinary person can aspire. Those who have a poor image of themselves can easily find “help” in self-harming and encouragement to starve themselves. All of this, of course, is available 24/7 since the internet never closes, even on bank holidays.

I would like to move from the macro picture to the micro picture. We have all read what reality is like for many mentally ill children and young people, with suicide a too common occurrence. I cannot imagine what it is like to have a son or daughter with a developing mental illness, for whom support only becomes available when a crisis occurs, and only then if you are a danger to yourself or others. For those acutely ill and needing in-patient treatment, a bed is often only available hundreds of miles away, which can make it almost impossible for family and friends to be in contact at the very time when these contacts are most needed.

Training school staff to spot the early signs of mental illness—and the new programme to train all sports coaches—is welcome. However, if there is not the support needed to follow up the issues identified, it will lead to even higher levels of frustration by those teachers and other professionals who work on the front line.

The need to provide better support services is universally acknowledged. Noble Lords will probably have seen from the Treasury minutes in the briefing pack that every single recommendation in the Public Accounts Committee report on the mental health of children and young people was accepted by the Government. Let us hope that the actions really will speak louder than the words.

In concluding, I would like to say a little about what should be done to try to promote well-being and good mental health among children and young people. In February, the Secretary of State for Education and the Secretary of State for Health announced,

“one of the largest trials in the world to boost the evidence about what works to support mental health and well-being”.

This is a welcome development in prevention, and will be much more effective than even the most effective cures. However, what we really need is a study that looks at the multitude of pressures which contribute to mental illness and young people. This study could then make radical recommendations for strategies to minimise those pressures. We have heard about pressures of young people at universities and colleges, but there are pressures right—

Baroness Goldie (Con): My Lords, we are tight for time. I would be grateful if your Lordships could keep an eye on the clock. Is the noble Lord about to conclude? The allocated time is six minutes.

Lord Storey: I have misjudged my time; I apologise profusely. I do not know where I got 10 minutes from, I must have been looking at the next debate. I will conclude now—my apologies.

12.01 pm

Lord Giddens (Lab): In that case, my Lords, I will start.

Let me begin by congratulating my noble friend Lady Royall on having secured this debate and on introducing it so ably. I am a bit far up the list for this, but my subject is a deeply perturbing one. I want to offer some comments on suicide and suicidal behaviour in relation to the mental health of children and young people.

Is there anything more tragic? It is not just a case of lives lost; it is a case of lives foregone. We cannot respond as a society unless we grasp the dynamics of suicide more generally. Understanding suicide poses unique problems, because by definition you cannot ask the individual why she or he acted as they did. Motives have to be inferred after the event, and this is often extremely problematic. For this reason, official suicide statistics, although they influence much public policy, are always pretty suspect. Can the Minister comment on this, given that suicide rates figure very largely in the national suicide prevention strategy, which I otherwise strongly support?

I spent a good deal of my academic career studying suicide and related behaviours. In my view, we need much more in-depth and sophisticated measures than suicide statistics if we are going to monitor the success or otherwise of prevention strategies. Some aspects of suicidal behaviour are absolutely counterintuitive. People will travel hundreds, even thousands, of miles to throw themselves off the Golden Gate Bridge in California, or in this country, Beachy Head. These include substantial proportions of young people. The youngest who has jumped from the Golden Gate Bridge was only five years old—albeit egged on by her father. Many have been teenagers and young adults, as at Beachy Head.

The Golden Gate Bridge provides the closest we have been able to get to talking to people who have committed suicide, which is otherwise a complete paradox. Throwing yourself off that bridge has a 98% fatality rate. Some of the tiny minority who survived, however, have been interviewed. They all said—this is pretty gripping—that as soon as they started falling, they regretted what they had done. One said, “The second my hand left the bar, I said, ‘I don’t want to die. What am I going to do?’ So I said, ‘Maybe if I get feet first, I’ll live’”. And in fact, this person did, but statistically it is virtually impossible to achieve. Your Lordships may ask what proportion of other suicides this would apply to, if there was data for this doubly tragic act—triple tragic in the case of children and young people.

The research also studied people who tried to jump off the Golden Gate Bridge but at the last minute were prevented from doing so by the police. Amazingly, the results showed that only 6% went on to kill themselves. The rest—all 94% of them—lived out their normal lifespan. In other words, and importantly for the relationship to mental health, it is not the case that they remained suicidal personalities. In fact, that very notion is suspect.

The biggest reduction in suicides that has ever occurred in this country did not come from therapy or mental health treatment; it came when natural gas replaced coal-fired gas. Putting your head in the oven had accounted for almost 50% of suicides before that

[LORD GIDDENS]

point, but then we saw a steep reduction in the suicide rate, which I am sure was real. The implications of this have to be clearly thought through. Suicide is very different from many of the things that people write about it and much more problematic in its motivation. This has to be recognised.

The suicide prevention strategy that has been rolled out at national level is a very worthwhile initiative. It is also good that substantial public funding has been allocated to organisations such as the Samaritans and the Zero Suicide Alliance. However, does the Minister think that the strategy embodies the most avant-garde thinking about suicide, in the light of research such as I have mentioned? I am not at all sure that this is the case.

In conclusion, perhaps she would like to comment on the following points. First, I know that this debate is about mental health, but it is time to move away from the mental health model of suicidal behaviour towards a more sophisticated perspective, recognising the symbolic richness of that action. Secondly, suicide, attempted and actual, is often as much a form of self-assertion as it is of despair. Thirdly, as the Harvard School of Public Health puts it:

“Intent isn’t all that determines whether an attempter lives or dies”.

The way in which it is done is often symbolically crucial, as your Lordships can see from the case of the Golden Gate Bridge. It is not often that someone says to themselves, “I just want to die and I don’t care how that happens”. More often than not, there is a deeply symbolic and rich emotional content to it.

I hope the Minister will recognise that understanding these complexities is key to the prevention strategy which the Government have quite rightly introduced.

12.08 pm

The Earl of Listowel (CB): My Lords, I also very much welcome this debate and thank the noble Baroness, Lady Royall, for bringing it. I declare an interest as a trustee of a mental health service for adolescents in north London, the Brent Centre for Young People, which began 50 years ago. It focuses on adolescents with suicidal thoughts and tries to address their needs. I am also a trustee of the Child and Family Practice Charitable Foundation, which concentrates on interventions to support post-traumatic stress disorders in young people. I am also a patron of a charity called Best Beginnings, which has been going for maybe 10 years and has developed a video, a drama re-enactment of a mother’s experience of postnatal depression. It is harrowing, but a helpful tool to health providers and others trying to understand postnatal depression. What stands out in that film is the isolation the poor young woman experienced, and the lack of assistance and understanding from the health service.

I will say a bit more about Baby Buddy and perinatal mental health. I commend the Government for their important and significant investment in perinatal mental health. Reports have clearly shown that, by failing to address the mental health needs of mothers, we can readily harm the life chances of their children. It can have a huge impact. I am immensely proud to be a

patron of Best Beginnings. In the last six or seven years, it has developed an app called Baby Buddy. This was developed with the royal colleges with the relevant experience—the Royal College of Midwives, and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. I am drawn most to its videos. The chief executive of the charity is a former BBC film producer, and there is a video of a mother breastfeeding her infant, showing mothers how to breastfeed, and of a father communicating with a young child, helping fathers to communicate with their children. I am proud that the evidence shows that this Baby Buddy app has increased initiation of breastfeeding by 9%, which is a significant improvement and above many other interventions. I mention this in the context of this debate because it is important that infants form secure attachments to their parents.

I will concentrate on the culture that children and young people grow up in and a few other principles lying behind the good mental health and emotional well-being of children and young people. I quote Sir William Utting, a respected social worker and perhaps the chief social work inspector of his time. He produced two reports in the late 1990s on the abuse of children in children’s homes. In his second report, *People Like Us*, published in 1997, he began by saying that the “best safeguard” for children is an “environment of overall excellence”. The culture in which our children grow up is very important. Perhaps we cannot always be excellent, but we can at least try to be good enough.

The city of Leeds has developed a strategy based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Everything it does, across the whole city, is founded on those principles. It has had outstanding results from inspections of child protection by Ofsted. It has recently been successful in reducing childhood obesity in young people. Again, this is put down to the culture it has created of concern for children’s welfare.

The Minister spoke helpfully about the excellent work the Government have done with social workers in the last 10 years. I would like to talk about the importance of expertise and experience. Timothy Loughton did not have a background in child protection, but took every pains to work with social workers, listen to young people in care and develop a thorough understanding of this work. Working with the noble and learned Baroness, Lady Butler-Sloss, he produced a report called *No More Blame Game*, championing the status of social workers. Subsequent to Timothy Loughton we had Edward Timpson as Children’s Minister. His family had a background of fostering, he had adopted siblings and he was a practitioner in the family law courts. He had a deep understanding of the issues around supporting children and young people, particularly those who are vulnerable. From that, we have seen many good policies emerge; for instance, the appointment of chief social workers for children and families and other areas.

In terms of the culture, politicians have an important role to play. I have always been of the view that if one is going to talk about the welfare of children, one has to have worked with them to some degree. I am fortunate to have had that experience. Being a parent can be a helpful introduction, but one needs to work with children and young people, understand their

vulnerabilities and difficulties, and understand that growing up is complex—we underestimate that as a culture. I see that I need to end here.

I welcome having expert practitioners at the forefront of policy as our chief social workers. Politicians need to be humble before that experience. They perhaps need to see themselves as communicators to the public of what is important, based on what they learn from those who have long experience as nurses or clinicians. That will help create a culture in which our children do much better. I look forward to the Minister's response and apologise for speaking for so long.

12.16 pm

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall (Lab): My Lords, at the end of *King Lear*, where, frankly, the stage is littered with bodies and not much to cheer one up has occurred, the Duke of Albany speaks to the few people who are left standing. He enjoins them thus:

“Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say”.

At this point, I feel that that is all I can do, because, unlike my noble friend Lady Royall who introduced this debate so extraordinarily well, and many others who are speaking, I cannot claim any expertise, whether clinical or in the work I have done in the field of child and adolescent mental health. However, I have some direct personal experience. Many people in my family, including me—I regret having to say it—have suffered from difficulties with their mental health. That includes children and one young child at the moment.

When I put my name down to speak in this debate, I knew that I wanted to speak but I was not sure how I was going to say what I wanted to say. I am still not entirely sure, so if what comes out lacks coherence or is sometimes intemperate, I apologise to the House and in particular to the Minister who has to answer this debate.

Two things have happened in the past 12 hours which have changed the way in which I thought about this subject. One was a television programme, and one was something that happened to a member of my family, a young child. The television programme was shown last night—I do not know whether anybody else saw it—and in it Nadiya Hussain talked about her own anxiety problems. The one thing that emerged from that for me more clearly than anything was that young people whose mental health problems are not diagnosed grow up into adults with mental health problems. That has already been mentioned by others, but we should never forget it. That is the risk we run: if we do not look at children's mental health early enough, they will grow up into adults who find it much more difficult to deal with the residual problems they have.

This week is Mental Health Awareness Week—many of us are sporting the badges. It may be less widely known in this House that it is also SATs week; if nobody understands what that is, they should look it up. Putting the two together, the few things I want to say are about schools—schools as healthy or, in some cases, unhealthy communities. I want to make it clear that, as I say it, I intend no disrespect whatever to teachers or their students, all of whom in their different ways are trying their best to do a good job in difficult normal circumstances. I say that because I believe it

but also because I have quite a lot of teachers in my family, so they would be very cross with me if I did not say it.

Good education must always strike a balance between discipline and freedom; core skills and creative range; learning to be part of a group and learning to be ourselves. Government policy over the past decade has done very little to help schools be healthy communities in that way. It has steadily narrowed the curriculum, reducing choice and imaginative aspiration, and focusing far too much on testing, which is why the SATS point is important. It has downgraded and undervalued arts subjects. I know that this is an old hobby-horse of mine, but I do not mind riding it out again when evidence shows the benefits of these subjects, including to mental health. More than anything else, government policy over the past decade has drained the joy out of education. If you cannot be joyful as a child, it is very hard to be mentally healthy.

I know that the Minister will say, with some good reason, that this is not her area of responsibility, but I ask her to consider that it is the responsibility of the Government as a whole to understand that young people spend a huge amount of their lives in school. Schools are communities, within which adults and young people need to find a way of co-existing such that the education the young people receive is good, enduring, healthy and sustainable. They cannot easily get that from adults who are themselves stressed, overworked and anxious. It is my belief and experience that many teachers in the system at the moment are in exactly that condition.

One way we can prevent our young people from becoming problems and needing mental health interventions is to try to ensure that their experience at school is nurturing, creative, safe and inspiring. That is what schools ought to be. I wish more of them were and I hope that the Minister will understand why I am putting this to her today.

12.21 pm

Lord Farmer (Con): My Lords, I too congratulate the noble Baroness, Lady Royall, on securing this important debate. I will focus on the indispensability of family support, and particularly support for parents' relationships with each other, if we are to address major contributing factors to children's and young people's poor mental health. Prevention should, whenever possible, be at the heart of any mental health strategy, whether from local or national government or from the NHS. Family relationship difficulties are also provoked by mental health problems in a child or young person. Whichever comes first, the family system, not just the person with the diagnosis, needs attention.

In a letter to the *Times* this week, I said that,

“The breakdown of family relationships creates a plethora of social policy challenges”.

Measures to strengthen families should be on the business plans of every department of government, as families which function well are major assets to their aims and objectives. This is particularly the case here. The NHS survey *Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2017* found that family functioning was clearly correlated with mental health problems. Almost two-fifths of children from families functioning

[LORD FARMER]

in the least healthy ways had a mental disorder, compared to one-12th of children in the families functioning most well. Robust surveys of mental health clinicians corroborate this. Family relationship problems were cited as the biggest presenting issue by mental health clinicians in a recent study of over 43,000 children in services.

Distressed children would agree. I commissioned research from a team led by Dr Samantha Callan, my parliamentary adviser, to inform the work of the Department for Education and the Department of Health and Social Care in developing the Green Paper on CAMHS. This included a focus group with young people with mental health problems who had experienced parental relationship breakdown. They highlighted that people in general are “not at all” aware of the effects of family breakdown on children and young people. They described teachers’ and other adults’ expectations that exposure to conflict or parental separation two or more years earlier would no longer impact them. This made it very hard to express ongoing pain from the lingering effects, including the difficulties in keeping in contact with the non-resident parent.

One participant said: “I see girls who don’t see their dads who try to get the attention and the affection from someone much older than them. It can have a bad long-term impact on you if you end up in bad relationships”. Another described their severe problems with anger management, linked to their father leaving unexpectedly more than a decade ago. Other negative effects were attributed to one parent not having recovered from the relationship breakdown. Conflict might have ceased, but children might still be coping with their parents’ depression, bitterness or other long-term ramifications of the split, which went unsupported. One said, “I have absolutely no complaints about the care I have received, but my mum didn’t get any help at all. I might not be sitting here if she had had the same level of support”.

The importance of good interparental relationships was recognised in the 2017 Green Paper, which said:

“Children who are exposed to persistent and unresolved parental conflict are at a greater risk of early emotional and behavioural problems, anti-social behaviour as an adolescent and later mental health problems as they transition into adulthood”.

To unpack the concept of persistent and unresolved conflict, this need not mean a violent home environment but one daily characterised by overt, hostile exchanges or cold, contemptuous indifference.

Apart from citing the DWP’s reducing parental conflict programme, the Government’s response to the Green Paper consultation made no proposals to support families and interparental relationships. Similarly, the *NHS Long Term Plan* merely acknowledges that a,

“stable and loving family life”

significantly influences young people’s health and life chances. Health services might argue that relationship and family support are someone else’s responsibility, but this ignores the fact that, in a phrase coined by researchers from UCL, good relationships are a health asset. Indeed, I cannot resist saying here that “The key to happiness”, according to today’s headlines from the Office for National Statistics, is to “Eat, drink — and

be married”. Moreover, health budgets dwarf government funds earmarked for relationship support, so can my noble friend outline what the DHSC is doing to support family relationships?

I have a couple of recommendations. First, NHS organisations could invest directly in the provision of relationship support. Hackney child and adolescent mental health service employs a specialist to work directly with the couple while another member of the multidisciplinary team treats their child or young person who has been referred. The research found that this is rare, so to help build confidence that embedding couple counsellors in CAMHS teams is good use of scarce mental health funding, the DHSC should fund pilots of this model.

Secondly, early help for families is imperative to address the roots of mental illness and prevent children and young people developing such problems. Local councils, from Newcastle to the Isle of Wight, are making progress in repurposing children’s centres as “family hubs”, so that their expert early years services are preserved alongside services offering help for parents of children aged nought to 19. Health services and education, now both on the front line of help for children with mental health difficulties, are free and available to all, yet we cannot ignore any longer the uncomfortable truth that, without similarly accessible support for family relationships, they will fail to turn back the tide of mental illness in this and future generations.

12.28 pm

Baroness Morris of Yardley (Lab): My Lords, I too congratulate my noble friend Lady Royall on the way she introduced this debate and on giving us the opportunity to speak on such an important issue. I accept all the points made about the lack of resources in the National Health Service, the queuing for CAMHS and the need to invest there. Having said that, I do not want to talk about that aspect of well-being and how we can support young people. If our approach is that we always use an external health model to deal with this issue, we will never actually solve the problem: if we are always treating the crisis, there will always be a crisis. Whatever Government are in power, CAMHS and other mental health services through the NHS will always be rationed to some extent. At the moment, we are seeing teachers in schools spending their time queueing to get their children into the acute services of CAMHS and the health service.

I want to put forward as an example an approach to go alongside that but not replace it, because I know that for some children that level of expert clinical support will be needed. Essentially, we need public health working through schools. As a parallel, in dealing with obesity we deal with the causes of obesity; we have dentists, but we deal with the causes of children having bad teeth.

My noble friend Lady McIntosh made an incredibly powerful and effective speech. But even if we had the sort of curriculum in schools that she would like—and I wish that too—there would still be a need to make school a place where the well-being and mental health of young people are supported. That is the job of adults, whether parents, family, community or teachers.

It is for us to create an environment where more young people develop the skills and knowledge to have better mental health and well-being throughout their lives.

I chair the Birmingham Education Partnership; in saying that I declare my interest in the register. Four years ago, we were approached by the clinical commissioning group in Birmingham. It wanted to do this sort of work and knew it did not have the access to the city's children that we did through the schools system. BEP provided funding to work with schools on a public health model. With its resources, we have appointed a team led by a psychotherapist—a brilliant woman called Anna Robinson—and made up of a family therapist, a head teacher and a learning mentor. So far, the team has worked in 53 secondary schools in Birmingham, appointing a designated senior lead in each school. The job is quite simply this: to help those teachers identify vulnerable children as they come into school from primary; to develop training packages for teachers and all adults who work in the school; to work with external partners, as managed by our group, such as the excellent YoungMinds, the public health authorities and clinical commissioning groups; and, now and again, to bring together the leads from all the schools so that there is a community of interest and support for this work. We are working with 53 schools, and when we finish our fifth year of funded work we think we will be working with all 80 secondary schools in the city. We are now turning our mind to working with primary.

The examples that the noble Lord, Lord Storey, talked about, of some schools having support and not others, are what I experienced and are usual. As an ex-Education Minister, I know that the most difficult thing is not to find what works but to get it into every school. The real challenge is rolling out good practice. I am cautiously excited, if that is not a contradiction in terms, to have got this model into 80 schools in Birmingham in five years and to be all ready to move to the primary schools. I wanted to bring that to the attention of this debate as something I hope we can take forward.

I know that, after we started, the Government came forward with their Green Paper, the first aid kit and measures to work with schools. I applaud that and am grateful for it, but the worry of our team in BEP is that elements of this still use the NHS-based model. If I get over one fact in this debate, it is that that by itself will not work. It has to be a model that is wrapped round, runs through and envelops the life that children have in schools, so that attention to mental health is part of how we do our job and not something that we have to refer children to.

I will finish by giving four or five points that BEP has learned and wants to bring to the attention of this debate—I am merely chair of the organisation and pay tribute to the team. First, quick wins are possible and there is nothing wrong with them, but sustained work needs time and consistency. The fact that we are going into our fifth year of this project is an important message in itself. Secondly, these lead teachers need to be confident and well trained, and have good subject knowledge and the confidence to train others. They therefore need training on an ongoing basis that will

bring them together and enable them to do their job. Thirdly, schools need to be supported by an integrated team with other skills and other professionals.

I will make two points to finish about things that are not around yet but which will come. Schools need to know who to go to in order to buy or get good quality support. This will become a market. There are lots of organisations—some good and some not so good—selling or giving services. We will get to the point where we as politicians can list the organisations and resources which schools can access to support this work, but we do not give teachers the information they need to make wise decisions about what they buy or access.

Lastly, our team made a point which made me smile: you have to work within the school year. The National Health Service does not work in line with the school year. If we are to bring professionals together to create in our schools an environment where children are given the skills and knowledge to create as good mental health and well-being as possible, we have to work around the rhythms of what they do.

As I say, I am not putting this forward as something that is guaranteed to be a success, but I am confident that it is a more than valuable and important contribution to the debate, which I am delighted we are now having.

12.35 pm

Lord Addington (LD): My Lords, the fairest question we can ask any Minister in this debate is, “What are you doing to lead the action that is required here?” No one department can deal with this. When you talk about young people, clearly you will be talking about education—there has already been a great deal of emphasis on that. However, if you look across at the things that are working, take a leaf out of your own sports policy. Exercise is reckoned to be incredibly good for most people with mental health problems. Taking part in a sports team is a good way to prevent mental health problems, as you get a positive attitude and company, and the endorphins and stress release of sport help.

What are we doing to encourage that? What is the Department for Education—which, let us face it, is one of the few departments which is not quite as tightly squeezed as the rest of government at the moment—doing to lead this? That is the question that it is fair to ask the Minister; I am afraid that it comes with the job. What are you doing to help make sure that we get things right? If you do not, the Department for Education and everyone else will merely shuffle the problems on to you. What does not come to the Department of Health and Social Care will go into the criminal justice system. Where people fail to function in society is where it ends. On every occasion, when there is somebody who cannot function in respect of mental health or anything else—you name it—that is where you pick it up. You are the catch-all for what goes wrong.

Can the Minister give us some idea of what encouragement the department is giving to make sure that in the field of education the Department of Health is saying to the Department for Education, “Will you make sure that people are educated in such a way that they can thrive?” I refer to the groups that

[LORD ADDINGTON]

were mentioned in the good and comprehensive opening remarks from the noble Baroness, Lady Royall: those with special educational needs. I remind the House once again of my interests in this field.

The All-Party Group for Dyslexia and Specific Learning Difficulties, led by Sharon Hodgson, flanked by myself and Henry Smith MP, has just produced a document in which we looked at the personal costs to dyslexics as a group and the amount of stress experienced by an individual and their parents if they are dyslexic and their needs are not being met as they go through the educational system. Stress is a great trigger mechanism for mental health problems—I think that is agreed. What are we doing to make sure that the Department of Health and Social Care says to the Department for Education, “You’re shovelling your problem on to us”? These trigger mechanisms are in place, but because of recent education reforms people are saying to dyslexics, my group—which is not the only one that is suffering—“You must get English”, and are putting an emphasis on taking more spelling tests, which is probably the world’s worst thing to do to a dyslexic. If you have a bad short-term memory and bad language processing, it does not matter how many times you do a spelling test—you will still forget. I know, because I have done it. What are we doing to say, “Stop doing these things that aggravate this very large group”—roughly 10% of the population?

As I said, they are not the only group. The National Autistic Society reckons that 70% of those with autism have mental health problems in the school system because of this pressure. It is not those with the most obvious problems—the low-functioning autistic or very severe dyslexic—but those who probably could just function in the system whom we must worry about. They are the people who will be overlooked and who will not get help automatically. I always use the example that if you have a car at the side of the road with smoke coming out of the bonnet and somebody shrieking, people will stop and help. If you are stuck in third gear, you are a pain.

What are the Government doing to lead this activity? Those are only two small examples covering two areas. How are they bringing this together? If the department does not do that, we will have high, pious words. Everyone will say, “Oh, it is terribly difficult”. Most of the reaction in the education system will be, “If we wait a few years, it will be another bit of the education system’s problem. Then it will be the Department for Work and Pensions’ problem—and then it will be a problem for the criminal justice system and then for the Department of Health”. That is what happens. We need co-ordination, and the Minister’s department must lead it.

12.41 pm

Lord Bradley (Lab): My Lords, I, too, congratulate my noble friend Lady Royall on her excellent opening speech to this very important debate. I also declare my interests in health and education as recorded in the register.

I will take a few moments of my time to sincerely thank both Houses of Parliament, including the Ministers—the noble Baroness, Lady Blackwood, and

the noble Baroness, Lady Goldie, who has just left the Chamber—and my noble friend Lady Thornton, on behalf of my sister Janet, Gavin, Miles and both of our families for the very kind messages of sympathy following the deaths of my sister, Dr Sally Bradley, and her husband, Bill Harrop, in the Sri Lankan bombings. They were a great comfort to us all. Thank you.

Turning to the subject of the debate, I will first make a brief comment about the funding of mental health services. In a Written Answer, the Minister advised me that the cumulative increase in NHS England’s revenue funding would be £6.2 billion in 2019-20, rising to £25.4 billion in 2022-23. The *NHS Long Term Plan* indicates that at least £2.3 billion more will be spent on mental health care. Assuming we receive that £2.3 billion, it means that over the period, the percentage spend on mental health will actually reduce from 37% in 2019-20 to 9% in 2022-23. We also know that the proportion of that spend on children and adolescent mental health services is only about 15% of the total. If we are really to tackle the gaps in mental health services for children, a significant further shift in resource allocation from physical to mental health must be made to achieve the ambition of parity of esteem. I should be very grateful for the Minister’s views on that point.

Secondly, I will say a brief word on the workforce. The long-term plan states that,

“we will continue to increase the NHS workforce, training and recruiting more professionals—including thousands more clinical placements for undergraduate nurses”.

There is a real crisis in our current mental health workforce, given the age profile of those extremely dedicated staff and the number who will retire in the next few years. It was disappointing that the workforce plan was not published at the same time as the long-term plan. Obviously, we welcome the work that the noble Baroness, Lady Harding, is undertaking on behalf of the Government, but can the Minister confirm today when the final report will be published and what engagement the noble Baroness has had with universities undertaking high-quality nurse training, such as the University of Salford in Greater Manchester, where I am honoured to be the pro-chancellor? Without a clear, robust workforce plan, whatever the increase in funding, timely access to essential support for the spectrum of mental health needs—the key issue—will not be achieved.

Turning to mental health and well-being in the education system, I will raise two issues. First, many representations—including my own—have been made through YoungMinds and the Children and Young People’s Mental Health Coalition to Ofsted as it reviews its inspection framework to ensure that it assesses and recognises the effectiveness of schools and academies in supporting children and young people’s well-being. I hope the Minister will ensure that it becomes part of the Ofsted framework to ensure that early intervention in schools is comprehensive and consistent across the country.

Secondly, it is clear from the speeches we have already heard that mental health issues in higher education are a crucial challenge that universities need to address. Over the past five years, 94% of universities have

experienced a sharp increase in the number of people trying to access support services. I therefore commend to the Minister an initiative in Greater Manchester that established a task force, following a workshop bringing together all the universities in Greater Manchester, the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership, the Mayor of Greater Manchester, mental health experts and clinicians. The task force designed an integrated single pathway and hub for all 100,000 students in Greater Manchester and included a central physical treatment hub in the area of greatest student density—on Oxford Road, near the centre of Manchester—and two further hubs in Salford and Bolton, as well as a clear pathway to enable students to be referred through existing support channels, digital consultation sessions, digital communication with students and many other initiatives. This is a two-year pilot going live at the start of the new academic year in September and co-funded by the universities and the NHS. I hope the Minister will visit Greater Manchester to review this project, with a view to it being rolled out as a model across the country.

Finally, I will make a brief comment on mental health, learning disabilities and the criminal justice system. Over the past few years, since my report was published in 2009, a core all-age liaison and diversion service has been rolled out across the country to support people who hit against or find themselves in the criminal justice system. It is anticipated that the scheme will reach 100% geographical coverage over the next year. The next stage, for the next 10 years, is to address particular health issues. I raise one today—autism—in recognition of how many people with that condition may find themselves a witness, victim or suspect in the criminal justice system. We must improve access to training for all staff working in the criminal justice system—whether in police stations, courts, probation services or prisons—on autism and other key vulnerabilities, and deliver on the commitment in the *NHS Long Term Plan* to,

“invest in additional support for the most vulnerable children and young people in, or at risk of being in, contact with the youth justice system”.

I hope the Minister will help drive this forward.

12.48 pm

Lord Bragg (Lab): My Lords, I too thank the noble Baroness, Lady Royall, and congratulate her on introducing such an important subject at a particularly apposite time. Her comprehensive speech was compelling. I declare an interest: from 1996 to 2011 I was president of Mind, the leading mental health charity in the UK. In 2011 I handed over to Stephen Fry, but I have continued to work for Mind and its CEO, Paul Farmer.

Although it could not be called an interest, it is also relevant to say that I am rather in the position of my noble friend Lady McIntosh. I had a severe breakdown in my early teens. This lasted about a year and a half and had many unhappy consequences at school, at home and in the town. I raise this to observe that at that time, 1953-54, there was no one I could say a word to about what was happening, neither at home nor at school. There was nothing I could read, and I never dreamed of going to the doctor about such an inexplicable event that I could not articulate. Even now it is impossible

to describe. It seems to have been an inescapable condition and the only thing I could do at the time was to hide it. Isolated and imprisoned like so many young people are today, it was a desert.

I can draw the following from that for this debate. First, mental health issues are still largely invisible, which over centuries has resulted in them being dismissed as the devil’s work, mere make-believe, obstinate laziness or the sufferer’s own fault. It has also persistently carried stigma, with the word “mental”, by a vicious irony, being applied to someone whose unimaginable affliction was mentally generated. You can see a fractured arm and sympathise; a fractured mind eludes sight and sympathy.

The example of my childhood, which could have been multiplied 10,000 times or more by people of my age at that time, was likely to have been considered a mark of shame, beyond reach. Sufferers were taunted or ostracised. Remember, this was soon after World War II, when tens of thousands of victims of traumatic stress in this country were totally ignored.

The main point I wish to make in my contribution is to argue how very much has changed for the better since that time. It is perhaps against the flow of this debate but it is important to air it. I am aware of how far there is to go and, thanks to Mind, I have a litany of sad statistics. One in 10, or nearly 850,000, children and young people aged five to 16 are diagnosed with mental health problems and this is increasing. These statistics have been set out by other people. However, the progress over the past 50 years—especially the past dozen or so years—is important to show that these problems are being resolutely tackled at last.

Another personal example I will now give may seem to be on the margins of usefulness but I think it matters. So, if your Lordships will excuse me once again, I will use personal experience. About 20 years ago, when I helped run the Mind annual book award for the best book of the year concerning mental distress, I tried to find a sponsor. Mind’s money came almost wholly from its effective shops throughout Britain. A sponsorship of £5,000 would have been a help. I approached a number of organisations and well-known patrons and, to use a phrase, none of them wanted to know. They did not want the association. The ancient taboo that mentally ill people were destabilising was still rigidly in place. Perhaps they feared contamination by association.

How greatly for the better times have changed. The younger members of the Royal Family, for instance, have just come onside emphatically and openly and with a substantial contribution from their own funds—unthinkable before—and have aligned themselves with the cause we are discussing today. This is a tremendous boost. The great and the good—I say this with gratitude and not irony—have over the past dozen years moved into this area with substantial impact. Tonight, for instance, with Stephen Clarke, the CEO of WHSmith, I will be talking to more than 100 people at the house of the noble Lord, Lord Fink, in London, who will be there because of their interest in helping Mind’s efforts for young people. It is a high-level involvement on their part and it is important for us. Their contributions will be invaluable and fill many a gap in the present struggling system for mental health for the young.

[LORD BRAGG]

Something in our society has shifted. In this as in some other areas we have become kinder. Perhaps generous people looking for a cause to support have found—who knows, perhaps on their own doorsteps?—that this problem affects the most vulnerable and needs all the help that powerful patronage can bring. They are acting pro bono publico and Mind is grateful to them.

As we have heard, the subject is now referred to much more openly on the television and certain newspapers have come out in support and have, above all, made the issue visible. The formerly unmentionable has now become a problem that can be addressed and, I hope, set on the road to benefit many young people who, at the moment in our country, are locked in a state of mind from which they despair ever to be released. It is part of the good that is happening here as more and more we are uncovering minorities who have been scorned or neglected and trying to bring them home into the larger community that is our country. We are as good as we treat the weakest people among us, and that needs to be singled out for praise.

As I said, I know there is a long way to go but we are now on the road. For instance, Anne Longfield, the Children's Commissioner, points to the vast number of reports we have had on children's mental health recently. That is a mark of the some way in which we have gone.

We learn in this debate how far there is to go. Although we are failing, we are trying, and that is important. We are trying better. If we can make as much progress in the next 20 years as we have made in the past 20 years, we could be well on the way to removing the stigma, the centuries-old, deep prejudice, and alleviating the torments attending so many young people. We need to harness the strength of hope for our young people who need help so much, who need to be reached and restored to the full possibilities of the lives they deserve.

12.55 pm

Lord Hastings of Scarisbrick (CB): My Lords, I, too, am deeply grateful to my friend, the noble Baroness, Lady Royall, for allowing us to have this important debate in which many personal experiences have been shared. I start by referring to a conversation that happened yesterday. The noble Lord, Lord Giddens, is no longer in his place, but he brought us towards understanding the pain and pressure of suicide. Yesterday afternoon I met a young man who graduated from Manchester University with a first-class degree in politics and economics. He spent the week immediately after Easter with nine others in Tenerife. They were working with an established church which every year seeks to cater for the thousands of young British men and women who go to Tenerife to have a drink-filled funfest over seven days. In the course of that week, three guys and one girl aged 17 to 20 committed suicide. They were meant to be relishing the freedom of economy and opportunity. They all had exceptional grades from school but none of them were happy enough to survive a week away.

Much has been said in this debate about the importance of families and the vital need for communities around our young people. I recently looked at two Gallup surveys. One was on global purpose and asked hundreds

of thousands of people around the world, including in the UK, what they felt about the value of their lives. The other, which has just been published, is based on the world happiness report. The statistics from the Gallup survey on purpose reveal that just over 80% of people in the world, mainly adults, say they do not know what their purpose in life is. In Europe, 22% of people say they know what their life is about and why they exist. In other words, there is a severe deficit of purpose among adults. This will translate on to the next generation. When it comes to happiness, interestingly, communities and countries with the highest levels of happiness are in the south. Patagonia is the happiest place in the world. Latin American countries, Africa and parts of Asia show higher levels of happiness than North America and Europe. What is this telling us? It is telling us that people feel that the complexity of our well-heeled lives in the western, richer world is not giving us the community of well-being that allows that essence of strong families, good relationships and strong coherence that is more easily experienced in poorer communities. That raises the real question: what is wealth and what is it for?

A report was published a few months ago by the Legatum Institute: *The Maker Generation: Post-Millennials and the Future they are Fashioning*. The noble Baroness, Lady Stroud, is chief executive of the Legatum Institute. The report refers to the good news and, as the noble Lord, Lord Bragg, has just indicated, there is good news. There has been a 71% fall in the number of young people sentenced for criminal offences in the past decade; teenage pregnancies are down; the use of drugs among 11 to 15 year-olds has halved in the past decade; and underage drinking is declining. That is the good news. However, Legatum says:

“Britain has developed an adolescent mental health crisis”.

All the statistics that we have heard about and referred to clearly indicate that that is the reality. Its report is based entirely on government analysis and says:

“The proportion of children living in lone parent families has tripled, to 25%. A recent study found that only just over 50% of 16 year olds are living with both their biological parents. The change in family life, and for some the absence of a father in particular, means that many new parents have not had the role models previous generations relied upon to teach and guide them”.

It goes on to talk about the absence of cohesiveness in neighbourhoods, which drives severe well-being and mental health pressures in addition to the many other factors that have been referred to in the absence of services.

Therefore, we live in a more conflict-based society, and in the last week ITV has been coming to terms with what that means. The complexity of society brings huge pressures. Our communities are less secure, relationships and long-term commitments are less coherent, and our sense of endless risk divides people. Excessive over-concern about risk separates communities, but that is not the case in the happiest nations in the world. We need a review of our risk reality, and we also need to look at a different form of citizenship that encourages active community, which brings well-being.

1.01 pm

Lord Layard (Lab): My Lords, in her excellent speech my noble friend Lady Royall described the dismal state of access to treatment for young people with mental health problems—a point repeated by almost every speaker. The question is how to deal with it. I think that the way forward is quite clear, because the situation for children now is almost exactly the same as it was for adults in 2008. However, since then, the situation for adults has been improved radically through the programme for improving access to psychological therapy, otherwise known as IAPT. This includes a large programme for training therapists, plus new services rolled out across the country to deal with all but the most serious cases, who continue to use regular mental health services.

What we need to do for children now is exactly what has already been done for adults, and that is the approach that the Government agreed to in the Green Paper. That was an excellent document. It proposed creating a nationwide system of mental health support teams to do for children what IAPT has been doing for adults. The teams will take all those cases that fall below the very high CAMHS threshold, and typically they will do that in the friendly setting of a school. Therefore, this is a moment of great hope and I congratulate all those in the Department of Health and Social Care and in NHS England who have brought us to this point. However, I also want to raise three key issues in respect of which I think the programme could be significantly strengthened.

The first is training. At present, the training is mainly for handling only mild to moderate problems. However, unless the service can also handle moderate to severe cases, it will end up passing many children who start off in it upwards to CAMHS and the blockage in CAMHS will continue, just as happens now. Therefore, in these new support services we need a stream of “high-intensity” therapists, as they are known, working with young people in the same way as they work with adults in IAPT.

The other issue is conduct disorder, which is not adequately covered in the training of the support teams. It is as serious a problem as anxiety and depression. We have already trained 4,000 practitioners to deliver the group training of parents of children with conduct disorder but very few of them are being used. We should be using them.

The second issue that I want to raise is the management of the service. When adult IAPT started, it was helped enormously by an expert reference group, which included leading psychological therapists, who brought their experience to bear on the design of the service and, conversely, carried back to the profession their own excitement about what was happening. However, we do not have any such group for children, and many leading figures in the profession feel excluded from the process. That is a real pity, and I hope that the Minister can assure us that such a group will be created. I hope that she can also assure us that the more ambitious training scheme that I have mentioned can be put in motion.

The third issue is scale. The Government have allocated only £250 million to the support teams over the first three years. In current money, that is half the figure

that was spent on adult IAPT in its first five years. This timorous approach means that, as has been mentioned, under a third of the country will be touched by the new children’s service in the first three years. Surely we should be more ambitious than that. In fact, I would like to suggest that we should be more ambitious about mental health overall. Since 2000, mental health has been the top priority of the NHS—that is what has always been said—but the share of NHS expenditure has remained exactly the same. That will change only if the NHS has a specific, separate, ring-fenced budget for mental health. This is an issue that we should all think about. I suggest that we need a budget for mental health growing at 6% a year in real terms compared with 3% for physical health.

Finally, I would like to ask two questions about schools. First, the Prime Minister has promised to enable schools to measure the well-being of their children. That is an excellent idea that will affect schools’ ability to help children and incentivise them to take well-being much more seriously as a goal alongside academic achievement. However, we have not heard what is going to happen as a result, and what I have heard has been worrying. Can the Minister tell us what, concretely, is going to happen with the Prime Minister’s promise?

My second question concerns life skills. This Government have been the first to make life skills compulsory. That is a huge and excellent step forward, but they have not said how much time as a minimum should be devoted to life skills. In some schools, it will be rather a small amount. Can the Minister assure us that some guidance will be given on the minimum amount of time to be spent on this? I suggest that it should be at least one lesson a week.

Therefore, things are moving forward, as many speakers have said. That is wonderful, but surely they need to move a lot faster.

1.07 pm

Lord Woolf (CB): My Lords, like previous speakers, I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Royall, for obtaining this debate, and I congratulate her on a remarkable speech in opening it. It was of a standard which has so far been maintained by the other speakers.

I have one thing in common with the noble Baroness, Lady McIntosh, in that I, too, am not an expert on this matter. However, I am speaking in this debate largely because of the interest I have gained as a result of a member of my family being autistic. I have seen at first hand, although not as a parent, the problems that autism can cause for families. Here, I acknowledge that the noble Lord, Lord Farmer, is undoubtedly right in saying that if you have a good family background, the problem can be more proportionate than it would otherwise be. Even for the best of families, where the parents are deeply devoted to an autistic child, the problems of having that child can be immense because things do not work as well as they should.

I draw attention to my interests in the register, and point out that as a judge, or a person who spends his working life largely judging, you become very much involved with prisons. At one time I was president of the Prison Reform Trust—I believe I am still technically

[LORD WOOLF]

president. I see the noble Lord, Lord Bragg, who helped me very much when I was chair. He is nodding his head. The fact is that you need to go around prisons to see what the consequence can be of young people not getting the assistance that we know they need. The sad thing is that the majority of youngsters you meet there have a mental health problem of one sort or another, and sometimes dyslexia. I would not say that that was a mental health problem but it is one that, like an earlier speaker, I suffered from myself at one time, so I am very conscious of the difficulties that it can create.

At the moment I am a member of the Joint Committee on Human Rights. Under the able chairmanship of Harriet Harman, the committee is taking an in-depth look at the people we are talking about today. The report will not be available until the summer but it is probably good for the House to know about the sort of evidence that has been presented to us. The adviser to the committee and our clerk from the Lords have kindly helped me to, I hope, tread on the right side of making revelations about what the committee is considering without prematurely disclosing some of our evidence.

From the evidence that we have received, there is no doubt that there are still substantial problems in this area for those directly involved. Evidence from parents and people who work in this area indicates the sort of problems that occur. My belief is that, unfortunately, although there has been the progress that previous speakers have mentioned, it has been nothing like as great as it could have been if the efficiency with which the help was provided had been greater. People caught up in the situation of doing what is right for a child who has problems of this sort find that they are pulled in different directions, and that they do not get the sympathetic hearing they would expect to receive. It is very disturbing that this should be the situation.

There is also the fact that, all too often, instances of separation and restraint occur because the children, if they receive help, are in institutions that cannot care for them. I accept that there are huge difficulties in managing the complex issues in custodial settings, but surely we can manage to ensure that our system works in a way that is compatible with the real needs of the people seeking help.

I notice that my time is running out, so I shall sit down.

1.14 pm

Baroness Massey of Darwen (Lab): My Lords, this is an important debate. I thank my noble friend Lady Royall for introducing it with such eloquence and for the information that she has supplied. I have listened to many moving speeches today containing evidence for urgent action on this issue.

I want to focus mainly on what young people themselves and their parents say about mental health services provision in schools. I draw on my experience of working with young people and parents and on evidence from the Association for Young People's Health, of which I am a patron, and with which parliamentarians have just set up an All-Party Parliamentary Group on

Young People's Health. Our last meeting was on the mental health of students, with eloquent testimonies of some of the problems described by my noble friend.

I start with a quotation from a review by the Association for Young People's Health, which spoke to parents about their concerns. One parent said about her daughter:

"She'll come to me and she breaks my heart: 'help me mum', and I say, I promise I'll help you pet, I'll make sure you get help. And I feel like I'm banging my head against a brick wall because it doesn't happen, it never happens".

That sums up the situation described by many here today. We know that the situation is worrying. We know the Government have expressed concern in many ways and are putting money into their concern. However, there are problems of funding and of timing. This is an urgent issue. I feel that the situation is fraying around the edges, as described by some of my colleagues today.

I want to mention the aspect that concerns me most, as highlighted by the Local Government Association. Funding reductions to local authorities mean that many councils are being forced to reduce intervention work to support children and young people. The early intervention grant has been reduced by almost £600 million since 2013. Children's services will have a projected funding gap of £3 billion by 2025. Youth clubs are closing, mental health services are overwhelmed and Sure Start centres are disappearing. I do not understand the logic of putting money into children and young people's mental health, as this Government intend to do, when so many services are being eroded by these devastating cuts.

I turn to what young people and parents think about the state of mental health services and what might be done about it. I was involved in a seminar in Parliament in November 2016 at which young people, NGOs, academics and service deliverers met interactively and equally to discuss child mental health and child-friendly justice. Young people constituted half the group. One young woman said at the beginning of the seminar, "We are experts by experience". That is why I make a strong plea for involving young people in defining problems and suggesting solutions.

Young people require protection and good services, but they also require empowerment to speak out and help themselves. Some points that the young people made in the seminar were about the stigma attached to mental health; the importance of cultural awareness in dealing with young people's mental health issues; problems around consent and consensus for treatment; access to treatment, including waiting lists; there not being enough counsellors in schools; schools being too focused on academic results to note early warning signs—for example, eating disorders; a lack of sensitivity to vulnerable groups, such as BME and LGBT youngsters and those in the criminal justice system; and the negative impact of social media, which can also be a force for good—for example, with helpline support groups. They emphasised the need for campaigns of positive information about mental health. They suggested that good interventions include buddy systems in schools and youth services; committed, informed professionals; and awareness being raised by well-known, high-profile people speaking out.

I turn to what parents have said in surveys, and in particular to a project to support young people with mental health problems carried out two years ago by the Association for Young People's Health. Some 41% of them said that agencies involved in mental health issues for children do not include or consult them. These parents created a network for parents, which snowballed into other networks. Things they found helpful were: the development of parent support groups; provision of more practical advice for parents; provision of mentors, support groups, helplines or advocates for parents; more consistency in how schools operate as intermediaries in involving parents; easier access to early intervention; crisis support; and acknowledgement that parents are important partners in helping young people recover. One sad and worrying thing that 36% of parents said is that they had had to resort to private treatment, because there was no access to CAMHS. I hope the Government will listen to this, and strengthen these services.

I do not have time to dwell on the local and national cost savings of tackling mental health problems, which are huge. Millions could be saved on this annually. However, the life chances of young people are being affected and the key to all this is the welfare and happiness of young people and families.

1.21 pm

Lord Haskel (Lab): My Lords, speaking last, I cannot help but observe that all of us, and the country, have been on a mental health journey—a journey making us more and more aware of the prevalence, growth and impact of mental ill-health, its effect on people's lives and the shortage of related services. I congratulate my noble friend on moving this debate, especially during Mental Health Awareness Week when a lot of these considerations come together.

As I became more and more aware of mental health on my journey, so I was able to observe and recognise how young people were coming under greater stress, and how the services designed to deal with this stress were themselves coming under more and more stress and pressure. The causes are everywhere; noble Lords have mentioned school, home, the media, sport, relationships and the transition to adulthood. I have particularly noticed the polarisation of the generations, as shown in the recent FCA report, which I think deserves a lot more study. Others have spoken of social media, where platforms are set up to reward young people's engagement so that they are encouraged to continuously feed off each other, adding to their stress. We really need to get on with separating control of the platforms from control of the content.

Like my noble friend Lady McIntosh, I have no expertise, but it seems to me that the best support one can give is to help those who are trying to establish good practice and sound procedures to prevent these problems emerging in the first place and, if they do emerge, to provide help in coping with them. YoungMinds has campaigned for additional investment in services for young people's mental health while at the same time providing a parents' helpline for information, advice and support for those concerned about the mental health of young people. It has also made people more aware of mental health problems so that

they can be caught earlier. The earlier the intervention, the less pressure there is on services and on the child. Awareness is important, but it is absolutely no substitute for action.

These positive measures are the best sources of prevention, but of course they are difficult to measure. Can the Minister reassure us that, even so, the prevention strategy will include these positive measures? They are especially important now, with cuts to youth services and community workers, and sport, art, music and other activities in schools being cut due to academic pressures. As others have said, we know that the majority of mental health problems are established when we are young. This makes a prevention strategy especially important.

Another aspect of maintaining the mental health of young people is to ensure that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is upheld, in government, schools, health services and criminal justice. I came across this as part of my duties as a member of your Lordships' Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee, when we scrutinised an order regarding children working undercover for the police. This brought me into contact with Just For Kids Law, a charity which campaigns for the rights of juveniles under this UN charter.

In May 2017, the UK was examined under the universal periodic review carried out by the United Nations, which includes examining the rights of the child. Among the recommendations coming out of this review are recommendations about age-appropriate mental health services. However, in spite of campaigning, the Government supported only 28% of the recommendations regarding children's rights and mental health. Of course, the Government can choose whether to just take note of recommendations from the United Nations committee or to accept them; they do not have the force of law. However, they have a moral pressure. Can the Minister tell us the status of the recommendations which were not accepted? Are they under consideration, or have they been rejected?

Of course, the mental health of young people touches us all. To this end, in October last year the Government announced an ambitious programme to train 1 million people in mental health awareness, with a pilot in the West Midlands ahead of a national rollout which was to take place about now. Is this going to happen?

Real improvement in young people's mental health is achieved by reaching young people early, hopefully before they actually need the services. For this, we all need to be aware. Mental Health Awareness Week is an important contribution to this and, together with other noble Lords, I welcome the opportunity to participate.

1.27 pm

Baroness Tyler of Enfield (LD): My Lords, I add my congratulations to the noble Baroness, Lady Royall, on securing this vital debate during Mental Health Awareness Week. I refer to my interests in the register.

It has been a powerful debate, which has confirmed in my mind that the worsening state of children and young people's mental health is becoming one of the major social policy challenges facing our country. We

[BARONESS TYLER OF ENFIELD]

are becoming familiar now with the statistic that one in eight five to 19 year-olds has a diagnosed mental health disorder. To try to make that a bit more real, that is roughly three children in every classroom.

Looking ahead, the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health's report entitled *Child Health in England in 2030* found that reported mental health problems in England are set to increase by 63% over the next decade—a huge increase. Already, the number of girls under 18 being treated in hospital after self-harming has nearly doubled compared with 20 years ago, and the number of referrals by schools seeking mental health treatment for pupils has shot up by over one-third in the last three years, with over 50% of these coming from primary schools. That is a really worrying trend.

We have already heard about the long-term plan for NHS England, which builds on the *Five Year Forward View for Mental Health*. It makes some very welcome commitments for further investment in children and young people's mental health services. I particularly pick out the new waiting time standards, investment in eating disorder services and the expansion of crisis services to a 24/7 service. It is welcome that funding for children and young people's mental health services will grow faster than both overall NHS funding and total mental health spending.

Then, of course, as others have said, we have the Green Paper's proposals. Those proposals to bring schools and NHS services closer together and to act earlier to identify children who need effective help to prevent them falling into a crisis are of course welcome. The proposed new mental health support teams have the potential to make a real difference, but as my noble friend Lord Storey said, they really need to be rolled out a lot faster. Of course I understand why they cannot be created overnight, and I welcome the fact that training for the first cohort of these new teams started recently, at I think seven universities, but based on the Government's own estimates, on current plans some children who are eight now may not receive any additional support before they leave school at 18—a full decade after the new teams have been launched.

To summarise, much is promised or in the pipeline, but what is the reality on the ground? Quite simply, too often children and young people's needs are going unmet. Currently, less than one in three children with a diagnosable mental health condition is getting access to NHS treatment and care, which I am sure we all agree is a scandalous state of affairs. The Care Quality Commission's review of access to children's mental health services last year found a "complex and fragmented" system at local level with multiple providers and minimal co-ordination of service delivery, while high demand and limited resources meant that far too often the referral threshold to CAMHS, as we have heard, was far too high in many places. At the tail end of last year, we had reports from the NAO and the Public Accounts Committee that absolutely echoed these findings.

Further evidence, if we need any more, comes from Healthwatch. I am grateful to it for sending its recently summarised findings of 152 local Healthwatch organisations in each local authority around the country. In short it

found, first, that children experience long waits to see a specialist and often complain about poor communications from services. Secondly, access to assessment services is challenging, the referral process is complicated, and often young people did not feel that they were listened to. Thirdly, a lack of timely and appropriate information for young people and parents was a problem. Indeed, young people often said that they felt patronised by the tone of materials produced for them and that they would like to discuss mental health more in schools, which I will return to in a minute. Fourthly, the transition from children's to adult services is confusing and challenging. As we heard, we have too many young people falling through the gap. Fifthly, there is a real lack of integration between learning disability and mental health services, leading to services being not at all tailored to specific needs.

This is a very familiar and depressing catalogue of problems, so what do we do about it? I will suggest a short-term solution before coming to longer-term solutions. To help overcome the fragmentation that I have been talking about, the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health recommends piloting and evaluating a "local offer" for mental health, mirroring the existing local offer for special educational needs introduced by the Children and Families Act. This is something I strongly support. A local offer for mental health would provide comprehensive information about the available services in a local area and how to access them, but it would also very importantly identify shared responsibilities across authorities for ensuring that children and young people are supported as close as possible to their home.

This "local offer" approach has much to commend it. It would help to co-ordinate local services and make gaps in provision more visible, therefore encouraging local providers to work together to fill those gaps. I raised this with the Minister at Oral Questions on 25 March, and she kindly said that she would consider the suggestion and get back to me. Could I ask her if she is yet in a position to respond on this important point? I would very much like to know her thinking in this area.

I turn now to longer-term solutions. Workforce is the biggest issue that the system faces. It has been said many times in many quarters that it is the overriding barrier to improving access to children's mental health services. I know that NHS leaders face the daunting challenge of delivering the changes set out in the *NHS Long Term Plan*, alongside a workforce that is under huge strain and struggling to cope with widespread staff shortages. Figures from Health Education England in 2018 showed that a very worrying 60% of training places for child and adolescent psychiatry were unfilled. Frankly, Health Education England has limited data to develop its workforce plan. New data very recently released by NHS Digital shows there has been an almost 4% fall in the number of CAMHS psychiatrists between 2012 and 2019, despite the number of doctors for all other medical specialties during that period having risen by about 15%.

I have been trying to understand these workforce challenges. They are quite complicated. I spent a bit of time poring over *Stepping Forward to 2021*, produced by Health Education England, and I commend it for it. Quite frankly, I find it quite confusing and complex. It is the workforce plan to support delivering the

five-year forward view. Roughly, it talks about the need for about 20,000 additional workers in psychiatry, nursing and psychology to support the plans at the time. Now we have the expanded plans in the long-term plan. Others have mentioned that we are waiting for the workforce strategy that the noble Baroness, Lady Harding, is working on, which I am looking forward to. I very much appreciated the chance to meet with her last week. That was very helpful indeed. I have also talked recently to various mental health trusts that I have been fortunate enough to visit. I know how concerned they are about the need to expand the workforce and to retain staff at the same time.

I return briefly to schools, which have such a pivotal role to play. These points were raised very powerfully by the noble Lords, Lord Bradley and Lord Layard. We know that what gets measured gets done. That is why Peers on these Benches have called for Ofsted to include an assessment of the effectiveness of schools in supporting children and young people's mental health and well-being. Ofsted released its new inspection framework earlier this week, with new guidelines about how schools should be assessed. On the plus side, the framework has a greater emphasis on personal development and the quality of education, including confidence and resilience building. I was pleased to see more references to mental health throughout the inspection, but frankly I am disappointed that the reforms have not gone far enough. Under the new framework, schools and colleges will not receive any recognition for developing a whole-school approach, having positive responses for identifying mental health problems and ensuring that young people get support when problems first become involved. This is a missed opportunity to turn school inspections into a mechanism that would inspire real change for children and young people's mental health and psychological well-being. I would welcome the Minister's thoughts on this. I see that my time is up.

1.37 pm

Baroness Thornton (Lab): My Lords, I congratulate my noble friend on bringing this important debate to your Lordships' House. It is of course appropriate that we are having it during Mental Health Week, as my noble friend Lord Haskel said at the beginning of his remarks. Indeed, he is quite right: we have been on a mental health journey in this country over the past 10 to 20 years. My noble friend described most eloquently the issues facing students and others with mental health problems. I should like to address the scale of the challenge we face.

I start with a shaming aspect of this challenge. Some 22 children have died suspected self-inflicted deaths while admitted to mental health hospitals and in-patient units in the past five years. My noble friend Lord Giddens spoke more widely about the tragic issue of suicide and related behaviour. Figures released by the Department of Health and Social Care show that four patients aged under 18 have died already in 2019, matching the highest number of fatalities in any previous year.

A Sky News investigation reveals that poor care in privately run child and adolescent mental health services units is putting vulnerable young people at risk. Patients,

parents and whistleblowers have shared their experiences of privately run facilities paid directly by the NHS to care for some of the most challenging mental health patients, including those with serious eating disorders and those engaged in persistent self-harm and suicidal behaviour. One former patient told a story of the brutal physical restraint she had experienced, and of how she had been able to inflict life-threatening self-harm while in a privately-run unit. She said, "I would rather have been dead than alive in that place". Former staff at another facility run by the same company until it was closed last month, described the culture of self-harm as "out of control", and alleged that employees were directed to downplay serious incidents. Sky News revealed that a former member of staff at a third unit, also now closed, is subject to a police investigation.

These children are often placed in units many miles from home and family because of a shortage of appropriate services in their area. In 2017-18, NHS England paid private providers £156.5 million for specialist mental health services, which is 44% of its specialist budget. Inspection reports compiled since 2016 for 60 CAMHS units show that 88% of the NHS units were rated good or outstanding, while just 58% of those run by the largest private recipients of NHS funding were rated good. No privately run unit was rated outstanding, five were rated inadequate, and, since 2017, five have been closed.

First, how acceptable does the Minister think this is? Does she think that the NHS is getting value for money from these units? What is the incentive to make these young people well, given that the duty of the private units is to their shareholders, which must mean keeping full occupancy? There is a potential conflict of interest here. Those of us who have recently been engaged on the Mental Capacity (Amendment) Bill will be familiar with this issue. I would like to know from the Minister what the safeguards are.

A recent FOI request by the Labour Party found that 1,039 children and adolescents in England were admitted to non-local beds in 2017-18 for NHS mental health treatment, in many cases more than 100 miles from home. Is it acceptable that patients from Canterbury in Kent were sent 285 miles for in-patient mental health care, those from Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly 258 miles, and those from Bristol 243 miles? What effect does the Minister think this has on the youngster and their family? If that family are on a low income, it might prove impossible to visit on a regular basis, or for them to know what treatment their youngster is receiving.

Let us look further at the scale of this challenge. As my noble friend Lady Royall said, three in four children with a diagnosable mental health condition do not get access to the support they need. Three in four: that is graphically illustrated by the narrative from my noble friend Lady Massey. CAMHS turn away 26%—more than a quarter—of children referred to them for treatment by concerned parents, GPs, teachers and others. The average waiting time is more than 26 weeks. In a YoungMinds survey, 76% of parents said that their children's mental health had deteriorated while waiting for CAMHS treatment.

Therefore, is it surprising that the number of A&E attendances by people aged 18 or under with a recorded diagnosis of a psychiatric condition has almost tripled

[BARONESS THORNTON]

since 2010? This translates, for example, to a severely depressed or anxious young person being at home for several months, unable to go to school because they feel so ill, with all the strain that puts on them and their family, to say nothing of the education they might be missing. They may become even more severely ill, which could have been avoided had treatment been readily available.

As many noble Lords have said, this means a huge cost to our NHS. Can the Minister provide assurance that the Government's forthcoming Green Paper on prevention will include measures to improve the promotion of positive mental health for children and young people? Given that one in six young people aged 16 to 24 have symptoms of a common mental health disorder such as depression or anxiety, how does the Minister's department aim to address the specific needs of that age group?

My noble friend Lord Bradley and the noble Baroness, Lady Tyler, have approached the workforce issues more than adequately. It is concerning that the number of doctors working in child and adolescent psychiatry has fallen every month since the beginning of 2018. There are serious societal problems that need addressing because of our children's growing mental health issues. My noble friend Lady Morris gave us a great message of hope, but children who have had the most difficult and complex starts in life, experiencing abuse, neglect, bereavement, discrimination or poverty, are more likely to have mental health problems as they grow up. A study by SafeLives showed that 52% of children who witness domestic abuse experience behavioural problems in later life.

At a time of austerity, rising personal debt and precarious work, we are all encouraged to be individuals and not rely on anybody. Society perceives us to have failed in life and look weak if we do. There is a narrative that many people choose to be on zero-hours contracts. Then there is the gig economy. All these things put stresses on families, which puts stresses on our children. It is not only a well-funded NHS that we need. It is no accident that countries with stable welfare systems and school systems that do not focus on endless testing have good records on workers' rights. That, surely, is where we must aim to be.

I thank my noble friend Lady McIntosh for her brave and honest speech. I too watched Nadiya Hussain yesterday, and was very moved by her story. I also thank my noble friend Lord Bragg for reminding us of the change we have seen and the reducing of stigmatisation, and my noble friend Lord Layard for asking very pointed questions about money, which is where I wish to end my remarks.

One of the key targets in the *Five Year Forward View for Mental Health* is to go from 25% of CYP to 35%. That still leaves 65% not receiving access, which is not good. I am so pleased that my noble friend Lord Bradley shared his huge experience with the House. He got to the nub of it. Research by YoungMinds demonstrated that only 14% of STP plans at local level showed evidence of engagement with children and young people. Can the Minister provide assurances that integrated care systems will be required to consult young people about the services that affect them, as part of the implementation of the NHS long-term plan?

1.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care (Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford) (Con): My Lords, I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Royall, for introducing this debate and giving us the opportunity to discuss such an important issue during Mental Health Awareness Week. She spoke movingly and importantly. We have had an extraordinary debate today, with many personal reflections; it is an incredibly valuable contribution to this week. I also thank those who have asked the huge range of questions which I am now tasked with trying to respond to in less than 20 minutes. I hope your Lordships will forgive me if I do not cover each one; I will write on those points I am not able to cover today.

The noble Baroness, Lady Royall, is absolutely right when she says that, unfortunately, it remains true that many young people who seek help for their mental health find it difficult to access the right support at the right time. This is wrong, and we need to work harder and faster to get it right.

I would like to start by responding to a point about data, made by the noble Lord, Lord Storey. We have recently improved the available data in two key areas, with a significant prevalence survey on mental health in young people that was done in 2018 with 9,117 children and young people aged between 2 and 19. It showed that the prevalence of mental health diagnosis has increased by 1.1% since the previous survey, and that 25.2% of young people with a diagnosable disorder report having been in contact with NHS mental health specialist services in the last year. This is important, because the previous prevalence survey was 10 years old, and during that period social media has intervened, which we expected to have had a significant effect. The CMO then did a review which created evidence-based guidelines on screen time—an important intervention. In addition, we have brought in the dashboard to track data at a local level and the implementation of various standards which we have brought in.

This is a huge improvement on the level of data and tracking that we have on mental health within the community and the performance of our mental health trusts compared to the last time I was in the post. Therefore, I would like to reassure the noble Lord on the point about data. It is not where we would like it to be, but it is still a significant step forward. I wanted to start on that, because you cannot talk about policy and where we are if you do not have the data to know about it. That is why I want to talk about where we have come to before I talk about where we need to go.

We are on track to meet the commitment to improving access that we made in the five-year forward view, and to have 70,000 more children and young people accessing treatment each year by 2020-21 compared to the 2014-15 baseline. We have introduced the first-ever access and waiting time standards for mental health services. For young people experiencing their first episode of psychosis, we have a target for early intervention to ensure that treatment begins within two weeks for more than 50%. Nationally, the NHS is exceeding this: over 75% of patients started treatment within two weeks in March 2019. We have also set a target for 95% of children and

young people with eating disorders—which have been on the increase—to access treatment, with a one-week referral for urgent cases and four weeks for routine cases by next year. Nationally, we are on track to meet this, with the most recent data showing that over 82% of patients started routine treatment within four weeks. We need to pay tribute to those who work incredibly hard within the mental health system and are making some very difficult changes to achieve this, coming from what was a very low base. It is important to pay tribute to them for their achievements.

I would like to move on to some questions put to me by the noble Baroness, Lady Royall, about crisis care, before moving on to those from the noble Baroness, Lady Thornton, about out-of-area placements and the private sector. The noble Baroness, Lady Royall, is absolutely right that we need to improve access to crisis care for those young people who need it most. A commitment has been made that we will invest £400 million in 24/7 crisis resolution home treatment teams in every local area by next year, and £249 million in mental health teams in A&E departments to improve the system. The long-term plan makes a commitment to ensure timely, universal mental health crisis care for everyone, including young people, and to drive out the variability which we recognise exists for them.

We also recognise the concerns raised by the noble Baroness, Lady Thornton, about out-of-area placements. We have made a commitment that inappropriate out-of-area placements must come to an end. Where there are specialist cases, a young person will need to travel, but we want in-patient stays to be as close to home as possible and to avoid inappropriate stays. For that reason, we have introduced the accelerated bed scheme, which has already created 117 new beds, with 69 new beds on the way. This is being done to reduce variability of access to in-patient care, but we also want to reduce that care by bringing in more prevention and earlier access to lower-level care, such as that pointed out by the noble Lord, Lord Layard. I shall return to the point that he made.

We are very concerned about the recent reports of failings within mental health care, which the noble Baroness raised. She is absolutely right that all providers of NHS services, whether NHS or private, must abide by the same high standards. Where this is not the case, we are ensuring that the NHS looks into the circumstances and considers what action should be taken. Private providers play an important role in the provision of children's mental health services, but these must be safe and of high quality. We have tough regulators to ensure that that happens.

I will move on now to the points made on early intervention by the noble Baroness, Lady Royall, and the noble Earl, Lord Listowel, who is not in place.

Baroness Thornton: He is there.

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: I apologise—perhaps the noble Earl is sitting low in his seat.

They are absolutely right that prevention and early intervention are crucial. We prioritised improving perinatal mental health when I was previously the Mental Health Minister for exactly that reason. The noble Earl put it so eloquently: it is vital for newborns to form that early attachment with their mother and father. We

must also consider the role played by the wider family, as those on our own Benches have put it. From 2020-21, we have put in place increased access to perinatal mental health services in all areas for at least 30,000 women, backed by £365 million in funding, as part of the five-year forward view for mental health. The long-term plan will also go further, with a commitment to increase evidence-based care for women with severe perinatal mental health difficulties and a personality disorder diagnosis, to benefit an initial 24,000 women per year by 2020-21. That is reassuring, but we also need to ensure that it carries on beyond the early years and into the school years—a point made by a number of your Lordships.

I recognise the impatience surrounding the Green Paper, but I would like to clarify a few points. The commitment within the Green Paper is to have a pilot, for 25 schools in the first instance, but it is then to incentivise every school and college to identify and train a designated senior lead for mental health to create new mental health support teams in and near schools and colleges. We are starting by piloting so that we can work out what the best design is and then move it across to all schools. The idea is not to have variability but to drive it through the whole system. While I recognise the frustration with rolling out these proposals in a phased way, it is a very ambitious commitment. We need to recruit and retain a workforce numbering in the thousands for the mental health support teams alone. We cannot do that overnight, given that there are over 20,000 schools and colleges. To roll out a fifth to a quarter of these by 2022-23 is already a challenging target. We must ensure that we train that workforce in an appropriate way to meet the challenges they will face.

I will also respond to the eloquent words of the noble Baroness, Lady McIntosh, and the moving experience which she spoke of. She is right that I do not speak for the Department for Education, but the thing about being at the Dispatch Box is that I can say whatever I like; once I am up here, they cannot pull me down. As she said, I speak as a former music graduate of Somerville, and I believe strongly in the importance of the arts, and in particular music, for education and mental health. I back her entirely on its importance for social prescribing as well. I will advocate strongly for that in this role. I agree with the noble Baroness that it is extremely important that young people's experience should be safe, inspiring and nurturing. We should all be pushing in our roles for more joy within our society.

I know that I will run out of time quite quickly, so I will move on. I would like to talk a little about the work we have been delivering for university students. This key aspect has arisen on a number of occasions, and I know that the mental health of young people in universities is vital. Noble Lords will be pleased to hear that NHS England and Universities UK are working together on a programme to support and improve mental health at universities through Universities UK's StepChange programme, which calls on higher education leaders to adopt mental health as a strategic priority and to take a whole-institution approach to mental health. As part of this programme, the Government are actively backing the introduction of a sector-led

[BARONESS BLACKWOOD OF NORTH OXFORD]
 university mental health charter, which will drive up standards in promoting student and staff mental health and well-being.

NHS England is also working closely with Universities UK through its mental health in higher education programme to improve welfare services and access to mental health services for the student population, including focusing on suicide reduction while improving access to psychological therapies. There is funding attached to this and I am happy to meet with the noble Baroness if she would like to discuss that further, as it is a vital part of the picture.

I will move on to the questions raised regarding stigma and social media, which are crucial if we are to have a preventive approach to the situation we find ourselves in. The noble Baroness, Lady Massey, and the noble Lord, Lord Bragg, spoke incisively on this issue. We are committed to eliminating the stigma around mental health and are providing £20 million in funding to the Time to Change national anti-stigma campaign, which has been hugely successful. As the noble Baroness rightly said, it involved high-profile individuals who cut through the noise that often comes at young people every day. The campaign aims to improve social attitudes towards mental health, including promoting the importance of well-being in all areas.

However, we should also think about one area that did not get aired within the debate, and that is those who face double stigma when they have a chronic condition. As I think was raised by the noble Baroness, Lady Tyler, there are those who have learning disabilities and mental ill-health. It is challenging for them to navigate their way through the system. Public Health England is delivering a £15 million national health campaign called Every Mind Matters, with the aim to equip 1 million people to be better informed to look after their own mental health. This will be of huge benefit going forward.

It is important that we do not imply, in this place, that everybody who suffers from mental ill-health will end up in the criminal justice system. I do not believe that is the case.

I also point out that this Government have been committed to addressing the agenda of social media and the harms it can produce, even though it is beneficial in other areas when it is used as an effective tool. That is why the Secretary of State has not only taken this on as a personal commitment in the round tables he has held with internet companies, but we are also bringing forward the online harms White Paper. The noble Lord, Lord Haskel, was right when he said that we have to make sure this has teeth. That is why there are commitments to bring forward a new regulator under it and why the CMO brought forward recommendations on screen time.

None of this is relevant if we do not have the workforce and funding that we need. I am pleased that NHS funding for young people has increased. I was concerned to hear the noble Lord, Lord Bradley, and his comments about reduced funding. The information I have is that children's mental health funding is increasing. It has gone up from £516 million in 2015-16 to £687.2 million in 2017-18. Planned spend next year is £727.3 million, an increase of 5.8% compared to the previous year. This will be monitored with the investment standard

and dashboard. I am happy to follow this up with the noble Lord, but I believe that NHS funding for mental health is increasing and at a faster rate than overall NHS funding. We are tracking this and ensuring that local CCGs stick to that commitment. This transformative investment will ensure that more young people receive the mental health support they need.

I finally turn to the questions about suicide prevention, which was movingly spoken about by the noble Lord, Lord Giddens, and others. The noble Lord is right that we have an excellent suicide prevention strategy. It must be based on accurate data. It is challenging to ensure we have that data, but I have a great deal of confidence in Public Health England working with local authorities to ensure we raise the standards of that work. Understanding the reasons for suicide is complex. Suicides among children are relatively rare, but each is an appalling tragedy, so we must work with every ounce of our abilities to move forward and make that better.

I am proud that we recently increased the amount of research funding for mental health, by a record amount, to £74.8 million. This will play an important role in helping us understand the sources of all forms of mental ill-health, including those that drive individuals to suicide.

While I am sure that noble Lords feel there are other areas I could have covered, and would like answers to other aspects, I hope that, by pointing out the areas of rising investment today and that we are improving access and waiting times, I have communicated to you that the Government are genuinely working across all departments to ensure that we see this as a priority agenda. I have demonstrated that we understand that we still face significant challenges. While we are impatient for faster improvement, there can be no question of our commitment to a brighter, healthier and more joyful future for our children and young people.

I was deeply moved to hear the words of the noble Lord, Lord Bragg, his testimony of his own experience some years ago and how different he feels things are today. Each of us still feels frustrated by how far we still have to come and how many things we still have to deliver to give our children the services that they deserve. I cannot think of a better way to close than by repeating some of the comments that he gave in his speech. We are only as good as the way we treat the weakest among us. There is a long way to go, but we are now on the road. If we can make as much progress in the next 20 years as we have in the last 20 years, we can give young people the stigma-free lives that they deserve.

2.05 pm

Baroness Royall of Blaisdon: My Lords, I am grateful to the Minister. That was a splendid summing up and it has been an excellent debate. I leave believing this is a priority for the Government, but I am still worried. We have had so many powerful speeches today and testaments to personal experiences. Many charities have been mentioned, and I pay tribute to them and, likewise, to the many brilliant projects taking place with the universities in Manchester and the schools in Birmingham. There is so much happening, which gives me great optimism and hope.

We have come a long way, as so many have said, and it is great that mental health is not the taboo it used to be. But far too many people are still suffering problems. I know that the Minister wants to do more, but we are all terribly impatient. Perhaps by working together we can make things move more quickly. There is so much more we could and should do. I am glad the Minister agrees with my noble friend about education and what we should be doing to make schools more joyful places, with more creativity and time for children. Our children need a happy, safe environment wherever they are, including in their schools, so I hope the Minister will work closely with her education colleagues and convince them they should be listening to her.

There has been more investment, and I suggest we need more investment to ensure that all these initiatives are not piecemeal pilots. They are not meant to be, as we want joined-up initiatives across the United Kingdom so, if any of our children are suffering, wherever they are, they will not be suffering in silence. If they need diagnosis or treatment, they will get that and it will be superb quality, wherever they are.

I feel relatively optimistic at the end of this debate, and I am glad and grateful to all noble Lords for highlighting these issues that are of such importance to individuals, and also to the future and well-being of our society. Thank you to everybody who participated.

Motion agreed.

Veterans: Investigations

Statement

2.07 pm

Viscount Younger of Leckie (Con): My Lords, with the leave of the House, I shall now repeat, in the form of a Statement, the Answer given by my honourable friend the Minister of State for Northern Ireland to an Urgent Question in the other place. The Statement is as follows:

“We have concluded, at least for the moment, that it would be better to try to respond to the right honourable Member’s comments about soldiers serving in Northern Ireland—obviously the Northern Ireland Office addresses that directly—particularly because the rules were different when soldiers were serving in Northern Ireland. They were there in support of the police, in support of civil powers, which is a different legal basis from the one that applies if they are fighting abroad in other kinds of conflict. Therefore, I will endeavour to be as helpful as I can to my right honourable friend. If he has any remaining questions about this which he wants to address, I am very happy to follow them through with him later, but let me at least try to address the burden of his UQ right here, as it is asked.

Can I start by saying, Mr Speaker, that I strongly agree, and I suspect that everybody on all sides of the House will strongly agree, that my right honourable friend is absolutely right that the current system—the current situation—in Northern Ireland is not working properly for people on all sides? It is clearly unsupportable and it is unfair in many ways. Whether you are a former soldier or a former police officer, perhaps now in your 70s, who is worried about being pursued through the courts about events that happened 30 or 40 years ago, that is a constant worry to you, and to your family and

friends. Equally, if you are a member of the family of a victim of republican terrorists where the perpetrators were never brought to justice, there is great worry, concern and difficulty in moving on. That concern affects people on all sides of the community in Northern Ireland, and my right honourable friend is absolutely right that it has to be addressed. That is why not just the Government but, I think I am right in saying, parties on all sides of the House and right across Northern Ireland believe that a new approach is vital to put this right. It is why the original Stormont House agreement was announced some years ago and why, most recently, we have been running a consultation on views about how it should be taken forward.

There were more than 17,000 responses to the consultation, which I think shows the breadth, depth and intensity of concern about the current situation. We have almost finished going through those returns and some trends are starting to emerge. We will of course bring them to the House as soon as we decently and responsibly can.

I think that one thing is clear: everybody agrees on the aim. The difficulty is that, 30 or 40 years after some of the events of the Troubles, we need a process which may have a judicial element—I am sure it will—but which will have to be broader than just judicial. It should allow all sides of the community in Northern Ireland to establish the truth where it can be established, be fair to all sides and allow society as a whole to draw a line and move on. While comparisons cannot be exact, because the situation in Northern Ireland is unlike anything else on the planet, this has been done in other societies; famously, for example, with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. That clearly would not work precisely in Northern Ireland, but some equivalent process which aims at the same outcomes and allows people to feel that justice is being achieved, that truth has been delivered wherever it can be and that, so far as is possible, closure can be achieved for all sides on an equal basis is essential. That matters particularly for soldiers and police officers who served in Northern Ireland but also for the families and grieving loved ones of victims. I will endeavour to respond to my right honourable friend’s further questions—I am sure that he has many—but I hope that my Answer at least helps to set the scene”.

2.12 pm

Baroness Chakrabarti (Lab): My Lords, I am grateful to the Minister for repeating that Answer and for its sensitivity at such a delicate moment for the peace process in Northern Ireland—if only others would be as sensitive in their remarks. I hope that he agrees that it is one thing, and quite right, to protect veterans anywhere from vexatious claims and to support them in general, but that it is quite another to create blanket immunities or statutory time limits in relation to very serious matters in breach of our international obligations.

Viscount Younger of Leckie: I thank the noble Baroness for what I think is her broad endorsement of what we are doing, and she makes some very good points. It is important to protect veterans from vexatious claims, which is the gist of the announcement that has just been made.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire (LD): My Lords, I note that the Statement intends to separate the issue of what has happened in Northern Ireland from the responsibility of soldiers in conflict. While one cannot be entirely left on one side, I note that the Secretary of State for Defence talked in her RUSI speech yesterday—I hope that the Northern Ireland Office was consulted beforehand—about the importance of defending “the rules-based order” in the world. That of course includes the laws of war, so that in the very rare cases where British soldiers do not obey the laws of war they have to be held responsible. The Government, who pursue people for war crimes in the Balkans and elsewhere, must recognise that we cannot take our own forces entirely outside the laws of war. I emphasise that the Stormont House agreement was extremely important and that all sides in Northern Ireland, as I understand it, are committed to it. I encourage the Government to pursue as fast as possible the publication of the consultation and the establishment of the arrangements and institutions set out in the agreement.

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The noble Lord is right to the extent that we also wish to come back on the results of the consultation. He will understand that it takes time with 17,000 responses—a lot are very sensitive and a lot are long exposés and letters going back to terrible experiences—but we want to come out with a detailed response to the consultation as soon as possible. As he alluded to, we owe great gratitude for the heroism and bravery of our Armed Forces. We take seriously the issue of the prosecution of veterans. The Prime Minister is fully aware of the strength of feeling on this, both in Parliament and among the public. However, nobody is above the law—we should take that very seriously, particularly in this country. The point has been made that there is a difference in terms of our brave soldiers fighting in Northern Ireland as opposed to in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Lord Howell of Guildford (Con): My Lords, I declare an interest as having been a Minister for Northern Ireland 45 years ago at some of the bloodiest times and during some of the most terrible atrocities. I understand what the Secretary of State for Defence is trying to do and explain, but it is worth remembering that the Provisional IRA declared that it was a war and that anyone in uniform was a fair target and could be slaughtered—what we called murder and it called war. That distinction should perhaps be made a little more strongly in the Statement. Of course Northern Ireland is different, as the terrorist situations in Afghanistan and Iraq are different. Northern Ireland being part of the United Kingdom made for an additional difference. Nevertheless, it was a war. Young and often inexperienced soldiers were put on checkpoints where they were confronted with a choice of murder or be murdered. The drama of this has to be understood in dealing with the problem of veterans and repeated accusations. Could that emphasis be a little more carefully enunciated in dealing with this matter?

Viscount Younger of Leckie: My noble friend is right that these matters are quite sensitive. On whether the Troubles can be defined as a war or a conflict, to my own knowledge they are defined more as a conflict.

What is certain is that our soldiers were put into the front line to deal with some extremely difficult issues and, as soldiers do, they had to make split-second decisions in very demanding situations. We should never forget that they are extremely highly trained, nor should we forget the victims who were caught up in those events. The whole point of what we are trying to do is draw a line under the conflict and move on.

Lord Judd (Lab): My Lords, does the Minister agree that we should all place on record without equivocation our admiration for soldiers in very difficult situations, whether Northern Ireland or those others to which he referred? It is very easy to discuss these matters in Parliament; it is quite another thing when you think of the strains, the stresses and the immediacy of the situations in which soldiers serve. That said, does he agree that what matters tremendously in the armed services is the culture and not just the law, and that one must be careful not inadvertently to undermine the courageous leadership of so many non-commissioned and commissioned officers in upholding the rule of law and the principles that we are defending? They understand that it is a battle for hearts and minds, and we must not play to the wrong influences in such situations.

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The noble Lord is absolutely right, and this plays into the comments I made earlier. We need to draw a line under this, but it is terribly important that a line means a line and that people on all sides feel happy that enough investigation has been done into what happened during the Troubles in Northern Ireland. As a result of the consultation and the efforts made on the back of the Stormont House agreement, everybody should end up by moving on. Despite the fact that it has no Assembly up and running, Northern Ireland has enjoyed continued peace for a good long time, and has an outstanding future ahead.

Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown (DUP): My Lords, I know what it is to come from a family whose loved ones were brutally blown up and gunned down by the Provisional IRA. No one has been brought to justice to this day and probably never will be. However, we owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the young men and women who served in the Armed Forces on the streets of Northern Ireland in very difficult circumstances. They showed tremendous professionalism and bravery. Can the Minister assure me, and the House, that the British soldiers who served in Northern Ireland will not be left as pawns in the political game?

Viscount Younger of Leckie: They absolutely will not. It is extremely important that we continue to support our Armed Forces as much as we do. They are the ones on the front line protecting us. There has been an extremely long, difficult and complicated process in Northern Ireland. An important result of this consultation and the work that has been done is that all victims of violence in Northern Ireland need to be remembered and the details of that violence investigated where necessary.

Lord Empey (UUP): My Lords, I would correct the noble Lord, Lord Wallace: not all parties support the Stormont House agreement. My party does not support

it. I do not support it. It proposes to establish a historical inquiries unit which will have the effect of hounding out members of the security forces for the next 10 years. The Minister talked about drawing a line under the process. In fact, it will only start a whole industry because the security services have records and the terrorists do not. The republicans have said that they want the records at Kew; that is what they are aiming to get. I totally accept that nobody is above the law. However, does the Minister accept that the proposals initiated some time ago at Stormont House and subsequently by the Northern Ireland Office will be the starting point for a new campaign of hounding members of the security forces? As former Justice Minister David Ford said, we could expect one or two convictions over the lifetime of that body, at best. That sets a very bad example.

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The noble Lord has so much more experience than me in Northern Ireland, but I do not entirely accept what he says. In the interests of justice, we need to find out what evidence there is. If any new evidence emerges relating to the possibility that a serious crime was committed at some point in the past, it should be properly investigated. As he rightly says, the Armed Forces themselves do not wish to be seen as somehow above the law.

Baroness O'Neill of Bengarve (CB): My Lords, a year ago I visited the Staatsanwaltschaft in Stuttgart—

Baroness Goldie (Con): I am so sorry, but I must say that we are out of time.

Probation Reform

Statement

2.23 pm

The Advocate-General for Scotland (Lord Keen of Elie) (Con): My Lords, with the leave of the House I will repeat a Statement made in the other place by my right honourable friend the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice. The Statement is as follows:

“I should like to make a statement on the Government’s response to the ‘Strengthening Probation, Building Confidence’ consultation. Earlier today I laid this government response for consideration by both Houses. It sets out our proposals for the future of the probation service. Across England and Wales, the probation service has over a quarter of a million people under its supervision at any one time, and an effective service is key to protecting the public, punishing those who have broken the law and reducing reoffending. I pay tribute to the hard work and professionalism of staff in both our National Probation Service and the community rehabilitation companies that deliver this work.

The transforming rehabilitation reforms from 2014 aimed to encourage innovation and more modern ways of working. We introduced a payment by results system creating incentives for providers to achieve reductions in reoffending; and we extended statutory supervision and resettlement to all offenders released from prison, supporting an extra 40,000 offenders for the first time. Since those reforms, we have seen a reduction in reoffending and other positive developments. However, there are challenges in the system. The changes I am setting out today are designed to make the system

work as effectively as possible and meet our aims of a probation system that commands the confidence of the courts and the public. Last summer, we took action to stabilise current delivery and, as a result, there are now around 500 additional staff in place to focus on resettlement services for offenders. At the same time, we also announced a consultation on our plans for the future; I am grateful to the individuals and organisations that engaged and provided valuable feedback.

We have reflected carefully, and I considered how to most effectively use the innovation and expertise of both private and public sectors to continue to drive down reoffending. I am today setting out plans that will see responsibility for the management of all offenders transferred to the National Probation Service. These arrangements are different from those set out for England in the consultation last summer. However, I believe that bringing responsibility for delivery of all offender management within the NPS will remove some of the complexities that have caused challenges in the current model of delivery, and make it more likely that an offender will have continuity of supervision throughout their sentence, while strengthening processes for managing risk. Alongside these changes we will develop a more clearly defined role for the private and voluntary sectors in delivering core interventions to offenders and securing innovation in the provision of these services.

Each NPS region will continue to have a private or voluntary sector partner—an innovation partner—directly responsible for providing unpaid work and accredited programmes. The NPS will be expressly required to buy all interventions from the market, spending up to an estimated £280 million a year, and contracts will be designed flexibly, so that innovative approaches that show results can be quickly identified and spread across the wider system. These interventions, such as unpaid work, accredited programmes and resettlement and rehabilitative services, are central to delivering the sentences of the courts. Subject to market engagement, I look ahead to launching procurement for these services later in the year with competitions for unpaid work and accredited programmes.

We want to make sure that services are responsive to local needs, and for resettlement and rehabilitative services we will create a national dynamic framework. This will be accessible to all providers, including specialist, smaller scale and voluntary sector providers with the expertise to support the most complex offenders back into society. This direct relationship will create a greater role for providers in delivering probation services and ensure that innovation can be identified and replicated across the system effectively. I am confident that this model, based on the arrangements we consulted on in Wales, offers the most sustainable approach for probation and is the best option to build on the positive changes made under transforming rehabilitation, to strengthen the system and sentencers’ confidence in it, and to continue to break the cycle of reoffending. We have no intention of reverting to the former probation trust model.

Since the consultation we have established a director-general post in HMPPS responsible for overseeing probation delivery, and we will appoint probation directors across each new probation region. Probation works best when local partners work together and

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these directors will be accountable for the quality, delivery and commissioning of services in each area, alongside building stronger relationships with local partners to ensure real joint working, including through co-commissioning opportunities where possible.

Alongside these organisational changes in NPS, we will overhaul NPS capability in commissioning and innovation and deploy cutting-edge technology. CRCs have taken some steps to demonstrate how digital tools can improve practice. We will transform the use of technology in probation, investing in a digital and data strategy that will replace all our core systems and better utilise data to inform professional judgment. We will complement this with a new, targeted innovation fund. We will ring-fence an initial £20 million a year in a regional outcome fund, to attract match funding from other government departments or commissioning bodies, including social finance providers and social impact bonds. The fund will be reserved for innovative, cross-cutting approaches and will enable us to test proof-of-concept services before scaling these up.

I also want to go further than what was set out in the consultation. When parliamentary time allows, we will look to bring forward legislation to implement a statutory professional regulatory framework, putting probation on a par with teaching or social work. This will set ethical and training standards for different roles, to recognise the skills and expertise of probation staff and support their ongoing professional development and expertise in providing a critical public service.

The changes I have set out mean that in future, it will be easier to respond to the changing profiles of offenders and to drive improvements across the probation system. We will continue to leverage the innovation of the private and voluntary sector, and to ensure that probation is working with partners across the criminal justice system to reduce reoffending. It is essential that we take the time to get these changes right. We have put in place arrangements to allow us to extend CRC contracts to ensure we have the necessary time to get the transition to the new system right. We intend to use these arrangements to end contracts in spring 2021. My officials will now engage with prospective providers and wider stakeholders and finalise our proposals ahead of seeking to launch procurement exercises later this year.

These changes will help to deliver a stronger, more stable probation system that will reduce reoffending, support victims of crime, keep the public safe and merit the confidence of the courts and the public. I commend this Statement to the House”.

My Lords, that concludes the Statement.

2.31 pm

Baroness Chakrabarti (Lab): My Lords, I am incredibly grateful to the Minister for repeating the Statement. This is a welcome U-turn on a disastrous probation policy—but what a mess, what an absolute mess. I feel the need to probe the underlying thinking a little further to ensure that lessons are truly being learned in the Government. Those of us on these Benches have real constitutional concerns, and concerns about accountability for public safety in relation to privatising the criminal justice system.

Today’s U-turn, a necessary first step to cleaning up the probation mess, comes only after hundreds of millions of pounds have been squandered propping up failing private companies, and public safety has been put directly at risk as a result. So I must probe the Minister on the thinking for the future and the proportion of these funds that are to be preferred towards private companies as opposed to voluntary bodies and social enterprises. This is crucial to understanding whether failing outsourcing giants, such as G4S and Sodexo, are going to be offered a way back into the probation system.

Lord Dholakia (LD): My Lords, I thank the Minister for repeating the Statement. All of us think that it has been a long time coming and it is right that we should broadly welcome the thrust of the Government’s intention to reorganise this service.

I take our share of the blame as part of the coalition Government, during which we supported some of the reforms of the National Probation Service in 2014. Some of the principles of these reforms were very sound when they were introduced. It was right that supervision was available for at least the first year when inmates leave prison. It was important to provide through-the-gate services, so that people can have a place to live as well as continuity of training and treatment between prison and the community. To do all this, it was vital that voluntary organisations working in the criminal justice field were fully involved.

Mr Grayling has bungled and underfunded contracts so badly that his reforms failed to achieve these objectives. No wonder it is estimated that these botched reforms have cost the taxpayer more than £500 million, according to the National Audit Office. He is the most unfortunate Minister whose record is dismal, and it is a surprise that he has lasted so long, even at the Department for Transport at this stage.

We need some guarantees to ensure that the probation service is not let down again. Who is examining the existing case load of probation officers? What further resources are available to make them more effective? Is there any way of tying probation resources to the rise in the number of prisoners in our establishments? Is there some way of ensuring that more incarceration of prisoners will effectively mean more work for the probation service? A good many well-trained but disillusioned probation officers have left the service in the last few years. What is being done to bring them back into probation work?

The Minister has just announced a new targeted innovation fund. What share will voluntary organisations have in such funds in order to make the probation service more effective? The new targeted innovation fund ought to make sure that such organisations are not locked out. Of course reforms are necessary, but we should never lose sight of the fact that when the state incarcerates prisoners, it takes full responsibility for each individual. We would do well, in very difficult times, to say to ourselves that if we lose that responsibility we will lose control of our criminal justice system.

Lord Keen of Elie: My Lords, I thank the noble Lords for their contributions. I do not accept the characterisation of these matters advanced by the

noble Baroness, Lady Chakrabarti. Indeed, as I have often observed in the past, the gross overstatement of an argument simply diminishes it in the ears of hearers.

The position is that we have learned lessons over the past few years from the way in which probation was set up and carried through, as between the National Probation Service and the CRCs. Indeed, one of the difficulties that emerged arose not out of money being used to prop up CRCs, or money being taken from the taxpayer for the benefit of CRCs, but because the Government were actually too successful in negotiating the commercial terms of the CRC contracts, with the result that the CRCs made persistent losses on these contracts of such magnitude that they began to withdraw from the quality of service they should have provided in the first place. That created very real difficulties, and we accept that. We actually had to go to the CRCs and try to renegotiate in order to keep them on a reasonable path of provision.

One consequence of that has been that, for example, CRCs have paid out more than £9 million in respect of what are called service credits—which are, for them, service debits; they are credits to the taxpayer but debits to the shareholders of these companies—because of their failure to reach performance targets. So we responded to the very real difficulties that emerged in that context.

We are now developing a system whereby we will have the probation service on a regional basis. These regions will be coterminous with the PCCs, in the hope that, going forward, there will be greater linkage between the PCCs and the probation service. We will have a director-general of probation, which I think accords with a recommendation that has just been made in the interim report issued today by the noble Lord, Lord Ramsbotham, who was commissioned by the noble Baroness's honourable friend, who I believe continues to be the shadow Secretary of State for Justice, Richard Burgon MP, who asked the noble Lord to look at this.

On the question of U-turning on nationalisation, I will quote from the interim report of the noble Lord, Lord Ramsbotham. He says:

“There is no doubt that the private sector has brought rigour to the oversight of probation. The best of them explained how they had introduced a forward-looking culture of delivering more with less, which must have relevance for the future, plus a better understanding of the relationship between cost and delivery”.

We are seeking to build on those benefits, appreciating that there were also deficits in the way in which CRCs delivered at the end of the day.

To take up the particular point raised by the noble Lord, Lord Dholakia, we are concerned to ensure that the voluntary sector has access to these contracts going forward. Indeed, one of the difficulties that emerged with CRCs was that, as they fell into greater financial difficulty, they drew back from their engagement with the voluntary sector and we therefore lost the immense benefit of that sector's involvement in the probation service.

Taking this forward, we hope to re-establish clear, unambiguous faith in—for example—non-custodial sentences so that the courts can have more confidence in putting those forward and thereby, touching again

on a point made by the noble Lord, relieve pressure on the prison system itself by virtue of an improved probation service.

2.40 pm

Lord Judd (Lab): My Lords, does the Minister not agree that in its earlier chapters the probation service attained an outstanding reputation and public confidence because of the quality, wisdom, experience and insight of its staff? That is crucial to the operation. Does he not also agree that, while there may be an argument about what happened in the last phase, there is very little doubt that, among many people, its reputation seemed to be in jeopardy as short cuts were taken and that there was a perception that the probation service had become an extension of the custodial system and had rather lost the purpose it was there to fulfil? Does he not therefore agree that, whatever happens—and we wish the new system well—commitment, quality of staff and the relationship and friendships that have to be built up between the officers and the people with whom they are dealing will be absolutely crucial?

Lord Keen of Elie: My Lords, I without hesitation and qualification commend the professionalism, integrity and ability of the staff within the probation service. That is why we are intent on implementing a statutory professional regulatory framework that will recognise the degree of professionalism that they have exhibited and continue to exhibit in the discharge of their demanding functions. The National Probation Service has extended its staff in recent years by about 500, and is bringing on further training of such staff. Going forward, we have appreciated the need to ensure consistency in the delivery of probation services and are not looking back to the prior form in which probation was delivered. When there were 35 probation trusts operating, with commendable staff, there were 35 ways of doing things. We have found that it is far better to try to identify a single, unified way of doing things for the entire probation service.

Lord Ramsbotham (CB): My Lords, I am grateful to the Minister for quoting the interim report that I was required to write by the Shadow Minister for Justice. I note that he quoted my paragraph saying that not all had been lost by the community rehabilitation companies and citing the economic rigour that they had to bring to their role. Perhaps I might ask Minister two questions. First, he will have noted that the Justice Select Committee and the Public Accounts Committee—plus the National Audit Office and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Probation—issued very critical reports of the whole transforming rehabilitation process. They said that the procedure had been rushed and unpiloted. Are the new proposals again to be rushed through unpiloted? Secondly, will the 11 areas correspond to the existing 11 government regions within which the police and crime commissioners operate, or will we have yet another division? By adopting Department for Work and Pensions boundaries, *Transforming Rehabilitation* completely crossed every single common-sense boundary that had been followed by the probation service for years.

Lord Keen of Elie: I am obliged to the noble Lord and welcome the fact that he has given consideration to these issues and is able to contribute to this matter

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with his interim report. No doubt he may take that further. On his second point, I had mentioned that the 11 proposed areas will be coterminous with PCC regions. There are more than 11 PCCs, of course, but we will ensure that the regions are coterminous so that we can develop the appropriate relationships between the PCCs and the NPS in that context. It is certainly not our intention for this to be rushed. I would mention two points: first, although the existing CRC contracts, as adjusted, run to the end of 2020, we have the ability to extend them to the spring of 2021 to have time to bring in these reforms; and, secondly, there will be a pilot in some sense because the model we are now adopting is the one we had already decided to adopt for Wales, which will be implemented from 2019. We will be able to see how this actually operates in practice before we proceed further with the rollout across the rest of England.

Lord Beith (LD): My Lords, if the Government do not succeed in putting right the failings which many of us identified in previous reports, they will not win the confidence of sentencers and be able to proceed with getting rid of short custodial sentences, which is part of their policy. Surely, in order to get these things right, you do not want too complicated a structure. The intermediate body which is doing the commissioning from the voluntary and private sector seems a rather cumbersome structure, and we have to deal with telephone reporting being relied on, excessive workload for probation officers and features demonstrating that the system is not delivering what it ought to deliver.

Lord Keen of Elie: My Lords, I acknowledge that under the present scheme we have seen instances of excessive caseloads being placed upon probation officers, and we are concerned to address that issue. Equally, we are concerned to ensure that appropriate contact between probation and the persons to be released from prison can be achieved. I entirely concur with the noble Lord's observation about the need to ensure that probation works in an effective manner, such that we can instil in both the courts and the public a confidence in non-custodial sentences. That is one of the objectives we have in mind with regard to these reforms.

Lord Birt (CB): My Lords, I declare an interest as my wife was the founding director-general of the National Probation Service. The Minister is surely right to observe that it was a vast improvement on the hotchpotch of arrangements that had preceded it. I welcome the Government's Statement; first, because it is entirely right that the state should take back full responsibility for managing all offenders; it is right too—and here I disagree with the Opposition Benches—that both the private and voluntary sectors should continue to provide specialist services to the NPS. Secondly, I welcome the Statement because of the Secretary of State's willingness to reverse an error. That genuinely took courage and is to be applauded.

Lord Keen of Elie: I am obliged to the noble Lord for his observations and insight into the initial transformation that we brought about. I recognise, as he does, that there were deficiencies in that, which is why we proceeded with the consultation and have put forward these proposals for further reform.

Baroness Donaghy (Lab): My Lords, there was mention in the Statement of bringing the probation service to the same level as that of social work. That filled me with some dread, as an Oral Question earlier today revealed across the House that the social work service is on its knees. I am looking for some reassurance that these new proposals will not make the same mistakes as the old ones, and I would be interested to know how much this appalling shambles has cost the taxpayer.

Lord Keen of Elie: I am obliged to the noble Baroness for her questions. As I indicated earlier, the real cost of the recent changes fell not on the taxpayer but on the shareholders of the various CRCs, which made immense losses arising out of the way in which the contracts were made and handled. The consequence was that the numbers that they were going to be dealing with were wholly wrong, and they found themselves with an unsustainable financial model. That is what led to some of the difficulties we faced. In the context of the comparison with teaching and social work, I was referring to the need, and indeed the desire, to implement a statutory professional regulatory framework. We believe that that should—and will—reflect the clear and high professional standards exhibited by the probation service and will therefore maintain standards going forward.

Lord Paddick (LD): Would the Minister agree that we are now in a position where government Ministers no longer have confidence in the ability of short-term sentences to rehabilitate offenders, and the judiciary has no confidence in the ability of the Ministry of Justice to provide effective alternatives to short-term sentences? Is the Minister confident that the reforms he has outlined today will result in effective rehabilitation of offenders, and how long will it take before that is achieved?

Lord Keen of Elie: I do not agree with the propositions advanced by the noble Lord at all, and I have confidence in these proposed reforms.

Lord Scriven (LD): My Lords, the Minister says there has been no cost to the taxpayer, but the taxpayer has had to pay £500 million extra, including the early closure of these contracts, which cost £170 million, which in turn included a cost of £115 million for waiving some fees. Is it not the case that there is an extra cost of £500 million to the taxpayer for bringing these contracts to an early close, and that they have not performed?

Lord Keen of Elie: No, with respect. The cost of these contracts was estimated at about £1 billion more than the actual cost incurred for the foreshortened contracts.

Lord Bates (Con): I thank my noble friend for repeating the Statement, for the political courage which underscores its key message and for its particular focus on reducing reoffending. In the original consultation paper, in paragraph 58 on page 23, a worrying statistic was given: 70% of offenders who need ongoing treatment for drug or alcohol misuse had not been linked with that treatment within 21 days of their release from prison. Can my noble and learned friend assure me that, whatever new arrangements are brought forward, we will do everything possible to ensure that there is 100% availability from day one?

Lord Keen of Elie: My Lords, I welcome my noble friend Lord Bates back from his perambulations. We are of course concerned to ensure that through-the-gate services in particular can be developed to the point where such essentials as support, accommodation, the addressing of mental health issues and attention to misuse of drugs issues are brought to bear as swiftly as possible. One cannot give a time limit for that at this stage but clearly that underpins the proposals that we have put into this document.

Lord Purvis of Tweed (LD): My Lords, will the Minister state on the record categorically that the National Audit Office was wrong to say that this has cost the taxpayer £171 million?

Lord Keen of Elie: I did not say that the National Audit Office was wrong but pointed out that the actual cost of the CRC contracts was in fact substantially below the figure that had been budgeted for originally, which arises out of their termination.

Equality of Opportunity for Young People

Motion to Take Note

2.54 pm

Moved by Baroness Greender

That this House takes note of the case for delivering equality of opportunity and beneficial quality of life for young people.

Baroness Greender (LD): I cannot think of a better group of speakers to join me for the next two and half hours to shine some light on this all-important issue. I thank in advance all noble Lords participating in this debate. I also welcome our young guests in the Gallery, the participants in the webinar we held last night, and the responses to the Twitter poll we held this morning in advance of this debate.

I worry that too often the voices of the next generation are left out of the debate altogether. I hope we can instead find ways today to ensure that we can put young people at the very heart of policy-making. One of the basic principles of British society is that each generation helps out the next. The taxes of today's workers fund the pensions of their parents and the education of their children. It is therefore unsurprising that surveys find that a majority of people think that each generation should have a better life than the one before. But this goal is increasingly under threat. In the economy, housing, health and education, the millennials are not getting the same opportunities as the generation before them. Millennials are the first generation not to earn more than people born 15 years before them when they were the same age. Over 3 million people aged between 20 and 34 still live with their parents. According to the IFS, we will shortly reach a point where there is a crossover between the under-30s who are not even on the first rung of the property ladder, and the over-55s, one in six of whom owns a second property. The inequality is clear.

Nowhere does this become more acute and obvious than in the debate about Brexit. In our Twitter poll this morning—I thank the respondents—34% put this as a priority. We are concerned that the Government's relentless yet futile attempt to secure a Brexit deal that can pass the Commons has meant that the big issues facing young people are not being properly addressed. At present, the Commons seems to shut up shop earlier and earlier, but these are critical issues that need solving now for a future generation. Brexit must have consumed thousands of years of the time and energy of politicians, civil servants, policymakers and journalists—time that could have been spent dealing with the real challenges of our day, such as the impact of an ageing population, the mental health challenge for young people, and the all-important issue of combating climate change. It could have been spent putting greater focus on the brilliant work started by my colleagues, my noble friend Lady Featherstone and Jo Swinson MP to tackle the issues of body confidence or negative stereotyping—issues raised in a recent poll of school leavers by Central YMCA as all-important to them. Instead we are stuck in this endless loop.

What is so worrying is that young people have lost out most from this. They voted overwhelmingly to remain and feel that their opportunities to live, work and study abroad have been constrained. They must pick up the pieces in a few years' time, when the pension system becomes unsustainable, sea levels rise uncontrollably and deadly extreme weather across the world—and the resulting movement in populations—becomes the norm. So it is right that we ask ourselves today and continue to challenge ourselves on how we can improve young people's quality of life and make it more equal.

First, we need young people to be at the centre of the political debate, not just an afterthought. Secondly, we need to find the right mechanisms to hear their voice. Neither the current political process nor the policies it produces have made young people think that they matter to the politicians. Here, then, is a proposal that I and my colleagues on these Benches sent to the Minister in advance of this debate. Just as the Government have an industrial strategy to govern their relationship with businesses, we need an equivalent young people's strategy to help them work alongside our under-25s to deliver the policies they care about most and that will deliver equality.

The Government could start by ensuring that the Conservatives deliver their own manifesto commitments to young people. In 2017, they promised that apprentices would be provided with discounted bus and train travel and that a new, UCAS-style portal would be set up for vocational and technical courses. Both proposals appear to have been quietly dropped—unless the Minister has any further news on these issues for us today.

We also wrote to the Minister in advance with five key policies that we would like introduced. First, we would give young people aged 16 or 17 a vote and a voice in elections, including any people's vote on Brexit. I look forward very much to hearing more about the democratic engagement of young people from the noble Lord, Lord Bird.

[BARONESS GRENDER]

Secondly, we would end the funding emergency in our schools and colleges, so that policies such as the pupil premium, introduced by the Liberal Democrats, targeted to help those most in need, are the priority. Ninety-one per cent of schools will still have less money per pupil in real terms in 2020 than they did in 2015. This must end.

It was obscene to read in the press at the weekend about the fears of social engineering from independent schools as a result of Oxford and Cambridge shifting a tiny percentage in favour of state schools. The belief that writing a cheque for your child's education means that your child is entitled to a place at a top university is abhorrent and the opposite of equality. According to the Sutton Trust, the system still shows significant bias in favour those from of independent schools getting into Russell group universities. I look forward to hearing much more on that issue from my noble friend Lord Storey and the noble Baroness, Lady Prashar.

As the Social Mobility Commission recently stated, inequality is now entrenched in Britain from birth to work and the Government need to take urgent action to help close the privilege gap. It goes on to say that,

“the dominance of background factors on future outcomes is further compounded when we look at the interaction with gender, ethnicity and disability”.

I look forward to hearing from my noble friend Lord Dholakia on that.

Last night, we held a webinar in advance of this debate. We heard from Dom from Bournemouth University, who stressed the importance of the arts in education. Colleagues will be aware that we very much believe that the arts and creativity have a critical role in the future of the UK if we are to nurture more of the genius talents—yes, this a gratuitous mention—of the likes of Phoebe Waller-Bridge. If we had a fully funded state school system that included arts in our priorities—in other words, STEAM, not STEM—we could ensure that talent for the future.

Our third ask, which we wrote to the Minister about, is to guarantee that every young person can see a mental health professional within two weeks if they have experienced a breakdown. This is an issue that my noble friend Lady Tyler has campaigned on for many years and spoke eloquently about this morning. I look forward to hearing further thoughts on this from other noble Lords.

The charity YoungMinds warns that the NHS has the resources to provide mental health support to just a third of the young people who need it. Last night on our webinar, we learned about a student who has had to abandon his degree because mental health support was too far away. We learned that students had to de-register from their home GPs to get support in college, which was reducing their overall level of support. About an hour ago, outside Parliament, we met some young people who talked to us about the delivery gap for CAMHS, the plight of students needing access to mental health support and—much, much worse—the plight of those who are not students who need access to mental health support.

My fourth point, which is very close to my heart from my background of working at Shelter, concerns having somewhere decent to live. How can there be equality of opportunity if someone under 25 has nowhere to live? I look forward to hearing from my colleague and annual sleep-out compadre, my noble friend Lady Suttie, on that very subject. As the Intergenerational Fairness and Provision Committee recently found, lack of housing provision underpins unfairness in rent levels for 25 year-olds. It is key for our future generations that we build more homes. My noble friend Lord Shipley's commitment to building council houses is something I have long admired.

The charity Crisis and others have had great success recently in their help-to-rent schemes, but, as we wrote to the Minister to say, this is something that we would like offered at a national level, so that young renters can afford a deposit on their first home. In our Twitter poll this morning, 33% of respondents said that that was an important priority for them.

Fifthly, Extinction Rebellion and the recent visit of Greta Thunberg are signs of a younger generation who care about others, the planet and a global community. I applaud them for that. We should hear them loud and clear, recognise the outcry of young people against climate change and create a legal target of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045. Instead of the Government's current policies of banning the cheapest form of renewable energy—onshore wind—slashing renewable power subsidies and ditching the zero-carbon homes standard and the green deal, we would restore them and achieve some of those targets.

This is our five-part package. It is simple, ambitious, life-changing and would help young people to feel that they are changing the debate, not shouting from the sidelines. However, this will not fix the policy-making process or ensure that young people feel that they are contributing to how policies are devised and implemented.

The Government's industrial strategy includes a council of key stakeholders that monitors progress and holds Ministers' feet to the fire. In the same way that we have the UK Youth Parliament and the Youth Select Committee to mirror the work of the UK Parliament, a UK young people's strategy council would put young people's voices at the heart of the Executive. It could comprise members of the UK Youth Parliament or representatives from young people's charities. A similar council has already been set up in Canada by Justin Trudeau, and I look forward to hearing more detail on it from my noble friend Lord Purvis.

To conclude, we ask the Government to consider our young people's strategy proposal and our five key policies. We offer those flagship policies to ensure that young people feel listened to: giving young people aged 16 and 17 the vote; reversing the real-terms cut to per-pupil school funding since 2015, while providing a commensurate boost to FE funding for young people aged 16 to 19; ensuring that no child or young person has to wait more than two weeks for mental health treatment following an episode of psychosis; creating a nationwide help-to-rent scheme, giving loans to first-time renters so that they can afford to pay the deposit; and creating a statutory target to reduce net CO₂ emissions

in the UK to zero by 2045. We wrote in advance to the Minister and would like answers on those specific proposals.

None of us should be willing to stand by and let the voices of young people be unheard any longer. It is time for this Government to be held to account by a younger generation. Our proposals would help to deliver that: we owe it to a future generation to deliver.

3.08 pm

Lord Bird (CB): I welcome the opportunity to speak in this debate and am very glad that the noble Baroness, Lady Grender, managed to secure it. Two and a half hours is certainly not long enough to talk about what the young people of tomorrow or today should be getting out of society and life—I am sorry about my voice, I have a bit of a throat.

I am interested in the word “equality”. Is it equality before the marketplace? Is it equality in the democratic sense of everybody having a vote? Is it the equality that often does not happen, around people’s ability to have social mobility and to move on? Is it the equality we associate with being highly educated and knowing the difference between certain things? Is it the equality that comes from what I call a cognitive democracy?

What is the difference between a cognitive democracy and the democracy we now operate under? We operate under a representative system that, at the moment, seems unrepresentative because it cannot bring enough people together to share this representation. The Brexit issue is a confounding of what we have come to see as representative democracy. That is a great fear for the future and for our children, because it devalues this House, the other House and the whole process of what we call representative democracy.

Let us move on to participatory democracy. Why should young people be involved in participatory democracy? Why should they get off their rears and do things? Why should they study? Why should they burn the candle at both ends when, at the end of it, there is no opportunity to have a fuller life? We need to look seriously at the problems associated with the fact that many young people will do all that—go to university, go to college, do their apprenticeships, sweat both ends and burn the midnight oil—but at the end they will get some crummy job, because the crummy jobs are the only ones on offer.

I would love to see the equality of opportunity that comes from future generations not being controlled by the claptrap of the division between left and right and the division in society between rich and poor. We spend so much time trying to square the circle of the fact that a handful of people can own half of London while other people move along in a very shadowy sort of existence. These are the kind of things that the next generation are going to sort out, because we have not. We have not been able to develop the methodology or the pedagogy that would enable us to do so.

We fail 33% of our children at school. We can go on about public schools and private schools and all sort of things. We can say that, because there are private schools and public schools and privilege for some, we fail 33% of our children. I do not know if it follows like that. I come from the failed 33%. I failed many years ago—50 or 60 years ago—but even in that

failure there was something quite grand. It was called Her Majesty’s custodial system, which took children who had done wrong and gave them a second, third and sometimes fourth chance. It moved them on, out of crime and wrongdoing. If they wanted to climb Mount Everest, as long as they did not rob old ladies in the process they would be encouraged to do that. I was encouraged to become an artist, a printer and all sorts of things by a system that worked: the system of rehabilitation. For those 33% now, we do not have that system. We have a system that is clogged up, full up and has a real problem: people go in bad and come out worse.

I was in the care system between the ages of seven and 10. We were fed, looked after and marshalled. There was no individualism, but at least we came out untainted at the other end. The care system now is open for perverts to abuse. Now, if you have been through the care system, you have more chance of ending up in prison, on the streets or in the kind of job that will never, ever lift you out of poverty but actually keeps you in poverty—earning £6, £7 or £8 an hour means that your children will never get to university or get the opportunities of true equality.

I have been working very much on the idea of dismantling poverty. That is why I came into the House. It was a most grandiloquent thing to do: why would anybody come into a House that believes in and runs a system and say that it does not work? This system does not work. When I look around, I am astonished and appalled at the number of people who really want to help the poor have a little more comfort or opportunity but do not want to actually get them out of poverty. This ideological war is taking up too much of our energy. We should be addressing whether we can bring about equality using the old, ideological arguments that have brought us to a situation in which 69% of the damage done to the planet has taken place in the last 40 years.

I am running out of time, but I need to say this. Today, I am launching a very important magazine about social literacy, which to me is one of the central things; we have to pass social literacy to our children. Unfortunately, I have to skedaddle; please forgive me, but at 5 pm we close the magazine. Noble Lords will all get free copies in compensation.

3.17 pm

Lord Purvis of Tweed (LD): My Lords, it is a pleasure to follow the noble Lord, especially with the plug for the magazine towards the end of his contribution; no doubt we will all study it very closely. I also commend my noble friend Lady Grender, not only on how she introduced this debate and on securing it, but on engaging so widely in advance of it. I hope that that may become a model for many of our debates in this House—making sure that Parliament is about not only the debate in its Chambers but can stimulate debate outside it, as well as be as open and inclusive in our own proceedings as possible.

My noble friend suggested that I might refer to international perspectives and look at some comparative examples from the Commonwealth. In doing so, I will reflect on a slightly wider perspective. According to

[LORD PURVIS OF TWEED]

the United Nations, the world population in 2050 will be over 9 billion, which will be an increase of a third since 2010. Overall, the world's population is the youngest it has ever been and will proportionately get younger in the next generation, even while life expectancy increases.

When I was born in 1974, the population was 4 billion. The world has grown rapidly from a global economy of \$5.5 trillion then to \$76.7 trillion today, with average per capita GDP globally going from \$1,400 to \$10,300. This per capita average growth is marked but masks major inequalities. Often these are class-born, rural and urban, or driven by conflict and post-conflict situations. There are global similarities in such relative inequalities—the world is now a smaller place—so the issues my noble friend raised have relevance across the globe. The marked economic development is reflected in life expectancy, which has increased from 61 to 72 in my lifetime, with child mortality reducing from 132 deaths per 1,000 births to just 43. Our investment in girls' health, women's health, education and opportunities at the start of life has led to major developments, but there are still massive discrepancies.

As my noble friend indicated, the way in which young people communicate now will transform even more in the future. In many respects, the world is a much smaller place, offering greater opportunities but also, as young people perceive it, much greater threats to their privacy and security. For example, the number of air passengers in 1997 was 401 million around the world; in 2016 it was 3.7 billion. That increase raises issues not only of climate change but of the benefits of connectivity. The world is more closely connected as a result of the internet and the contribution of the world wide web. Half a trillion text messages are sent out every day, compared with hardly any until the mid-1990s. This means that a child growing up in the UK from whatever class or background will be able to communicate more freely. That offers greater opportunities but also more threats to security and more difficulties.

Politically too there has been major progress. The number of countries considered democratic when I was born was 34, today it is 87; and the number of young people living in a democratic or largely democratic environment has risen from 1.7 billion to 4.1 billion today. This means that with the social, economic and democratic progress also comes a belief that the individual is a stakeholder. The young people of today are far more empowered because they live in a democratic society. However, that democracy, which has an established and accepted social contract which states that your Government will provide you with greater services and better opportunities than the previous generation, is under stress. Now the expectations of these young people are being outstripped by the ability of the democratically elected Governments to deliver. This is the case in developed and developing countries and in countries where there are older populations, such as in Asia and the West, and where there are younger populations, such as in Africa and the MENA region.

What does this mean? It means that the life chances for children born in Britain today are immeasurably greater than a child such as me, born in 1974 to a mechanic dad who became an ambulance technician

for the NHS, and a mother who brought up her sons and worked part-time as a cleaner and then in a shop. That fairly typical working-class family that I am from, if born today, would be born into a radically changed world. The policymakers now looking towards life opportunities until 2050 at least, given the growth of the world's population, must think differently. The traditional policy choices of a social bargain and investing for social justice have to be challenged.

The question at hand, which my noble friend Lady Grender is tackling, is how these opportunities can be secured for the widest number of young people and how government can respond more and better to the views of young people to make sure that there are equal opportunities. A critical first step, as my noble friend said, would be a universal right of young people to vote at the age of 16. I have believed in this passionately since I joined a political party at 16. I was angry then that old people could vote to shape my future and I did not have a vote to shape my own. That was confirmed in the European referendum and other votes, where the older generation was not necessarily making decisions for the future generation.

A second step would be to formalise the structures of government so that young people are not only listened to but involved. Yes, the UK Youth Parliament, the Scottish Youth Parliament and the Welsh Youth Parliament have been positive developments, and I was the first Member of the Scottish Parliament to do joint advice surgeries with members of the Scottish Youth Parliament in my area. They are to be commended, but we need across the UK youth strategies, as my noble friend Lady Grender said, which inform and involve young people.

We can learn from the excellent initiative of the Liberal Government and Prime Minister of Canada. In 2015 Justin Trudeau appointed himself Minister of Youth at the same time as he became Prime Minister. He started the process of having the country's first dedicated youth strategy, informed and shaped by the Prime Minister's Youth Council, which he initiated. The introduction to the resulting strategy states:

"Investing in youth is in Canada's social and economic interest. As a country, we must respect and value young people's opinions. Almost all government policies and decisions have an impact on young people's lives and youth have the right to influence these decisions, both individually and collectively. Multiple perspectives also strengthen decision-making and policy development by encouraging innovation, creativity and change".

The participation of young people is critical to that. It went on to refer to something to which I am deeply committed, saying:

"Furthermore, involving young people in political processes will help build trust in democratic institutions, in turn protecting Canada's democracy".

The use of the word "protecting" is deliberate. We need to have that kind of language in our society today because it is under threat given the distance between policymakers and the young people who will have to live with the consequences of the major decisions being made by Parliament at the moment.

If we are to properly realise a strategy which has a direct impact on the life opportunities ahead, we need to make sure that it is the majority that seeks the

opportunity but does not shoulder the burden of the difficulties. A respondent to the consultation in Canada said:

“Every young person should be afforded the opportunity to be the best version of themselves”.

That is surely an ambition that a young person in London, England, or London, Ontario, and in Banff, Scotland, or Banff, Alberta, can share.

3.26 pm

Baroness Fall (Con): My Lords, there is no more important issue to society than the well-being of our young people and the creation of an environment in which they have the opportunity to fulfil their potential. I congratulate the noble Baroness, Lady Grender, on drawing this topic to our attention today.

Before young people come of age they remain our responsibility and under our protection, whether we are parents or citizens of the country. They are educated in our schools, treated in our hospitals, breathe the air of our cities, live by our laws, must abide by the results of elections in which they do not vote and have to put up with the decisions our generation make, some of them good and some of them less so. This is a huge responsibility and certainly should not be taken lightly.

It is a responsibility brought home to me every morning as I look at my sometimes quite intimidating Generation Z children sitting across from me at the breakfast table. This is a generation that has still to find its voice. I think of the immense challenges that they and all young people face, but with which I am sure they will have the vision and capability to grapple. One of our jobs is to make sure that they have the opportunity to do just that and to be the best they can be.

However, there is clearly a range of issues—some of which have already been discussed in this Chamber—that we need to address to make this a reality. What kind of things do I mean? A new think tank called Onward, on whose advisory board I sit, published fascinating statistics a few weeks ago and I should like to share a few with the House. According to the OECD, millennials are being squeezed out of middle-income households. According to Civitas, nearly 1 million more young people live with their parents than 20 years ago. Onward’s survey of Generation Y discovered that more than half of those aged under 35 are worried or very worried about their personal finances. One in four people aged between 18 and 24 say that they find social media pressure difficult to manage, and they are rightly worried about climate change.

We also know that at least 10% of young people in Britain today suffer from mental health issues. That could be as much as 20% if we include those not yet caught up in the system. This is a problem of epidemic proportions and I single it out today in my comments, echoing today’s earlier debate.

If we consider that 50% of mental illness in adults starts under the age of 15 and 75% before the age of 18, the problem of today’s children will soon become the problem for tomorrow’s adults. We are projecting a mental health problem of major proportions towards the future. If we are to try to deliver equality of opportunity and beneficial quality of life, as the noble Baroness, Lady Grender, suggests, this is a big obstacle.

We see it in the worrying level of mental health issues that have arisen in our universities with tragic cases of student suicide on the rise. As the *Times* columnist Clare Foges wrote recently, on top of the stresses of a life on social media and financial stress,

“there lurk three further assassins to wellbeing: too much unstructured time, too much isolation, too much distance from the comfort of home”.

This can result in tragedy for some and misery for many.

Our universities need a good long think about how they can provide more support and a more engaged environment for students, but the problems often start well before university. I welcome the growing awareness of the problems of children’s mental health in society today, I pay tribute to the many powerful charities, such as YoungMinds and Place2Be, which do so much to help, and I commend the Government on making this a priority and on the many proposals set out in their Green Paper.

However, awareness is only the first step, and we are some way from rolling out a holistic solution. Let us look at the Government’s focus on solving the problem in schools, which I welcome. The proposal to introduce a designated school lead for mental health is not yet fully explained. We must make sure that these leads are well trained and their role is clear. Without properly trained counsellors, there is a danger that we will get better at identifying who needs help without being in a position to offer them the help they need. A recent EU-funded study shows the UK way down the European league table for the numbers of CAMHS psychiatrists and hospital beds. A recent study from the Children’s Commissioner found funding down in real terms in one-third of areas in England. Inconsistencies in funding are undermining efforts to get to grips with the problem.

We continue to face a toxic combination of stringent thresholds, which lead to rejected referrals—nearly one-third—and those who are lucky enough to be referred often being left languishing on waiting lists. By the time they get to see someone, the situation is quite a lot worse.

We owe our young people more. We need to do what we can to give them the best chance of a worthwhile life and playing their part in society, fulfilling their potential and being the teachers and doctors, mums and dads of tomorrow. They are our future, and at the moment we are a long way from where we need to be in supporting them.

3.32 pm

Lord Dholakia (LD): My Lords, this debate is timely. It comes at a time when our young people are excluded from the political process that will affect their future for generations to come, a point well made by my noble friend Lady Grender. Millions of us voted in the referendum to decide whether we remain in or leave the European Union. However, only those aged over 18 took part; the opportunity was denied to our young people. In Scotland, 16 year-olds can now vote in Holyrood and local elections, so why do we continue this anomaly, which had a substantial impact on the outcome of the referendum? The Lord Speaker’s programme for schools has clearly identified young

[LORD DHOLAKIA]

people's craving to learn about and participate in our political process. Why are there no immediate plans for the UK Government to lower the voting age for general elections? Surely delivering a beneficial quality of life will be more meaningful if young people have a say in their future.

My other concern is that the age of criminal responsibility in the UK is the lowest in Europe. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, it is 10 years old, which contravenes international juvenile justice standards. In the two previous Parliaments I have promoted Private Members' Bills to raise the age to 12, and in this Parliament I am awaiting the Third Reading of my Bill. The current limit is arbitrary and not evidence-based. It is also out of step with other age limits for children. Criminalising children adversely affects their prospects. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has repeatedly criticised this and called on the UK to raise the age to 12. How will the Government improve the quality of life for this group of our young people if they continue to retain the lowest age of criminal responsibility in the UK?

Last week I watched with horror a news item on the BBC about a gambling habit swallowing Kenya's youth. Online sports betting is worth billions of pounds every year. This habit is fuelled by the faster internet, cheaper phones and the English Football League. One Kenyan Minister called it "a curse on youth". It must be a worry that children are being sucked into a cycle of betting, debt and poverty. I welcome the campaign led by the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of St Albans on this matter. We need to do much more to divert young people away from gambling. We must have a clear strategy to ban the effectiveness of gambling adverts. We must be one step ahead on the impact of gambling on children. The use of mobile phones has increased, and so has young people's participation in unconventional or new forms of gambling or gambling-like behaviour. Are we satisfied with the betting industry's ability to regulate its clients? It would be helpful if the Minister could explain whether systematic monitoring of the betting industry is taking place and whether the Government have in mind demanding a mandatory tax on that industry to fund treatment for addiction, particularly in young people.

In the past I have taken every opportunity to reduce the impact of sentencing on our young people. I refer to my Private Member's Bill, the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Amendment) Bill. I am glad that the Government have now realised that short custodial sentences have little rehabilitative impact on the lives of young people, but more initiatives need to be taken to reduce the unacceptably high rate of incarceration among our young people. We need to reform the childhood criminal record system so that it is child-specific and reflects the nature of childhood offending. I am impressed by the work of the Standing Committee for Youth Justice. I share its concern that the current system allows widespread, lengthy and unnecessary retention of childhood records and acts as a barrier to rehabilitation by preventing children growing up and moving on from past mistakes. At present, the system is by far the most punitive I have come across. I support the SCYJ's call for the Government to reform

the system so that it provides a better balance between public protection and rehabilitation. Such sentences should be significantly reduced, there must be a presumption against the disclosure of police intelligence relating to children, and there should be an ability to wipe or delete records. Will the Minister look at the Supreme Court judgment and undertake a wide-ranging review for significant reform on this point?

The report by the House of Lords Intergenerational Fairness and Provision Committee spells out unfairness between older and younger generations. The committee observed:

"There is a structural shift taking place, with younger generations not seeing the increase in living standards enjoyed by the previous generations".

I am afraid this disadvantage is built into the lives of black and ethnic minorities from the time they come to the United Kingdom. Of course we have race relations and human rights legislation on the statute book, but discrimination and disadvantage remain an everyday reality in the lives of many people. Geographically and economically, they occupy the place allocated to them when they arrived here, and organisations and institutions still fail to take into account the cultural diversity of our communities. Of course I welcome the Government's initiative to audit their workforce, but after nearly 70 years of settlement here, we should have eradicated such disadvantages a long time ago.

We saw the ugly face of racism filtered through the last London mayoral election, followed by crude comments about migrant workers during the EU referendum. Many have argued that it is important to articulate a shared sense of national identity in contemporary conditions of flux and change. If so, how can we reconcile this with diversity, openness and pluralism of belief and practice? With the growing generations of young people in our black and ethnic minority communities, fixed notions of shared identity—even if they could be agreed on—are less necessary than promoting individual identity, pluralism and genuine multiculturalism. We need to take into account post-war migration and the process of globalisation, which cross the geographical boundaries of all nations. Unfortunately, much of the public debate on multiculturalism and "Britishness" has been on shallow grounds.

Multiculturalism is about more than a vague, well-meaning tolerance of difference. The passive position has led to the perception of many separate communities with separate interests which are in conflict. True multiculturalism is proactive and means that equality and diversity are at the core of everything we do, from government to individual responsibility. It means taking a much more proactive stance towards combating racism and discrimination, really tackling inequality in all aspects of society—the social and economic aspects and civic participation—positively valuing the contribution of different cultures and perspectives, and treating them with respect. We should not fail, or generations of minorities growing up in this country will never forgive us.

3.40 pm

Baroness Bull (CB): My Lords, it is a depressing fact that there are now 500,000 more children living in poverty in the UK than there were in 2012. With so many young people starting from this position of early disadvantage, ensuring equality of opportunity is more important than ever, and I too thank the noble Baroness, Lady Grender, for providing a platform to air these issues today.

Being born into poverty has a profound and enduring effect on the opportunities that will be both available and attainable in later life. Privilege may be an accident of birth but the propulsion that it provides, throughout the life course, is not.

Children from disadvantaged families have the odds stacked against them from the outset. By the age of three, they are likely to be 18 months behind the children of more affluent parents. In areas of high deprivation, up to 60% start school without adequate speech, interaction and communication skills. This early disadvantage accumulates: if you are lagging at age five, you are six times more likely at age 11 to be behind in English and 11 times more likely to be behind in Maths.

The terrible truth is that, by the age of five, 40% of the overall gap between disadvantaged 16 year-olds and their better-off classmates has already been set in train, and it continues throughout the educational journey. Only 26% of free school meal students go on to higher education, compared with 43% of their more affluent peers. Just 5% win places in the most prestigious institutions and, for those who do, drop-out rates are a third higher.

Early disadvantage continues to exert its insidious influence on employment prospects, career progress and earnings potential. A degree will certainly make a difference, but students from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to be in work six months after graduation, they will be earning less and, as they are less likely to have gone to a Russell group university, they will not be enjoying the 40% earnings premium of those who have. Even when disadvantaged students go on to gain a prestigious first, they are still likely to earn around £7,000 a year less than more privileged graduates with identical results. The recent *State of the Nation* report says:

“Being born privileged in Britain means that you are likely to remain privileged”.

Sam Friedman and Daniel Laurison, authors of *The Class Ceiling*, go further, describing privilege as a,

“following wind ... an energy-saving device that allows some to get further with less effort”.

It is not that the upwardly mobile cannot progress, as we know that they do, and it is not that they will never reach the top; it is just that they often have the wind against them. Their analysis in *The Class Ceiling* of Labour Force Survey data confirms that, showing that only 10% of people from working-class backgrounds will climb the steep social ladder to the highest professional, managerial or cultural occupations. It would be easy, and it would certainly be easier on our consciences, to put that down to merit—to justify it on the basis of talent alone—but research shows that this is not the case. Unless we believe that talent is reserved solely for the middle classes and above, we have to admit that something has gone wrong.

Education ought to be the great equaliser, but all the challenges of disadvantage are compounded through our twin-track education system: one track for 94% of UK children and another for the remaining 6%. That part of the system employs one out of every seven teachers in the UK and the spend on students’ education is three times higher—all underpinned by fees that are now, on average, 50% of the median UK household income. Pupils at these schools mix with a peer group of equal privilege—the beginnings of a valuable network that will support them in their future careers—and they benefit from a vast range of extra-curricular activities and facilities, such as theatres, sports fields, drama and art, all of which help cultivate character, confidence and cultural capital.

To those of us who regret falling arts provision in state schools, it is bitter-sweet to see how frequently fee-paying schools sell themselves to parents on the basis of their outstanding arts provision. These schools fully understand the multiple benefits of arts engagement—discipline, resilience, empathy and creative thinking, for example—but they also understand the value of cultural capital in high-level careers: the contribution it makes to that elusive quality of “fit”, not just to getting in but to getting on. All that is borne out by the statistics: 48% of A-level grades in independent schools were A and A*, compared with a national average of 26%. Their pupils win 43% of the offers from Oxford and 37% of the offers from Cambridge. They also continue to dominate the professions: 74% of judges, 51% of journalists and 71% of top military officers are privately educated. Even in those fields that we think would be genuinely meritocratic, we see the same discrepancies. One-third of British Olympic medal winners in 2012 went to fee-paying schools, as did 42% of the 2016 BAFTA winners. Those are a lot of statistics, but it is hard not to conclude that our twin-track education system risks entrenching privilege more than ever before.

This matters for three reasons. First, educational credentials matter more than ever before. Secondly, it risks perpetuating inequality far into the future. If these schools were more diverse, society’s leaders would ultimately be drawn from a broader cross-section of the population, able to bring wider perspectives to the processes of decision-making. Thirdly, if there is an education system that is so successful in developing potential and opening up opportunities, should it not be available to everyone, especially those young people who need it the most?

Despite successive Ministers and Prime Ministers making it a priority, inequality is a wicked problem that is not going away. So what might the Government do? First, invest more in early-years education, which has a direct effect on the adults that children become. We know that children’s centres lead to better outcomes, yet up to 1,000 have closed over recent years. Can the Minister confirm when the promised review will be completed? Will he also consider the Sutton Trust recommendation that early-years teachers be given qualified-teacher status?

Secondly, the Government should lead a national conversation about how to harness the best qualities of independent schools, reimagining how the advantages

[BARONESS BULL]

they confer could be shared more equitably and articulating more clearly the role they should play in advancing social mobility. There are excellent examples of partnership in place, but there is a lack of definitive best practice and thought leadership to shift the status quo. The Social Mobility Commission's report promises more detailed recommendations. Can the Minister say when those will be available?

Lastly, perhaps one of the reasons progress on social mobility has stalled is the absence of any imperative to monitor and report on socioeconomic diversity in the workforce. In January the Government published guidelines on how employers might do that, but their use is currently entirely voluntary. It is a well-worn truth that we measure what we value and we value what we measure. Given that, does the Minister agree that the time is right to move to the compulsory measurement and publication of social mobility data, particularly in the highest-level professions? Only then will we know whether our efforts to equalise opportunities for young people are having a genuine impact on the opportunities available to them in later life.

3.49 pm

Baroness Suttie (LD): My Lords, it is a pleasure to follow that incredibly powerful and inspirational speech by the noble Baroness, Lady Bull. I commend her for it and I hope the Minister replies to all the questions that she has put.

I congratulate my noble friend Lady Grender on securing this extremely important debate. Investing in young people is a vital and all-embracing subject but I shall limit my remarks today to areas that I feel are particularly important: housing and homelessness, building resilience and the opportunities offered through international travel and exchanges. Twenty-five years ago, when I was 24 years old, I bought my first flat in Streatham in London. It was a two-bedroom flat with a small garden. I still remember the excitement of receiving the keys and knowing that I had my own place to call home. I was able to buy that flat without parental help and at a time when I was receiving a very modest Liberal Democrat salary. For most 24 year-olds nowadays, however, the very idea of buying a flat in London, Manchester, or Edinburgh is virtually unimaginable unless you have extremely generous parents or have inherited money. The same applies to rented accommodation. My young professional friends in their 20s and early 30s have to give up a huge proportion of their salaries renting a room in a flatshare, often with very basic facilities and with a long commute to work. In real terms, salaries have not remotely kept up with the increases in house prices or rented accommodation since the 1990s, when I was able to afford to buy my first flat.

All mainstream political parties agree on the urgent need to build more affordable housing but I feel that more radical and creative solutions need to be found if there is to be a solution to the current generational divide in access to housing. I should declare an interest as an ambassador for the homelessness charity Depaul International, which works with some of the most vulnerable young people in the UK and abroad. Last

year Depaul UK worked with more than 3,700 people at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping, most of whom were under the age of 26. The number of people aged 16 to 25 sleeping rough in London has doubled since 2010.

Investment in tackling homelessness—for example, through the rough sleepers initiative—is reducing rough sleeping in some areas. However, the Government will not meet their own targets to end rough sleeping unless they do more to prevent homelessness and address problems with the welfare system. There are three particular areas where I believe that government action could make a difference. The first is bringing housing benefit for young people back in line with the cost of renting. In many areas there is no accommodation available that young people on low incomes can afford, even when they are receiving housing benefit. Like other types of housing benefit, the shared accommodation rate has been frozen since 2016. In the 40 local authority areas with the highest number of 18 to 25 year-olds sleeping rough, there are just not enough affordable rooms available. Will the Government consider returning the shared accommodation rate to a more realistic level in line with local rents?

Secondly, the current five-week wait for universal credit payments can result in young people falling into rent arrears and being unable to pay for travel to find work. This can very quickly lead to a vicious cycle of debt and despair and ultimately to sleeping rough. Will the Government now consider plans to give new universal credit claimants access to housing benefit payments to cover the five-week period, similar to those planned for transferring claimants next year?

Thirdly, short-term preventive services can help young people to remain in their family home or find alternative accommodation before they reach a crisis point and end up homeless. Homelessness family mediation services can help young people and their families resolve issues that might otherwise lead to a young person leaving the family home and sleeping rough. Will the Government consider substantially increasing investment in preventive and family mediation measures to prevent young people becoming homeless in the first place?

The second issue I would like to raise is looking at ways to help young people develop their skills and build their resilience. Research undertaken by CFE Research and LSE Enterprise on behalf of the British Council found that 82% of individuals with international experience were confident in their ability to adapt to new and unfamiliar situations. Respondents with international experience were also more likely to describe themselves as resilient.

On a personal level, I know that my three-month exchange as a 20 year-old in Voronezh in the Soviet Union in 1988 had a profound impact on my ability to deal with adversity and cope without the luxuries of living at home. It certainly improved my ability to communicate in the Russian language too. At present, international exchange programmes are mostly available to young people in the higher education sector, but I would like to see ways of making them more widely available, and not just to certain socioeconomic groups. We should investigate the current barriers to these

international exchanges. We should also look at ways of encouraging young people from all backgrounds to participate in international programmes and school exchanges, as well as encouraging them to learn foreign languages. That becomes all the more urgent if we leave the European Union.

With the British Council, I have been very privileged to attend a great many events in the UK and abroad that help young people to develop their skills, confidence and resilience. The annual Hammamet Conference is one such positive example. It brings together young people from the UK and five North African countries from a variety of backgrounds to allow them to share ideas and experiences in a very practical way. For many of the British participants, it is their first opportunity to travel abroad and most certainly their first opportunity to visit the African continent.

The conference encourages active listening and listening to what young people really think, rather than what we think they think. I would like to see if there are ways in which such positive events can be scaled up to include a greater number of young people in future. I would be grateful if the Minister commented on this in his concluding remarks.

Investing in young people and allowing each individual to find a way to fulfil their potential is surely the single most important thing any society can do. Young people have so much to give and so much to offer if we are just prepared to listen. As my noble friend Lady Grender spelled out so powerfully in her opening remarks, we need to make sure that we find effective ways to tap into that rich seam of talent, in this country and beyond.

3.56 pm

The Earl of Listowel (CB): My Lords, I also thank the noble Baroness, Lady Grender, for securing this important debate. Listening to what the noble Lord, Lord Bird, said, I was reminded of a conversation I had with a care-experienced adult who is 30 years of age. Just recently, she had visited Italy and had visited a children's home there, and she said that in Italy it is normal for the staff to have a degree-level qualification. That led me to think of a conversation I had with a man from Finland, who worked in a children's home there. He said, "In Finland, we just don't allow somebody across the door unless they have a degree-level qualification. The children are far too vulnerable, and we just feel that they need the best quality care possible". In this country, our system requires that people have only an NVQ level 3 to work in a children's home; 80% of staff need to have that qualification.

Yet the children in our children's homes are much more vulnerable than those in Finnish or Italian children's homes. In Italy and Finland, about half of the children in care go into residential care, and half go into foster care, compared with only 10% in this country. This is understandable, because of the history of child sexual abuse in our children's homes. That is not to say that other countries have avoided that, but residential care is a very unpopular option generally. I speak to very well-respected social workers who say they would never place a child in a children's home if they could possibly avoid it.

To my mind, that is a great pity. Developmentally, it is absolutely right. Adolescents move away from their families. Many young people do very well in boarding schools, if there are high-quality staff and support. Parents can visit for the weekend, or for lunch. Tim Loughton MP went to Denmark to look at its children's homes and said that they were quite like boarding schools, with parents coming along on Saturdays. They have highly qualified and very well-supported staff.

Nowadays, in this country, the risk is not so much the low level of qualifications of children's home staff. Because they are highly regulated and monitored, it is unlikely that they will sexually abuse children or commit other kinds of abuse. It is when a girl is aged 14 to 16, it is a Friday or Saturday night and there are people who wish to groom them outside the premises who have maybe succeeded in grooming a friend of the girl and they are calling her out. It is how the staff prevent that young girl joining that group or gang. I remember having breakfast in a children's home a few years ago. Maybe it was Saturday morning. The staff were congratulating a girl, who was 14 years old, on not going out the previous night because she had been called out by a young woman who they feared was involved in such a gang. Thanks to the excellence of the staff and the support they had offered her, they managed to persuade her to stay in.

I mention this to highlight the main theme that I would like to discuss in this debate. All young people start as foetuses, then become infants and then children. One really needs to think about their whole development and supporting them from the very beginning if they are to have good opportunities in adolescence and beyond. Something I would single out that we are, regrettably, very bad at in this country is recognising the complexities of children's and young people's needs and the importance of childhood and adolescence. We talk about it and there is a growing understanding of its importance, but consider, for instance, early years educators and carers. There is an early years degree. We all recognise that we want more qualified staff in early years settings because of its vital importance for young people's education and other outcomes, yet it is quite possible to qualify as an early years graduate and to be paid no more than when one was unqualified and yet have more responsibility and look after more children.

Thankfully, the Government introduced the minimum wage, or whatever it is called. That probably raised the level of pay for many early years practitioners, but many of them are on the lowest possible wage that can be paid. This is enormously sophisticated work. I mentioned to a colleague that we should have more graduates in early years settings. She said, "Why do you need a person with a degree in an early years setting?" There is a whole culture of misunderstanding. I visited Denmark and spoke with a social pedagogue—a thoroughly well-educated young woman who worked in the early years and whose father ran an early years setting. She was very middle-class and well-educated. Our settings are very often very low paid and people are poorly educated. It is often seen as the sort of job that young women do when they perhaps do not see many options other than doing these things.

[THE EARL OF LISTOWEL]

Maybe I can take this opportunity to apologise for and retract something I said to a group of educationists this week that I think was unhelpful. I said that I rather thought it was a good idea to advise young people not to become a teacher in this country. That was an extreme thing to say. Obviously, our children need their teachers, but I feel so frustrated at the way we teach our teachers, youth workers, social workers and residential childcare workers. It denigrates the importance of childhood and the complexity of children's needs, especially those who have experienced trauma and sexual abuse.

I do not wish to be too negative and there is a lot of good progress being made, but will the Minister keep very much in mind what he can do to make teaching more attractive and to ease the burden on teachers? I have an old friend who is a primary school teacher in an inner city. For years, her family have been trying to persuade her to stop doing the job because they get to see so little of her because of the long hours she works. Speaking to another colleague whose wife is a teacher in an inner-city school in the Midlands, it is quite normal for many of her colleagues to work 50, 60 or 70 hours a week.

How can we expect children and young people to thrive? They need good relationships, most importantly with their parents, but going on to their early years provision and then their primary and secondary school teachers, to help them through often difficult times. If we do not treat our teachers well, if we do not treat the people who care for our children well, then we will not be treating our children well. We have to be kinder and more thoughtful to our teachers. We should not leave them feeling so despairing that they wish to leave the profession.

I know that the Minister is doing some excellent work in this area. Perhaps he may say something about the work that he is doing to ease the caseloads and workloads for teachers. However, we compare poorly to the way that those on the continent invest in the people who care for their children. I hope we can do better.

4.05 pm

Lord Shipley (LD): My Lords, I am grateful for the opportunity to follow the noble Earl, Lord Listowel, and for his very honest and thoughtful contribution to this debate. He has reminded us of the complex needs of children and young people, and I particularly appreciated the international comparisons that he drew to our attention.

This debate has raised a large number of concerns, to which I want to add two structural problems that the Government must address. The first relates to Whitehall and its silo thinking. Several Whitehall departments have responsibilities for the policies affecting young people. This does not mean that the interests of young people are adequately integrated, and the Government must take steps to enforce that integration. Does the Minister really feel that, across Whitehall, the interests of young people are properly integrated?

The second issue is a failure to assess the impact of government legislation on young people generally. It seems to be left to think tanks such as the Resolution

Foundation, or to the Office for National Statistics, the Institute for Fiscal Studies and the House of Lords, through its Select Committees. Inevitably, this a hit and miss process. I suggest that it should be for the Government themselves to join up their policy-making and not simply to leave it to other organisations. I hope the Minister can give the House some confidence on this matter, and that the Government will adopt cross-departmental policy impact assessments in relation to young people.

The House of Lords Intergenerational Fairness and Provision Committee published its report last month. It is a very good piece of work, which concluded that "a structural shift" is taking place between the generations. That must concern us greatly. Can the Minister tell us whether we will have an opportunity for an early debate on this report, rather than be faced with the usual six-month delay after a Select Committee has published its report?

In her excellent opening speech, the noble Baroness, Lady Grender, proposed a UK young people's strategy council, which I strongly support. It is a positive idea, which would give a voice directly into government from young people, and would help to address the need for that integration of policy that I referred to. I have been considering whether we should have a young people's commissioner or commission.

Whether or not we do those things, a young people's strategy council would be essential as a foundation for any other bodies that were created. It might address, for example, the impact of huge cuts to youth services and whether there is a relationship between those cuts and the rise in knife crime. It might look at travel costs for young people, which differ across the country, particularly in getting to post-16 education. It might look at how we support young people who do not go to university. It might examine issues of income for young people.

It has been reported that a quarter of young people are always in debt and that half run out of cash each month. That must create increased levels of worry and stress. Such a strategy council might also examine how young people can be expected to put aside enough money for their pensions, and how to boost FE funding for young people aged 16 to 19 to give them the work opportunities and level of pay that should be justified.

A number of speakers referred to housing issues. It is the case that we are creating a generation of renters who are not able to save for a deposit to buy their own home because they have to pay high rents. People in their 20s and 30s are spending one and a half times more of their income on housing than my generation did at that age. As the Library briefing has reminded us, on average young people today have less floor space and tend to live further from work, so their travel costs are higher. On average, private renters spend 35% of their income on housing at age 25, while my generation paid just 15% at that same age. I strongly support a nationwide help-to-rent scheme, giving loans to first-time renters so that they can afford to pay their deposit. It would at least be a start on the ladder. However, as my noble friend Lady Grender said, the biggest barrier of all in housing is a lack of supply. We have to build more social housing. It is not just a

question of the Government trying to meet their commitment to building 300,000 new homes a year by converting offices.

I want to comment on a recent figure produced by the Office for National Statistics, which suggested that there had been a slowdown in new household formation. There is a problem with this conclusion. It is now estimated by other research that around 900,000 young people are living with their parents because they cannot afford to live on their own. If they are doing that, they are not forming new households, so one has to be really careful with a statistic suggesting that we need fewer than 300,000 new homes a year. A major issue in relation to equality of opportunity has been confirmed in research by the Resolution Foundation, showing that at the age of 30 those whose parents do not own property are 60% less likely to be homeowners themselves. I hope the House will agree that such a division in society cannot help to reduce social exclusion.

Inequality seems to have become entrenched in our country. Social mobility has now been stagnant for four years. The noble Lord, Lord Willetts, has been quoted as saying that young people are becoming the “squeezed generation”. The point has been reached when the Government need to do more than just take note of a debate like this. I hope the Minister will be able to confirm that the Government are willing to do more to create the structures that meet the challenge of addressing the needs of young people, and that we will not simply bury the issues debated this afternoon in long grass.

4.13 pm

Lord Mawson (CB): My Lords, I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Grender, for calling this debate. I want to talk about SMEs and the army of young entrepreneurs being generated in the British economy, not only in London but across the north of England. Many of them are one-man or one-woman bands; many of them face a mountain to climb daily.

Over the last four years, I have been leading a programme in 10 towns and cities in some of our poorest communities across the north of England, which is now called Well North Enterprises. I declare my interest. In Denaby Main, an ex-mining town, we carried out over 400 conversations with residents in 2015. It was clear that the community was missing opportunities to thrive in an area defined by a dependency culture, long-term unemployment and double the borough average rates of employment support allowance. Get Denaby Enterprising was a way to offer non-traditional avenues into employment through self-employment, allowing young people to work and manage their condition.

By the end of year one, 24 SMEs were registered with HMRC and trading. A successful part of the approach was the establishment of a business club for new and established local businesses. The group grew quickly by word of mouth and relationship-building. The business club was used as a forum to celebrate these new businesses at the end of the first year. Each business was recognised for its hard work and success. In 2018, the programme widened to include four other communities across Doncaster, with 15 further SMEs. The business club continues to grow, with 32 members.

It is interesting how youth unemployment varies in the western world. The youth unemployment rate in the European Union averaged 19.05% from 2000 to 2019. Youth unemployment in Greece today is 39%; Italy, 33%; Spain, 32%; and France, 20%. By contrast, in the UK it is 11%, and in the US, 8.3%. This broadly suggests that those with the most regulated employment regimes have the highest youth unemployment. Why is this? Is it about unintended consequences or the awful paradox that, when Governments pass more regulations to protect workers’ rights and regulate the marketplace, the unintended consequence is often increased unemployment, especially for the young? This is not because legislators have the wrong motives; they have excellent motives. It is just that the consequences of some of our motives and values are often the opposite of those intended.

Total employment in SMEs in the UK is 16.3 million people, which is 60% of all private sector employment in the UK, contributing 47% of revenue to the UK economy. Damage this and you damage the employment prospects of young people for a generation.

I have been in correspondence with the Treasury over the last six months about a list of the 42 different pieces of red tape that I have discovered that any small single-handed business, church, charity or social enterprise has to pay attention to each day simply to operate legally. It is getting to the stage where hiring a local hall to run an exercise class, for example for two hours once a week, has become almost ridiculously complicated. Whether the person running the class is employed or not is now a highly complex question. What about their pension? Do they have a contract or holiday pay? What about tax and insurance? Have you complied with all the health and safety regulations? The list goes on.

I could imagine that hiring a hall will get caught up in regulations for the gig economy. Imagine you are going to sell food afterwards—another mountain of regulations to which we are about to add more. Imagine you make some sandwiches at home first—horror of horrors. If the class is going to involve children, forget it. Now imagine a young person wants to set this up, with little or no experience; it is likely that, after a few hours of research, they will just give up, or they could get it wrong and be hit by a disproportionate fine from HMRC. Imagine they are on universal credit and want to work out its impact on their benefits. Could any noble Lords in this Chamber work it out? These are the practical issues we are seeing in Doncaster and east London.

Those with family connections to help may find a way through but, if you come from a disadvantaged background like Denaby Main, and do not know anyone whom runs a small business who can help you, how likely are you to succeed? It is hardest for those trying to get going as young entrepreneurs.

Last week I was talking to a young builder in east London, whom I have known since childhood. Last Saturday, he was going to drive to Bristol and take out a large loan to buy a new van, because of the Mayor of London’s latest decree on clean air in the capital. Another young man I know gave up his own business in Hackney after 10 years and moved out of the country because, as he told me, every time he was

[LORD MAWSON]

starting to get a bit of a bank balance to help him grow the business, another bit of local, London or central government made yet another financial demand on him. Is that what the black cabs are trying to tell us with their horns each week, outside this building? It seemed, he said, like a hamster's wheel that he could not get off. These things affect young people and their mental health. Those two young people cannot afford to buy their own homes where they grew up; one had to live with his parents.

This is the net effect of thousands of pieces of legislation—a salami-slice approach. Each one is perfectly valid in its own right, but the net effect can be completely stultifying. We are going to add a whole lot more: on zero-hours contracting and food labelling, and a ton of stuff around reducing carbon and online reporting to HMRC—to mention just a few.

What is it going to be like in a few years' time for a young person in, let us say, Skelmersdale or Rotherham who wants to set up a small business? Is anybody thinking about them when we draft all this new legislation? Is anyone in the Civil Service interested in the cumulative effect of all this? We wonder why they do not trust Governments.

I expect that part of the problem is that most of us in the Palace of Westminster and the Civil Service have no experience of trying to run a business as a young person, and it is thus not surprising that the legislation does not work from their perspective. Perhaps we should involve those affected by legislation more directly in its drafting.

I suggest that this problem is partly because we have stopped listening to one another. If we are concerned about keeping a lid on the national debt and not passing it on to our children, we are accused of destroying communities through evil austerity. If on the other hand we are genuinely worried about the impact of reduced services on communities, we are unprincipled, unrealistic spendthrifts. The truth is that people hold both positions for perfectly valid reasons and they all genuinely care about our country's future. Populist rhetoric on all sides seeks to amplify difference and simplify arguments, whereas the truth is often more complex and nuanced.

Is it possible to work together for the future for our young people, recognising the validity of a wide range of opinions and perspectives from across the political landscape? Can we all reduce the spin and talk and focus a bit more together on solving some of the practical problems that our young entrepreneurs face day in, day out? Would the Minister be willing to bring together some of his colleagues to look at these burdens placed on young businesses and explore how they might be reduced?

4.22 pm

Baroness Tyler of Enfield (LD): My Lords, as my noble friend Lady Grender said so powerfully in her excellent opening speech, it has long been considered a given that each generation would have a better quality of life than the one before it. According to the Intergenerational Commission, more than half the individuals in every age group believe that each successive

generation should have a higher standard of living, but we live at a time where this is no longer the case. Since the recession, young people have overwhelmingly faced worse outcomes than did their parents.

As well as facing mounting inequality between the generations, as we have already heard, young people now face great inequality within their generation. According to the Social Mobility Commission's recent *State of the Nation* report, as already referenced, social mobility has been stagnant for the past four years and,

"Inequality is ... entrenched in Britain ... from birth to work ... Those from better off backgrounds are almost 80 per cent more likely to be in a professional job than their working class peers".

This entirely echoes the findings of the recent report *Closing the Regional Attainment Gap* produced by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Mobility—of which I have the pleasure to be the co-chair—which showed that, without policy changes, we are more than 40 years away from closing the gap between the educational attainment of disadvantaged children and that of their more affluent peers, with that gap varying wildly across the country.

The failure of successive Governments to tackle the underlying causes of such unequal life chances was laid bare in a hard-hitting report from the IFS, published this week, which exposed the ever-widening inequalities in pay, health and opportunity in the UK which are undermining trust in democracy.

As a member—and the original proposer—of the Lords Select Committee on Intergenerational Fairness and Provision, which published its report just after Easter, I was struck by the evidence that we heard about the number of challenges faced by many of our young people. The picture that our report paints is deeply worrying, with too many young people facing barriers at every turn. The report demonstrates starkly that our post-16 education and training system does not provide those in further education with anything like equal opportunities. Too many young people are being held back by schooling which does not prepare them for a rapidly changing labour market and a considerably longer working life. Once they move into the workforce, young people are disproportionately faced with insecure employment, low pay with few prospects of progression and little prospect of owning their own home.

It is perhaps, therefore, no wonder that young people's well-being has fallen dramatically. The Intergenerational Foundation's 2018 index found that young people's overall well-being fell by a whopping 10% over the last two decades. The message here is clear: we need to improve young people's opportunities or risk damaging their mental health and well-being—a subject covered comprehensively in the excellent debate in this Chamber this morning.

When it comes to education, the paths that young people take are not equal. Further education and vocational training provide a vast range of opportunities; they are fantastic resources for those who do not wish to pursue other, more academic routes. Yet our report found that further education and vocational training have been chronically underfunded. That means that students taking this route are simply not getting a fair

slice of the cake when it comes to educational resources. That is why the report included a recommendation to rebalance public spending to put higher education and further education on a more equal footing. For this to happen, the Government must reverse the cuts to further education. Will these deeply unfair funding mechanisms be looked at in the forthcoming spending review?

We also need to ensure that young people receive an education which equips them for the real world. It is worrying that many young people feel they are leaving school without the life skills they need to function as adults. For example, there is no statutory requirement to teach young people about housing in their PSHE lessons. However, the young apprentices in our contact group who gave evidence to the Select Committee as part of its work told us that their key concerns were housing and homelessness. They told us that they did not know enough about how renting worked or what their options were if they had trouble affording housing. How are young people supposed to navigate the complexities of renting and housing if we are not giving them the knowledge and skills to do so? This is why our report also recommended that the Government should increase housing and financial education in PSHE lessons.

Once young people leave education, the barriers to opportunities do not end. Instead, as the House has already heard in this debate, too many young people are faced with insecure employment. Indeed, the proportion of individuals who are self-employed, on zero-hours contracts or involved in the gig economy has rapidly risen among young people. Many companies propagate a myth of self-employment to avoid providing their workers with the rights and protections they are entitled to. By denying young workers access to vital employee benefits, insecure employment can have a huge impact on their financial stability. As recommended in the Select Committee report, it is vital that the Government act to ensure that there is a default presumption of worker status when people are employed. This will help tackle companies rebranding their young employees as “freelance contractors” to deny them the worker’s rights and employee benefits to which they are entitled.

Not only are many young people in insecure employment, but they are also not getting paid fairly. According to the Financial Conduct Authority, in 2017 real earnings for those in their 20s were 5% lower than they had been in 2008. Poor pay not only has negative consequences for young people’s well-being; it also has serious consequences for their relationships and family life. This is starkly demonstrated by the results of a 2018 YouGov survey of young workers between 21 and 30 years old. It found that over one-fifth of the respondents had put off starting a family because of a shortage of money. Another quarter had put off changing careers and over 40% had had to ask their family or friends for financial help due to a shortage of money.

An exacerbating factor is that young people are spending a rapidly rising proportion of what they do earn on housing. Our report on intergenerational fairness highlighted that young people born between 1981 and 2000 spend one-and-a-half times more on housing at the age of 25 compared to previous generations. That

might be acceptable if young people were getting housing which is one and a half times better than previous generations. Instead, we were shown evidence that they get less floor space and longer commutes. As my noble friend Lord Shipley has already said, a recent estimate by the Resolution Foundation suggested that one-third of millennials could still be renting privately at the age of 65. This is a really major shift in how society is living.

Tackling the issues raised in this very good debate this afternoon will take sustained government action and political will. Solutions do exist, we have heard many of them this afternoon and I totally endorse the excellent package of proposals set out by my noble friend Lady Grender. Let us just hope that the Government are listening.

4.30 pm

Baroness Prashar (CB): My Lords, I too thank the noble Baroness, Lady Grender, for securing this debate and providing us with the opportunity to discuss the issues facing young people today. I particularly commend her efforts to engage young people through social media: last week, when we debated the toxic nature of public discourse, I suggested that we often talk about social media’s negative impacts but not how it can be used positively. It has been really refreshing to see engagement with young people and an effort to get them to participate.

In recent months, a number of reports have highlighted that we have an increasing divergence in equality of opportunity for young people and that social mobility is stagnant. The Social Mobility Commission’s recent report said that inequality is now entrenched in Britain, from birth to work. It concluded that being born privileged still means you usually remain privileged and that the dominance of background factors on future outcomes is further compounded by gender, ethnicity and disability.

One of the contributory factors is of course the discrepancy in educational opportunities in further and higher education, so vividly illustrated by my noble friend Lady Bull. While there have been substantial improvements in university participation among students from disadvantaged backgrounds in recent years, the gap remains significant. Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to go to university and more likely to drop out. Those who do complete their studies start their careers with huge debts. Many have to work to support themselves while studying and have anxiety about their job prospects when they qualify. The Intergenerational Fairness and Provision Committee, already referred to, suggested that there may be a mismatch between the jobs graduates expect and the jobs available.

If we are to offer young people true equality of opportunity, reform of the funding of further and higher education must be one of the strategic milestones to achieving it, as well as ensuring that education aligns with business needs—indeed, we have to look at funding cuts too. Will the Minister tell the House what reforms the Government are considering with regard to funding and what action, if any, they are taking to align education and business needs?

The Institute for Fiscal Studies found that those who attend Russell group universities have earnings 10% higher for women and 13% higher for men. The

[BARONESS PRASHAR]

university that a student attends is impacted by her socioeconomic background. There is also evidence that an attainment gap between students of different ethnic origins exists at the vast majority of universities; a gap that cannot be explained by a student's background or prior qualifications. A recent report by Universities UK and the NUS called for further research to review what works in addressing these inequalities. Will the Minister say what plans, if any, there are to look into this area?

Good quality apprenticeships have the potential to be an important vehicle for social mobility, with lifetime earnings on average better than many degrees, and they offer the opportunity to earn while you learn. However, according to the Sutton Trust, despite the recent growth in apprenticeships there are still relatively few degree apprenticeships each year compared to undergraduate places, and disadvantaged young people are less likely to take up the best apprenticeships compared to their better-off peers.

There is a need to provide more high-quality apprenticeships—not just boosting the numbers, or employers converting existing employees as a way of claiming the money. As there is no centralised system for apprenticeships, the need for better advice is even more crucial; as is awareness of the apprenticeship route among teachers, parents and students. There is also a need to rebalance the value attributed to higher and further education and apprenticeships, to ensure that different and more appropriate pathways to education are better known to students and given equal value.

The other area is housing, which has already been highlighted by the noble Baroness, Lady Suttie, and by the noble Baroness, Lady Grender, in her introduction. The Intergenerational Fairness and Provision Committee argued that the Government are not taking action to provide a sufficient supply of affordable housing. We have seen an increase in the number of young people living in private rented accommodation and a decrease in 25 to 34 year-olds in owner-occupation. This is a worrying trend. The noble Baroness, Lady Suttie, talked about her experience of buying a house at the age of 24.

We need action in at least two areas to deliver equality of opportunity. The first is housing affordability; that is, ensuring that house ownership remains in reach of this generation. It is disappointing that the Government are withdrawing the Help to Buy ISA in November, which supported saving for a mortgage deposit. Declaring an interest as a non-executive director of Nationwide Building Society, I can tell the House that, on average, Nationwide members with a Help to Buy ISA have been able to have their own home two years earlier and have required £1,000 less as a deposit than standard first-time buyers. Perhaps the Government might consider not withdrawing Help to Buy ISAs.

Secondly, we need a better private rented sector. Young people are vulnerable to bad practice. Again, in 2017, Nationwide set up the private rented sector partnership board, bringing together representatives of landlords, tenants and agents to improve the situation. The board has developed some themes for change in the sector and has set out the framework for government in this area so that there can be a strategy to tackle poor quality and affordability.

A housing policy needs to focus not just on building houses but on other factors which contribute to creating flourishing communities and a healthy work/life balance for the well-being of our young people. I am aware that the Government are taking the problems facing young people seriously and have set up a committee to look at inequality, but there is urgency to draw all the findings of several studies and research together to develop a more co-ordinated, comprehensive strategy to tackle this entrenched problem. Part of the problem is that there is no holistic approach, as a number of other noble Lords have said.

Non-profit organisations and businesses are partnering to do this. Among others, Cumberland Lodge, an education charity which I chair, and the Social Mobility Business Partnership, of which I am a patron, are developing an initiative to tackle this—so watch this space. I mention the organisations I am associated with not to advertise them but to illustrate that some of these initiatives are showing the way. What we need is government support and action to implement them and scale them up. In that sense, I really support the suggestion put forward by the noble Baroness, Lady Grender, that we should have a strategy for young people like we have an industrial strategy. The time has come when we cannot work in silos; we need the structural reforms that the noble Lord, Lord Shipley, talked about. I look forward to the Minister's response.

4.38 pm

Lord Storey (LD): My Lords, it is a privilege to speak in this debate and to follow some inspirational and knowledgeable contributions. I thank my noble friend Lady Grender for her powerful introduction and for the way she set about organising this debate—listening to young people, holding a webinar and putting together a package of proposals. It is a model for how other debates might be organised.

I am the father of a child born in the millennium—I never say “millennial”—and work from time to time with young researchers and interns in Parliament. I have been thinking quite a bit about the gap between Peers and the current generation of young people—not just in years. I am not particularly religious but I recall a verse from Matthew chapter 13, verse 12:

“For whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance. But whoever does not have, from him shall be taken away even that which he has”.

This sounds like a pretty good account of the 21st-century reality for many young people.

Certainly, most of us in this Chamber were among those who, according to Harold Macmillan in 1957,

“never had it so good”.

We grew up in a country where the then Prime Minister was able to claim that,

“you will see a state of prosperity such as we have never had in my lifetime—nor indeed in the history of this country”.

We remain one of the world's wealthiest countries, and even during the great austerity, our generation has continued to benefit from free prescriptions, free TV licences, bus passes and the winter fuel allowance. Compare that with what our young people have lost in the name of austerity: education maintenance allowances, affordable bus services—if there are any at all—the

decimation of youth services, the decline of services provided by the voluntary sector, and dare I mention university fees?

We have heard much—perhaps too much—about social mobility as the golden thread that is meant to underpin many of the Government’s policy initiatives. Everyone in government, from the Prime Minister down, talks about a moral responsibility to reduce inequality. Too many young people suffer many of the injustices that the Prime Minister spoke of in the speech she delivered in Downing Street just a couple of years ago. On equality of opportunity, the current Administration are word perfect when they talk the talk but trip and stumble whenever they try to walk the walk. There is perhaps no finer or more detailed analysis of how unequal opportunities are than the latest report of the Social Mobility Commission. Noble Lords will recall that the previous commission resigned en masse 15 months ago. The new commission’s message in its analysis, the *State of the Nation 2018-19*, can be summed up as: on social mobility we are going backwards.

I want to talk about schools and education. I listened with great interest and awe to the contributions of the noble Baroness, Lady Bull, and the noble Earl, Lord Listowel, and I agree with everything they said. I will add just two other things. First, the EBacc has seen the creative and arts subjects in our schools squeezed and squeezed. As the noble Baroness, Lady Bull, rightly said, we see the maintained sector having fewer opportunities with regard to creative and arts subjects than the independent sector.

The second issue, which was briefly mentioned by the noble Earl, Lord Listowel, is our teachers, who are crucial to providing opportunities for our children and young people. I do not believe that you can train a teacher over a five-week intensive course, call it whatever you want—Teach First, or whatever. That is not the way you train a quality teacher. Teachers need to learn about child development, psychology and special educational needs to be able to motivate their children and young people. They themselves need to be highly trained, to have continuing professional development and to be respected—to be the linchpin of our education system. Sadly, we now see schools where there are shortage subjects, so supply teachers are brought in or the subject is taught by teachers who have no passionate understanding or knowledge of it. We also see a workforce strategy for teachers where we have to quickly try to recruit people in all sorts of different ways.

I am saddened by how we have allowed this situation in our schools to happen. In our primary schools, at one stage, it was a period of joy: looking forward to education. We now have a regime that develops SATs, creates league tables and puts pressure on children. That is not the way that children should develop. They should enjoy and be encouraged to enjoy the thrills of learning and discovery.

We are one of the wealthiest countries on this planet. It is surely a disgrace that while the number of banks is decreasing—admittedly, because many people use online banking and pay for everything with a credit card—the number of food banks is increasing. According to Napoleon, an army marches on its stomach. Many of our young people do not march but walk

unwillingly to school or college on an empty stomach. Only yesterday, the End Child Poverty report showed that poverty is the new normal.

If we put to one side those who are really poor—as the Government seem to do without too much concern—children and young people have a very different quality of life compared with the life experiences of those of us in this Chamber. The children I taught in Liverpool at the beginning of my career lived simple but limited lives. They had a television, but no one had a telephone at home or a motorcar, as they were then called, and few went on holiday.

In the 21st century, there are still children who live similar lives, but even those without a smart device at home have access to the internet at school or in the local library—those that are still open. This has brought a whole range of opportunities to every young person. They can set up an email account, open a Facebook page, join a WhatsApp group or join Instagram.

The internet does not make judgments on the basis of your accent, what school you attended, what your parents do, whether you went to university and, if so, which one, whether you are rich, and so on. The collection of judgments about people that underpin our class system and ensure that the few maintain their superiority over the many are not made by Google, although it and other companies collect data that enable them to get to know you very well.

However, the downside of the internet is the pressure put on young people, especially the vulnerable. Social media works 24/7, and unless you switch off your smartphone, iPad or computer, there is no escape from it. Young people today are under huge pressure to meet what is promoted as the norm, particularly in terms of body image. Everyone promoting themselves—and, often, commercial products—on the internet is always a perfect shape, with high-fashion clothes and the latest gadgets. We hear about the reality of their lives only when they go into a clinic because of drink, drugs or mental health issues.

In the previous debate, we learned much about what is happening to the mental health of our young people and the need for the Government to make urgent headway to improve mental health services. We are training teachers in every school to identify mental health issues in young people, and there is now a scheme to train sports coaches to spot young people with mental health issues. These measures are welcome—early intervention is always better than a cure—but it is not enough simply to respond to crises in young people. Months after a Green Paper pledged to make Britain the safest place in the world to be online, it took—very sadly—the suicide of a young girl to speed up the Government’s response to taking seriously the contribution of social media to young suicides. Perhaps in the same way, it took a suicide to persuade ITV to take “The Jeremy Kyle Show” off the air.

In my final minute, I make a challenge to young people themselves. They have it in their own hands to change the way we think by going to vote, by using the ballot box. It is very alarming that 18 to 30 year-olds are the lowest percentage of voters, while those aged 50 to 70 are the highest. If young people went out to vote, Governments of the day of any political colour

[LORD STOREY]

would take note and, when they took note, some of the issues that we have been raising and are concerned about would be acted on.

4.48 pm

Lord Bassam of Brighton (Lab): My Lords, like other noble Lords, I express my gratitude to the noble Baroness, Lady Grender, for initiating and instigating this debate. I congratulate her on the number of name-checks for her Lib Dem colleagues she managed to achieve in the early part of her speech. This is not a problem I have to wrestle with.

I will enter another slightly discordant note. It should not go unremarked that many of the policies that have taken us backwards in equalities over the last nine years—as the noble Lord, Lord Storey, acknowledged in his contribution—sadly had some of their origins in the coalition years: Sure Start cuts, the bedroom tax, the scrapping of EMAs and the tripling of tuition fees, to name just a few.

But this debate is about more than that. When Mrs May became Prime Minister back in 2016, she did so with a mission to heal social divisions and act to help those just about managing. She put herself at the head of a Government with a social agenda designed to tackle inequality and unfairness in the workplace and to rebalance the housing market. That early promise is often forgotten and, in a news cycle dominated almost totally by the daily psychodrama that is Brexit, wholly overlooked. So I very much welcome this debate focusing on what equality of opportunity means for young people seeking a beneficial quality of life. This Government have strayed a long way from Mrs May's original purpose and have long lost any sense of where their policies might lead.

As others have referenced, the Social Mobility Commission's *State of the Nation* report concluded recently:

"Inequality is now entrenched in Britain from birth to work, and the government needs to take urgent action to help close the privilege gap".

The same report observed that,

"social mobility has been stagnant",

for over four years. As the noble Baroness, Lady Bull, observed in her contribution—a brilliant contribution, with lots of really powerful and important questions—being born privileged still usually means that you remain privileged. The report found that:

"The dominance of background factors on future outcomes is further compounded when we look at the interaction with gender, ethnicity and disability".

This is a damning indictment of government policy by a government-sponsored body, and not one that I have heard anyone question.

Probably the most troubling aspect of the picture painted by the Social Mobility Commission and the Lords Select Committee on Intergenerational Fairness and Provision is that younger generations are not seeing the increases in living standards experienced by previous generations—my generation. This has led to what the committee identified as,

"disappointed expectations ... in housing and the workplace".

This was attributed to successive government failures to anticipate and,

"prepare for social, economic and technological change".

Inequality in all its forms has sadly become so entrenched in modern British society that the IFS has launched its own large-scale study on the topic. I very much hope your Lordships' House will have the opportunity to discuss the Deaton review as it progresses.

None of this comes as a surprise to those of us on this side of the political divide. Since 2010 the Government have pursued policies pinned to the holy grail of austerity Budgets designed to lead to the false God of ending the deficit in public finances. In reality, we know to our cost that these policies have led to a decline in public services and a loss of trust in the power of the state to intervene and promote greater equality and opportunity in society. Since 2010 the Government have systematically undermined things that had been introduced to narrow inequality, make higher and further education more accessible and enable people to make provision for decent housing options—all things that tangibly improve the quality of life for a rising generation.

The litany of negative policies is a long one. Scrapping the EMA took away much-needed financial support for books, transport and studying costs for low-income students in post-16 education. This was coupled with the massive tripling of tuition fees in England, which has driven whole generations into debt they will never clear, making access to the housing market after graduation even harder. The fees have had a disastrous impact on part-time studying too.

Young people face the impossibility of accessing reasonably priced housing. As the Lords Intergenerational Fairness and Provision Committee found, the Government are,

"not taking the action needed to ensure there is a sufficient supply of affordable housing",

which is primarily hurting the younger generation.

The Resolution Foundation has calculated that it will take a 27 to 30 year-old 18 years to save sufficient money to put down a deposit on a house; 20 years ago it would have taken just three. All of this makes the bank of mum and dad even more important—so much so that at the age of 30 those without parental property wealth are approximately 60% less likely to become homeowners.

Young people, too, are experiencing the worst impact of the private rental market. Typically, young renters are paying as much as 35% of their income to rent, whereas the immediate post-war generation spent, as we heard, only 15%. In a sector lacking security of tenure and with many private landlords demanding large deposits and access charges, and providing poor repair services, it is little wonder that young renters suffer increasingly from mental health problems and anxiety.

Housing and employment taken together have a major impact on life satisfaction. By historical standards we live in an era of relative full employment, with young people out of work at historically low levels—11.3% according to the latest figures. However, that masks considerable dissatisfaction with insecurity of employment and pay levels. Slow pay progression is a real factor for new entrants into the labour market. Young people have seen larger declines in pay over the past decade

than other age groups. This of course impacts on labour market flexibility and household formation rates and has led to couples starting families much later in life.

Both the Social Mobility Commission and the Intergenerational Fairness and Provision Committee commented on job insecurity and low pay. The SMC found that 52% of disadvantaged young people leave school without qualifications and, as a consequence, get stuck in low-paid work. The commission argued that young people with professional parents were 80% more likely to get professional jobs themselves. It made the point that adult education was failing to address this inequality. That failing, coupled with the increasing rate of automation of jobs, is likely to lead to a further entrenchment of inequality and reduced levels of social mobility.

What sort of change do we need if we are to emerge from this malaise? The SMC was clear that we need an economic model that values concentrated investment in skills, jobs and infrastructure in areas of low pay and low social mobility. This will of course need a new approach from employers too. To this I would argue and add that if we are to answer the Motion of the noble Baroness, Lady Greender, we need comprehensive policies that counter growing inequality in the workplace, in our communities and in the provision of good-quality housing.

Reintroducing the EMA, scrapping tuition fees and promoting a national education service will all go some way to creating a learning culture that says it values the development of skills for life. We need to set out to provide lifelong learning so that, as new technologies come along, the workforce of the future can adapt and retrain. Apprenticeship and graduate-based skills need an equivalence of value in the workforce so that we can get away from the rigid divides prevalent in the labour market that prevent progression and social mobility.

Exploitative zero-hours contracts, unpaid internships and poorer pay for part-time employees need outlawing. Scrapping the youth rate for the minimum wage and ensuring a real living wage of £10 per hour for all would go a long way to restoring dignity in our workplaces.

In the housing market we need decisive action. Rents and house prices are sensitive to the scale of a building programme. A national programme, with councils enabled to expand their stocks, more help for first-time buyers, with Help to Buy expanded and extended, and an end to insecurity in the private sector, with a cap on rent rises, new minimum standards and a guaranteed right to repairs are all measures that will make a difference to our younger generation.

Work and home are the things that give our lives value and can create a sense of well-being. They are the foundations to much of our personal satisfaction. Public policy over much of the past decade has done little to enrich the lives of younger people or provide them with an opportunity to progress and aspire. We live in a society which, despite the best efforts of the last Labour Government, is still overly defined by class, place and background. If we want to escape from a future defined by those things, we need to rethink, reimagine and revisit whole areas of public policy. The alternative will leave us stuck in a time-warped, two-speed economy where inequality becomes even

more entrenched and young people become resentful and alienated as the issues that affect them and shape their world are ignored. We let those things fester at our peril.

5 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education (Lord Agnew of Oulton) (Con): My Lords, I congratulate the noble Baroness on securing this important debate. I am grateful for the opportunity to outline the Government's work on delivering opportunities for all and improving the quality of life for young people. We have heard many excellent contributions in this debate across a range of ideas. I am also grateful to noble Lords who provided early notice of questions. I have received 25, many just before I came into the Chamber, so I will not be able to cover all of them, but I will of course write.

Noble Lords will not be surprised to know that I believe fervently that the surest way to expand opportunity is through education. Everyone has the right to a good education regardless of their circumstances. To start with the concern expressed by the noble Baroness, Lady Bull, improving this country's education system starts in the early years. Since 2010, all three and four year-olds have been able to access 15 hours of early education a week. In 2013 we introduced 15 hours a week of free early education for disadvantaged two year-olds. We have a record proportion of children starting year 1 with a good level of development. We are spending £3.5 billion on free early years education entitlements this year.

We have introduced the phonics screening check. In 2018 163,000 more six year-olds were on track to become fluent readers compared to 2012, and 88% of those pupils who had met the phonics standard in year 1 went on to attain the expected standard in reading at the end of key stage 2 in 2018. England achieved its highest-ever reading score in the 2016 PIRLS rankings, moving from joint 10th to joint eighth.

This Government have focused on raising school standards because we know a decent education is the best way to boost social mobility. I think we all agree on that. We have helped to ensure that there are 1.9 million more children in good and outstanding schools compared with 2010. The proportion of children in good or outstanding schools rose 66% in 2010 to 85% by the end of December 2018, and that is in part down to our reforms. The latest Ofsted figures show that more than 70% of sponsored academies are good or outstanding despite replacing mostly underperforming local authority schools. In free schools, 84% of those with inspection reports published by the end of March are rated good or outstanding. We have narrowed the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and others by around 13% at key stage 2 and 9.5% at key stage 4 since 2011 as measured by the disadvantage gap index.

The noble Baroness, Lady Greender, asked about school funding. We accept that there are challenges in the system. We invested an additional £1.3 billion across the period 2018 to 2020 over and above the existing plans in the spending review. The IFS has shown that real-terms per-pupil funding for five to 16 year-olds in 2020 will be more than 50% higher

[LORD AGNEW OF OULTON]
 than in 2000. Since 2017, we have given every local authority more money for every pupil in every school while allocating the biggest increases to the schools that have been most underfunded.

The new GCSEs and A-levels are the culmination of curriculum and qualifications reform since 2011 involving consultation with subject experts, higher education institutions and teachers. The new GCSEs are more rigorous and their demand matches that of other high-performing economies. At A-level, changes aim to improve students' readiness for the demands of higher education. We have removed some 3,000 what I describe as useless qualifications, which has made room for quality of education, an important point made by the noble Baroness, Lady Bull. We have put effort behind the EBacc. There has been a 76% increase in the proportion of pupils taking the core academic standard subjects including languages. This will set them up for success in later life.

I reassure the noble Baronesses, Lady Bull and Lady Prashar, that we are widening access to higher education. It is a priority for the Government. In 2018, 18 year-olds from disadvantaged backgrounds were proportionally 52% more likely to go to university than they were in 2009.

The noble Earl, Lord Listowel, asked about making the teaching profession more attractive. He is absolutely right. The one thing that matters most in our profession is the quality of the teachers. We are very conscious of the demands on them and the fact that they now have to deal with a range of social issues which they possibly did not have to deal with 10 or 15 years ago. We tried to address this recently in our recruitment and retention strategy, and we published the *Workload Reduction Toolkit* in March last year.

It seems that the noble Earl engages with teachers quite often, so I ask him to take a simple message back to them—a message that I try to get across. One of the most pernicious additions to workload is teachers having to individually plan each school lesson. It is an enormous burden on them and, frankly, quite unnecessary. Schools should provide skeleton work plans for them to draw on and then they can simply add the local context to the group of children they are teaching. The evidence I have is that lesson preparation can take four, five or six hours a week, but teachers do not have to spend their time in that way.

The noble Lord, Lord Bassam, talked about higher education. I agree with him in part, in that I think we have tilted the HE route too far for some students. That is why we are putting much more emphasis on apprenticeships. We are aiming to create 3 million quality apprenticeships, with 1.7 million starts from May 2015. They are longer, with more off-the-job training and a proper assessment at the end. We are introducing T-levels, which will offer a rigorous technical alternative to academic education. We are also establishing national colleges and institutes of technology to meet higher-level technical skill needs that will further support technical education.

One thread that has run through the debate is social mobility. I am pleased to be able to say that the NEET figures are declining. At the end of 2017, they were

6.3%. This is a fall of 2.9 percentage points compared with the same figure at the end of 2010. It is the lowest comparable figure since a consistent series began in 1994.

The noble Baroness, Lady Tyler, asked about lifelong learning and adult learners, which are all part of the same issue. We are living in a very fast-evolving economy, so we have created the national retraining scheme to equip individuals with the skills they need to redirect their careers. We know that uncertainty is being caused around automation, and the retraining scheme is focusing on those most at risk from automation. The scheme acknowledges and will build on existing services. We are working closely across government and with the National Careers Service on ways to improve this, looking at the industrial strategy challenges to see where we can learn lessons and unify this journey.

Many noble Lords raised the issue of participation in higher education. Higher education providers have committed to spend £860 million in 2019-20 on measures to improve access. That is more than double the amount spent in 2009. We are seeing increasing numbers of children from state schools getting Oxbridge entries, which, for me, is one of the most rewarding aspects of my job.

Many noble Lords addressed living standards and stagnation. It is important to remind the House that there are over 1 million fewer workless households than there were in 2010, with around 665,000 fewer children living in such households.

I turn to the concern raised by the noble Baroness, Lady Prashar, about providing support in career development for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. We established the Careers & Enterprise Company's investment fund to help give additional support in preparing for work, including opportunities for mentoring and guidance.

The noble Baronesses, Lady Grender and Lady Tyler, raised the question of young people's wages. We are tackling this by trying to improve their skills. We know that earnings outcomes for young people studying level 2 and level 3 apprenticeships are materially higher than they are for those without those qualifications. The youth unemployment rate has nearly halved since 2010, compared to last year.

I want to address the points made by the noble Lord, Lord Mawson, about young entrepreneurs, and I compliment him on his tireless work as a social entrepreneur. I have had the privilege to hear of the many great things that he is doing. I take on board all the points he made about bureaucracy; having run my own businesses since I was 18 years old, I know exactly what he is talking about. I am very happy to meet any stakeholders who want to discuss how we can deal with this. BEIS itself has launched an independent review into young entrepreneurship, led by the Prince's Trust. I do not know whether this is particularly high praise but a young person in the UK is twice as likely to be involved in setting up a business or running a new business as young people in France or Germany.

The noble Baroness, Lady Tyler, raised a number of issues about social mobility. I certainly recognise that there are areas across the country with entrenched social mobility barriers where young people may feel left

behind. This is why we are investing £72 million through our Opportunity Areas programme, which focuses on a mix of 12 coastal, urban and rural areas across the country. Through Opportunity North East we are working with leaders from education, local government and business and investing up to £24 million to address the specific challenges in that region.

We know that people from poorer backgrounds can face greater challenges. The pupil premium has provided schools with more than £15 billion in extra funding since 2011—over £2.4 billion in the year 2018-19—to tackle the symptoms of socioeconomic disadvantage and improve academic outcomes. We have introduced the pupil premium plus for looked-after and previously looked-after children, at more than double the rate of the standard pupil premium at secondary level.

The noble Baroness asked about the social mobility report on closing the regional attainment gap. I mentioned earlier the narrowing at key stages 2 and 4, which I think is a matter for celebration but certainly not one for complacency as there is a long way to go. Social mobility is one of our top priorities. We are targeting extra support in the poorest areas of the country to raise school standards. Disadvantaged pupils are catching up with their peers. We are reforming technical education and, as I said earlier, disadvantaged 18 year-olds are entering university in much higher numbers.

On the *State of the Nation* report, we welcome the publication of the Social Mobility Commission's annual report and the important work that it is doing. The commission shines a light on where the Government, business and employers can continue to raise the bar for everyone living in this country. We have asked the commission to launch a £2 million research and evidence fund to identify and spread best practice on how best to boost social mobility, beyond everything that we are doing at the moment.

It is important to address universal credit, which I know has been a controversial subject over the last few years. The noble Baroness, Lady Suttie, asked about the five-week wait for universal credit payments. It is important to acknowledge that the system has improved; I am sure that it is still not perfect, but only today I was talking to an official at the DWP who was a case worker two or three years ago and has friends and colleagues who are still on the front line. She says unequivocally that case workers now feel much more empowered to help the clients they are dealing with than they did under the old regime.

No one has to wait for their money if they need it. We have made advances easier to obtain, and claimants can get up to 100% of their first month's payment up front. From 2021, advances can be repaid over 16 months. We have already introduced a two-week run-on of housing benefit, and we will be introducing a two-week run-on for other legacy DWP benefits. All these improvements are intended to support claimants prior to their first monthly payment of universal credit.

The noble Baroness also raised the issue of homelessness. Again, I put on record that we have seen a drop of 20% in the number of under-25 year-olds sleeping rough between the years 2017 and 2018. The Government have committed over £1.2 billion to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in the current spending review.

Our vision for those with special educational needs and disabilities is the same as it is for all children: that they achieve in their education, find employment, lead happy and fulfilled lives and experience choice and control. We have enhanced the support available for young people and their families, giving £391 million to local areas since 2014 to support the implementation of reforms. We will continue to fund parent carer forums. In December last year, we announced £250 million of additional high needs funding, bringing the total allocated to £6.1 billion in 2018-19, and £6.3 billion in the current financial year. We recognise that high needs budgets face significant pressure.

The noble Baroness was quite right to include the issue of the quality of life of our young people in this debate. The Government are focusing on mental health. My noble friend Lady Fall is concerned about mental health. To reassure her, from December 2020, we will make teaching about mental health a compulsory part of the curriculum across the whole state system. The Green Paper on children and young people's mental health sets out proposals to improve mental health support for young people. We will incentivise and support schools and colleges to identify and train designated senior leads for mental health, funding new training to facilitate this. We are piloting new approaches to mental health assessment.

The Chief Medical Officer recently commissioned an independent review of the impact of screen time and social media on children and young people. They must take time away from screens. Participation in extra-curricular activities promotes well-being. For example, schools with cadet forces see improvements in attendance, behaviour and attainment. Through the cadet expansion programme, 268 schools have received approval to establish Combined Cadet Force units.

The noble Baroness, Lady Grender, asked about NHS mental health support. To reassure her, the Government have made protecting the mental health of children a priority. For people experiencing their first episode of psychosis, we have a target for early intervention to ensure that treatment begins within two weeks for more than 50% of people. Nationally, the NHS is exceeding the two-week target, with over 75% of patients starting treatment within two weeks in March this year. The NHS long-term plan has set the goal of supporting an extra 345,000 children and young people via NHS-funded health services by 2023-24.

Coming back to the broader issue of well-being, as noble Lords will be aware, we established the National Citizen Service in 2011. Nearly half a million young people have participated since then. Virtues such as kindness, generosity, fairness, tolerance and integrity can be developed through activities which stretch and challenge. My right honourable friend the Education Secretary has called the following areas the five foundations for building character: sport, creativity, performing, volunteering and membership, and the world of work. An advice group will develop materials to help teachers identify opportunities that will help pupils build character, and it will produce recommendations by September this year.

Several noble Lords raised the issue of housing, which is of course a high priority for this Government. On affordable housing, which the noble Lords, Lord

[LORD AGNEW OF OULTON]

Storey, Lord Bassam and Lord Shipley, mentioned, we are investing some £9 billion in the affordable homes programme, with 407,000 affordable homes delivered since 2010. To encourage home ownership for the young, we have smashed stamp duty by 95% for first-time buyers who pay it. We have also committed an extra £17 billion to the Help to Buy fund since 2017 to help up to 470,000 households into home ownership. The noble Baroness, Lady Suttie, asked about the shared accommodation rate freeze. I will write to her on that, as I am running out of time. It is an important issue.

The noble Lord, Lord Dholakia, raised a number of issues relating to justice and crime. I will write to him on the Supreme Court judgments on criminal records, regulating gambling, mobile gambling, criminal responsibility and a mandatory tax to fund treatment for addiction.

The noble Baroness, Lady Suttie, asked about family mediation. The Government are committed to reducing conflict between parents, whether they are together or separated. That is why the DWP has introduced a new programme on reducing parental conflict, backed up by £39 million. It will encourage councils across England to integrate services and approaches which address parental conflict into their local services for families. This includes awards to both Mediation Now and Hall Smith Whittingham, which will help disadvantaged families at risk of involvement with the family justice system.

The noble Lord, Lord Dholakia, asked about the need to do more to combat racism. I am pleased to be able to reassure him that, since 2010, ethnic minority unemployment has fallen by around 140,000. The rate is at a record low. We have also published an updated hate crime action plan and launched a national hate crime public awareness campaign.

I am being told to stop, but a couple more Peers have asked questions that I would like to put on the record. The noble Baroness, Lady Prashar, asked about racial disparity. The black ethnic group has seen the greatest proportional increase in progression rates by the age of 19, from 44% in 2009 to 58.5% in 2016.

We are committed to the life chances of all children, including those in custody. The Government began a youth justice reform programme in 2017, investing in staff, education and psychology services.

To sum up, the Government are committed to providing all young people with the tools needed to reach their potential. There are few more important priorities for any Government than this.

5.20 pm

Baroness Grender: I thank all speakers. I will study *Hansard* for the breadth and depth, which has made the debate such a hard thing to respond to, but therein lies a tale: this is why we need more concentration on young people as a policy discipline.

I will mention a couple of quick policy issues. The £1.3 billion referred to for schools was actually raided from existing capital expenditure. And I think that the noble Lord, Lord Bassam, would agree that the shortage of council houses predates 2010 as a chronic shortage. It is something that we have said all political parties take responsibility for.

Most of all, I thank all the young people who have participated in the webinar, the Twitter poll, the meet outside beforehand, and those very resilient individuals who have attended and sat through this entire debate, especially the person who is currently in teacher training, who is up there in the Gallery. I particularly salute all of you. Generations Rent, Y and Z: we hear you, just about. We salute all of you for the future and the challenge you have. We hear you, but we think it is time for all of you to get louder. Above all, we think it is time for the Government to listen to you.

Motion agreed.

Rivers Authorities and Land Drainage Bill

Second Reading

5.22 pm

Moved by Lord Bethell

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Lord Bethell (Con): My Lords, it is a great pleasure to have been asked to sponsor this Bill, which was introduced by the honourable Member for Somerton and Frome in the other place. I pay tribute to him for his dedication to such an important Bill, which resonates loudly with his constituents in the south-west, and for efficiently guiding it through its various stages. I note that it received unqualified support from all sides in the other place, and I trust it will receive similar support from your Lordships in this House.

As a child living in London, I was aware of the risk of flooding in my childhood before the £500 million Thames Barrier was built and opened in 1982. It seems now a completely remote idea to me that my house, and my favourite pub, might be underwater, local amenities damaged and, in the worst instances, lives put at risk. But for many people in this country that is no longer true. Parts of the country face the risk of flooding and our coastal towns in particular face coastal erosion. The threat from climate change is increasing the dangers of wet winters and hot summers. For instance, at the time of its construction, the Thames Barrier was expected to be used just two or three times a year. It is now being used an astonishing six or seven times a year.

While we accept that these natural events will happen, we can help affected communities to better manage the risk to their homes and businesses, so that when the weather is against us, there is less risk to life and recovery is quicker. The measures included within this Bill will help us to better manage the risk of flooding that we face, and help us to improve our water management and our environment.

I am sure that your Lordships will agree that there are few places nicer on a summer's day in the English countryside than next to a beautiful watercourse. I think in particular of the River Kennet in Wiltshire, which is at the end of my garden, and which I love very much indeed. However, I have also seen at first hand the consequences of too much water. I remember travelling through Cumbria, shortly after Storm Desmond in 2015 led to 2.5 million victims of flooding, seeing the heart-breaking damage to property and finding out for myself what happens when the local economy

and local transport cease to work. Following an incident like that, there is often grief, blame and then, finally, a desire to take action. I am sure these thoughts are replicated everywhere in the country where there is a disaster, but it was particularly true and relevant, for the first part of the Bill, for the flooding in Somerset.

The devastating flooding in 2013 and 2014 was widespread in all four corners of England—11,000 properties were flooded, and the total economic damage was an astonishing £1.3 billion. In Somerset, it was particularly bad. Flood waters covered the levels and the moors, 150 square kilometres of land were completely submerged for weeks, and, as your Lordships may recall, livelihoods were driven to the brink and people driven to despair. The cost to Somerset alone was £147 million.

One way action was taken in Somerset was the creation of a 20-year flood action plan. This was at the request of the then Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the right honourable Member for North Shropshire. A key and innovative action to come from this plan was the creation in 2015 of a new body, the Somerset Rivers Authority. Since then, it has overseen more than 120 projects. However, while the people of Somerset are fortunate already to have a rivers authority, and have benefited from it, this Bill is the next and very important step in order that it may be fully incorporated.

The first measure in this Bill will allow for the creation of rivers authorities, which will be locally accountable risk management authorities with the power to issue a precept funded by local taxpayers. A rivers authority will bring together other local flood risk management authorities, as well as other local bodies, and use the precept to fund additional local flood management work. These flood risk management authorities could include a number of key local players: the lead local flood authority; the district councils; the Environment Agency; the regional flood and coastal committees; internal drainage boards, where they overlap with river authorities; water companies; and highway authorities. They could also include relevant national organisations, such as Natural England, or more locally or specifically focused organisations.

I want to reassure the House that the aim of these river authorities is not to usurp their partners but to complement them, and to bring everyone together to provide additional flood protection and resilience to the local community. The precept will be used to fund additional local flood risk management work. Some examples are: the additional maintenance for rivers, watercourses and locally significant structures; dredging and monitoring of silt build-up; unblocking, clearing and repairing culverts and gullies; developing and maintaining new flood alert systems; natural flood management in both rural and urban settings; and, finally, encouraging better land management and the uptake of sustainable drainage systems. Alongside this, river authorities will also work with and help communities, households, businesses and landowners to become more resilient to flooding, and will encourage greater participation in groups and networks, and in identifying and supporting vulnerable people.

Another important body that tackles water management and flood risk is the internal drainage boards. These bodies maintain the watercourses, reduce

flood risk to people and property and manage water levels for agricultural and environmental needs within their drainage districts. There are currently 112 internal drainage boards across England, covering 10% of our land. Not everyone will need an internal drainage board for their area, but where establishing a new board or expanding an existing board is needed, there are requirements to amend the existing Land Drainage Act 1991. This is the purpose of the second and very important measure in the Bill.

In essence, there is a barrier to the expansion of existing drainage boards and the creation of new ones due to incomplete ratings data. The Land Drainage Act requires amending to accept the use of newer ratings data to set and calculate the value of land for internal drainage boards' charging methodologies. It is important to stress that these methodologies will use tax data already produced by the Valuation Office Agency so there is no additional cost, nor are there new forms of taxation.

Internal drainage boards are mainly funded by charges levied on the communities that they serve. The first, drainage rates, are paid by agricultural landowners; the second, a special levy, is paid by households and businesses. The alternative valuations methodologies will enable the apportionment of charges to be calculated fairly, using up-to-date council tax and business rate data. While it is only the data needed to calculate the special levy that is missing or incomplete, it is prudent to update the valuations methodologies relating to both charges at the same time. This will ensure that the apportionment calculation between the drainage rate and the special levy is up to date and will reduce the risk of imbalance on either side.

The measures within this Bill are enabling powers and the Government will not force them on to communities but act where there is local support. However, without this legislation no one can act to put forward proposals. I hope very much that it strikes a chord with your Lordships and that you are able to give the Bill your unanimous support. I beg to move.

5.32 pm

Baroness McIntosh of Pickering (Con): My Lords, I congratulate my noble friend Lord Bethell on introducing this Second Reading for what I think is his first hands-on Bill. I add my congratulations to our honourable friend in the other place on having the foresight to bring this legislation forward and prevent the rather lengthy process of what would have been a hybrid Bill. I can see traces in my noble friend of his father's campaigning zeal, and we look forward to having many more occasions of hearing from him in this regard.

I declare my interests on the register, in particular that I co-chair the APPG on water and am an honorary vice-president of the Association of Drainage Authorities. I also work with WICS, the water regulator for Scotland. I was a shadow Minister on two occasions in the 2000s; I also remember well taking through what became the Flood and Water Management Act, as chairman of the EFRA Committee. Given the history of flooding in the 2000s and more recently—both surface water flooding and, as my noble friend said, coastal and fluvial flooding—I am very proud of my involvement in Pickering's Slowing the Flow project.

[BARONESS McINTOSH OF PICKERING]

That project looks at having more natural flood defences with the involvement of drainage boards and a number of partners, including the Forestry Commission, which has had trees planted and felled there. There was also the building of bunds creating dams, so we have been working more with nature than we did in what I might say were the over-engineered projects of the past.

Drainage boards have a key role in maintaining watercourses in low-lying areas, particularly below eight feet in England. They have experience and success in managing water levels and flood risk in areas of special drainage need. They often have equipment which is not available to others and, as I mentioned, the expertise to use it. They are statutory bodies created under the Land Drainage Act 1991, funded from two separate sources. I particularly welcome in this Bill not just that the Somerset Rivers Authority will be put on an autonomous precepting basis but that there will be an opportunity, where there is desire locally, both to expand and create new drainage authorities.

That begs a number of questions I would like to put to the Minister, who is not normally responsible for Defra issues, but I welcome him to his place today. Will there be consultation on the methodology and criteria to be used before the regulations under the Bill are placed using the affirmative procedure? Further to questions that were raised at Second Reading in the other place, I would also seek assurance on what the role of the Environment Agency on flood prevention going forward will be. I believe it has and will continue to have a crucial role. That also begs a further question on what the role of the new body, the office for environmental protection, will be on flood prevention, water management and drainage boards generally.

I will also put a number of issues that were raised to me in briefings to prepare for today, first from the Association of Drainage Authorities. The first is how the chair of a new rivers authority is created, if there are any created. It is important, as ADA has mentioned, that these chairs are seen to be independent. Key to that is how they are appointed. Will the Minister assure the House today that they will follow the normal rules of public appointments for the chairs of rivers authorities? Secondly, I ask that, when establishing a rivers authority, in each case its functions are properly defined and agreed with existing RMAs.

The NFU has raised a number of issues, and it would benefit the House for the Minister to clarify them. First, under new Section 21F(2)(b), the power to acquire and dispose of property needs to be carefully defined. I know that Defra has said this will be included as a cover-all, just in case, but we do not want to spook either landowners or occupiers of agricultural land, which is a valuable resource on which they rely. Secondly, under new Section 21G(2)(c) and (d), as a rivers authority will be using public funds to carry out its work, there should be an obligation for it to report on whether the objectives set out in its strategy have been received. Will that report be published and the information in it made more widely available? Under new Section 21I(2)(a), could we be clear that it will not be a specified person but a specified body that is required? The NFU has pointed out that it would be a tall order indeed for a single person to take on these responsibilities.

Finally from the NFU, there is a request on new Section 21J(5)(e) for a specific reference to landowners or occupiers of agricultural land, within the area of the rivers authority, to ensure that members of the NFU and other occupiers and landowners are protected. This is a plea for consultation and notification of landowners or occupiers of agricultural land of planned activities by a rivers authority.

I am sure there will be many other opportunities to discuss these issues. My noble friend eloquently set the scene as to why there are challenges. We face increasing challenges from climate change, population growth and increased housebuilding. As co-author with the honourable Angela Smith in the other place, and under the auspices of the Westminster Sustainable Business Forum, we looked at some of these issues in our report *Bricks & Water*. We came up with proposals that I hope will appeal to the House—in particular to my noble friend who has brought this Second Reading to us today—to improve resilience, given the housebuilding that all sides of the House are committed to, increasing population challenges and global warming. I would like to see an end to the automatic right to connect, with water companies and IDBs made statutory consultees so that major housing developments would not go ahead without their say-so. IDBs have had an increasing role in preventing flooding not just in rural areas but increasingly in urban areas. That is welcome, but they obviously need the funds in place to secure that. I am passionate not just about the drainage boards but about a greater use of sustainable urban drainage. I would like there to be better use of building regulations and we should build only in appropriate places to ensure sustainable economic development. We need to work more with nature rather than have a constant focus on manmade, over-engineered flood defences.

Looking ahead to the Agriculture Bill and the environment Bill, there will be further opportunities to discuss the role of drainage boards, potentially new rivers authorities and the existing Somerset Rivers Authority in terms of public good, natural capital and environmental and land management schemes. For the purposes of today, I welcome the Bill and give it a fair wind. I congratulate my noble friend, but I hope that the Minister will take this opportunity to respond to some of the concerns that I have raised.

5.41 pm

Lord Cameron of Dillington (CB): My Lords, I must first declare an interest as a farmer in Somerset, where we pay drainage rates. I very much support the principles behind the Bill.

In the 1980s, I went occasionally to conferences on the continent which dealt with aspects of water management. The one thing that was always stressed to me by our continental neighbours, whose rivers sometimes run from one country to another, was how lucky we were in the UK to have our river catchments run by a single organisation. Those were the days of the water authorities and then the National Rivers Authority. It was stressed to me again and again that if a river catchment is managed as a whole, you can properly integrate the needs of the various conflicting interests: the abstractors, including the water companies

and farmer irrigators; the land drainage and flood defence interests, and the hugely important environmental balance that has to be maintained for the non-human species: flora and fauna, both aquatic and riparian.

This situation with the NRA and then the Environment Agency lasted until the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, when, in spite of my clearly ineffective protests in this House, it was decided to split up the land drainage and flood defence aspects of catchment management, and local authorities were given various roles in drainage and flood defence.

In my home county of Somerset, the weaknesses of this policy were soon exposed. The different levels of local government did not really understand or were slow in getting to grips with their specific roles in the hugely complex matrix of river catchment management. Even in Somerset, that should be quite easy because all our rivers rise in Somerset and fall to the sea in Somerset, which in theory gives us the means of control along their whole length. It is a huge advantage.

As a result of this split in responsibilities, the disastrous floods of 2014—already mentioned—occurred, when tens of thousands of acres of agricultural land and hundreds of private homes were put out of action by the muddle and lack of unified management of our rivers. Everyone assumed that others were running the show. There was also the small matter of the absence of any dredging on the main rivers over many years—but we shall put that to one side. As a result, in the aftermath of the floods the Somerset Rivers Authority was born to reunify the management and ensure that such a disaster could never happen again—and so far, so good. It is only right and proper that we should now establish such a model in statute so that others can copy this integrated river basin management.

The purposes of the Bill are excellent, but I am not sure that we yet have very much detail to get a handle on. In this seemingly Tudor age—that is a mild reference to the ubiquitous Henry VIII powers that seem to infiltrate every piece of legislation these days—many powers are granted to the Secretary of State, but I am still not sure exactly how it will actually work or whether the rivers authorities will have the right mandate or the right checks and balances. It probably depends on the Secretary of State of the day. There are a lot of “mays” and not too many “musts”. I am not sure that that is the right way to enact legislation.

For instance, I assume that there has to be complete unanimity between all the various local bodies, including the Environment Agency, before a river authority can be set up; otherwise, how would the precepting work with the electorate of a council which had decided to not be involved? Why not state that a river authority cannot be set up without complete unanimity at a local level? Which bodies are needed to support that decision? It would also be helpful if there had to be an independent chair, as the noble Baroness, Lady McIntosh, mentioned. In Somerset, the relationship between the districts and the county has not always been good and it might have been helpful for them to have had an independent chair.

What sort of check is there going to be on these authorities’ money-raising powers, or can an authority precept for however much it decides? To what extent

should authorities have to consult on their long-term strategy as well as their annual plans? If they are going to consult, do they do so with householders, riparian owners, parish councils and others? To my way of thinking, long-term strategies are more important than the annual plans mentioned in the Bill. Apart from flood-water management, what sort of wider mandate will they be given? Will they have a duty to carry out their responsibilities in a way that positively enhances the environment, both aquatic and land-based? Who will they report to annually on what they have done in this field? In my experience, without a reporting system such priorities always get forgotten. Will natural flood management solutions and sustainable drainage systems be a priority? Will these bodies have wider social purposes, or should they? After all, rivers are an important source of recreation, ranging from fishing, canoeing and swimming through to biking and walking on the riverbank and providing facilities to enjoy wildlife. I am not saying that all these various responsibilities are not possible under the Bill, but they should be on the face of it.

Finally, I turn to the section in the Bill on internal drainage boards. Over the decades and centuries, IDBs and their predecessors have served their localities well. They use local knowledge, local expertise and experience, built up over centuries, to ensure that upstream and downstream farmers and communities both pay for and have a say in the optimum management of our rainfall. Inevitably, their methods and priorities need reviewing from time to time; for instance, the 2016 NAO report gave them food for thought, to which they seem to have responded well. But IDBs have stood the test of time, and remain the best and cheapest way to implement effective local water management. It is only right to support the clauses in the Bill which bring the basis of their financial model up to date and give them greater flexibility to run their affairs and, if necessary, expand and even start new IDBs where the locals wish it. I repeat that I strongly support the principles embedded in the Bill.

5.47 pm

Baroness Redfern (Con): My Lords, I too thank the noble Lord, Lord Bethell, for sponsoring this important Bill, following the Private Member’s Bill introduced in the other place by David Warburton MP, and for the opportunity to take part in this Second Reading. The Bill will provide the Secretary of State with powers to create new bodies called river authorities. I understand that, as was mentioned earlier, there has so far been only one expression of interest, from Somerset. However, as leader of a local authority and a member of the local drainage board in Lincolnshire, I have unfortunately witnessed at first hand the devastation of flooding for homes and businesses. People, families and businesses have not only to deal with the consequences of the initial impact but also to endure the uncertainties of possible further flooding and constant coastal erosion, resulting in massive economic damage.

As the House has heard we have 112 internal drainage boards, which have been in existence for many years, and I acknowledge the members of those boards who have an incredible insight and knowledge of the areas they represent. We and they see it as imperative that the Bill will make sure that our flood defences are fit

[BARONESS REDFERN]

to meet future challenges as a result of manmade climate change, not just working with hard structures but working with nature—and yes, we need more trees.

For communities to be able to better protect themselves from flooding we need to give IDBs the flexibility, if required, to either expand or merge, primarily in low-lying eastern parts of the country and in some catchments in the north-west, where there seems to be strong local support. For the creation of new IDBs, or for pre-existing IDBs to be able to extend their boundaries, they need to be able to criss-cross local authority areas. We need to address concerns about the fact that land valuation data from the 1990s has not been retained in a lot of cases. The lack of up-to-date data will hinder the ability to extend IDBs or establish new ones.

In short, the Bill will provide the much-needed power to use modern data to value land and to modernise the rating system. The Bill confirms the function and purpose of the proposed rivers authorities, but with no primary duty for the rivers authorities to maintain and enhance the natural environment alongside the flood risk management role. Also, there appears to be no requirement for rivers authorities to publish or consult on their medium to long-term strategies and business plans, including action on climate change adaptation and mitigation, to enable proper scrutiny of their work programme and general approach. There needs to be a requirement for transparency over governance and over the composition and membership of boards, which should appropriately represent all relevant stakeholders.

The concerns I am raising could have a negative impact on climate change adaptation, mitigation of risk, natural flood risk management and the charges attributed to these. As I alluded to earlier, having witnessed terrible flooding and having had direct experience of the effects and power of flooding on people's lives, as well as the contamination of land, I believe that we must do everything possible to mitigate the impact of future flooding. We need better water management and good drainage systems. It is important also to mention the impact on wildlife—birds feeding and living on riverbanks, as well as fish and mammals in rivers and streams—including contamination by run-off from agricultural land and pollution. All this impacts on their habitats and the environment as a whole.

Let me say something in support of the farming fraternity. Farmers need to plan their agricultural businesses some years in advance, so steps must be taken to make them aware of any planned activities which may impact on their future planning. I would welcome within the Bill the requirement that my noble friend Lady McIntosh mentioned for a robust consultation period to be held before a new rivers authority is established, with the instigation coming from local authorities and internal drainage boards where there is strong local support for their establishment. Sharing of information would enable the methodology through which IDBs calculate and collect drainage rates and special levies to be on a sound legal basis, which can be periodically updated to reflect contemporary values, better reflecting current land and property valuations.

It is important that the Bill makes the rivers authorities democratically accountable through local authorities. Local democratic agreement from the local authorities involved and from local ratepayers will be essential to their success. Finally, people and businesses are all anxious to see safeguards within the Bill to help create a safer and more secure environment that is fit for the future.

5.53 pm

Baroness Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville (LD):

My Lords, I am extremely grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Bethell, for his comprehensive introduction to his Private Member's Bill, which was sponsored by David Warburton, the MP for Somerton and Frome in the other place. I understand that the Bill has government backing. I declare my interest as a vice-president of the LGA, although I am no longer an elected councillor in South Somerset, having retired on 2 May.

As most people remember, and as the noble Lord, Lord Bethell, said, during the winter of 2013-14 the weather in the country was appalling, with continual rain, day after day. There was flooding in many areas. In Somerset, we are particularly susceptible to flooding due to the famous Somerset levels and moors. While this attracts numerous interesting birds, it is not so good for the people who live there. During that winter, large areas of the countryside were extensively flooded for months. While the waters receded in some areas, this did not happen in Somerset. Some villages and communities were cut off for months, and schoolchildren and workers were ferried backwards and forwards via boats. Despite the best efforts of the fire service and the Environment Agency, the flood-waters remained—there was simply nowhere for them to go.

The plight of Somerset was on the national television news weekly and on the local television stations every night. We had visits from the head of the Environment Agency, government Ministers, shadow Ministers and even Prince Charles. We also had a visit from the Prime Minister, who stated at the time, "We must never let this happen again". Eventually, with the help of the Army, the flood-waters receded and the drying out process began. There followed a conference, chaired by the noble Lord, Lord Cameron of Dillington, which brought together all the various agencies involved, the aim of which was to provide a strategy to prevent this tragedy and misery from happening again. I am grateful to the noble Lord for his history in the progress of water management in that county.

The outcome was the six local authorities working together and creating an informal rivers authority. The Secretary of State was helpful in assisting this process. The county council and the then five district councils—Mendip, Sedgemoor, South Somerset, Taunton Deane and West Somerset—nominated members to sit on this rivers authority. This took place in consultation with the internal drainage boards, which, as we have heard, play a key role in preventing flooding and managing water levels for agricultural and environmental purposes on the levels and moors. Other signatories to the initial agreement were the Parrett and Axe Brue IDBs, the Environment Agency, Natural England and the Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee—a

lot of experts all working together towards a common goal. This informal authority was given permission to raise a shadow precept along with the council tax, but it was on a very ad hoc basis and not a permanent feature.

This Bill regularises the position of the Somerset Rivers Authority and sets out very clearly the powers of the Secretary of State in relation to it, alongside the powers of the rivers authority, how it should set about preparing a strategy for its area to prevent and deal with flooding, and how to operate its precepting powers. While no one particularly wants to introduce a new tax-raising body in communities, for those who have suffered the devastation that regular flooding brings, a tax to mitigate this is welcome. Like Flood Re, it would provide comfort and spread the risk and expense among the whole population of the area, as it is targeted at local priorities.

On the setting up of rivers authorities, I note that the initial period ends on 31 March the year after they are established. While I understand why this has been put in, I am concerned that it is insufficient time to draft a plan to deal with flooding and to begin to implement its proposals. This is simply too short a period for a properly costed and consulted plan to be implemented.

I am also concerned that Clause 21B(1) indicates a somewhat open-ended arrangement for the Secretary of State to set the precept levels rather than the duly elected body. The Parrett barrier is likely to cost well over £30 million, and it may be that a higher precept for perhaps five years is the best way to proceed unless government capital funding is injected. This prospect seems highly unlikely. If the Somerset Rivers Authority budget is fixed at a percentage linked to a maintenance-plus programme, this essential capital item will never happen.

There is also a possibility that the Environment Agency, needing to make “savings” from central funds, could leave critical tasks to the rivers authority, which will be using local taxation. Once the precepting body is on a formal footing, it could be easy for the Environment Agency to reduce its funding, leaving those costs to be met locally, instead of the EA contribution being for enhancements to effective water management. The rivers authority must be clear that funding will go to extra works, thus ensuring public confidence.

I note that rivers authorities will have the power to set up committees in addition to a finance committee under the Local Government Act 1972. I suggest that one of these might be a strategic planning committee. For rivers authorities to be effective, a longer-term strategy will be needed, beyond a year.

Under Clause 21D, which lists the proceedings of rivers authorities, there is no mention of adhering to the code of conduct in public life. The Bill would benefit from that addition.

In Clause 21E(1), on the main functions of rivers authorities, there is mention of the preparation and publishing of a plan for that financial year. Any such strategic plan will need to cover at least a five-year period. As we all know, Rome was not built in a day. Certainly, the informal Somerset Rivers Authority has a longer-term plan. In paragraph 2 of proposed new Schedule A1, there is a welcome condition to consult on the draft scheme, including the activities which will be funded in the first year, and explain how the precept

has been calculated—other Members were concerned about how that would happen. I would also expect equal weighting to be given to those responding in the list of consultees listed in paragraph 6 of proposed new Schedule A1.

Clause 21H(1), which deals with changes to a rivers authority’s area, appears to give the Secretary of State powers to create new rivers authorities and to add a local government area to an existing rivers authority. Given that no rivers authority boundaries can overlap, could the Minister say whether it is envisaged that a local authority might be moved from one rivers authority into a new one at the behest of the Secretary of State?

I would be interested to know the view of the Minister on how best to support the drainage boards and their funding, as they are also precepting bodies, similar to parish councils. They are very much the local delivery agents, but must work to a single strategic plan. The EA has responsibility for the main critical watercourses—similar to motorways maintained by Highways England. The IDBs do essential clearing of side channels and upper catchment areas. The SRA controls the added value through a strategic plan that all authorities have bought into and which have a seat on the board. While referring to the IDBs, I note that not all rating lists are available from the 1990s. Can the Minister say why this is?

Finally, paragraph 9 of Schedule 2 mentions the London fire commissioner but does not mention local fire authorities. This seems like an oversight, given that firefighters are the first responders to any flooding incident. Can the Minister comment on that?

This is an essential piece of legislation to legitimise the Somerset Rivers Authority and I am extremely grateful to David Warburton from the other place and the noble Lord, Lord Bethell, for taking the time and trouble to bring forward the Bill. I have no hesitation in supporting this Bill, which is primarily for the benefit of the people of Somerset but could well have wider implications for areas of countryside which often suffer the misery of flooding. I look forward to the Minister’s comments.

6.03 pm

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch (Lab): My Lords, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Bethell, for his introduction to the Bill this afternoon and for volunteering to guide it through the potentially choppy waters of Lords scrutiny after its relatively safe passage through the other place.

I say at the outset that in principle we welcome the Bill, which, as noble Lords have said, could provide local communities with new powers to organise and protect themselves from flooding if used appropriately by councils and other flood risk management bodies. Of course, this will work only if the Government provide sufficient support to help these bodies develop their own business cases and engage with local communities to produce a comprehensive plan. However, as the Bill progresses we shall seek more clarity regarding the provision of delegated powers, combined with the appropriate level of transparency and support. Those are issues that noble Lords have raised this afternoon, so I hope we will find common cause on them as it progresses.

[BARONESS JONES OF WHITCHURCH]

Although it is a Private Member's Bill, it is quite a complicated Bill so, although formally I shall be addressing my concerns to the noble Lord, Lord Bethell, there are issues that I realise can realistically be answered only by the Minister, so I guess they will have to do a bit of a double act.

The imperative for the Bill becomes more acute as extreme weather events become a common feature of our seasons, as a direct result of manmade climate change. The Committee on Climate Change recently warned that rises in sea level of more than one metre could occur this century, with 200 kilometres of coastal defences in England projected to become vulnerable to failure during storm conditions. That does not include defences on river systems further inland. That is why we have called on the Government to declare a climate change emergency and rise to the challenge of flooding and drought, supported by a robust regulatory system.

The Bill takes the first step to address some of those issues. Turning to its detail, we of course welcome the establishment of river authorities. This will make it easier for locally accountable bodies with powers to issue a precept to billing authorities to collect the money from council tax payers for additional local flood risk management work. This would help flood risk management authorities for the first time to put their finances on a stable footing as a precepting body. We also welcome the additional safeguards for local taxpayers, which would allow the river authorities to plan their water and flood management schemes and thereby create a safer and more secure environment for us all.

However, under the Bill, the onus will be on local flood risk management authorities to develop proposed river authorities and, so far, Somerset is the only river authority envisaged under the Bill. The Explanatory Memorandum advises that the Government are,

"not currently considering establishing authorities in other parts of England".

Can the Minister confirm that that is because, to date, only Somerset has asked the Government for precepting powers? Is he aware of other areas that may apply for similar powers in future?

Does the Minister share my concern that many authorities might not have the capacity, resources or in-house expertise to develop those proposals? Has he discussed what support could be available to them to do that preparatory work? Perhaps he could address whether the Government are committed to helping the flood risk authorities with the cost of developing and consulting on their proposals for statutory river authorities.

In addition, there must be local democratic agreement from the council and local ratepayers to establish a rivers authority with precepting powers. Can the Minister advise the House on whether the current council tax precept regime and the legal referendum limits on increases to the precept will apply to river authorities in the same way?

There is a need for much greater clarity on the function and purpose of the river authorities. This is a view echoed around the Chamber this afternoon. Does the noble Lord, Lord Bethell, accept that as well as the duties to manage flood and coastal erosion risk, the

river authorities should also have a duty to protect and enhance the natural environment and biodiversity, as well as to adapt to climate change and build resilience? Does he accept, as has been argued by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, that these duties should be on a par with those already spelled out in the Bill? We need to have those equal duties accepted, with the balance that that implies.

The Bill also gives river authorities a power to, "acquire and dispose of property (including land)".

Can the noble Lord, Lord Bethell, clarify the circumstances in which he envisages that a river authority may acquire or dispose of property, including land, and to and from which bodies or persons? Does he agree that, as publicly funded bodies, river authorities should be required to set out longer-term strategies and business plans, including on climate change mitigation—with reports on outcomes and deliveries—in line with the principles of the 25-year environment plan? Does he accept that, without a clearly defined strategy, there could be a negative impact on climate change mitigation? For example, as we know, overdrainage of land has in the past led to drained peatlands and an increase in peatland-based emissions, as well as the loss of important wetland habitats.

I turn to the composition of river authorities; stakeholder engagement will clearly be key to their success. There is also a clear need for transparency and collaboration. For example, will there be a duty to consult all those impacted by the proposed activities, taking into account that, as we have heard, farmers often plan months or years ahead? Will they be given sufficient notice of the proposed plans? Will there will be any requirement in the Bill to have local communities, NGOs and other interest groups represented on the boards? What measures will be put in place to ensure that participants do not have a conflict of interest? The noble Lord may already know that this has been raised as an issue with the current internal drainage boards, as highlighted recently by the NAO report. It is important that there are robust measures in place to prevent that happening.

Turning to the proposals in the Bill to reform the funding of internal drainage boards, we accept that the current arrangements—with an out-of-date methodology—are in need of reform. We understand the need to amend the current legislation so that a newer ratings dataset can be used to create new charging methodologies and combat the problem of incomplete ratings data. These new methodologies could then be used to update existing council tax and business rates data to update both charging methodologies.

However, the NAO report highlighted that there are no statutory governance standards for IDBs and that the Government have no legislative power to ensure that IDBs, as public bodies, meet expectations for good internal governance and sound financial management. These are similar issues to those raised by the noble Baroness, Lady McIntosh. Does the noble Lord, Lord Bethell, share my concern that there is currently limited oversight of IDBs' operation? Does he agree that the Bill represents an opportunity to address these failings?

On the wider issue of funding, clearly flooding affects not only the communities in which it occurs but can cause disruption to large parts of the country that may not experience it in their immediate locality. These proposals will be funded either by local authority taxpayers or by landowners, but not necessarily by those who use the land for business purposes. What discussion has the noble Lord had with the Minister about alternative sources of revenue to help drive this activity rather than relying on the local tax base, as proposed in the Bill? For example, has he considered whether the “polluter pays” principle could also be used to fund some of the schemes, targeting industries that exacerbate climate change, leading to extreme weather events?

I realise I have raised a number of issues with the noble Lord today. I do not necessarily expect him to answer them all today, but they are issues that we will return to as we take the Bill forward. In the meantime, I look forward to the response from the noble Lord, Lord Bethell—as well as the Minister’s—and to working with him on the future stages of the Bill.

6.13 pm

Viscount Younger of Leckie (Con): My Lords, the Government are pleased to support this important Bill. I pay tribute to the honourable Member for Somerton and Frome in the other place for bringing it to Parliament. I also pay tribute to my noble friend Lord Bethell, who is sponsoring this Bill in your Lordships’ House. I and the Government wish my noble friend every success with this Bill, the first he has owned, if may put it that way, in this House. I endorse the points he made. This is an important, albeit small, Bill which will make a real difference.

I have listened with care to many eloquent speeches covering the devastation that flooding and coastal erosion causes. As the noble Baroness, Lady Jones, reminded us, although this is a Private Member’s Bill there are questions which fall to me to answer and I will do my best to provide answers and detail later on. I note there have been a large number of questions in relation to the small number of speakers in this debate but that is the way it goes. That is fine.

The devastating effect of flooding and coastal erosion goes beyond the immediate aftermath: the emotional impact can last a lifetime and be harder to handle. For some, this can be particularly hard when heavy rain pours down again and they worry about future flooding. Sadly, I can recall the images of previous flooding and the devastating impact it has on communities. I live near Oxford, for example, and who can forget the image of Tewkesbury and its abbey surrounded by flood water? I am very fond of the south Devon coast near Start Point and the tale springs to mind of the coastal village of Hallsands, which largely disappeared early in the 20th century because of coastal erosion.

Flooding is a national concern that requires continued action. Successive communities, local authorities and Governments have taken action to reduce the risk of harm from these events and continue to do so. I will dwell briefly on what has happened in the past before focusing on the present.

Thanks to the then Labour Government, we had the Pitt review in 2007 and, following this, the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, which set out how

bodies with responsibility for flood management would work better together. I note the views of the noble Lord, Lord Cameron of Dillington, on the legislation. The 2010 Act requires a national strategy for managing all sources of flooding and coastal erosion throughout England in a co-ordinated way. The Environment Agency is currently consulting on its new strategy, which I hope will provide some comfort to his comments.

More recently, flood action plans, supported by additional targeted funding from government, have been drawn up and are being delivered in Cumbria, Calderdale and Somerset. We have also published the *National Flood Resilience Review* and the property level resilience action plan. We continue to work with industry on both of these to further strengthen the resilience, protection and preparedness of our infrastructure and communities. The Government included taking action against natural hazards in their 25-year environment plan. In particular we have committed to bringing the public, private and third sectors together to work with communities and individuals to reduce the risk of harm from all environmental hazards.

On current action, the Government continue to invest record amounts in better protecting communities across England. They are investing £2.6 billion in building 1,500 new flood defence schemes to better protect more than 300,000 homes. Of this, £1.2 billion is being invested in coastal defences to better protect 170,000 properties. Since 2015, some 500 new flood defences have already been put in place. The Government are also investing £1 billion in maintaining existing flood management structures and investing in natural measures to slow the flow of water. We heard about that from my noble friend Lady McIntosh.

However, we cannot always prevent these hazards and so we have increased the use of mobile flood defences, invested in advance warning systems and trained staff ready to respond. These include our emergency services, local authorities, the Environment Agency and, if necessary, the Army. Therefore, we will be ready when, rather than if, the next flood comes.

My noble friend’s Bill fits well with the Government’s agenda. This modest Bill could deliver real change for our communities. As every community and threat is complex—and the challenges will increase in the future because of population growth and climate change—the Government and local authorities will continue to take action. But we also need to enable communities with opportunities to help themselves. The Bill provides mechanisms for them to make that choice.

The Environment Agency estimates that there are currently 5.1 million residential properties in England at flood risk and that over the next 50 years 2,000 properties and 1,800 kilometres of open coast could become vulnerable to coastal erosion.

While we continue to tackle these challenges now, we must also prepare for the future. Last week, the Environment Agency opened a consultation on its draft updated floods and coastal erosion risk management strategy and the Government announced that we will be issuing a call for evidence that will inform our policy statement on flooding and coastal erosion management in England, to be published later this year.

[VISCOUNT YOUNGER OF LECKIE]

As my noble friend Lord Bethell pointed out, following the devastating floods in 2013 and 2014 there was a strong local and national political desire for co-ordination and a joint effort across Somerset to act, which culminated in the Somerset flood action plan and the creation of the Somerset Rivers Authority in 2015. This rivers authority is able to undertake additional flood risk works by raising funds locally, via a precept, and bringing together different bodies with responsibility for or an interest in flooding and coastal erosion. It does not seek to replace existing flood risk management authorities or their funding mechanisms. The Government fully understand how important this is for the people of Somerset and support the work of the Somerset Rivers Authority. Following Royal Assent and the necessary due process, including demonstration of local support, as set out in the Bill, the Somerset Rivers Authority can become a legal entity.

My noble friend Lady McIntosh and the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, asked to whom rivers authorities are accountable. Ultimately a rivers authority will be held accountable by the communities that it serves and the councillors who are members of its board. As public bodies, rivers authorities come under the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, as set out in the Local Government Act 1974.

Making the Somerset Rivers Authority a legal entity will provide greater security, transparency and safeguards, enabling it to deliver more. Funding safeguards will also protect local taxpayers and ensure that funding is ring-fenced.

I shall go into a little more detail and focus particularly on the questions that were asked on the detail in the Bill. The noble Baroness, Lady Jones, and the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, asked about the current council tax and precept safeguards. I hope I can reassure them that they will apply to rivers authorities as major precepting authorities. That is covered by the Local Government Finance Act 1992. In particular, precepts are subject to the council tax referendum regime set out in the Act. Alongside this, each rivers authority will also have a precept sub-committee with a majority of representatives from the local authorities.

My noble friend Lady McIntosh of Pickering asked whether the usual rules will be followed for appointing chairs of rivers authorities. The Government will set out in the national framework for rivers authorities how the body should be composed, including members and the appointment of a chair. There are powers in new Section 21C for the Secretary of State to make provision for the appointment of a member of the authority as its chair, which I think answers the questions that were raised.

The noble Baroness, Lady Jones, and my noble friend Lady McIntosh asked about rivers authorities acquiring land. This is a permissive power. If a need to own a property to support a rivers authority in performing its statutory duties is identified, it will enable it to do so. For example, it may be to store machinery and vehicles or to ensure that ongoing flood risk management activities are delivered for the future. It is important to note that while a rivers authority would be able to acquire property, this power is limited to the scope of

its statutory duties and does not include compulsory purchase powers. This means that all parties would have to agree to the transaction.

My noble friend Lady McIntosh asked whether rivers authorities would be obliged to report their achievements. As a legal entity and a public body, there will be certain legislative expectations placed upon a rivers authority in regard to how it administers itself, including by the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, which will ensure the proper administration of its financial affairs. The Government also have the flexibility to make other requirements of rivers authorities through either the national framework, which the Government will publish for consultation, or the individual regulations creating a rivers authority, which will be subject to the affirmative procedure.

The noble Baroness, Lady Jones, my noble friend Lady Redfern and the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, asked about the need for rivers authorities to publish and consult on long-term plans—in essence, it is a strategy question. Rivers authorities are required by the Bill to publish an annual work plan or statement if there is to be no work in a particular year. This provides transparency for local taxpayers and shows where the precept funding is being spent. The Government expect that any proposal to establish a rivers authority will include a vision for such an authority. We will consider how this expectation can be made clear in the national framework that will apply to all rivers authorities, while of course maintaining the flexibility for rivers authorities to deliver and fund what is wanted locally.

The noble Baroness, Lady Jones, and the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, asked about the rivers authorities' duties. The Bill would constitute a rivers authority as a risk-management authority. As such, I reassure noble Lords that rivers authorities will be covered by existing legislation, including, as I mentioned earlier, the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. The latter places a duty on all public authorities to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in the exercise of their functions. Alongside this Act, additional environmental duties are included in other Acts and secondary legislation that would apply to rivers authorities. When undertaking work on behalf of another risk management authority through a public sector co-operation agreement, a rivers authority would need to have the resources, skills and capacity to meet the conservation duties and environmental standards of the authorising party.

My noble friends Lady Redfern and Lady McIntosh asked about a duty to consult. To give a little more detail, it is not possible, or perhaps prudent, to list all potential consultees within primary legislation. Instead, the legislation specifies key affected groups—that is, statutory bodies—and includes a requirement to consult all relevant parties. This provides the Government with both a duty and a flexibility to consult according to circumstance, especially as any consultation might vary depending on the location. As a further reassurance, there are additional provisions in the Bill about the minimum consultation period and what must be included in the draft scheme that is consulted on.

The noble Baroness, Lady Jones, asked further questions about the rivers authorities. She asked what support is available and whether we are committed as a Government to providing help. I am pleased to say that any risk management authority, or more than one, can put forward a proposal and seek local support for it. There is no requirement for a local authority to lead this process but we anticipate that it would have a key role. The Government will provide advice and clarity on the national framework but it is for risk management authorities to produce and consult on a proposal. I hope that that is clear.

The noble Baroness also asked whether the Government were considering—or perhaps not considering—more rivers authorities. The Government are aware of the potential financial impact on local taxpayers, and therefore it is not their intention to proactively create rivers authorities anywhere; nor are we aware of any substantial proposals for further rivers authorities at present.

The noble Baroness, Lady Jones, asked about governance and transparency in relation to a rivers authority. As a legal entity and a public body, certain expectations are placed on a rivers authority in regard to how it administers itself. To support this, the Bill allows for the Secretary of State, via regulations, to set out the composition of each rivers authority.

The noble Baroness, Lady Bakewell, asked whether there was sufficient time to deal with flooding and to implement the proposals. I hope I can reassure her that the legislation is set out so that, when a risk management authority submits to the Secretary of State its scheme for the establishment of a rivers authority, it must contain an estimate of the proposed precept for its first full financial year and how that has been calculated, including the activities that it will fund. This must therefore be done in advance of its formal establishment and in time for the financial year. This can inform the costs and plans for the authority during that initial period.

The noble Baroness, Lady Bakewell, asked about the Secretary of State's powers, which I think I covered earlier on. I shall say a bit more about that: at the request of the risk management authority, the Secretary of State can amend its area of operation but must continue to cover the whole area of a local authority or local authorities. I think this was to do with the crossover with other local authorities. The noble Baroness, Lady Jones, asked about more rivers authorities, but I believe that I have largely covered that.

My noble friend Lord Bethell mentioned internal drainage boards, a subject that was covered by many Peers. They have been in existence for many years and are now a key part of local flood risk management. The model has worked well but, as my noble friend said, not everywhere has such a board. There is interest in parts of England in creating new internal drainage boards, and some of those that already exist would like to expand. However, the current legislation now constitutes an unintended barrier to the creation of new, or the expansion of existing, internal drainage boards by referencing a specific data source that is no longer available. This prevents the valuation of land to

determine the correct apportionment of the charges. A change is therefore required, and I am pleased that that is provided for in my noble friend's Bill.

My noble friend Lady McIntosh asked about the IDBs and whether there would be a consultation on the methodology and the criteria to be used. The answer is yes. The Government will consult on the new regulations for IDBs before they are introduced to the House under the affirmative procedure. The Bill also sets out how Parliament will have the opportunity to scrutinise the regulations through the affirmative procedure.

My noble friend asked if there would be a role for the Environment Agency and what that role would be. As a risk management authority, the EA will play a key role with rivers authorities. The EA issues a national strategy that all risk management authorities must have regard to, including rivers authorities. The EA is also a board member of the Somerset Rivers Authority, which I think many Peers will be aware of.

The noble Baronesses, Lady Jones and Lady Bakewell, asked about the IDBs' funding. Local businesses within an IDB district benefit from the work of the IDBs in the same way that households and landowners do. Where these businesses are agricultural landowners, they will contribute via the drainage rates. For other local businesses, it is for the local authority to decide how to apportion the special levy contribution between council tax receipts and the proportion of business rates that they retain or indeed any other income that they have access to. The Government have recently undertaken a consultation, and as part of that we have started a conversation on raising alternative local funding to tackle flood and coastal erosion risk management.

My noble friend Lady McIntosh asked a slightly different question about the role of the Office for Environmental Protection. This body will provide independent scrutiny and advice and hold the Government to account on the development and implementation of environment law and policy. The Government believe that the independent body should have a clear remit, acting as a strong and objective voice for environmental protection.

My noble friend, along with the noble Baroness, Lady Jones, and the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, talked about the IDBs and the NAO review. I do not want to say too much here but I will say that IDBs are independent public bodies that are locally funded and locally accountable to the communities that they serve. There is more that I could say about that, and it might be that I write to noble Lords to give some further detail.

I realise that time is running slightly short. The noble Baroness, Lady Bakewell, asked why the 1990 ratings list is no longer available. I have an answer but, if she does not mind, I would rather write to her with that detail. I have it here; all I have to do is make sure that she gets it.

I conclude by saying once again that the Government support my noble friend's Bill and what it is aiming to achieve. It supports the great and important work undertaken by our flood risk management authorities, particularly the vital work that they do at a local level. However, it is important to confirm that these measures

[VISCOUNT YOUNGER OF LECKIE]
are funded at local level so neither will be forced on any community, a point that I made earlier. They will go ahead only if local communities want them.

I hope your Lordships will support this Bill and enable its swift passage through the House to Royal Assent.

6.34 pm

Lord Bethell: My Lords, I want to say a very big thank you to all noble Lords who contributed to this remarkably well-informed and highly technical debate. I greatly appreciate this support and the very kind personal comments people have made.

I am confident that the debate will continue to be as good natured as it has been today as the Bill passes through your Lordships' House. I noted, as did my noble friend Lord Younger, the incredibly large number of detailed and thoughtful questions that came out of this debate. I thank him for handling them so well on behalf of the Bill's sponsors. I also thank the Government for their support. Your Lordships' contributions have emboldened me to push ahead with my Bill and I ask the House to confirm its support.

Bill read a second time and committed to a Committee of the Whole House.

House adjourned at 6.36 pm.

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