

Vol. 802
No. 31



Thursday
27 February 2020

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

OFFICIAL REPORT

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Questions	
Single-use Plastics.....	269
Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012	271
Housing: New Homes	273
Ministers: Training	276
Private International Law (Implementation of Agreements) Bill [HL]	
<i>First Reading</i>	278
EU: Future Relationship	
<i>Statement</i>	278
Children and Families: Early Years Interventions	
<i>Motion to Take Note</i>	292
Rough Sleeping	
<i>Statement</i>	328
Offender Management: Checkpoint Programme	
<i>Question for Short Debate</i>	338
Israel and Palestine: United States' Proposals for Peace	
<i>Motion to Take Note</i>	351
Terrorism Act 2000 (Proscribed Organisations) (Amendment) Order 2020	
<i>Motion to Approve</i>	384

Lords wishing to be supplied with these Daily Reports should give notice to this effect to the Printed Paper Office.

No proofs of Daily Reports are provided. Corrections for the bound volume which Lords wish to suggest to the report of their speeches should be clearly indicated in a copy of the Daily Report, which, with the column numbers concerned shown on the front cover, should be sent to the Editor of Debates, House of Lords, within 14 days of the date of the Daily Report.

*This issue of the Official Report is also available on the Internet at
<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2020-02-27>*

The first time a Member speaks to a new piece of parliamentary business, the following abbreviations are used to show their party affiliation:

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

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

© Parliamentary Copyright House of Lords 2020,
*this publication may be reproduced under the terms of the Open Parliament licence,
which is published at www.parliament.uk/site-information/copyright/.*

House of Lords

Thursday 27 February 2020

11 am

Prayers—read by the Lord Bishop of Gloucester.

Single-use Plastics

Question

11.06 am

Asked by **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take to reduce substantially the use of single-use plastics.

The Minister of State, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development (Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park) (Con): My Lords, we have reduced annual sales of single-use plastic carrier bags by over 7 billion with the 5p charge. We launched the ground-breaking Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance alongside it. From April, there will be a ban on the supply of plastic straws, cotton buds and stirrers, while our landmark Environment Bill will shift the emphasis towards producer responsibility. It includes powers to charge for single-use plastic items, introduce deposit return schemes and manage the export of plastic waste.

Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle (GP): I thank the Minister for his Answer. He will be aware that dealing with litter and fly-tipping costs councils £660 per person per year, and that local councils spend 32% of their council tax revenue on dealing with waste. Does he agree that this cost should be borne not by people in communities but by the people benefiting from it? He may be aware that in the United States, the Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act has just been tabled in the Congress, which calls for industry to meet those costs. Even better, since this plastic is choking our planet, should we not ban it altogether?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The plastic bag tax itself has not put any additional costs on to local authorities; on the contrary, it has raised substantial funds, which have been deployed through local charities in the areas where it has been collected. On the broader point about the cost of tackling unnecessary or avoidable waste, that is central to what we are trying to achieve in the Environment Bill. Taking the Bill in its totality, it is about shifting the emphasis away from consumer responsibility towards producer responsibility, on the understanding that most consumers do not welcome unnecessary waste from the products that they buy.

Baroness Boycott (CB): My Lords, further to the noble Baroness's question about banning plastics altogether, at the moment the supermarkets seem to be having their cake and eating it. They are charging us for our plastic bags but not all of that money is going to charity. Some of it is being kept by the supermarkets. Furthermore, they have developed a very tidy line in

bags for life. I gather from a recent report that, on average, every family in England has 54 of these bags, which are made of much tougher plastics. On top of that, can the Government not use this year to come up with some systematic, countrywide system to tell people what to do with their plastics—which is which and how to dispose of them? It is a total muddle.

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: There is no doubt that there has been an upsurge in the use of so-called bags for life, but the net impact of the plastic bag tax has unquestionably been superb for those interested in reducing unnecessary plastic waste. The noble Baroness's second point, about the ease of recycling, is absolutely right. In the Environment Bill, which has been introduced in the other place and will be here later in the year, we commit to making recycling easier and ensuring a more consistent, comprehensive service right across the country to avoid exactly that confusion, which exists from local authority to local authority. The Bill introduces legislation requiring all local authorities to collect a core set of recyclable materials—plastic bottles, plastic pots, tubs and trays, glass, metal, paper and card, food and garden waste—from households and businesses in England from 2023.

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch (Lab): My Lords, does the Minister agree that, if we concentrate on single-use plastics, there is a danger that manufacturers will just switch to other materials that are not much better in terms of their impact on the environment? Should we not be challenging the whole concept of "single use" and tackling the throwaway society? This requires a much bigger change in mentality than simply, item by item, banning the use of particular materials.

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The noble Baroness is right. I make one point about the plastic bag tax. It is often argued that the paper bag alternative is, from a carbon point of view, not necessarily an improvement, but if you look at its environmental impact, there is no doubt that the paper bag is vastly superior to the plastic bag, which can last in the environment, breaking up slowly over anything up to 1,000 years. Paper, of course, decomposes very quickly. If you judge things only through the lens of carbon, perhaps single-use plastic bags might be better than paper bags, but that would be fundamentally the wrong approach to take. I agree with the noble Baroness on the broader point; the Environment Bill is designed to take us to a place where we reduce unnecessary single-use plastic bags consistent with the 25-year plan launched a couple of years ago by the former Prime Minister. Our emphasis on extended producer responsibility is essential and, in effect, means that producers will have to take financial responsibility for the lifetime costs of dealing with whatever they create.

Lord Hayward (Con): Further to my noble friend's comments welcoming the success of the plastic bag charge where it has been imposed on large retailers, can he indicate when that same charge will finally be imposed on small and medium-sized retailers, which even the Government's figures indicate would result in a massive drop in the unnecessary use of plastic bags?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: My noble friend makes a very good point. At the risk of triggering a groan in the House, I am afraid that I can tell him only that, having consulted on extending the charge to all retailers and upping it to 10p—something the Government are very serious about—we will be taking the next step as soon as possible.

Baroness Parminter (LD): My Lords, in 2018, the Government promised to review the waste prevention programme. If, as the Minister says, the Government are so serious about prioritising waste reduction, why has that not yet happened?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: I think the Government's record on tackling plastic is pretty robust. We have, for example, world-leading legislation on tackling microbeads. The many billions of microbeads that would have ended up in the environment, particularly the marine environment, will not, as a consequence of the steps we have taken. I have already mentioned the plastic bag tax, and there are numerous other bans on the way in relation to plastic stirrers and spoons and so on. It is unfair to describe the Government's progress as slow. However, when it comes to things such as extended producer responsibility, they cannot just be invented overnight. It is much more complex and requires us to look at the whole life cycle of individual products. We are working hard to develop the right answers but it is important that, when we introduce them, they are the right answers.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall (Lab): There has been a significant, if perhaps small, increase in the use of compostable substitutes for plastic packaging. What assessment has been made of the genuine efficacy of these materials as far as composting is concerned? What percentage of packaging do we now think is being provided from these materials?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The noble Baroness makes a very important point. The problem here is that, quite often, when plastic is sold or marketed as biodegradable, it is not; it simply breaks down into smaller bits of plastic and causes problems further down the food chain and, like much of it, ends up in the oceans. The second problem is that, even where it is biodegradable, if it ends up the recycling stream it can have a very damaging impact on the quality of the recyclate. We believe, however, that biodegradable plastics have an increasingly important role. We published a call for evidence last year to help us consider the development of standards or certification criteria for genuine bio-based, biodegradable and compostable plastics. We are looking at the responses at the moment and will publish a response very soon.

Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012

Question

11.14 am

Asked by **Baroness Burt of Solihull**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans, if any, they have to strengthen the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 as part of their review of procurement regulations post-Brexit.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Baroness Barran) (Con): My Lords, as outlined in the civil society strategy, central government is stepping up our ambition to deliver social value through commercial activities. In future, social value will be explicitly evaluated as appropriate, rather than considered, and extended to goods and works contracts in addition to contracts for services. This joint programme between DCMS and the Cabinet Office puts social value at the heart of an estimated £40 billion of public spend each year. The Government intend to publish a Green Paper consultation on possible procurement reforms to make the rules simpler, more flexible and better placed to support improved commercial outcomes and meet the UK's specific needs.

Baroness Burt of Solihull (LD): I thank the Minister for that Answer and for taking the time and trouble to meet me last week. I think we both agree that social value is an incredibly powerful tool to create benefit for communities of all kinds. Does she also agree that social value needs to be central to the procurement process and not just an add-on, and that 10% of contract value is entirely insufficient to enable the full potential of social value to be realised?

Baroness Barran: I absolutely agree that social value is central to our procurement process: it is a massive lever. It is £49 billion of central government expenditure, but total public sector expenditure was £284 billion in the last financial year, so it is one of the biggest levers we have in terms of our focus on place and on levelling up. The 10% is a minimum, and my experience going around the country is that areas frequently go above and beyond when they get this. I was in Durham last week, where more than 55% procurement is through social value, and Manchester has set a minimum of 20%.

Lord Hamilton of Epsom (Con): How do the Government actually measure social content when they come to award these contracts?

Baroness Barran: The Government are developing a measurement framework. There have been two approaches. Most local government procurement uses a form of financial metric. Central government procurement, in consultation with the voluntary and community sectors, uses a more qualitative approach. My colleague the Crown rep for the voluntary and community sectors is working very hard to make sure that this is embedded effectively.

Lord Fox (LD): My Lords, further to that question, the review led by the noble Lord, Lord Young, five years ago specifically highlighted measurement, the need for a methodology, and the need to set standards and to propagate those across the sector. The Government have had five years, so when will we have a rigorous system for measurement that everybody understands? It is very important to measure the value of what we are doing.

Baroness Barran: We will implement the system this year. We are keen to be able to measure the distance travelled for individual departments and for procurement

overall. Training is being rolled out to 4,000 procurement officers, and is available to strategic suppliers as well as to smaller voluntary and community sector suppliers.

Lord Tunnicliffe (Lab): My Lords, a number of local authorities across the country have made a commitment to pay their staff and contractors the living wage, as calculated by the Living Wage Foundation. This commitment goes well beyond that required under the Act. The Prime Minister has stated that he wants full sovereign control of procurement policy as part of his commitment to close regional inequalities. Does the voluntary living wage form part of his plans?

Baroness Barran: My understanding is that all aspects of these issues are being reviewed as part of that. I do not know specifically about the voluntary living wage, but in the short term a big focus is being placed on procurement that includes a number of diversity metrics, including ethnicity, disability and women leaders of organisations.

Lord Blunkett (Lab): My Lords, when the forthcoming Green Paper is published, will the Minister discuss with her colleagues the idea of providing government incentives for public services and others to join together in procurement at local levels? Social value can be cascaded into the wider economic value that can accrue when different agencies and institutions are able to jointly procure, in a way that has been pioneered in areas such as Preston and my own city of Sheffield. Then we can see a much greater critical mass developed, which can have a major impact on the growth and productivity of an area as well as the social value we have discussed this morning.

Baroness Barran: The noble Lord makes a very important point. The proportion of procurement spending in the Preston area has increased almost fourfold in the past four years, with big economic impacts. We are already working to support smaller voluntary organisations to be able to bid in consortia so that they are not excluded, although I appreciate that that is wider than the point he is making.

Housing: New Homes Question

11.21 am

Asked by **Lord Young of Cookham**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made in meeting their target of delivering 300,000 homes per year by the mid-2020s.

Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist (Con): My Lords, last year over 240,000 new homes were delivered, the highest number in over 30 years, taking the total delivered to over 1.5 million new homes since 2010. This is very encouraging, but we know that there is more to do, which is why we are reviewing the levers at our disposal, including planning reforms and housing infrastructure. Taken together, our actions will continue progress towards 300,000 homes a year by the mid-2020s.

Lord Young of Cookham (Con): I am grateful to my noble friend for outlining the progress the Government are making towards meeting their ambitious target. In the 10 years from 1974 there were two Housing Ministers, who did roughly five years each, and annual output of housing in England averaged 200,000 a year, against some difficult economic circumstances. In the 10 years since 2010, we have had 10 Housing Ministers and annual completions have fallen to 130,000, against a more benign economic environment. Does my noble friend think those statistics might be connected? Would she agree that capable Ministers, of whom there are many in your Lordships' House, should stay longer in post if they are to have a chance of delivering the Government's policy objectives?

Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist: That does not bode very well for me in my post, does it? My noble friend speaks with great authority on this issue, having himself been a rather longer-serving Housing Minister than many of his successors. However, despite that turnover, we can be proud of the Government's housebuilding record since 2010. Having consulted on this issue before today's Question, I would say that a greater issue of concern is the number of planning officers and the proportion of them who are job sharing, which is having a great impact on the efficiency of the planning process and inhibiting our ability to deliver.

Baroness Warwick of Undercliffe (Lab): My Lords, I welcome the Government's commitment to a renewed larger affordable homes programme, but the current lack of detail about the size and scope of the programme is affecting the social housing sector's ability to deliver much-needed homes. I declare an interest as chair of the National Housing Federation. The upcoming Budget presents a great opportunity to be bold in committing to the 10-year programme that will be needed to deliver the Government's 300,000 target. What conversations has the Minister had with her colleagues in the other place about the upcoming Budget and government investment in the building of affordable and social homes?

Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist: I am afraid that I cannot speak for my colleagues in the other place about what is intended in the Budget. What I can say is that there are a number of reviews of the planning process and of the sections dealing with accessibility. All these will help us to deliver our target. While there is still work to do, levels of housebuilding have recovered from the financial crisis of 2008-09, and this country has now delivered over 241,000 additional homes, the highest number in over 30 years. We are driving forward an ambitious agenda with everyone involved in housebuilding, including housing associations, small and large private developers and councils. We are all working hard to deliver this target.

Baroness Greener (LD): My Lords, is the Minister aware that the promised homes, hospitals, schools, prisons, HS2, Northern Powerhouse Rail and more require a growth in the construction sector of 35%, but the sector is projected at the moment to shrink in

[BARONESS GRENDER]

workforce by 9% post Brexit? Does she agree that those sums simply do not add up? What urgent action will the Government take to grow this sector, or will the desperately needed housebuilding pipeline simply be a pipe dream?

Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist: The Government are taking many measures to tackle the skills crisis in this sector. For example, the Department for Education's £24 million construction skills fund is supporting 26 on-site hubs focusing on housing. The EU exit does create opportunities to grow our own workforce, but the industry is best placed to step up and train the workforce that it knows it will need. The Government are doing their part by improving skills provision, supporting modernisation to increase productivity and creating a fair migration system.

Lord Best (CB): My Lords, to rescue the country from the small number of volume housebuilders who do 70% of all our housebuilding, have the Government made any progress with Sir Oliver Letwin's radical and important proposals for local authorities to set up corporations that would acquire sites and capture the value for the public good, instead of leaving it to those volume housebuilders who, I am afraid, let us down every time?

Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist: The Government fully recognise the importance of increasing the number of small and medium-sized housebuilders in providing the housing in this country. He is absolutely right to point out the dominance of the large housebuilders. We have done quite a lot to encourage SMEs in this space, and at the last Budget we announced up to £1 billion of new guarantee support schemes for SMEs, to be implemented by the British Business Bank. To go further into Sir Oliver Letwin's report, I would rather write to the noble Lord with a fuller reply.

The Lord Bishop of London: My Lords, will the Minister say whether the Government are planning to look at different versions of what affordability might mean in relation to housing? I am sure noble Lords know that the West Midlands Combined Authority has been looking at income rather than market value. This has brought house prices within easier reach of more people in lower income brackets.

Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist: We have done much to increase affordability for individuals. The affordable rent was introduced to maximise taxpayers' money, which has allowed us to build more homes for every pound of government investment, because local authorities have had greater income at their disposal to spend on new houses. Removing the cap has also enabled them to invest much more in housing.

Lord Howell of Guildford (Con): My Lords, does the Minister recall that, when it comes to 300,000 houses, we have been there before with Ernie Marples in the early 1960s? In 1965, before the Conservative Government fell, they were planning to build more than 400,000 houses that year. If we could do it then, surely today, with modern fabrication methods, we could certainly do it now.

Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist: My noble friend makes a very good point. I heard the earlier point about our past history in building houses but, with modern methods of construction, he is absolutely right to say that we should be able to build a larger volume of houses more efficiently. The Government are committed to building more homes using modern methods of construction, including off-site and smart techniques. Indeed, there was a report from the Science and Technology Committee on this very subject quite recently. The Government have also created a working group to address barriers to modern methods of construction, chaired by an industry expert, the MMC housebuilding champion Mark Farmer, to develop a standardised definition of this. They are also taking forward work on a memorandum of understanding between the main warranty and insurance providers.

Ministers: Training Question

11.29 am

Asked by **Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what training and guidance is provided to their Ministers on (1) bullying and harassment, (2) diversity and inclusion and (3) staff management; and how many current Ministers have completed any such training.

The Minister of State, Cabinet Office (Lord True) (Con): My Lords, the Ministerial Code provides advice and guidance to Ministers on the standards of conduct that they are expected to uphold and the way in which they should discharge their duties. Obviously, Ministers are also traditionally able to seek further advice and guidance within the departments. The Government do not hold central records of training undertaken by Ministers.

Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe (Lab): I welcome the noble Lord to his first performance on the Front Bench and congratulate him on his appointment.

I hope that, on reflection, the noble Lord may go back to the department and see whether it can be a little more precise in trying to follow this through. In Parliament, we now have a programme for training on abuse, harassment and so on. We should seek to apply that similarly at the highest levels where people have privilege and power, which is at ministerial level. I hope the noble Lord might reflect on whether something more formal could be established.

Secondly, given that we now have the freedom and have taken our power, we have an opportunity to have laws in this land better than those in Europe. As we have an employment Bill in prospect, will the noble Lord reflect on whether we could take the principles behind the Question on this Order Paper and see whether they could be applied to employment opportunities in general for people who have problems with abuse of power in general employment, so that we end up with a law that is better in this respect than that in Europe?

Lord True: My Lords, first, I am grateful to the noble Lord for what he said on a personal basis.

The noble Lord is addressing an extraordinarily important point, which we all share; obviously I am not here to answer for Parliament, but we are all aware of the facilities that this House makes available. I hope all Members of this House will avail themselves of those. The Ministerial Code is absolutely clear:

“Harassing, bullying or other inappropriate or discriminating behaviour wherever it takes place is not consistent with the Ministerial Code and will not be tolerated.”

That clear message is given to new Ministers right at the outset—I can testify to that from this week—but I accept the spirit of what the noble Lord said.

Lord Pannick (CB): Does the Minister agree that, if bullying and harassment will not be tolerated, any Minister guilty of such conduct should no longer remain in post?

Lord True: The noble Lord is wise and knows very well that whether people remain in office is a matter not for me or him but for the Prime Minister. In fact, this Prime Minister updated the advice around the code last August, to include greater clarity on how investigations into alleged breaches will take place. It made it very clear that if there is an allegation of a breach, the Prime Minister will consult the Cabinet Secretary. If he feels that it warrants further investigation, he may ask the Cabinet Office to investigate the facts of the case and refer the matter to the Independent Adviser on Ministers’ Interests, Sir Alex Allan.

Lord Forsyth of Drumlean (Con): My Lords does the Ministerial Code apply to special advisers?

Lord True: My Lords, there is a code for special advisers.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire (LD): My Lords, the paragraph that the noble Lord just quoted actually says that the Prime Minister

“may ask the Cabinet Office”.

What is the status of the Ministerial Code? When we had an exchange in this House at the time of the resignation of a previous Foreign Secretary, now the Prime Minister, and it was pointed out that he had been reprimanded for breaking the Ministerial Code in several places, it was also pointed out by the then Cabinet Office Minister that the Ministerial Code is an honour code and based on the idea that Ministers will always act on their honour. Is it now time that we had some stronger sanction than that?

Lord True: My Lords, I repeat: Ministers hold office at the Prime Minister’s request and remain in office only for as long as they retain the Prime Minister’s confidence. I note what the noble Lord says. The current position is that the Prime Minister is the ultimate judge of the standards of behaviour expected and the appropriate consequences. The conduct of any Minister in office is subject to the most absolute scrutiny—that is, public scrutiny—and this Government intend to hold, and do hold, to the very highest standards of ministerial behaviour at every level.

Baroness Smith of Basildon (Lab): My Lords, may I press the Minister further on his responses? The Ministerial Code says:

“Ministers should be professional in their working relationships with the Civil Service and treat all those with whom they come into contact with consideration and respect.”

The point picked up in particular by the noble Lord, Lord Pannick, is: what happens when they do not? The Minister says that it is a matter for the Prime Minister, but that sets a pretty low bar of sanctions that could be imposed. I ask him to reflect on his answers. I am not saying that in every case a Minister should be sacked—there will be cases in which they should—but there is a lack of clarity about what happens when the Ministerial Code is breached.

Lord True: My Lords, I do not agree with the implied statement of criticism of the Prime Minister. The current Prime Minister expects the highest standards of performance and behaviour from all his colleagues. That is true at every level of the Government. I have said that Ministers are officeholders, not direct employees, but that does not—either at the human level, the work level or the professional level of any sort—absolve any person in any position in this country from the requirement to observe the highest standards of respect for those with whom we work.

Private International Law (Implementation of Agreements) Bill [HL]

First Reading

11.36 am

A Bill to implement the Hague Conventions of 1996, 2005 and 2007 and to provide for the implementation of other international agreements on private international law.

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

EU: Future Relationship

Statement

11.37 am

The Minister of State, Cabinet Office (Lord True) (Con): My Lords, with the leave of the House, I shall repeat a Statement made today in another place by my right honourable friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office. The Statement is as follows:

“With your permission, Mr Speaker, I would like now to make a Statement on the Government’s approach to our future relationship with the European Union.

Now that Britain has left the EU, we are entering a new chapter in the history of these islands. This Government have honoured the clearly expressed wish of the British people. Their instruction to us, their servants, to secure our departure from the EU has been followed. The votes of 17.4 million people—more than have ever voted for any democratic proposition in our history—were implemented on 31 January and we

[LORD TRUE]

are now on a new journey. As a sovereign, self-governing, independent nation, we will have the freedom to frame our own laws, control our own borders, lower all our taxes, set our own tariffs, determine our own trade relationships and ensure we follow the people's priorities on security, the economy and democratic accountability. Over the next nine months, we will negotiate a new relationship with our friends and partners in the European Union, based on free trade and friendly co-operation. We have today published the approach for those negotiations, and copies of the document, *The Future Relationship with the EU*, were made available to Members in the Vote Office from 9.30 am.

Talks with the EU on our future relationship begin next week, and it is our aim to secure a comprehensive free trade agreement, as well as agreement on questions such as fisheries, internal security and aviation. We are confident that those negotiations will lead to outcomes which work for both the UK and the EU. But this House, our European partners and, above all, the British people, should be in no doubt: at the end of the transition period, on 31 December, the United Kingdom will fully recover its economic and political independence. We want the best possible trading relationship with the EU, but in pursuit of a deal we will not trade away our sovereignty.

The Government's vision for the UK's future relationship with the EU was outlined with crystal clarity by the Prime Minister during the general election campaign, the election result comprehensively confirmed public support for our direction of travel, and in his speech in the Painted Hall in Greenwich on 3 February, the Prime Minister laid out in detail how we will reach our destination. The first principle of our approach is that we wish to secure a relationship based on friendly co-operation between sovereign equals. We respect the EU's sovereignty, autonomy and distinctive legal order, and we expect it to respect ours. We will not accept nor agree to any obligations where our laws are aligned with the EU or the EU's institutions, including the Court of Justice. Instead, each party will respect the other's independence and the right to manage its own borders, immigration policy and taxes.

The second and allied principle of our approach is that we will seek to emulate and build on the types of relationship that the EU already has with other independent sovereign states. We will use precedents already well established and understood to ensure both sides' sovereignty is respected, and by using already existing precedents we should be able to expedite agreement. We will seek functioning arrangements that the EU will recognise from its many other relationships. So our proposal draws on existing EU agreements such as the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement with Canada, the EU-Japan economic partnership agreement and the EU-South Korea free trade agreement. This approach will enable us to move swiftly towards the goal envisaged in the political declaration agreed last October, in which both sides set the aim of concluding a zero-tariffs, zero-quotas free trade agreement, or FTA.

As well as concluding a full FTA, we will require a wholly separate agreement on fisheries. We will take back control of our waters, as an independent coastal

state, and will not link access to our waters to access to EU markets. Our fishing waters are our sovereign resource, and we will determine other countries' access to our resources on our terms. We also hope to conclude an agreement on law enforcement and judicial co-operation in criminal matters, so that we can work with the EU to protect their citizens, and ours, from shared threats, but we will not allow our own legal order to be compromised, and by taking back full control of our borders we can implement measures to make the British people even safer, and we can tackle terrorism and organised crime even more effectively. We also wish to conclude a number of technical agreements covering aviation and civil nuclear co-operation, which will help ensure continuity for the UK on its new footing as an independent sovereign nation.

Securing agreement on all these questions should not, in principle, be difficult. We are, after all, only seeking relationships with the EU which it has with other nations, relationships that respect the interests and sovereignty of both partners. It is in that light that we should view discussions about what has been termed the "level playing field". It has been argued that EU demands in this area will make full agreement difficult. Yet there is no intrinsic reason why requirements that both parties uphold desirable standards should prejudice any deal.

The United Kingdom has a proud record when it comes to environmental enhancement, workers' rights and social protection. In a number of key areas, we either exceed EU standards or have led the way to improve standards. On workers' rights, for example, the UK offers a year of maternity leave, with the option to convert this to parental leave so that both parents can share care. The EU minimum is just 14 weeks. On environmental standards, we were the first country in the world to introduce legally binding greenhouse gas emission reduction targets through the Climate Change Act 2008. We were also the first major global economy to set a legally binding target to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions across the economy by 2050.

We will not dilute any existing protections. Indeed, as the Environment Bill, debated yesterday, demonstrates, we wish to go further and faster than the EU in improving the natural environment. We do not need the EU's permission to be a liberal nation leading the world in the fight against climate change and for social progress. That is why the UK Government seek an FTA with robust protections for the environment and labour standards, but we do not see why the test of suitability in these areas should be adherence to EU law and submission to EU models of governance. The EU does not apply those principles to free trade agreements with other sovereign nations, and they should not apply to a sovereign United Kingdom.

Some argue that we must accept EU procedures as the benchmark because of the scale of UK trade with the EU, but the volume of UK trade with the EU is no greater than the volume of US trade with the EU, and the EU was more than willing to offer zero-tariff access to the US without the application of EU procedures to US standard setting. The EU has also argued that the UK is a unique case, owing to its geographical location, but proximity is not a determining factor in any other FTA between other neighbouring states

with large economies. It is not a reason for us to accept EU rules and regulations. You need only to look at the USMCA—the agreement between the US, Canada and Mexico—for an example of a trade agreement that does not require regulatory alignment to one side's rules or demand a role for one side's court. Geography is no reason to undermine democracy.

To be clear: we will not seek to dynamically align with EU rules on EU terms governed by EU laws and institutions. The British people voted to take back control, to bring power home and to have the rules governing this country made by those who are directly accountable to the people of this country, and that is what we are delivering.

The negotiations are due to begin next week, led by the Prime Minister's Sherpa, David Frost, and I would like to end by looking ahead optimistically to the coming months. There is ample time during the transition period to strike the right deal for the UK. We hope to reach a broad agreement ahead of the EU Council's high-level summit in June, whereupon we will take stock.

We know our proposals are measured and our approach is fair. We know what we want to achieve; we are ready to go. This Government are committed to establishing the future relationship in ways that benefit the whole of the UK and strengthen the union. We are committed to working with the devolved Administrations to deliver a future relationship with the EU that works for the whole of the UK. I take this opportunity to reassure colleagues that our negotiation will be undertaken without prejudice and with full respect to the Northern Ireland protocol. This Government will act in these negotiations on behalf of all the territories for whose international relations the UK is responsible. In negotiating the future relationship between these territories and the EU, the UK Government will seek outcomes that support the territories' security and economic interests and reflect their unique characteristics. As the Prime Minister committed to do at the Second Reading of the withdrawal agreement Bill, we will keep Parliament fully informed about the negotiations and colleagues will be able to scrutinise our progress in the normal way.

The Government are delivering on their manifesto commitments with energy and determination. This Government got Brexit done and will use our recovered sovereignty to be a force for good in the world and a fairer nation at home. We want and we will always seek the best possible relationship with our friends and allies in Europe, but we will always put the welfare of the British people first. That means ensuring that the British people exercise the democratic control over our destiny for which they voted so decisively. That compact with the people is the most important deal of all. In that spirit, I commend this Statement to the House."

11.50 am

Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town (Lab): I welcome the noble Lord, Lord True, to his role. He is the fourth Minister covering Brexit that I have faced. Two retired hurt—one fell out of a helicopter, and I think the other fell out with his political masters—although the last left the field having successfully delivered for his Prime Minister. While I wish the noble Lord well, I

obviously hope we will be able to persuade him to listen to views other than just those emanating from No. 10.

Somewhat unusually, the lead negotiator—the Minister calls him a Sherpa—is a civil servant, David Frost. He is not a Minister; he is a civil servant, answerable neither to the Commons nor therefore, via a junior, to this House. We therefore welcome the Minister's confirmation that he will be Mr Frost's man in this House and report regularly as the negotiations proceed. Perhaps he will speak, or I can do so via him, to the Chief Whip to ensure we can have a proper debate on this document in the near future.

Today's Statement is, needless to say, on a crucial and vital issue, but sadly I fear it does not bode well, since it leaves us with a query as to whether the PM really wants a deal, or at least whether he is willing to risk no deal simply to please his friends—whether Trump or the ERG—such that he prioritises a US deal over and above one with the EU. Without an EU deal, we would see tariffs, checks and barriers to trade implemented very fast, by January, in a way that would damage the whole economy. The price of a US deal, even if we got one, would be lower consumer standards, workers' rights being jeopardised, and environmental concerns being downplayed. What would be the purpose of that?

The only reason seems to be the avoidance of the ECJ—a court—and, as we just heard, this reassertion of so-called "sovereignty", which was mentioned 11 times in the Statement: a bit of a hang-up there. This is an interdependent world, where the value of currencies, confidence in economies, global interest rates, international tax and wage rates all impact on UK businesses every day. The idea that we live in this independent sovereign world unaffected by anything outside is a figment of the imagination. The best way to confront these global uncertainties is to work closely with our nearest partners and as part of a half-billion market to absorb the ups and downs in world trade and to secure a thriving market for UK goods.

Any idea that a deal suitable for a faraway country—3,500 miles in the case of Canada—would suit the sort of trade that we have with a continent 12 miles away at its nearest is surely pure fantasy. Do the Government understand that the imports and exports of meat, cheese, milk, nuclear medicines, flowers, fruit and vegetables depend on short distances, fast travel and a virtually identical time zone for that easy flow of trade? Or that our car manufacturers need rapid supplies of parts as well as exports of finished products which depend on easy access to the continent? Easy means quick and cheap. No wonder the Treasury predicted that a Canada-style free trade agreement would shrink the economy by up to 6.4%.

The Government seem to accept that there will be customs posts, tariffs and checks, and they even occasionally acknowledge that these will be between Northern Ireland and GB. But those cost money to businesses, to consumers, and to the taxpayer. I hope I have read it wrong, but this Statement seems to smack of a negotiating position which is seeking a very distant relationship with the EU, happy to establish barriers for those businesses trying to continue to trade with our largest economic partner. Despite the

[BARONESS HAYTER OF KENTISH TOWN]

warm words which the Minister has just repeated, the Government's commitments on rights, protections and standards, which were written into the political declaration that the Prime Minister signed, now appear to be at risk because the Minister seems to be saying that because some of ours are higher, we can junk all of the commonly agreed minima.

The political declaration promised that the Government would seek a free trade agreement that was underpinned by provisions that ensured a level playing field—the Prime Minister signed that—and safeguarded workers' rights, consumer rights and environmental protections. Today's Statement seems to back-track on both. That is not just bad for the people concerned, be they workers, consumers or those interested in the environment, but it is bad for business, with this new variable and reckless approach to negotiations taking business straight from one set of uncertainties to another. We know what businesses want from our deal with the EU: first, ambitious co-operation on regulation with regard to goods to reduce red tape for exporters; secondly, comprehensive coverage of services to maintain the competitive edge of UK providers—a vital part of our economy and, unfortunately, an element not mentioned in the Statement; and, thirdly meaningful customs facilitation to keep costs and complexities low.

It is no good the Prime Minister's spinners attacking the CBI, as they did earlier this month, accusing it and others of neglecting their duty to prepare their members for the realities of a Canada-style free trade deal. Briefing from No. 10, referring to the CBI and others, said that they have a responsibility to their members that they are not fulfilling, and individual businesses might consider whether they are getting the best representation from the umbrella groups that they are funding. That sounds to me like Downing Street trying to encourage the CBI to mute its criticism of the Government's strategy. That is not an open Government willing to listen to the views of others.

Without thriving businesses, we have no chance of levelling up or continuing to grow, so I urge the Minister to engage with representatives of consumers, of industry, of farmers and of the service sector so that real hard economic facts, rather than ideology and wishful thinking, will be the lodestar in the negotiations. Can the Minister confirm to the House that the Governments of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland as well as of Gibraltar will be fully involved in all stages of the negotiations so that the interests of all parts of the UK are safeguarded?

Lord Wallace of Saltaire (LD): My Lords, I, too, welcome the Minister to his new position and look forward to a series of robust exchanges in the months to come. As I was coming down to the House, I was interested to learn that there is now a revised version of the Statement. Perhaps it might be of interest to the House to point out what has been revised. The original text stated that

“as a sovereign, self-governing independent nation we will have the freedom to ... lower all our taxes”.

The Minister correctly read out the revised version, which is

“to set all our taxes.”

That seems a wise revision by a Government who are about to produce a Budget which intends to increase spending very considerably. If they were to promise in a wonderfully populist way to lower all our taxes at the same time, it would be a little more Trumpian than even Johnsonian.

I would like to tackle the language and assumptions of the Government's current approach. This is a very harsh, autonomous independence. As has been pointed out, sovereignty—independent sovereign equality—runs all the way through it, as does the notion of the people's Government, the “servants” of the people. Saying that “we follow the people's priorities”

is not the language of Churchill or Thatcher. It is the language of Viktor Orban, the Prime Minister of Hungary, or even President Erdoğan of Turkey. This is not constitutional parliamentary language. This is not Edmund Burke. The Conservative Party has to recognise that it is slipping into different territory.

In his speech last week, David Frost started and finished by quoting Edmund Burke, but he also rubbished the idea of shared sovereignty. I recall listening to Geoffrey Howe and Margaret Thatcher talking about shared sovereignty and how we benefit in constructing a multilateral international order by sharing our sovereignty through international treaties and agreements, international organisations and international law. Britain has done a great deal in that regard. The language of the Statement suggests that we reject most of that and that we think we are now dealing with a power—the sovereign European Union—which is threatening our sovereignty and independence.

I have not yet heard any Minister say that in dealing with the United States we will expect the United States to treat us as a sovereign equal. I hope the Minister can assure us that we expect the same from the United States because it would not be desirable to establish our independence from the European Union hostile force—as it clearly in many ways is—by reinforcing our dependence in security, intelligence and a range of other ways on the United States. We see it in current extradition procedures and in the presence of American intelligence operatives in this country, who are not fully covered by treaty arrangements and not fully reported to Parliament. That is a degree of dependence which is certainly an evasion of British sovereignty, if we are going to talk about our sovereign independence.

How are we going to establish our political and economic independence by January next year? If we are going to be economically independent, are we going to ensure, for example, that all our key telecommunications equipment is made inside this country? Are we going to ensure that we have an independently owned steel industry, or at least a steel industry of some sort, or is that not part of economic independence? Do we think that supporting offshore financial centres under British sovereignty is part of independence, given that integration into the offshore world which is the ultimate denial of sovereignty in taxation and other terms? If we are not, that is misleading, populist language. It is wonderful to suggest that we stand for the people, but actually, we do not.

Free trade limits sovereignty. Protectionism is what protects sovereignty. North Korea is in many ways one of the most sovereign countries in this world. Once you

open yourself to foreign investment and trade, you limit your sovereignty, and that is what we have done. We are one of the most open countries to foreign takeovers and, as a result, we have limited sovereignty and we have to share it with others. If we are talking the language of sovereign equality, we should remember what that great realist Thucydides said: strong states do what they like, small states—and we are smaller than China or the United States—do what they must.

There is no understanding of Britain's position in the world now we have left the European Union. We have no foreign policy at present. That is not part of this current populist dimension. How do we approach climate change and how do we deal with pandemics? We have to share sovereignty. I hope, when it comes to the climate change conference, the Government will sign up to new international obligations, which will also limit Britain's sovereignty. Perhaps it is only signing up to shared obligations with the European Union that we object to and we do not, apparently, object quite so much to signing up with China or India.

Can the Minister also assure us that what I understood the Statement to mean on regulatory divergence is that we demand the principle of regulatory divergence but, in practice, we shall be fairly closely aligned? We are standing up for the ideological dimension that we choose but, when it comes to it, we will probably go along with them. Of course, the alternative, if we do not align with European regulations, will be to align more closely with American regulations, rather than, I suspect, to choose our own.

I hope the Minister recognises that the change of tone from the political declaration we signed last October is very worrying for anyone who cares about our position in the world. He will have read the *Times* editorial the day before yesterday, which said that if we now suggest that we are not bound by agreements that we signed up to last year on Northern Ireland and on the political direction, no one will be prepared to trust us and we will not be able to get a future agreement. When a not particularly left-wing newspaper, such as the *Times*, says that about the Government's approach to their negotiations, we should all be very worried indeed.

Lord True: I thank the noble Baroness and the noble Lord. Obviously, I thank them for their references to my arrival here. I feel privileged to follow my noble friend Lord Callanan in answering on this subject at this Dispatch Box. He was often stoic and always willing to be open to the rest of the House. I assure both noble Lords who have spoken that I will endeavour to be fully open and I look forward to working with them. I know my noble friend is a hard act to follow and I will try to do that.

I will come to each of the contributions in a moment. I felt that they had something in common. One was, perhaps, slightly more robust but there still seemed to be a lack of recognition on the Benches opposite of the fundamental change in the circumstances in which this nation—and, frankly, this Parliament—operates and, I submit, has a duty to operate. Not only was there a very clear referendum result some years ago, following which this House did not cover itself in glory in the way it behaved, but there has recently been

a general election—as referred to in the Statement—in which the British people gave a decisive steer. It is a mandate—whatever people on the other side may feel—and an instruction that, as the Statement said, we on this side feel an overwhelming duty and responsibility to respond to. Everything that this Government will try to do in this House will start from the fundamental fact that the British people have voted to leave and they have voted to be independent and that is the policy that this Government will pursue.

I come to some of the points raised. With respect to the noble Baroness, it was a little like hearing the briefing on the process before Brexit actually happened. The Government are trying to be as open with the House as possible right from the start, publishing this mandate before the negotiations begin. We are in a new phase. Brexit has happened. In the period up until 31 December, we are seeking to reach an agreement with our friends and allies in Europe; that is, an agreement based on full respect and friendly co-operation, and centred on free trade. With great respect to the noble Lord, Lord Wallace, it sounded as though he was seeing the Government as inspired by Stalinist socialism in one country. The Government are fully alive to our international friendships and obligations, which stretch right across the world. I repeat that the key position, which this House must understand, is that we want friendly relations and co-operation between sovereign equals, but it must be informed by the decisions taken by the British people—by our mandate.

On workers' rights and environmental matters, the Statement was unequivocal. The position taken by the Government is that we aspire to the very highest standards in those areas. We had exchanges earlier about environmental matters. There is no question of the Government resiling from that aspiration.

The noble Baroness asked about friction. Our objective is free trade. That was the proposal put forward by our European friends. But, if it turns out that some element of friction—which we hope will be minimal or non-existent—is present, we have made clear the importance of our need to be an independent, sovereign nation. The noble Baroness talked about a different relationship. We do not want a different relationship in the sense of being hostile, as the noble Lord implied. We bear no hostility to our European friends but we do want a free trade agreement as sovereign equals. In that sense, the relationship is certainly different.

Financial services are, of course, absolutely critical. The noble Baroness asked about this. The position is that, again, it is an area of hopeful co-operation. We have a common interest with the EU in establishing an enduring relationship on financial services, based on mutual trust and co-operation. As my right honourable friend said in the other place, that means completing equivalence assessments, one hopes by the agreed June 2020 deadline.

We must not run ahead of the negotiating process—it is yet to begin. It is disappointing to hear in your Lordships' House the assumption that everything is impossible. I do not agree with that. I am happy to repeat that we will, of course, try to keep the House informed in an appropriate way as the negotiations go forward; yes, we will keep the devolved Administrations

[LORD TRUE] informed. Indeed, in the House of Commons, my right honourable friend expressed his gratitude for the valuable recent discussions he had had with representatives of the devolved Administrations.

On language, I was invited to be robust, but I must try to stop being robust now that I am a Minister. I want full co-operation and friendship with the noble Lord, who I enjoyed working with in coalition, but it is a bit rich to be given a lesson on language by a party that went to the last election planning to revoke Article 50 without any reference at all to the British people. To my reckoning, that seemed mildly harsh. I will not go into a philosophical argument about what sovereignty means. Some things the noble Lord said were true; some were not. This Government intend to be a leader on climate change, as we have already demonstrated.

I have tried to answer the questions, but I am sorry to have gone over time. We must accept this as a fresh phase, and I hope the whole House, on all sides, addresses this phase in the positive spirit of wishing to get a good outcome by the end of this year, both for this country and for the European Union. That is the position of this Government and what we will try to achieve.

12.15 pm

Lord Howell of Guildford (Con): I warmly welcome my noble friend to his new role, and I warmly welcome the comments he has just made and the whole tone of his speech, particularly its emphasis on the principles of our co-operation with the rest of Europe—in a sense, our European policy for the decades ahead. Does he accept that the Statement might have benefited from a description of what is going on in the EU, where radical change is under way? It is adjusting to a completely new style and emphasis in the digital age. Would he applaud a statement from the 19th century and the famous statesman Leopold von Ranke that “the union of all depends on the independence of each”?

If we stick to that principle, old though it may be, we will be able to influence our Europe—which we still belong to—constructively in the future, along his lines.

Lord True: I thank my noble friend and agree with him, but this Government are not going to lecture the European Union on how it should manage its own home. We respect their right, as 27 sovereign nations, to determine their own future, but the points that my noble friend made are germane and important. We will, and I personally will, bear them all in mind.

Baroness Quin (Lab): My Lords, I appreciate that the Minister had a lot of questions to answer, but I wonder if he could pick up the point raised by my noble friend from our Front Bench about integrated supply chains. Can the Minister assure companies such as Nissan that they would not be adversely affected by the Government’s approach, particularly to alignment? I hope also that the Government will try to avoid a triumphalist approach to the negotiations and their dealings with this House. You would never have guessed from the Minister’s Statement that, actually, 16 million people voted the other way. Neither would you have guessed that the Conservative vote increased

by only 1% overall at the last election. It seems the Government should approach these negotiations in a spirit of compromise, and keep as close a relationship with the EU as possible.

Lord True: My Lords, I am not very good at doing triumphalism, and I do not believe that either this Statement or anything the Government have done has that tone. It is not triumphalism but the act of a historian to point out the result of the recent general election. It is not a mark against any party that took part, but a clear outcome of that election was that the British people renewed an instruction. As for the key question about business interests, the Government are continuing our dialogue with business over the coming months, in the usual way. We are fully aware of all the issues involved, but let us not leap forward and assume the worst at every opportunity. The Government will wish to be informed and to inform, but many supply chains successfully exist in areas where there is no customs union—in North America, for example. I do not accept the advice that we must be defeatist and that problems and issues cannot be satisfactorily addressed, at this early stage, when negotiators have not even met yet.

Lord Garel-Jones (Con): My Lords, can my noble friend assure the House that, if these discussions with the European Union do not lead to a happy conclusion, the no-deal situation will be brought to Parliament for approval?

Lord True: My Lords, the Government do not anticipate that these discussions will fail.

Lord Kerr of Kinlochard (CB): My Lords, I welcome the noble Lord, Lord True, to his new responsibilities. I look forward to many a True statement. He emphasised the importance of our understanding that the world has changed and that we are in a brave new world that is all fresh. What I am worried about is whether the foreigners will see it that way. I am worried that the foreigners will still believe that the joint commitment in the political declaration to a level playing field perhaps still holds. I am worried that the foreigners—the 27—noting that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Prime Minister are in denial about what the Northern Ireland protocol says and that no work is being done in Belfast or in London on implementing it, may feel that “pacta sunt servanda” is no longer the governing principle here. Will the noble Lord assure me that we still believe that commitments should be honoured? If that is his view, will he please raise it with the Prime Minister?

Lord True: My Lords, I take particular note of what the noble Lord says. I thank him for his kind remarks. I have the highest respect for his great service to this country. I remember watching from the sidelines in the early 1990s his extraordinary achievements. I think I said at one stage in these discussions that he was the Duns Scotus, the great scholastic who understood everything. I hope he will not regret having to deal with a Dunce Anglius here at the Dispatch Box who has a lot to learn. Look, the negotiations are just yet to begin. People will lay out their positions next week.

Again, the noble Lord invites me to run ahead of the position. Each side's position will be staked out by the appropriate people as the negotiations commence.

Lord Davies of Stamford (Lab): Do the Government not appreciate that no one will invest in manufacturing capability in this country, the output for which will be dependent on demand from the single market to a considerable and possibly larger extent, in a climate of regulatory uncertainty where it is not clear whether at any moment our regulations might divert from those in the European single market? It seems to me that the Government either have decided to neglect or have never heard of one of the most elemental requirements of industry in the important area of investment.

Lord True: My Lords, that argument was put in 2016 and has been put ever since, but in that time the UK has benefited from enormous inward investment and I have every confidence that it will continue to do so.

Lord Hamilton of Epsom (Con): My Lords, my noble friend's Statement has exposed the speciousness of the argument that for some reason the UK should be treated as a special case because of our proximity to the European continent. Does he agree that this is actually an indication of the insecurity of the EU? It is a euphemism for saying that we should be punished for daring to leave the EU. This is not exactly a vote of confidence in the future of the EU.

Lord True: My Lords, I am not going to be critical of the EU. As I have said, we respect its right to conduct itself as it wishes. I repeat: we certainly do not accept the proximity argument that requires that we should be in a customs union. It is not an argument that applies in North America, and I do not believe it applies on the European continent either.

Lord Liddle (Lab): My Lords, I welcome the noble Lord, Lord True, to his place and assure him that we accept that we are now in a different situation. On the point that the noble Lord, Lord Hamilton, just asked about, do the Government still adhere to the political declaration that the Prime Minister signed on 19 October last year? I draw the Minister's attention to paragraph 77, which deals with the point that the noble Lord just raised. It starts:

"Given the Union and the United Kingdom's geographic proximity and economic interdependence, the future relationship must ensure open and fair competition, encompassing robust commitments to ensure a level playing field."

That is what the Prime Minister signed up for last October. Can we have it clearly stated that the Government still sign up to that statement? This is a matter of great importance; I think hundreds of thousands of people's jobs depend on it.

Lord True: My Lords, the political declaration set out our commitment to discuss open and fair competition as part of negotiations on our future relationship. We are committed to doing so.

Lord Cormack (Con): I too welcome my noble friend to his post and wish him every success. Does he accept that the hallmark of successful negotiations

has to be mutual respect? Can he assure the House that we are not aiming for splendid isolation, but rather mutual prosperity? Does he also remember that the last negotiations, of unhappy memory, were bedevilled by the proclaiming of red lines far too early in the process?

Lord True: My Lords, I thought I had said in the Statement and afterwards that they will be approached in terms of mutual respect. But mutual respect and friendship—as I think my noble friend will understand from our happy relations in this House—does not always mean absolute identity on everything.

Lord Howarth of Newport (Lab): My Lords, I welcome the noble Lord to the Dispatch Box very warmly. May I tempt him to enter into the philosophical discussion? Was not the very point of Brexit that we should reclaim that part of our sovereignty that we lent to the European Union, and does not the sovereignty of a democratic state reside in its ability to make its own laws in its own Parliaments and Assemblies, accountable to its own people? The sovereignty of that people also resides in their ability to have those laws applied and interpreted in their own courts. To reclaim sovereignty is therefore not to advance propositions about power in international relationships or economic independence. It is simply about the right to national autonomy.

That being so, is it not inconceivable that the Government should accept the principle of dynamic alignment, thereby tying a democratically elected Government in this country in the future to accept whatever new regulations and laws might be promulgated by the institutions of the European Union? Should not the EU therefore, if its negotiators really care about the well-being and prosperity of its peoples, move quickly to agree a trade deal that involves no tariffs or quotas, and enables us to pursue the friendly, co-operative and mutually advantageous trading arrangements that surely we all should seek?

Lord True: Yes, I very much agree with the noble Lord's analysis but I think that the House, when it has a Minister for a brief time, does not want a philosophical discussion. But I take his side in the discussion that he will no doubt have with the noble Lord afterwards, and agree with what he said. Our objective is to have a free trade agreement; that is what we have asked for and what the EU once offered. It is my hope that we will get there and have the other agreements that the Statement refers to as well. Our approach is based on a precedent that the EU has accepted with other nations. We see no reason why it should not be accepted. The EU has not asked for the kind of alignment that the noble Lord referred to in a number of other agreements that it has already accepted.

Baroness McIntosh of Pickering (Con): My Lords, in congratulating my noble friend and welcoming him to his new position, does he recall the Government—or the leave campaign's position—at the time of the referendum clearly stating that they were seeking frictionless trade with our European partners? Why have we left that position, and is it not explicit in the Statement he has just read out that the Government

[BARONESS McINTOSH OF PICKERING]
intend to leave the negotiating table in June? As my noble friend Lord Garel-Jones asked, is it not incumbent that we should return to this House to discuss that position and the impact that leaving on World Trade Organization rules will have on the British economy?

Lord True: My Lords, I do not answer for Vote Leave; I was not a member of Vote Leave. I was trying to lead a local authority at the time. Business in this House is a matter for the usual channels. The direct answer to her question is no; the Government intend to procure a successful negotiation and successful outcome, and we hope very much that that view will be shared by our friends and allies in Europe. We will continue the negotiations with a view to a successful free trade agreement and agreement on the other matters covered in the Statement before December.

Lord Grocott (Lab): Like the Minister, who I welcome to his post, I do not want an academic debate about sovereignty, but I do think that, in having a sensible discussion, it is fundamental to recognise the difference between having relationships with other countries via treaties or any other mechanism and a relationship between sovereign states. To have the kind of organisation that exists in the European Union, of which we are thankfully no longer a member—whereby the multinational organisation can legislate, trumping domestic law, and that can be interpreted by courts outside the control of the nation state and its legislators cannot be removed by the people of the nation state—is a difference in kind. It is not a gradation. It is time that people recognised that and put that particular argument to one side.

Lord True: My Lords, I profoundly agree with what the noble Lord said. I thank him for what he personally said and reciprocate with my respect for him and, indeed, the noble Lord, Lord Howarth, and their strong voices through the past two or three years against the overwhelming view on the other side. I agree with their analysis; I do not agree with that of the noble Lord, Lord Wallace.

Lord Caine (Con): My Lords, I warmly welcome my noble friend to his place on the Front Bench. Can he assure the House that, in the negotiations, the highest priority will be given to delivering on the Conservative manifesto commitment to ensure that Northern Ireland businesses and producers will have unfettered access to the rest of the United Kingdom and that that will be enshrined in UK law? Does he also agree that, while Monsieur Barnier might have one interpretation of the protocol, it is not the only interpretation?

Lord True: My Lords, I accept that point and I can certainly assure my noble friend that the interests of all nations of this United Kingdom will be absolutely paramount, and respected and considered at every stage of negotiations this year.

Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle (GP): My Lords, I join others in welcoming the noble Lord to his new position. I have two brief questions. First, we heard in the Statement and we have heard from many other

noble Lords on the Government Front Bench that we want to maintain or exceed the current EU standards on the environment and workers' rights. If that is the case, why is there any problem with signing up to them if we are planning to keep or exceed them?

Secondly, the noble Baroness, Lady Hayter, referred to the number of times the word “sovereignty” appeared in the Statement. We are focused on issues of national sovereignty but, if the multinational corporations around the world were countries, Walmart would be the 24th largest country ranked by GDP, Volkswagen the 43rd and Amazon—the great tax dodger—the 58th. Can the Minister reassure me on how we will maintain our sovereignty as a solitary nation state up against those giant multinational corporations, when we have found that difficult even as part of a giant union of the peoples of Europe?

Lord True: My Lords, as my noble friend Lord Howell said, the United Kingdom will never be a solitary nation state. The United Kingdom seeks friendship and alliance with every other nation of the world except those that, by their behaviour, do not merit it. I do not believe that this great United Kingdom is incapable of doing on its own what 135 other nations are capable of doing. I do not accept that we have to be told by an external power or nation what we must do as we cook our eggs in the morning. The British people want to cook their own eggs.

The Earl of Sandwich (CB): My Lords, does the Minister agree that the European Commission responded very warmly in its mandate to what was proposed in the political declaration and that the Statements we have heard since, from the Prime Minister and today, have simply disregarded or hardly mentioned the political declaration, which was approved by so many members of his party? Can he reassure me that we will see a Statement very soon that includes things in the declaration? I am thinking particularly of international security, the CSDP missions that we do and international development.

Lord True: My Lords, international security will be a separate strand in discussions. On my first outing at the Dispatch Box I am not going to interpose my body between what the Prime Minister has lately said and what the House might or might not want him to say. All I will say—I respect and understand noble Lords' feelings after what has happened—is that we must all try together, whatever our position, in the interests of this country and the European Union, to assist a constructive, positive and friendly outcome.

Children and Families: Early Years Interventions

Motion to Take Note

12.36 pm

Moved by The Lord Bishop of Gloucester

That this House takes note of the case for improved early years interventions to support children and families.

The Lord Bishop of Gloucester: My Lords, it is a great privilege to initiate this debate today on early years intervention. My interest in this subject comes from my experience as a paediatric speech and language therapist, then in parish ministry and now as a bishop committed to the flourishing and well-being of diverse individuals and communities. In light of that, I draw your Lordships' attention to my entry in the register of interests.

The experiences we have as children, and in particular as young children, shape the rest of our lives. A child's development score at just 22 months can serve as an accurate predictor of educational outcomes at 26 years. Adverse childhood experiences—ACEs—have significant public health and social consequences. Having had four such experiences is associated with poorer physical and mental health, drug and alcohol abuse and interpersonal and self-directed violence. There are stories up and down the country, including those I hear in prisons and women's centres, about those who are now adults who were deprived of appropriate early years intervention, and about those who are turning their lives around for their children and their families as a result of receiving early intervention for their children and for themselves as parents.

My intention in tabling this debate today is to reflect on how government, both centrally and locally, can work with families and communities to support children's well-being, particularly at the start of life—I deliberately use the word “with”. The Government have plenty of evidence that early interventions are not just good for children's life chances, they are also sound financially. The old adage, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”, rings true here. Despite this, the Children's Society estimates that local authority spending on early intervention services for children and young people fell by 49% between 2010 and 2017.

Health visitors are a highly effective intervention and support for all babies and families across the social spectrum, yet their number is falling. Similarly, most areas in England have experienced a real-terms reduction in reported spending on speech and language therapy over the last three years, despite the fact that children with poor vocabulary skills at the age of five are three times as likely as their peers to have mental health problems in adulthood, and twice as likely to become unemployed.

For those in government concerned about money, it should be enough to point out that, when we provide early support and catch problems early, intervention is far less expensive. However, we have to be able to do this. The Government's troubled families programme comes too late. The families it supports are already in trouble, not simply struggling or at risk.

Increases in government spending on children's services have been largely a result of the increased number of looked-after children and the Government's expansion of free childcare hours, while spending on children's centres and provision for families has decreased, particularly in the most deprived parts of the country where they are most needed to address inequality. In the case of looked-after children, this is by far the most drastic and expensive intervention the Government can make in a child's life. What assessment have the Government made of the causes of this rise?

On childcare, academic research shows that pre-schooling and paid childcare improve children's outcomes only if they are of high quality. Where children are looked after by private providers, vital links with local authorities can be missed and staff may not have the specialist training required to spot early issues. Research done by the Institute for Fiscal Studies and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation suggests that the free entitlement for three and four year-olds does not effectively target the most needy and at risk. What assessment have the Government made of the quality of this provision and its effect on early years outcomes for children?

Child poverty has a strong link with child development. Children who have lived in persistent poverty during their first seven years of life have cognitive development scores on average 20% below those of children who have never experienced poverty. The Millennium Cohort Study shows that poor children are four times more likely than rich children to develop a mental health problem by the age of 11. Gaps in achievement open up early on, and by the time they start school the poorest children are already 11 months behind their more advantaged classmates. Overcrowded, poorly maintained housing can lead to children sleeping in living rooms or with parents, which has consequences for physical and mental health. Poverty puts families under pressure, and that stress can be a source of ill health and family breakdown, leading to expensive work by public authorities further down the line.

Simply expanding both entitlement to free childcare for disadvantaged two year-olds and the number of free hours that older children are entitled to is unlikely to counteract the effect of benefit changes and the two-child limit. To put it simply, incentivising single mothers to work is not a panacea for their child's development. Can the Minister explain what analysis the Government have made of the impact of DWP changes on child poverty, particularly the two-child limit, and any impact assessment of the effect that this will have on children's life chances and well-being?

We also know that worklessness is no longer the root of poverty. Seven in 10 children in poverty are now in a working family. Part of the problem is that families have to pay the entire cost of free childcare up front before they can claim back the 85% that the Government will cover. Many low-income families do not have the capital to pay this up-front cost or risk going into debt. Moreover, childcare support has been capped at £175 per week since April 2016, while childcare costs continue to rise. The deep irony of this situation is that most childcare workers are themselves women on low pay, and 44% of childcare workers claim state benefits or tax credits.

To paraphrase the Sutton Trust and the Marmot review published earlier this week, it is difficult to see how even well-designed policies to support parenting and ensure access to high-quality early education can have the optimal impact against a backdrop of a sharp increase in child poverty.

Furthermore, navigating the benefits in the childcare system is hugely complicated, especially as families begin to migrate on to universal credit. Anecdotally, we hear that this is something that churches and toddler groups help with around the country. Toddler groups

[THE LORD BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER]

—many provided by churches and other community-based groups—do a huge amount of early intervention and signposting work, informally across the country. It amounts to thousands of hours each year. Often, these are the only places in a community where children from different backgrounds mix and parents and care givers are provided with support. Yet toddler groups are almost invisible in impact studies and government reports. They are a tremendous asset to the country, provided by hard-working, committed volunteers. We want to encourage this sort of expression of civil society, but the Government must partner with the community to make sure that local services are joined up, holistic and sufficiently funded. This work cannot simply be outsourced to stretched volunteers.

While I welcome the Government's commissioning of research on family hubs, surely the case for children's centres is already well known. For each Government to have to learn the benefits of early intervention for themselves is frustrating and a poor use of resources. One of the most important parts of Sure Start was co-creation with the local community—a bottom-up approach that listened to the needs of service users. Will this happen with family hubs? What support will the Government provide for children and their families from all walks of life to ensure that parents who have concerns about their child's welfare and development have somewhere to turn?

If I had longer, I would have liked to say something about families of children who have a disability. The long-term well-being of such children and families is about not only access to early diagnosis but appropriate early intervention. Early intervention by definition needs to be made early, and I hope that the Minister, in her reply, will explain how the Government are working across departments to improve early years policy, given that the interministerial group on the early years has been disbanded. Will the Government introduce a cross-departmental early years strategy as part of the plan to level up Britain, and ensure that every child can achieve their potential? What attention have the Government paid to the work of the Early Intervention Foundation and its analysis of what works as effective interventions? Will the Minister assure the House that local authorities have sufficient ring-fenced funding to deliver them?

There is an urgent need for join-up. At present, we do not have a single framework, even across health and education, to assess and support the development and well-being of every child. This is more than join-up across health and education—although that would be a good start. This is about every aspect of life if we are rightly to look at the whole child in the context of the family.

In this debate, we are not simply focusing on little people. We are talking about investment in the start of life, which affects the long-term well-being of individuals, families, households, communities, our country and beyond. There is a very strong case for improving early years interventions and having a clear and joined-up strategy for doing so. I look forward to hearing the contributions of other Members on this topic today.

12.48 pm

Baroness Wilcox of Newport (Lab): I thank the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Gloucester for securing this debate. It gives me a great opportunity to share with your Lordships the excellent work being undertaken in Wales on early years education and care. As a classroom teacher with more than 35 years' experience in the secondary sector, I saw all too often that if only issues had been addressed earlier on in a child's life, the problems that surrounded them in their teenage years could have been solved.

Last October, the Welsh Government launched a new approach; the reform of the provision is aimed at creating a single, child-centred approach to early childhood education and care. The early years are defined by the Welsh Government as the period of life from prebirth to the end of the foundation phase, or nought to seven years of age. These years are a crucial time for children. They grow rapidly, and both their physical and mental development are affected by the environment in which they find themselves.

The first three years of life are particularly important for healthy development, due to the fast rate of neurological growth that occurs during this period. There is an abundance of research showing that investing in the first years of a child's life improves outcomes for them throughout the rest of their life. A mentally healthy child has a clear sense of identity and self-worth and the ability to recognise and manage emotions, to learn to play, enjoy friendships and relationships, and deal with difficulties. A wide range of interrelated factors play a role, such as individual, family, wider society and of course environmental issues.

Co-ordinated interagency action at national and local level is required to improve the health of children and young people and its determinants. It is hoped that this will reduce the attainment gap between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers and will allow parents and children better access to education and childcare in ways that meet their differing needs and circumstances. The six outcomes the Welsh Government are looking at are that children: feel safe are cared for; feel supported and valued; are resilient and capable; are coping; are healthy while they learn and develop; and are not disadvantaged by poverty.

We know that adverse childhood experiences play an important role in lack of future development, and development is the start of a good life. We know that by the age of just three children from poorer backgrounds start to fall behind. This gap then widens as they start school, and the self-fulfilling prophecy of underachievement and underattainment is set in motion, with a lifetime's impact.

With this renewed approach, the Welsh Government are determined to redress the imbalance and close the gap. They want to ensure that every child has access to the same, high-quality support, and early childhood education and care are key to this. In Wales, we have managed, despite a decade of crushing austerity and lack of funding of public services, to extend excellent childcare provision across the early years. We have a long-established and well-regarded offer for three and four year-olds, with the delivery of the innovative foundation phase of education.

The foundation phase is the developmental statutory curriculum for three to seven year-olds in Wales, and it is based on the principle that early years education provision should offer a sound foundation for future learning through a developmentally appropriate curriculum. It brings more consistency and continuity to children's education in this all-important period. It places great emphasis on children's learning by participating in practical activities. Young children are given opportunities to gain first-hand experience through play and active involvement rather than by more formal education and completing exercises in books. It encourages children to be creative and imaginative and to have fun, and places the child at the centre of their learning. They are given more opportunities to explore the world around them and understand how things work by taking part in practical activities that are relevant to their developmental stage. They are challenged with open-ended questions and given opportunities to explore and share ideas for solving problems.

This latest approach will be built on those foundations, and at its core is the aim that all children will have a high-quality, stimulating learning and care experience in any education and care setting that they attend, whether in Welsh, English or bilingually. Putting child development at the heart of early childhood education will ensure that the principle of quality is clear to all who work with children and will underpin the provision in every setting in Wales.

Who is eligible? Working parents of three or four year-old children can claim 30 hours of free early education and childcare in Wales a week, for up to 48 weeks of the year. Local authorities will be a key player in this delivery, and there is investment in innovative solutions that will enable more parents and children to have better access. It is particularly important to ensure that children with additional learning needs or physical disabilities can access this provision without any inequalities.

It is an ambitious change and full implementation will take the next decade, but it will include a plan for developing a quality framework that enshrines the principles supporting it by setting out the quality required. This will be the guide for practitioners to use, for parents to understand and for inspectors to assess, thus linking those elements together.

I commend the Welsh system of early years education and care to the House and hope that Ministers in the UK Government will look carefully at what Wales is doing, learn from that embedded good practice and those future ambitions, and develop similar excellent systems of care for young children across England.

12.55 pm

Baroness Tyler of Enfield (LD): My Lords, I thank the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Gloucester for securing this vital debate and refer to my interests in the register.

It is widely understood and acknowledged these days that what happens during pregnancy and in the early years shapes children's physical health, language and communication, learning, emotional well-being and ability to form positive relationships. In short, the early years of a child's life are pivotal to their ability to flourish throughout childhood and into adulthood.

Given the importance of early years, I am sure I am not alone in this Chamber in thinking that improving outcomes in the early years is just about the smartest investment we can make as a society. We still have much to do in ensuring that high-quality early years services are equally accessible to all families, wherever they live.

I make the case for improved childhood interventions on two grounds. First, intervention is crucial to a child's long-term well-being, which should be a crucial objective of any Government; and, secondly, there is certainly room to improve a system that at the moment is either barely adequate or, in some places, does not even exist.

The evidence is instructive: 4 million children living in poverty; 50,000 children aged nought to five living in households with domestic violence, alcohol or drug dependency and severe mental ill-health; and an attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their better-off peers clearly evident at the age of five when they start school. There is also a wealth of evidence showing that failing children in the early years has devastating and long-lasting consequences. For example, we know that an estimated 220,000 children aged 10 to 15 are unhappy with their life. Children who live in families under financial strain are more likely to be unhappy and to experience symptoms of depression than their better-off peers. As we have already heard, there is a clearly established link between poverty and poor mental health, which manifests itself early on in a child's life. Where we fail to act early, we fail to equip children with the necessary tools to improve their life chances and social mobility.

Before turning to some specific policy responses, I will say another word about poverty, because it is so important. Child poverty is acting as a key barrier to children's educational achievement and good health. At just five years old, children from the poorest income groups are twice as likely to be obese as their better-off peers. This is just one example of how poverty can ruin childhoods and cause irreparable damage to society's future health and productivity. Early years education, childcare health visitors and early help family support services, often provided by the voluntary sector, can boost outcomes for most disadvantaged children, but research shows that take-up among these groups is low. Simply put, those who need these services the most are often missing out. Many families are unaware that the services are available to them.

I very much share the view expressed by the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Gloucester that one thing we currently lack is an overarching children's strategy. Happily, this can easily be addressed. It is absolutely crucial to demonstrate joined-up working and leadership within central government to inspire local areas to see early intervention as a shared responsibility. Early intervention needs to be everyone's business, and we must reflect the complex ways in which various components of children's well-being interact.

The National Children's Bureau—last year I stepped down as its president after a seven-year term—has called for a comprehensive cross-government children and young people's strategy to establish a new vision for childhood and create a binding set of outcomes that all government departments are accountable for

[BARONESS TYLER OF ENFIELD]
 delivering. Many programmes to drive these improvements in early years either exist or we know about them, but to make the most of these interventions, we need the sustained, focused and committed efforts of all government departments to address poverty, integration of services, and funding.

Service integration is key. Children's lives are heavily influenced by many aspects: their family, their neighbourhood, their nursery or school, their GP surgery and so on. These interactions impact on child outcomes in a complex way. Therefore, co-operation and integration between education, social care and health services, and between the voluntary and statutory sectors, is needed, not only to improve outcomes but to narrow inequalities. Of course, this needs to be done in full partnership with children and their families.

I will finish on the issue of funding, which is so important. The last decade has seen the capacity of early years services to work in a preventive way undermined by significant reductions in public spending, with local authority budgets particularly badly affected. We have already heard the statistics: since 2010, cash-strapped councils have had to reduce spending on early intervention by almost 50%. That is a very big figure. The LGA estimates that an investment of at least £3.1 billion per year by the middle of the decade is needed to prevent children's services from collapsing. The Government have committed just £1 billion per year, to be split between adult and children's services, so let us hope that there is better news in either the Budget or the spending review. It will be great if the Minister can give some reassurance on that point.

The Government also promised in their manifesto to develop a network of family hubs, but no further detail has been given. With proper funding, they could be a very welcome re-extension of early intervention services back into the communities. Can the Minister give an update on the Government's plans for family hubs?

Finally, *Storing Up Trouble*, a report published by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Children, of which I am co-chair, found that just a small proportion of local authority resources are being spent at the early, preventive end of the agenda. Virtually all of it at the moment has to go on crisis support. We have already heard today—and so powerfully—how it is crucial to intervene before families reach this crisis point. I am looking forward to the all-party group's hearings and inquiries in May, which will take a strategic look at spending and identify the interventions on which the Government could best target its investment. I will be delighted if the Minister attends those inquiries and responds to the APPG's recommendations.

1.02 pm

Lord Astor of Hever (Con): My Lords, as the right reverend Prelate said, early intervention in education is essential to any child with special educational needs or any learning disability. Numerous studies in the past decade show that early intervention increases a child's potential for greater all-round development, that a child learns as much in the first three years of its life as it will throughout its remaining years, and that

if help is not given that vital period is irretrievably lost. These points were very well made by the noble Baroness, Lady Wilcox.

I am the father of a 27 year-old daughter with special needs. At the age of four she was diagnosed with severe autism and a learning disability, as well as dyspraxia. Through my personal experience I feel sufficiently qualified to know the enormous value of early intervention. Our daughter attended special-needs schools and left at 19 with several entry-level qualifications, able to read fluently and work a computer and mobile phone. This would not have been the case without the early intervention that she received.

Autism is a lifelong condition that affects more than one in 100 children and young people. Intervening early in these children's lives to support their communication, learning and development increases the chances that they will make good progress with their education and ability to cope throughout their adult lives. Children may be able to access early intervention only if they have a diagnosis, but the length of time that many families wait for an autism diagnosis means that too few autistic children benefit from early intervention programmes. Research by the National Autistic Society found that children wait, on average, three and a half years from when their parents first seek help to when they receive a diagnosis of autism, despite NHS guidelines stating that children and adults who may be on the autism spectrum should be assessed within three months.

Diagnosis is vital. It enables a child on the autism spectrum to be better understood by their parents, teachers and others. It should also open access to crucial help and support. As soon as a diagnosis is made, intervention should be carried out with immediate effect. If children are not given the help that they are entitled to when they are young, they will grow into adults who require infinitely more expensive care throughout their lives and put enormous strain—emotional and financial—on their families.

An important initiative for young children on the autism spectrum is the EarlyBird programme, run by the National Autistic Society, a three-month programme of group training and individual home visits for families of preschool children. The aim is to help parents understand their children better; how to support them; how to get into their child's world; how to find ways to develop their interaction and communication; and how to understand how the child behaves and reacts. Children on the autism spectrum do not experience the world in the way that we expect of most children in the early years stage of development and learning. Early intervention programmes can help these children learn and develop the skills they need, understand their environment and reduce their levels of stress and anxiety.

Early intervention is vital for these reasons, and should be available for everyone, regardless of their postcode or bank balance. There are over 1 million children in the United Kingdom with special educational needs. In the light of this, will the Government make a commitment to implement the guidelines on waiting times for diagnosis, so that no child must wait years for the help and support they need?

1.07 pm

Lord Mawson (CB): My Lords, for 35 years my colleagues and I have supported East End families and children and worked with them at the coalface. We have spent our lives operating within the machinery of the state and have witnessed countless promises made to these families and communities, many of which did not turn out quite as expected. It takes a family and a community to raise children well. If we want to be serious in this debate, given all the money that Governments spend on research that few people read, we might like to look back over the last 30 years and learn from the programmes that the state has run. In our experience, government is not a learning organisation. It has little memory, and this fact has unintended consequences for many of our most vulnerable families.

We had a rich ecology of childcare providers in our area 30 years ago, often with strong relationships with parents and families. Then Governments started disrupting this. They said that they would encourage children to enter school one or two years earlier, thus destroying the business model of many small nurseries and support networks. Then they set up Sure Start and children's centres. The launch of these centres was at the Bromley by Bow Centre, which I founded. They were all our ideas. We were told that we were the model for what should happen nationally, and now, of course, we are saying that we cannot afford them. The Bromley by Bow Centre had its children's centre contract cancelled at short notice. What is the net effect on childcare and support services over the last 30 years? How much money has been spent, to what overall effect? One experienced children's officer in one London borough described to me recently the present overduplication in her borough, the outdated silo systems incapable of real integrated working and staff waiting out their pensions and poor leadership.

Our work—often despite government—is starting to go national and my colleagues and I are today working in challenging communities across this country. I was in Skelmersdale last Monday at one of our innovation platforms with the NHS civil servants who are writing the new Green Paper on prevention. Local people and I shared with the civil servants the long journey of state intervention in this town and the unintended consequences. I do not know Dominic Cummings—I have never met him—but if he is really interested in the dysfunctionality of so much of the machinery of government systems and their countless interventions, he would do well to spend some time in Skelmersdale. This community, like countless others, is littered with three-year government programmes that spent loads of money and came to little. Local families know this fact. The civil servants we met seemed more interested in policy than implementation—classic Oxbridge culture. It is the impact that counts.

As a Christian community in east London, we took these families seriously and created four nurseries—a network of integrated health centres—which now have 42,000 patients because we saw that the health services were not joined-up locally around them. We have set up 87 businesses with local people and countless programmes and projects. We began to understand the state only when we tried to bend it and make any of

the machinery work for these families. You only really understand and learn by practical engagement, not through policies, research and the paraphernalia the Government seem to spend so much money on—most of it, in our experience, simply does not work. The Word becomes flesh in John's Gospel, not policies, not research, not minutes—flesh. You learn by doing.

There is an awful truth: the poor will always be with you. I was listening to a woman on the radio in Rotherham recently, another town where my colleagues and I are working. Even after all the sex scandals there, the horrific effects of a PC religious culture and ideology in that Labour council and all the statements about lessons being learned, she said that nothing had fundamentally changed. In poor areas, the state struggles too—that is true. It will only ever be part of the solution. It is the traditional Catholic message; it is what the Pope would say. He, of course, has the long view.

When we began working with families and children, we decided not to follow the then trendy approach in the 1980s focused around equal opportunities and an advert in the *Guardian* when it came to employing a person to work with these families. We knew we would end up with a bright young graduate with all the right papers, who had done all the right courses but had never had a child. We chose Jackie, a brilliant East End mum who had had four children by the time she was 21. She was a brilliant mother and role model, and she did a great job. She eventually introduced us to a 35 year-old mother called Jean Vialles, a friend from school, who had two kids aged 16 and two, sleeping in the same bed. Jean was dying of cancer and the NHS was busy writing four reports about her, but no one was giving her a bath. Through Jackie, we discovered a Baby P scenario on our doorstep—the profound dysfunctionality of the state. Jackie forced us into a massive confrontation with the NHS and we have the scars to prove it. Out of it came the first working model of a fully integrated primary healthcare centre in the country. Nowadays we have 2,000 visitors a year coming to see what this all means in practice. It was all about focusing in a joined-up way on the complicated lives of local children and families and believing in them, and that they could achieve great things, as many of them have gone on to do—learning by doing.

It is easy to blame the state, but what about the behaviour and interventions of our own institutions? Let us start there. I am listening to too many bishops telling us that the solution is for the state to spend and do more, and all will be well. They are listening to too many academics who have never built anything. I worry about all this research our politicians are quoting, emanating from our universities. They all seem to be saying the same thing. I do not believe in these too tidy by half solutions. The clinical psychologist Dr Jordan Peterson, the Ezekiel of our day, is raising some rather awkward questions about the state, our universities and their Marxist/liberal consensus that is infecting a generation. He is worrying away about the simplistic ideological glasses through which so many academics, whose salaries rely on the next research document, view the world. Few of them will spend real time with these children and families. Go and look at the many millions of pounds being spent on the Born in Bradford study and ask yourself: where is the money going and

[LORD MAWSON]

how much of it will stick to these families and communities in Bradford? Will we be able to point to the name and address of one family in the city who will have benefited from all this research funding?

This is not about policy but about implementation. I encourage the Minister to come with me to Rotherham to have a look at what that means in practice. I have had the invite out for a while, but maybe after this debate we might have coffee.

1.14 pm

Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle (GP): My Lords, I thank the right reverend Prelate for arranging this debate, for her excellent introduction and for her reliance on expertise in her introduction. I hope to reflect that approach in my speech also.

For our debate on early intervention, the invaluable House of Lords Library briefing, which we always have for such debates, talks about early intervention specifically for children with atypical development, but I want to focus first on what is typical for children in the UK. A Children's Society report from August 2019 showed that the level of happiness of our children is the lowest for a decade: a quarter of a million children said that they were unhappy with their lives; a third of 10 to 17 year-olds were fearful about the future; and one in eight children were unhappy at school. If we go back to 2016, a UNICEF study placed Britain 13th out of 16 countries for the happiness of our eight year-olds. We have a problem, widely acknowledged, with child poverty. There are 10 constituencies in the country where more than 50% of children—whole communities of children—are living in poverty. Overall, around the country, 4.6 million children are living in poverty.

If we look at where the support and the services for children—both those who need special interventions in children and in general—come from, local council funding has fallen by 17% on local services. That is nearly £300 per person in the past decade. Some 57% of the budget for services goes to social care, under huge pressure for the need for early interventions, among other causes. That has meant the loss of libraries, parks and other services, so I put it to your Lordships' House that we have a real problem in our treatment of all children and this will increase the number of children who will have what will be seen, in historical terms, as atypical development and who will need intervention.

I turn briefly to some reflections on what that intervention should be like and how it should be funded. A report from the Sutton Trust recommended:

“The Government should move towards giving early years teachers qualified teacher status, with the increase in pay, conditions and status”

to match. I think we can all agree that there can be no more important job than taking care of our youngest children, particularly helping those children who need extra support to reach standard landmarks. I will, very shortly, be joining the National Education Union outside, which is concerned about the funding for post-16 education. We have a problem of how we prioritise education right across the board in our country.

I move to another point brought forward by the Sutton Trust in its 2014 report *Sound Foundations*. It stressed the importance of prioritising quality of services,

particularly for the under-threes. There are two things I want to pick out from that: one is the focus on play-based activities and routines and the other is the opportunity to move and be physically active. Last night, when I joined the National Trust downstairs to celebrate its 125th anniversary, it was focusing on the importance of access to nature for all of us, but if we think about children, particularly struggling children, that access to nature—the chance to play and run around—is absolutely crucial. All the expert evidence shows that, yet we know this is being denied to many of our children, particularly children who may need early intervention. I think of the recent exposure in London of the fact that children living in social housing that is divided between social housing and purchased housing were being excluded from playgrounds. That is the kind of behaviour that will create situations that need intervention.

The point I really wish to make to your Lordships' House is that there will always be a need for acute interventions for some children whose development is not proceeding as it should, but we are now at risk of creating a situation where social and economic circumstances put more and more children in that situation. That will demand more and more resources for more and more stretched services. We risk entering a downward spiral. Many speeches have already focused on the detail of the services for early intervention, but we also need to look at issues of equality—not social mobility for the few, nor help just for those most acutely affected, but a decent life for all our children.

1.20 pm

Lord Morris of Handsworth (Lab): My Lords, I too thank the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Gloucester for bringing this issue forward. For far too long, issues relating to families and their support have had a confusing history and some have been lost in time. One Government would organise the benefits system to penalise mothers who went to work, and the next would penalise those who stayed at home. Who suffers? It is of course children and families. Society would demonise mothers who chose to earn a living because they were not at home to control their children, but then penalise mothers—especially single mothers, and single fathers—who stayed at home but also claimed benefits.

The practical help needed came just over 20 years ago when the Government of the day—I am pleased that it was a Labour Government—introduced the idea of Sure Start. It really was a start. These centres were designed to boost the educational and life chances of socially and economically disadvantaged children. The first centres were set up in deprived areas, with baby-weighing clinics, childcare and play sessions alongside more general health needs, as well as parenting advice and employment coaching. Looking back, and judging by today's standards, I think it was a progressive start.

In 2004, the programme was expanded, with the aim of delivering a childcare centre in every community. At its peak in 2009, Sure Start had more than 3,500 centres delivering major health benefits for youngsters in deprived areas. A report last year by the Institute for Fiscal Studies told of how Sure Start centres had reduced the number of people taken to hospital and delivered millions of pounds of NHS savings.

However, in 2010 the coalition came into office and introduced austerity cuts that reduced centre numbers by nearly 1,000 and their funding by some two-thirds. The numbers have reduced every year since. The biggest reductions have been in deprived authorities at a time when rising poverty has fuelled demand for parent and child support services, and when families and children need their support more than ever.

Millions of parents are now being punished and pushed out to work in order to feed, clothe and look after their children. A weapon is used in some instances; it is called universal credit. If your child is aged under three you will not have to find a job, but you will have to prepare for work, which means having regular meetings at the jobcentre and possibly doing some training. There is, presumably, a presumption that granny will look after the children. Those with children aged under 13 can limit their availability for work around their schooling and childcare, if they can find an employer prepared to accommodate that. If their child is aged over 13 the number of hours they are expected to work will vary, but they can be assured that their problems will be greater and more expensive.

Universal credit might pay up to 85% of childcare costs, but the maximum payment assumes a lower cost of childcare than you are likely to find. With payment in arrears, many applicants find themselves in a position where there is only one way out: to take out a loan. At different times we have all heard of latch-key children and criticisms of parents who are perceived not to control their children. Via universal credit, the Government positively encourage this. The threat is: work or else.

The Government continually argue that employment leaves the individual in a better place. No one disagrees with that, but everyone believes that it should not be solely at the expense of looking after children and families. Therefore, we on this side of the House believe that the Government and the media should not blame children and families. They are victims, not the cause. We believe that the regeneration of the principles that underpinned Sure Start would make a fundamental difference today.

Sure Start and children's centres were closed; sports centres, playground and other outside playing areas are unkept; schools are deprived of resources and staff; children with special needs are deprived of services; libraries are closing. That is the United Kingdom shutting down, rather than looking up. It is therefore time to place responsibility where it belongs. It is time for the Government to take responsibility, in the context not just of work, but of work and the community. That is how we build a nation. If we were to judge building our nation by how we treat our children overall, we would be failing.

1.28 pm

Baroness Newlove (Con): My Lords, I also thank the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Gloucester for this important debate. However, it also saddens me that yet again we are talking about young lives. Over the past 12 years, for 10 of which I have been in your Lordships' House, including just recently over the weekend, my girls and I have gone through turmoil and upset at the lack of confidence in government departments, policies and systems that we all genuinely

and honestly believed would provide support when it was truly needed. Yet the system itself retraumatizes and breaks you once again.

This debate shines a light on systems which for some are simply no longer available, or else the severity of the case does not match the threshold set by agencies. Adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood from birth to 17. They include violence and abuse to a family member, committing or attempting to commit suicide, substance misuse, parental separation, chronic health problems and mental ill health, and, again, substance misuse in adulthood, all leading to a negative impact on education and job opportunities.

I do not stand on ceremony. I am not a policy person and I do not do scripts very well. But while I do not wish to undermine the role of my noble friend Lady Berridge, who I have great support for, the time has come to take all political parties out of this loop. This is about tiny, small children who are undernourished and undereducated and have such a dreadful start from birth onwards—be that substance misuse, domestic abuse, or simply that we now have a generation of young, vulnerable and mentally ill people having babies.

As a mother of three daughters, I am very proud of my working-class background. I do not say that to show that I have the profile of someone who understands what it is like; I say it because my working-class parents worked so very hard for my sister and me. They had a day job as well as a night job, always providing to make sure that we had a happier and healthier lifestyle, always saying education was very important but also providing a warm home and food to instil in my sister and me that you have to work hard in life to get what you want—and we also knew that we had the support of our parents.

Parenting is not the easiest of jobs. I am definitely not Mother Teresa and Gary was not the Pope and we were not a family who lived on a mountain like the Waltons. Parenting is very, very hard, whether you come from a good family or a bad family. There are worrying issues of health, as my parents had with me because, unbeknown to them, I was born with a hole in my lung. I had really bad health, and still do, so at times it shook them. Also, my parents did not have the best upbringing—they suffered hardship and parental separation—but they ensured that my sister and I had the best. So I am proud to stand here to say that I am stood here today because of them. They made me the person that I am and they made me understand that we should have morals and manners and we should respect one another. We will only get that if everybody who has spoken in this debate—hence my notes look like something out of the *Beano*, with blots everywhere—understands that it is not easy for the system if the system does not understand the hardship on the ground.

I have worked with many communities to find out what is going wrong in cycles. What I find further insulting is that we hear about young lives battling to survive daily struggles, as well as peer pressure which leads them into bad behaviour in our schools. Then that system moves them into pupil referral units, and in turn that system makes their vulnerabilities bait for those who feed them and give them love, only to turn that into the power to corrupt so they end up within

[BARONESS NEWLOVE]

our criminal justice system. And then we blame that system, but is that not putting the cart before the horse?

The real issues have been spoken about again and again in this Chamber, but now we are seeing young people become young parents, those children now scavenging in bins for food, washing uniforms at schools because they have no other uniform and no washing facilities at home, children not wanting school holidays because they are scared to be at home. We have children unable to speak who get frustrated because they cannot communicate, which then sadly manifests itself in mental health problems further down the line. That leads to behavioural and social problems and we no longer flicker so much as an eyelid when we read about this or watch it on TV. We label young people with exclusions and yet it is their very home environment that makes them behave in the way they do. So, unless we change, we are feeding that carousel even more.

I have had the pleasure of working with the Wise Owl Trust with children as young as three, talking to them about their character traits and emotions, having weekly missions with them where they have to use resilience. I love the resilience programme because it is a pipe where the rain goes down, which brings a nursery rhyme with a spider. If they cannot get the spider out, they have to carry on, because they get angry until that spider appears. That is an innocent childhood nursery rhyme. But I am fed up with seeing people pushing prams and their babies have got iPads—people who cannot take the time to have conversations with their children because the mother or the father is on their mobile phone. And, more importantly, I am sick and tired of sitting at tables, hearing about the lack of health visitors, of midwives, of GPs and of GP surgeries when we have families living in poverty, children being carers to mentally ill parents, going to school and to bed in the same clothes, and children in nappies at five because they know no other thing to do.

Surely it is a sad occasion when we stand here today. There is one thing that I know. The character build for respect is called resilience. It stands for “Resilience: I can do it”, Empathy: “I know how you feel”, Self-awareness: “I understand”, Positivity: “I believe in that”, Excellence: “I will do my best”, Communication: “I will share”, and, moreover, “I will work with others”. We have three-year-olds doing that, but we need to act soon before we have a generation who will not do that.

1.36 pm

Viscount Bridgeman (Con): My Lords, I join other noble Lords in congratulating the right reverend Prelate on this timely debate, which has been particularly enhanced by her speech; she has very considerable and distinguished experience in this matter. Early intervention is not short of attention, and the excellent briefing from the Library highlights no fewer than 10 different sources and authorities on this vital subject. The absence of early intervention, which can go back to the womb, can affect the subsequent adult life of a child; this is absolutely irredeemable.

The case for early intervention is fortunate in having among its advocates a number of committed and articulate charities, of which the Early Intervention

Foundation mentioned by the right reverend Prelate is a good example. The mission of this body is simply expressed. It identifies four causes requiring its services: home lives and family relationships, physical and mental health, cognitive development and educational attainment, and social and behavioural skills. There is nothing new here, but by working on these simple categories the EIF is more able to target the children most in need of its support.

Research by another fine charity, Home for Good, gives very bleak statistics, mentioned by the noble Baroness, Lady Tyler. Of 75,000 children in care in England, 10,000 are between the ages of one and four and a further 4,500 children are under the age of one, and 63% of those children will have experienced abuse or neglect. This charity places great emphasis on the alternatives for care through kinship, foster care and adoption. Its guiding principle is that every person needs a family for life. Those are just two outstanding charities among many.

There have been three relevant Select Committees in another place: on education, science and technology, and health and social care. The Science and Technology Committee acknowledged the marked differences in the need for early intervention in different parts of England and called for a national strategy. This has been rejected by the Government, who have argued that

“Local areas are best placed to understand the early needs of their local communities to commission early intervention services to meet those needs”.

However, the committee contended that the national strategy would not have to run contrary to this locally led approach. Instead, it

“could have raised the awareness and ambition among local authorities with regards to adversity-focused early intervention, provided guidance and described best practice”.

This sentiment was echoed by the Health and Social Care Committee and the Education Committee, the latter of which in February 2019 published the report *Tackling Disadvantage in the Early Years*. It concluded:

“There seems to be little strategic direction ... on early years”.

I also draw noble Lords’ attention to a powerful cross-departmental committee organised by my right honourable friend Andrea Leadsom. It focused on ages one to two. It had a debate in the other place in July 2019, but a report has never been issued. Will the Minister say whether it is possible that the Government will release that report? The committee was, of course, disbanded.

All these reports add up and give the impression that the Government are missing the chance to give an effective national lead on this vital subject. I shall very much welcome the Minister’s assurance that the Government are looking again at their role in early years intervention. I am particularly pleased that in response to a Written Question by my honourable friend Steve Baker, on 7 February Michelle Donelan, the Minister of State at the Department for Education, announced that a further £165 million is to be given to the Early Intervention Foundation for its troubled families programme, and we look forward to its report, which is anticipated in the spring of this year.

There have been references from many quarters to the three years wasted by the Brexit debate, and I suggest that it meant that many domestic issues have not had the time and attention they deserve. The Conservative manifesto at the election stated:

“A strong society needs strong families.”

The Government now have a strong mandate, and I hope the Minister can assure your Lordships that they will be unstinting in their support for bodies such as the foundation to which I have just referred, Home for Good and others that share their admirable aims in giving effect to that manifesto pledge.

1.42 pm

Lord Touhig (Lab): My Lords, every child has the right to a good life and, even more, every child has a right to a good quality of life. The right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Gloucester set the scene when she opened this debate in such a powerful and expressive way. We have a duty to ensure that children are given the best opportunities in life whatever their circumstances. For this reason, early years interventions are important. Those early experiences are crucial, as they set in motion a child's life trajectory. The decisions made and the support received in the first few years of life will have lifelong implications.

As this debate has shown, early years interventions are a broad subject so I will focus specifically on the need for early diagnosis for children with learning disabilities and autism. There are around 700,000 people with autism in the United Kingdom, which is more than one in 100. If we include their families, we are talking about 2.8 million people who live every day with someone with autism. Children with autism can start exhibiting signs from as young as 18 months. Evidence shows that early diagnosis of special educational needs allows these children to make better progress, with minimised long-term impacts. For children with autism or learning disabilities, giving them much-needed skills early allows them to reach their full potential.

Non-diagnosis can result in difficult behaviour, social isolation and children not attaining their best achievement in school. When I visited a school in Wales last year I saw at first hand how, with the benefit of early diagnosis, the staff had helped a young boy with behavioural problems. When I was introduced to him, he said, “You know I have behavioural problems?” I said, “Yes.” He said, “My brother's five. He's got behavioural problems, but I'm helping my mother cope.” I said, “Well done.” He said, “You know I'm going to comprehensive school in September?” “Yes,” I said, “I've been told.” “I've decided on my career,” he said. “Well done,” I said, “What are you going to be?” “I'm going to be a High Court judge, and if you come up before me you'll get a lenient sentence,” he said. That young lad's quality of life had been helped so much by the early diagnosis and the understanding and support of the education system. An early diagnosis gives a child and their family understanding, the relief of knowing and the ability to get the help the child needs.

An important early intervention for children on the autism spectrum is the EarlyBird programme run by the National Autistic Society, of which I am a vice-president. The noble Lord, Lord Astor, spoke about the society and explained how it operates. However,

children may be able to access early intervention only if they have a diagnosis. I endorse and support the noble Lord, Lord Astor, in pressing the Minister to commit to implementing the NHS guidelines on waiting times for diagnosis—a wait of no more than three months—so that no child has to wait years to access the help and support they need.

Investment in improved early intervention must be paired with an investment in support further down the line. Yet, from my experience of talking to people, diagnosis is sometimes a double-edged sword. Knowing that your child needs support and not being able to get it, or having to make a full-time job of fighting to get it, can in many ways be as damaging to quality of life as non-diagnosis. Reports from the Commons Science and Technology, Education and Health and Social Care Committees have all highlighted the lack of government strategic direction in early years policy and the need for a cross-governmental approach. The noble Viscount, Lord Bridgeman, spoke about this. The Government rejected those claims. Well, sadly, they would, wouldn't they? Look at what has happened to Sure Start. My noble friend Lord Morris spoke powerfully about Sure Start. It was one of the best examples of early years intervention this country has known. It targeted parents and children under the age of four living in the most disadvantaged areas. Sure Start projects delivered a wide variety of services designed to support children's learning skills, health and well-being, and social and emotional development—and where is it now? Since 2010 the Government have presided over the laying waste of this scheme, cutting funding by two-thirds and seeing more than 500 centres close.

In the meantime, the Government continue to put pressure and responsibility on to our underfunded local councils and schools. If a child with special educational needs is lucky enough to get across the hurdles of receiving a diagnosis and getting an education, health and care plan, we are asking our schools to stump up £6,000 per child in addition to the funding from the local authority. Given that local authority schools have an average funding deficit of £570,000 and that there will be a projected national high-needs spending deficit of between £1.2 billion and £1.6 billion by next year, this is surely untenable. Short-term cash injections of too little money will not suffice. Local authorities and schools in their current state cannot adequately support the most able of our children, let alone those in most need. We must ensure that the importance of early years intervention is not underestimated. We must invest in early years interventions across the board. While good work is being done, more needs to be done so that no child goes unsupported and no family has to fight for the support their child desperately needs. This is Britain in the 21st century. We need to wake up to this.

1.48 pm

Lord Sheikh (Con): My Lords, I am grateful to the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Gloucester for securing this important debate. I congratulate her on the excellence of her speech.

Early years intervention for the most vulnerable children and families is a multifaceted topic that requires a collaborative approach. The evidence which suggests

[LORD SHEIKH]

that the early years of a child's life are pivotal to their ability to flourish throughout their childhood and into adulthood is compelling.

It is a grave misfortune that far too many children do not experience the care and security they need in their early years. The welfare of the most vulnerable citizens in our society is not a partisan issue so it is only right to pay tribute to the former Labour MPs, Graham Allen and Frank Field, for their extensive work in this area.

I broadly welcome Her Majesty's Government's decision to allocate an extra £165 million to the troubled families programme. Can my noble friend the Minister say how the Government will ensure that the money is used effectively?

Research suggests that children from unstable homes are 75% more likely to fail academically, 70% more likely to engage in drug abuse and 35% more likely to experience long-term unemployment and become reliant on state benefits. These children are also often dealt with in the juvenile criminal justice system.

I welcome the Government's emphasis on how the merits of localism can bring about the change so desperately needed in our communities. Local authorities, agencies and community groups have the potential to play a vital role in ensuring that individuals and the most vulnerable members of society receive the support that they need.

A renewed focus on prevention is required to draw on the expertise and capacity from all areas of society for it to be sustainable. These groups have a role to play in offering practical and emotional support to children and families in need. Can the Minister inform your Lordships' House of any steps HMG are taking to give local councils adequate support in tackling this important issue?

The delivery of early years intervention programmes will be most effective when operating with the long-term stability of the children in mind. In cases where children are unable to return to their birth parents, permanency will be sought elsewhere through adoption or foster care. In the context of early years intervention, adoption is particularly relevant as a high proportion of children placed for adoption are under the age of five. There are 75,000 children currently in England's care system, of which 13% are between the ages of one and four, with a further 4,500 children not even one year old.

The charity Home for Good has been running a campaign called Change His Future, which raises awareness of the reality that black children wait significantly longer to be adopted compared to other children. This is largely due to a lack of adopters stepping forward from BAME communities and an overrepresentation of these children in the care system. As such, many of these children face long waits to find an adoptive home or never find one at all. Furthermore, there is a large shortage of foster carers from BAME communities in two-thirds of English councils.

We are all aware that committed family relationships have an unrivalled impact on children in their early lives. The current shortage of foster and adoptive families in this community must be addressed. Can the

Minister inform your Lordships' House of any steps Her Majesty's Government are taking alongside local authorities to address these challenges?

Analysis by the Early Intervention Foundation suggests that £16.6 billion is spent on late interventions by the public sector each year in England and Wales. This figure does not take into account the ancillary costs to society. I wholeheartedly welcome the Government's decision to commission the Early Intervention Foundation to investigate the family hub model and sustainable local practices. I very much look forward to learning the findings of the report later this year.

We all have a moral duty to support the most vulnerable children and families in our communities. Early intervention requires a collaborative approach built on trust and sustainability. I sincerely hope that we are closer to reaching a point where no child is left behind.

1.55 pm

Baroness Prosser (Lab): My Lords, I, too, thank the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Gloucester for her splendid introduction to this debate. I did not disagree with a single thing she said. I also did not disagree with the points made by the noble Lord, Lord Mawson.

Prior to working in the trade union movement, I worked in community development and I agree that the involvement of local people, with their experience and knowledge, is hugely important in the proper delivery of services in local communities. However, these two matters are not mutually exclusive. Local people, no matter how well intentioned, experienced and knowledgeable, cannot deliver a service out of thin air. It needs financial support and clear policy guidelines and commitment from central government for those two interventions to work together.

Other noble Lords commented on the closure of Sure Start centres. I will repeat the point, despite it having been made several times already, because the more we say it, the more people out there may take notice. More than 500 Sure Start centres have closed since the coalition Government came in in 2010. The programme had been established by the Labour Government and was just finding its feet. Closing the centres was a completely ridiculous decision and a waste of both money and the experience and knowledge that were being built up. Some 66% of the finance for Sure Start has been taken away but the Government have the audacity to say that they support early years intervention.

I will give the House a small example I saw a couple of weeks ago that made me think that a local Sure Start centre would have been a really good thing. I got on the bus to start my journey to the House. A mother had a baby in a pram and a little boy, probably about three years old, sitting next to her. She was not one of those mothers who never says a word to her children—of which there are many—but she never said a single positive thing to that little boy. She told him to shut up. She told him to stop fidgeting. The final straw, in my opinion, that nearly made me leap up, was when she told him to stop laughing.

That poor little fellow was getting no encouragement, no language development and no assistance to know how to behave. I thought that a Sure Start centre

would help that family. However, the Treasury in its wisdom has its books at the ready, adds up its figures and, like the computer, says no. The result is a family with no help, where the children will be incapable, as they grow up, of developing their full potential or being able to make a good contribution to the state. It is penny-wise and pound-foolish.

The second example that has been brought to my attention is the effect upon children of homelessness. Personally, I do not know anybody who has become homeless. I count myself as grateful for that because there are so many homeless people. Shelter tells us that, every eight minutes, a child in this country becomes homeless. We may as well be living in a third-world, undeveloped area when we think about those kinds of statistics. This particular family includes five children: an older teenager, an 11 year-old, a seven year-old and two year-old twins. The father lost his job, and the private landlord decided that he would not have a family on benefits living in his rented accommodation, so out they had to go.

They approached their local authority, Redbridge London Borough Council, and were rehoused in a room in a hotel miles from anywhere. There is no bus to go to the shops, so the mother and the twins are stuck in the one hotel room. The father takes the two other children to school on the school bus. The school bus turns up at 7 am. It takes the best part of two hours to get to the dropping-off point. Actually, he can take only one child to school, so, when I said he takes the two children, I made a mistake—I beg noble Lords' pardon. He takes one child to school. By the time they get to the dropping-off point, there is insufficient time for him to take the two children to two different schools. The seven year-old was going to junior school; but the 11 year-old is now at senior school. It has been decided by the family that, as the 11 year-old is in more senior education, she is the one who has to be taken to school. So the seven year-old is now not at school.

Is that a good start in life? Any early years intervention that the seven year-old may have benefited from when she was smaller will soon be gone. The two year-old twins are getting no stimulation as they are stuck in the hotel room miles from anywhere. Do we think this policy is going to help the young people of this country? If austerity carries on for much longer, we may find what John Maynard Keynes always said: the more you have austerity, the poorer everybody gets and the more we go down and down. I beg this Government to reconsider their austerity programme. If we are to have young people able to grow up properly and contribute to our society and to this country, we have to invest in them. That means money.

2.02 pm

Baroness Wyld (Con): My Lords, I congratulate the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Gloucester on securing this important debate, and for her continued work to support children and families. I declare my interests as set out in the register, particularly as a board member of Ofsted.

If your Lordships will indulge me, I would like to start today by paying tribute to the many wonderful early years professionals who have supported my own

family over the last decade. It would feel wrong not to do that. I have three young daughters, born in 2010, 2012 and 2015. Many times I have wished away a sleepless night or a toddler tantrum, yet now I find myself emotional about the fact that the “baby”, as we still call her, will start reception in September. We are coming to the end of our own early years.

Like millions of others up and down the country, my family is indebted to the people who helped us: the midwives, the health visitors, the nursery teams; they do not often become famous, but these are the people who save our sanity when we stumble blindly into the journey that is parenthood, and whose patience seems to know no ends when we ring up, once again, and ask, “Is this normal?” I thank each and every one of them. I have a simple ask of the Government—I am afraid that it is a wish list, but I do not do this often. I echo my noble friend Lady Newlove: train more of these people, pay them properly and use your platform to speak about their value to us all.

It strikes me that, when we talk about early years policy, we sometimes fall into the trap of thinking about the country's youngest children as isolated individuals, weirdly forgetting altogether that they are completely dependent on their parents and, when their parents need help, on wider society. I do not mean this as a particular criticism of the Government. I am simply thinking of the number of times that I have heard funded nursery hours cited as the magical solution to every societal problem, as if two and three year-olds will get themselves up and dressed and trot along to nursery, leaving the rest of us to focus on economic productivity.

To be clear, I think funded nursery hours are a wonderful thing; my youngest daughter will be taking part in story time as we speak—at least, I hope she is. However, the debate around early years provision is sometimes soulless. We have spent endless hours in Westminster agonising over our national identity in the context of Brexit. I suggest that what we are talking about today is far more important, although there may be fewer of us. I venture to suggest that, if we invest as much time in thinking about how we bring up well-balanced young people, we may find the upcoming generations less likely to tangle themselves up in the way that we have all done over the last few years. We can but try.

This is why I want to talk again about family hubs—now a very welcome government manifesto commitment—as an integral part of the early years offer. Family hubs ensure that families with children from the early years right up to age 19—or up to 25 for special educational needs and disability—can access early help to overcome difficulties and build stronger relationships. Before I go on to say why I think they are the right approach, I want to say that I have listened very carefully to the all the contributions today. I accept some of the criticisms that have been levelled at the Government; I think that, on the whole, they have been made in a fair-minded way. I will talk about why I think this is the right approach, but it is in that context.

At the moment, even in areas with excellent services, they can often feel piecemeal to users. One consequence is that the transitions for young people are often

[BARONESS WYLD]

difficult. Family hubs bring together both targeted and universal services. Placing universal services such as birth registration within a family hub means that they can provide the ideal place to identify more complex needs and refer people on to targeted provision. This is particularly important for perinatal mental health. With 20% of new and expectant mothers experiencing mental illness, hubs provide an opportunity for practitioners to identify early warning signs, especially where they include health visitors and antenatal and postnatal support. The integration of voluntary initiatives into hubs means that mothers have access to community and peer support that go beyond just statutory services.

Time is, as ever, tight, but we can point to some very good examples of hubs, from the Isle of Wight, to Leeds, to Wallsend in my own native north-east, where hubs can take an innovative and bespoke approach to early years based on a deep understanding of local need. I am urging the Government to support family hubs because I think that a birth-to-adulthood support service will establish deeper relationships and make transitions less risky.

I am very aware that children's centres across the country have closed and that local authority budgets are tight. I want to be clear that there can be no dilution of early years support. This is about offering support in a holistic way, not striving for efficiencies for the sake of it. There is evidence, of course, that family hubs can report cost savings through the co-location and co-delivery of their services. I have no problem at all with making public money work harder and better; this is for local authorities to lead on. But I want to know that the investment is there in the first place, and I would be grateful to my noble friend the Minister for reassurance.

As we sit here this afternoon, parents up and down the country will be confiding in a health visitor, or perhaps awaiting the results of a speech and language assessment, worrying about the short and longer term. The early years are, for families, some of the most joyful but also the most anxious. Will the Minister please update the House on how the Government plan to implement their manifesto commitment to "champion family hubs", and reassure the House that excellent early years provision will be at the heart of all that hubs do? When it comes to working with our youngest, there is a saying that another mother gave me one night as I was sitting by a hospital bed when my little one had bronchiolitis. She said, "The days and nights are long, but the years are short." We have a short window of opportunity, and we cannot let our children down.

2.09 pm

Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top (Lab): My Lords, I too congratulate the right reverend Prelate on securing this debate, which is timely given the other things going on.

All children learn and develop quicker in the early years than in the rest of their lives. By the time they are two, the brains of babies will have a different shape and size which reflect the nurture, care and stimulation or the neglect they have had. When you look at scans of two year-old babies' brains, it is terrifying to see the

difference between someone who has been severely neglected and someone who has had the sort of loving care and stimulation we all want for our own families. It is, therefore, in the interests of all of us to pay attention to the needs and opportunities of children in their very early years.

We need to look at this again. The nature of family and community life has changed drastically in my lifetime, and our services need to understand and reflect that. We hear stories this week of the rising costs of childcare. It is now a problem for most families. I have not come across a family with young children that is not talking about it. The noble Baroness, Lady Wyld, addressed this complexity and lack of coherence, but it is also very challenging, so we all have to look at this again, and do so seriously.

When I was appointed to the Cabinet Office—and this reflects my old age—in 2006, I was given the social exclusion brief. The Prime Minister charged me with looking at why the Government had not succeeded in really changing the life opportunities of the bottom 2% of our society. I will not talk about the rest but about that bottom 2%. We had set up and started the Social Exclusion Unit in 1997 and, 10 years later, were really frustrated that we had not shifted this bottom 2%. Anybody who had any engagement or work with the different benefit systems for single-parent families, people with disabilities and so on was able and encouraged to access other services, such as Sure Start, and received tax credits and the minimum wage. That sort of package made an incredible difference to their lives.

Sure Start was part of a package to improve opportunities across the board, but we also knew there had to be systems within it to recognise not only the best start for every child but those who were going to face particular challenges, so they could be picked up early with appropriate interventions and just to keep hold of them. My work was to ensure that the most disadvantaged had the most effective interventions and opportunities. Spotting or identifying these children and beginning the intervention cannot wait until school. People now talk about school readiness, because they know that, if we do not enable children to start school with a chance, we are making it clear that, for the rest of their lives, they will struggle to keep up.

I insisted that there was someone from the health service based in every Sure Start centre. It was normally a health visitor, because they have a statutory responsibility to visit every family in the early years. I would like to see more health visitors, but that is part of their role. I looked around the world at all the different interventions for disadvantaged families to find the most effective. Coming back to the speech from my noble friend Lady Wilcox, I discovered the Incredible Years in Wales. It was an international programme, devised in Canada, but taken up by an inspirational educational psychologist in Wales, who persuaded the Welsh Government to train every Sure Start in how to introduce the Incredible Years parenting package. It had fantastic outcomes.

I also learned from other evidence-based programmes and introduced 10 pilot programmes of the nurse-family partnership—we now call it the family nurse partnership. It is expensive, because it starts six months before birth and then works with the mother and newly born child until the child is two. The 20-year analysis that

we looked at showed better outcomes than anything else in the world, in terms of the amount of money spent for the return, first by the time the child was seven and then when they were 15. All Governments say it is great to introduce programmes like that, but they are virtually disappearing in this country, because we are not paying for them. It goes back to that: if we make the right investment, at the right time, we will save a lot of money down the road. I do not care what the Government call any intervention but, for goodness sake, do not throw everything out because it was done by a different Government. Learn from what works and make sure kids get those opportunities.

2.16 pm

Lord Addington (LD): My Lords, this is one of those debates in which there has been an incredible amount of agreement. There has been a slight tonal difference, but the agreement has been overwhelming. The right reverend Prelate—I thought of this, so I have to use it—is a prelate who displayed some punch today. She started the whole thing by saying that if you get the basis right, somebody's life gets a little easier; it is easier for them to have a pleasant experience and for society to benefit. I am paraphrasing, but that is roughly what was said, and everybody has agreed.

The difference becomes clear when you look at what it means. It means start at the beginning: government has to work together. I do not know how many people have spent how many hours, in this Chamber, saying, "Get two departments of government to work together to a commonly agreed goal." There are many ex-Ministers in this place who have battle scars and tears on their bodies from trying to drag another department to work with them. I have seen it happen. I have seen stress lines appear on a face almost in front of me. We have touched on housing, the DWP, education and health today, all of which have a key part to play here.

The briefing from the Library lists 12 different projects over two pages—and it said it was not in any way an exhaustive list. These are the structures and organisations involved in trying to support people. The number of problems here is mind-blowing, because of the number of things that do not work and create problems. A parent may not have the facility, financially, intellectually or educationally, to deliver this, usually because they did not get support themselves.

The right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Gloucester brought in language development. If a child cannot talk properly, there may be many reasons why—for instance, dyspraxia, mental development, language facilities or autism, down to simply not being talked to and stuck in front of a screen or being shouted at and told not to speak. If that is coming through and that person cannot talk, they are stuffed when it comes to dealing with the rest of society. If their capacity to communicate is fundamentally limited, what will they do? How are you to explain that you even have a problem if you cannot talk coherently? You might need help at school but be unable to talk or interact. This can be caused by a variety of things, and it is just one small example of how you cannot get by.

With regard to my own background—I remind the House of my interests, predominantly in special educational needs—dyslexia is not normally easily

identified at an early age because it is not really ingrained in education. However, the principle is the same: if you get in early, you will get help. The noble Lords, Lord Astor and Lord Touhig, pointed out that autism is possibly the classic example of early recognition being needed to get the right help. In this area, too, you need to identify early, but if there are lots of people around who for other reasons are not communicating or developing normally, it gets much more difficult.

You have to start developing because if you have a hugely clouded field of vision, with the best will in the world, you cannot deliver the help you want to. How can you do this? What happens normally is that the parent comes in and supports the child, who gets the help. That process involves 12 different bodies, and people try to find their way through. If you have not come from that background yourself, how do you do it? My noble friend Lady Tyler put her finger right on this issue; indeed, I have not forgiven her for taking away the biggest point in my speech. The parents who come from that background are the best equipped to get the best out of the system. That has become accepted practice. We have a series of debates coming up next week that point that out.

How are the Government going to help people to identify the problems just for people with special educational needs? Let us take that group to get them out of the way; if they are dealt with then that clears the field for everyone else. We will do that only if we have very well-trained staff, access to them and support for them, but this is not an area awash with very well-paid jobs. There is SENCO support when you get in early, but do the staff know even when to call in the help? The answer is no, they do not have the training. These characteristics are found throughout the education system later on, but here I feel that they are even more difficult to identify.

You have to get the staff trained well enough to know when to call in help and say, "This is it", particularly when you have parents who are not equipped to do the heavy lifting themselves. Those are the groups most difficult to reach. The question, "When are you going to come in and do this?" is very important. The rest of the organisations, such as those dealing with autism and dyspraxia, are run by parents who are taking on this job themselves. It is less likely to happen early on, but if it does it is better because you do not have the structure or the experience. Problems that manifest themselves at the beginning are less likely to be spotted. If you want to save yourself money later, start training staff properly. Of course, we know that that does not really work because no one looks beyond their own department and their own budget, so the Government have to co-ordinate. We have to make sure that these people are better trained and that the people who support them are numerous and well-trained enough to intervene. We should start to make a difference in that cohort.

The rest of this is a huge task that society may never get right but it can certainly improve on. Bad housing and bad accommodation, where people are not working together, will add to all these problems. We have to try to become a little clearer about where to apply leadership. I put my bid in there, but others will have other points to make.

[LORD ADDINGTON]

The noble Lord, Lord Mawson, commented that we do not need another study or another survey. I quite appreciate what he feels because, many times in various fields that I have been involved in, I have heard people say, “Yes, they’re saying exactly what they said last time. They have said it slightly differently but it is essentially the same thing.” They still do not talk to someone else who may have carried out the same survey somewhere else. If you want to have a moratorium to ask, “What’s the best thing that we have discovered over the last five years?” you might save yourself some money and time and get yourself to a more coherent position.

Lastly, what is the Government’s position on centralising this issue? The briefing suggests that the local authority should do it, but there is no real doubt that local authorities are in no shape to do that. It does not really matter how we got there; it is where we are now. Are the Government going to co-ordinate this? How will they bring the departments together, even if in this field it is just health and education? What are we going to do and what is the timeframe? We have established very clearly that we need central direction and action. We have identified the problem; let us start identifying at least some solutions. Let us see if we can make some progress.

2.25 pm

Lord Watson of Invergowrie (Lab): My Lords, I congratulate the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Gloucester not just on securing this important debate but on the impressive and comprehensive manner in which she introduced it. I also noted the quite penetrating questions that she posed, not least about children and families hit hard by the cruelty often inherent in the introduction of universal credit, and about the Government’s determination to force mothers from disadvantaged backgrounds into work irrespective of the obvious effects, as other noble Lords have said, on their children’s early years development. I look forward to the Minister’s responses to those questions, among others. In passing, I welcome her to her expanded ministerial role in education.

The Early Intervention Foundation has shown that effective early intervention works to prevent problems occurring, or to respond immediately when they do before the problems get worse. It also helps to develop a set of personal strengths and skills that prepare a child for adult life. Every noble Lord has alluded to the fact that a child’s preschool years are critical to development, involving rapid growth unmatched by any other time in their lives. My noble friend Lady Armstrong spoke with great experience and highlighted the damage that can be done during that period.

Improving child development in the early years is vital in aiming to ensure that every child is school-ready, because only that will begin to reduce educational inequality. Despite successive Governments raising levels of development, according to research by the charity Action for Children, only 57% of children from poorer backgrounds are ready when they first arrive at school, compared with 74% of their better-off peers—a gap that the charity says has not reduced over the past year. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds spend

significantly less time in preschool than those from affluent households. Timely and effective early years interventions have the potential to help reduce this difference. The Action for Children research also revealed that the availability of early years interventions, as well as the resources available to provide high-quality interventions, have reduced significantly over recent years.

My noble friends Lord Morris and Lord Touhig outlined the sad decline of Sure Start, which had some 3,600 children’s centres when Labour left office in 2010. My noble friend Lady Wilcox provided a Welsh perspective to the debate, and I know that the Flying Start programme there has brought similar success. I have to say that my noble friend Lord Touhig was actually too kind; there are now over 1,000 fewer designated Sure Start children’s centres, and it has been deeply depressing to see so much of this transformative programme allowed to wither on the vine under Tory Governments.

The family hubs that have been much mentioned today are supposed to replace those centres, but they do not. Many of them fail the Sure Start test of being within pram-pushing distance for parents, and as a result they are much less well used. I very much hope that the forthcoming report on hubs will address that issue.

If childcare and early years education policies are designed to enhance child development at the earliest opportunity, the underfunded 30 hours’ childcare offer is failing. The Minister may have seen an article in yesterday’s *Times* reporting that nursery fees have risen at twice the rate of inflation because the 30-hours policy does not meet the cost of delivering those hours, and the gap has driven up charges for the additional hours that working parents need. Fees across the UK now average more than £13,000 per child per year.

Last year an inquiry by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Childcare and Early Education into the policy of 30 hours’ free childcare found that the average cost of delivering an hour of early education for three and four year-olds was £5.36. The Government’s funding rate is £4.46. That amounted to a £63 million shortfall and, unsurprisingly, has led to increase of almost two-thirds in the closure of providers, with those in the most disadvantaged areas, sadly, twice as likely to face closure as those in more affluent ones.

Last year, the Government announced what can only be called a miserly increase of 8p in the hourly rate for funded childcare, while it is estimated that the planned increase in the national living wage will add 51p an hour to the cost of provision. It is no wonder so many in the sector are in despair. I suspect the Minister will make much of the £66 million of funding allocated in last year’s spending review. But that does not even come close to the £300 million required to restore the cuts to early years provision and prevent providers having to close down, a fate awaiting many at maintained nurseries in August this year. They have the right to expect sustainable long-term funding to secure their future.

A research company contracted by the Early Years Alliance calculated that there is currently an overall annual funding shortfall of some £370 million for the various free entitlement offers, which represents a crisis by any standards. That plays into the landscape painted so ably by the noble Baroness, Lady Newlove.

Preschool provision, whether at maintained nurseries, PVI's or childminders, is extremely important for early years because of their low staff-to-children ratios. But there are not enough staff qualified to degree level; we believe each setting should have a graduate leader. Between 2007 and 2011, the graduate leader fund was successful in setting the early years sector on a path towards increasing staff qualification levels. That period saw ring-fenced funding lead to the number of staff holding a first degree or a foundation degree increase by 76%, while the number of those holding a higher degree increased by 13%. These are significant figures and were welcomed by the DfE. Indeed, the department commissioned an evaluation of the fund in 2011 which was largely positive, yet it was allowed to die. Given its proven ability to raise the level of support staff who are able to provide for children in their formative early years, it should now be resurrected. I would be interested to hear what the Minister has to say on this.

Currently in England's care system, around 10,000 children are aged between one and four, with a further 4,500 under the age of one. Two-thirds of these children, many of whom are adopted, will have experienced abuse or neglect. Studies have demonstrated that experiencing trauma in the key developmental early years, including in the womb, can adversely affect childhood brain development, which has a lifelong impact. It is imperative that these children receive targeted, ongoing support in their early years. The noble Lord, Lord Sheikh, was right to identify the particular issues relating to fostering and adoption of BAME children.

One example of an existing intervention is the adoption support fund, which provides access to therapeutic support for adoptive and some special guardianship families across England. The need for that fund's future to be guaranteed was a plea that I, together with other noble Lords, made in a debate in your Lordships' House just two weeks ago. In what turned out to be his valedictory appearance, the Minister's predecessor made it clear that he supported that aim. I hope that she will be able to repeat that today.

Equal focus should be given to the physical and psychological well-being of every preschool child and their family or carers. In its briefing to noble Lords, the British Psychological Society highlighted that 5.5% of preschool children have at least one mental disorder and that the preschool children of parents with poor mental health are three times more likely to have some kind of mental illness than children whose parents have good mental health. The noble Lord, Lord Astor, and my noble friend Lord Touhig spoke on this with regard to autism. The British Psychological Society wants the Government to develop a cross-departmental health and well-being strategy for under-fives. Central to that, it says, should be a cross-departmental, multi-agency approach—a plea made by several noble Lords today, including the right reverend Prelate and the noble Baroness, Lady Tyler.

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists also supplied an excellent briefing for the debate, pointing to the fact that around 50% of children from disadvantaged areas start school with delayed language and other identified communication needs, some of which they never fully recover from. The college also

calls for the Government to have a national joined-up strategy: the need for one is a recurring theme in the various reports produced by Select Committees in another place in the past two years. They all reached that conclusion in order to counteract the fragmented and highly variable provision of early years intervention, and to meaningfully tackle childhood adversity. Yet each time in their response the Government rejected the proposal, citing their belief that local areas are best placed to understand the needs of local communities.

That might be plausible were all local authorities able to provide a common standard of provision, but that is certainly not the case. I suspect the real reason that the Government have set their face against a national strategy is because it would require national funding, which they are not prepared to countenance. Perhaps the Minister can explain why this Government believe they have a monopoly of wisdom on this subject, and know better than the professionals in the field as well as the considered views of parliamentarians, who have listened to evidence from a wide range of organisations before arriving at their recommendations.

Many noble Lords have spoken today about social mobility. Implicit in the notion of social mobility is that poverty and inequality are tolerable, provided some people can escape by climbing the social ladder. For Labour, the true measure of fairness is not social mobility but social justice. Social justice demands that we end poverty, reduce inequality and create a society in which the conditions for a fulfilling life are available to everyone. That should start from day one of a child's life but that aspiration is some way removed from where we are today.

2.35 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education and Department for International Trade (Baroness Berridge) (Con): My Lords, I too congratulate the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Gloucester on securing this debate and all noble Lords who have spoken on this important issue. I am grateful for this opportunity to set out the Government's approach to improving early years interventions. I hope that the level of co-ordination, although not perfect, will assure the right reverend Prelate and other noble Lords that we are moving in the right direction.

The approach of the Government is based on a number of principles: that early, rather than late, intervention is the key, as noble Lords have outlined; that it is central government's role to support, facilitate and work with local government and other partners to tackle the issues together; that our solutions should be focused on outcomes and underpinned by evidence; and that successful strategies should be identified and shared widely.

This is the first debate in my widened portfolio, and it is a serious and complex matter. It straddles a number of central government departments, including the Department for Education, obviously, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department of Health and Social Care and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. But a co-ordinated approach to tackling early intervention is what the Government aim to achieve. There are meetings between

[BARONESS BERRIDGE]

the Department for Education and the Department of Health and Social Care on the advisory programme board to ensure that there is co-ordination across government. The noble Baroness, Lady Wilcox, mentioned the Welsh example, which is open to the What Works institutions that the department has set up—so there is a spread internationally and from the devolved institutions.

The need for a national strategy has been clearly outlined to me by many noble Lords. That need is under review, but I will take back to the department the clear message that while co-ordination with local government is essential, noble Lords also believe that a national strategy is valuable in this area. With this co-ordination in mind, the Government have prioritised three areas: first, improving social mobility, supported in the early years by high-quality early education settings and learning in the home; secondly, protecting vulnerable children through effective children's social care; and, thirdly, improving mental and physical health in pregnancy and childhood. This is underpinned by our work to empower local areas to improve multiagency working and build the evidence base—not necessarily the type of research that the noble Lord, Lord Mawson, would talk about—for what works.

Early educational entitlements are not a panacea, but there is extensive evidence to demonstrate that high-quality childcare supports children's development and prepares younger children for school. This is why the Government have made sure that all three and four year-olds, and disadvantaged two year-olds, can now access at least 15 hours of free childcare each week. In 2020-21, this is at a cost of £3.6 billion.

As many noble Lords outlined, when children start their formal education, the reception year presents a window of opportunity to address the key development gaps between disadvantaged children and their peers, before they have a chance to widen. The noble Baroness, Lady Tyler, mentioned disadvantaged two year-olds. The take-up rose from 58% in 2015 to 68% in 2019, but there was a slight decrease last year, so the department is working with the Family and Childcare Trust and Coram to ensure that there is an upward trajectory in the take-up for those disadvantaged two year-olds.

The noble Baroness, Lady Armstrong, and the noble Lord, Lord Addington, focused on the early years foundation stage. Too many children leave the reception year with poor outcomes, and the current assessment system involves too much paperwork and reduces the time that reception teachers have to support children. The proposed reforms to the early years foundation stage profile will free up teachers to interact with and support children to ensure that they develop the rich vocabulary, skills and behaviours that they need to thrive in school and to access the education on offer to them. There is good news in relation to this assessment: in 2013, 51.7% of children achieved a good developmental score; by 2019, it was 71.8%. The assessment of language and development skills will also be introduced into the universal child assessment for all two year-olds. We have also set a 10-year ambition to halve the proportion of children who finish their reception year without the necessary language and literacy skills they need to thrive.

The home learning environment, as many noble Lords outlined, is also important. We are supporting parents to improve the quality and quantity of adult-child interactions—a point made by the noble Baroness, Lady Bennett. A three-year campaign called Hungry Little Minds has been launched by the department to encourage parents to chat, play and read with their children—the noble Baroness, Lady Prosser, talked about a very moving example she witnessed on public transport—so that they can help to set their children up for school and beyond. We are taking a society-wide approach to get that message out, with different organisations, including charities and businesses, playing their part. The campaign will build on the department's work with the National Literacy Trust. An interesting example arising from that partnership has been the work of Penguin Random House with Arriva, the train company, to give away books at stations and to train staff to have the confidence to interact with young children on public transport. So we all have a responsibility when we interact with children to help improve their outcomes.

Looking beyond parents, charities and businesses, we are committed to supporting the workforce in this sector to gain the appropriate skills and knowledge—a point made by the right reverend Prelate and the noble Lord, Lord Addington. Alongside our training of 1,000 health visitors to identify and support children with speech, language and communication needs, we have invested £20 million to ensure that practitioners in disadvantaged areas have access to high-quality professional development. On the point raised by the noble Lord, Lord Watson, we are also supporting graduates into the sector through funding the Early Years Initial Teacher Training programme, including fees, bursaries and employer incentives.

In relation to the points made by the noble Baroness, Lady Wilcox, and the noble Lord, Lord Addington, early help of course plays an important role in promoting safe and stable families. It is about supporting and intervening with families at the right time and in the right way. Of course, that does not detract from the need for statutory guidance: *Working Together to Safeguard Children* is clear that local areas should have a comprehensive range of effective, evidence-based services in place to address assessed needs early. Although many noble Lords have made the point in relation to children's centres, there is a statutory underpinning that local authorities still need to meet, when looking at services, to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged in their communities. We have also strengthened the duty placed on police, health and local authorities to work collaboratively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Since September of last year, multiagency safeguarding partnerships have been in operation in England. We are implementing those reforms to try to see a further cultural shift in the way that police, health and local authorities work together in local areas to secure the outcomes for children.

I am grateful to my noble friend Lady Wyld for raising the issue of maternity and perinatal health. Since April 2019, new and expectant mothers have been able to access specialist perinatal mental health community services in every part of the country. Public Health England is currently undertaking a systematic

review and refresh of the Healthy Child Programme in England to ensure that the future approach is both universal in reach and personalised in response to those families needing extra support. I am pleased to inform the right reverend Prelate that a revised health visitor and school nurse model is being looked at within that work. Also in relation to health, the noble Baroness, Lady Tyler, raised the issue of childhood obesity. The Government's childhood obesity plan sets the ambition of halving obesity by 2030, and successful initiatives include breakfast clubs and doubling the PE and sport premium up to £35 million of expenditure.

As I have repeatedly outlined, local areas have a key role in commissioning and delivering effective early years interventions to meet the needs of children and families, and I have some examples of where we are supporting that. First, an additional £165 million has been announced for the troubled families programme, which many noble Lords mentioned, bringing the total expenditure to over £1 billion. Of the children on that programme, 34.2% are under two, showing that this is not always an intervention that is too late. This will ensure that more families get access to the programme's support.

A key aspect of the programme is the key worker, who goes in and builds a trusted relationship with a family, with practical instructions and advice, but also helps that family access the specialist support on offer in their area. Many noble Lords referred to the fact that, often, the person needing the support is least able to be the advocate to go and get that support. That key worker reminds me of my noble friend Lady Wyld's reference to the people who are around to help you in those years. As the noble Lord, Lord Mawson, said, it is the person who is on your side. I pay tribute to the local authorities—for schools, health provision and particularly those key workers—because this project has been and will continue to be evaluated.

When reading in preparation for today's debate, there were moments that caused one to forget all the policy, the research and the words and to think about the lives that are being affected by this. The evaluation of this programme shows that, 19 to 24 months after starting to receive support, the proportion of children on the programme going into care—compared with a similar cohort—is reduced by a third. Those key workers, health professionals and local authorities have affected and changed the lives of hundreds, if not thousands, of children who, as we stand here today, are not in care and are still with their families. I thank them for all that work. Also, the proportion of adults on the programme going to prison has reduced by a quarter and juvenile convictions have reduced by 15%. So this is not an intervention that is always too late—and, of course, everybody would wish that we did not have to make any interventions with any families at all.

Secondly, my noble friend Lady Newlove spoke very movingly about the issues for families facing adversity. There is now the Reducing Parental Conflict programme, with £39 million of funding. I am pleased to say that 98% of first-tier local authorities have taken up work on this programme. We know that children who are exposed to parental conflict can suffer long-term harm, and intervening early to help

parents reduce conflict obviously affects the outcomes for both children and parents. Through this programme, we are supporting local authorities and their partners to integrate support to reduce parental conflict into their local services for families. DWP is working with 30 local authorities across England to test eight face-to-face interventions aimed at reducing conflict. There is a theme here: it is the face-to-face, the key worker, the person who is there to intervene in situations.

Parental conflict is related to wider family risk factors including, for example, domestic abuse, poor mental health and substance misuse. The noble Baroness, Lady Tyler, referred to alcohol in this particular context. We are investing £6 million to improve the outcomes of children of alcohol-dependent parents who are also engaged in parental conflict. A key thing to say is that adult social services, which deal with the adult with the alcohol problem, work together with children's social services to ensure that it is joined up.

The noble Lord, Lord Sheikh, asked specifically whether funding was going into local government. The early years local government programme has funding of £8.5 million and is focused on how local services work together across health, education and early help to improve the outcomes for five year-olds. As part of this work, multidisciplinary peer reviews are supporting councils to identify reforms to services, and our early outcomes fund has provided approximately £6.5 million of grants to local authority partnerships. Gloucestershire County Council, in particular, in partnership with Swindon, was successful in securing an early outcomes grant and is using the fund to develop and pilot an early language support pathway: I hope that the right reverend Prelate, with her professional background, will be very pleased to hear that that is happening in her location.

The local government programme also includes work by the Early Intervention Foundation to review effective models for provision. The foundation is reviewing what family hubs and children's centres can offer. There are still more than 2,000 children's centres and we do not want to throw out the baby with the bathwater. That evaluation will look at everything that works, and I assure noble Lords that it does not matter what badge is on it: we need to focus. The needs are so acute and these children need such help that it does not matter. What matters is what works: that is the threshold. The Government will continue to champion the role of family hubs because they are a slightly different model to children's centres—to respond to the question from my noble friend Lady Wyld.

I assure my noble friend Lady Newlove that we are doing all we can for those children who live through adverse and traumatic experiences in childhood, such as abuse or neglect, or who have grown up in complex family circumstances. She has, in me, someone who did not relish school holidays and who is therefore going to take seriously these matters within the department. Such experiences can, and often do, have lasting consequences for children.

Many noble Lords raised the issue of mental health. New mental health support teams are going to be established in 25% of the country by 2023 and the Department for Education will be funding training for

[BARONESS BERRIDGE]

senior mental health leads in schools and colleges. The Government remain strongly committed to the What Works initiative. On the point made by the noble Lord, Lord Mawson, about research, I will be going back to the department to ask about the three foundations that the department funds: the Early Intervention Foundation, the Education Endowment Foundation and the Centre for Children's Social Care—these are “what works”. I will take back his insightful experience in the use of research and the need to monitor how far What Works is spreading from one authority to another: who is using this information to improve and share what is going on.

A number of noble Lords raised the issue of special educational needs, in particular the diagnosis of autism. The NICE recommendation is that the length of time between referral and first appointment to start an assessment should be no longer than three months. Learning disability and autism is one of the priorities in the NHS long-term plan. Over the next three years, autism diagnosis will be included alongside work with children's and young people's mental health services to test and implement the most effective ways to reduce those waiting times. I was most moved by the contributions of my noble friend Lord Astor and the noble Lord, Lord Touhig, in this space, particularly regarding children with dyslexia. The Department for Education has contracted the Whole School SEND Consortium to deliver a two-year, £3.9 million programme to help embed SEND in school improvement. As I am sure the noble Lord, Lord Addington, is aware, from 2011 to 2018 the department funded the British Dyslexia Association and other organisations to provide resources to assist schools and local authorities in early identification of those needs.

On funding to tackle child poverty, there is to be a 4.4% real-terms increase in the local authority settlement. The specific issue was raised that local authorities have often prioritised spending on adult social care and other areas at the expense of children's social care. The department is working with MHCLG to develop a robust and up-to-date fair funding distribution for children's and young people's services, which we are aiming to implement as part of a major funding reform package from 2020-21.

On child poverty, I have outlined that the 850,000 most disadvantaged two year-olds have been given free childcare places, and there is an additional 15 hours for lower income families in relation to the entitlement for three and four year-olds. There is also an early years pupil premium, which is just over £300 per pupil. It has been interesting to see how these issues all intersect and relate to that. I hope that the research into family hubs and children's centres will enable us to look at how best we locate services and help the most disadvantaged children. The Government stand by our position that work is the most effective way to bring these children out of poverty, but of course we recognise that free childcare is needed for many parents to take advantage of that.

I apologise to noble Lords whose questions I have not answered, but I will conclude by responding to the two invitations I was kindly offered. The noble Baroness, Lady Tyler, invited me to the APPG. I think that may

be for my honourable friend the Minister for Children and Families, but I will take the invitation back to the department. I apologise for my late response to the persistent invitations of the noble Lord, Lord Mawson, in relation to his wonderful work. I look forward to catching up with that and I hope that one of my first visits will be up to Rotherham. I thank noble Lords for their involvement in such an important debate.

2.55 pm

The Lord Bishop of Gloucester: I thank the Minister for her comprehensive response and all those who participated in this excellent debate. I do not have time to mention everyone, but I thank those who shared personal and professional experiences. I am sorry that the noble Lord, Lord Mawson, feels he has heard another bishop say, “It's all down to the state”, particularly as that was not what I was saying. I am passionate about community engagement and how we enable that, not least through our churches, our faith groups and all sorts of charities and communities. In order to enable that, we need a comprehensive, joined-up early years strategy and I am glad that that point has been clearly heard. This is about how we are investing not simply in small children but in children who grow up to be adults: we are investing in families for long-term impact, and I agree with the noble Lord, Lord Mawson, that this is about the impact on our communities in the long term.

Motion agreed.

Rough Sleeping Statement

2.57 pm

The Earl of Courtown (Con): My Lords, I shall now repeat a Statement made in the other place on rough sleeping:

“With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to update the House on the latest rough sleeping annual statistics for 2019, published today, and the new approach of the Government.

I think we can all agree that it is a moral shame that we see so many people sleeping rough on our streets. We are determined to end the blight of rough sleeping and we have placed defeating this great social ill at the heart of the moral mission of this Government. Today's figures are encouraging. They show that for a second year in a row the number of people sleeping rough has fallen.

Across England, the numbers have fallen by 9%, building on last year's reduction which was the first fall in eight years. Areas funded by the Government's rough sleeping initiative saw a 12% decrease. Manchester is down by 26%; Camden by 54%; Birmingham by 43%; and Enfield by 69%. Cornwall is down 55%; Hastings down 56%; the City of London is down 39%; Swale down 69%; Bedford down 41% and Tameside down by 86%. London saw a decrease of 11%, the first decrease in numbers of rough sleepers in London for six years and the largest decrease since 2010. That, as colleagues who represent London constituencies will know, comes despite the very considerable and specific

challenges faced in the capital, including, as the figures show, that 42% of those sleeping rough in the city are non-UK nationals, and quite possibly more than that.

This confirms what I have seen since I became Housing Secretary in the summer: dedicated, targeted support, backed by significant levels of government support, is getting vulnerable people off the streets and into safe accommodation where they can begin to turn their lives around. The Government's strategy is working, and I pay tribute to the hard work of charities, service providers, local authorities and the many volunteers backed by government funding across the country who are working tirelessly to give rough sleepers the support they need to help them off the streets and begin the long and complex process of turning their lives around. But this does not mean our work ends here. We are perhaps coming up out of the valley, but we are far from the mountain top.

This Conservative Government have made it an overriding priority to end rough sleeping by the end of this Parliament. There is a great deal more to do; we must be honest with ourselves about the scale of the challenge and tackle it head-on with renewed vigour. That is why I am pleased that the Prime Minister and I are today announcing that Dame Louise Casey will lead a review into rough sleeping. This work will consider the links between 24-hour street activity and rough sleeping, particularly for physical and mental health issues. It will provide advice to me and the Prime Minister on how we can best use the levers of central and local government to support this group and continue to reduce rough sleeping across the country. I know Dame Louise's vast experience, rigour and candour. The fact that she has worked across parties for many years means she is the right person to look at what is needed and help get the job done. I will support Dame Louise to move at a pace commensurate with the seriousness and urgency of the action we must take right now.

Meanwhile, we will continue to build on our successful rough sleeping strategy, guided by the best evidence, intervening rapidly where people are sleeping on the streets and supporting people's recovery to ensure they never have to sleep rough again. Putting this ambition into action, the Government have today announced £236 million of new money for move-on accommodation, safely supporting up to an additional 6,000 rough sleepers, and those at immediate risk of rough sleeping, off the streets into the safe and secure accommodation they deserve with the support wrapped around them. This is on top of the £437 million the Government have provided to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in the next financial year, including more than £112 million to fund services through the rough sleepers initiative. This funding will be used for councils to provide up to 6,000 beds and 2,500 support staff over the next year, so the number of beds will be increasing very rapidly.

We recognise that there are particular challenges around responding to the increase in European Economic Area national rough sleepers. Honourable Members may recall that, as part of the cold weather fund, the Government took the unprecedented decision to extend limited powers to the most affected local authorities to

support certain EEA nationals sleeping rough for a limited period of time. This approach has been successful, with over 400 EEA nationals accommodated in November and December last year and many of them supported into work or to return home. The Government have today taken the decision to continue some of these services until 31 December 2020, when the transition period ends and the new immigration system will be in place. I will be working with the Home Secretary on how we address these challenges at the end of the transition period.

While prevention, outreach and emergency support are of course vital, we need secure, sustainable accommodation to end rough sleeping for good. Increasing the provision of affordable housing is fundamental to making that happen. The Government have delivered nearly half a million new affordable homes, and many are doing it. We have also abolished the council borrowing cap so that local authorities can build up to 10,000 more social homes a year. We cannot and will not let that momentum slip.

That is why we have committed to 250,000 new affordable homes by March 2022 through the affordable homes programme, backed by £9 billion. We are increasing the supply of social housing and will ensure that rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping are provided with homes which are available in the long term and appropriate to their needs. We simply must build more homes as a country, and I will be doing all I can to ensure that.

However, boosting housing supply is just one of many long-term measures we must take to properly and permanently address homelessness and rough sleeping. We must redouble our efforts to tackle the underlying problems that have led many people to fall into a life on the streets. Last year, four in 10 of the rough sleeping population in London were suffering from a severe drug dependency and the same proportion were suffering from alcohol dependency. Half of all rough sleepers were assessed as having a mental health support need and, shockingly, data from 2017 indicates that eight in 10 rough sleepers who have died in London suffered from severe mental health conditions. We cannot allow this injustice to continue. We are stepping up our work to provide specialist help and support for those suffering from mental ill health, which is backed by the £30 million of additional funding from NHS England.

On top of this, we are working to implement test models of community-based provision access across six projects that are designed to enable access to health and support services for people who are sleeping rough with both mental ill health and substance dependency needs. Rough sleeping is as much a health challenge as a housing one, and our work going forward will reflect that. We also need a concerted effort to bring the different support services together, from outreach to housing, health, policing and immigration, so that we can effectively tackle the multiple issues that lead individuals to find themselves homeless.

We are acutely aware of the scale of the challenge before us. Ending rough sleeping within this Parliament is one of the most ambitious targets set by any Government since the publication of the Beveridge report and the creation of the welfare state. We accept

[THE EARL OF COURTOWN]
the challenge as a moral mission and an obligation we cannot pass up. Many of the underlying causes of rough sleeping I have spoken about today are deep-rooted, built up over successive generations and Governments. I hope Members across this House will support us in this collective endeavour and help us as a country achieve the simple but profoundly important objective to bring rough sleeping to an end once and for all.”

3.06 pm

Lord Kennedy of Southwark (Lab Co-op): My Lords, even if the Government’s figures truly reflected the scale of street homelessness, the situation would be horrifying. But the situation is even worse. Yesterday, an FoI obtained by the BBC showed that 28,000 people slept rough in the UK over the last 12 months, of whom nearly 25,000 were in England. This is five times the number recorded by the Government’s statistics, which blatantly hide the scale of the problem.

The Government have no basis to parade their own figures as anything resembling an accurate picture. In 2019, the Office for Statistics Regulation said that it expected the Government to plan for better statistics on rough sleeping. The recent defence that these statistics are only a good estimate brings into question why they were ever published. Can the Minister confirm that these government statistics have official statistics status approved by the UK Statistics Authority? If they do not, that is because they fail to meet official standards on trustworthiness, quality and public value. If they fail this test, they should never see the light of day. These figures are misleading and I would welcome an investigation into their accuracy. If the Minister is unable to confirm the status of these statistics today, could he write to me and place a copy of the letter in the Library?

In 2018, 726 people died homeless across England and Wales—the highest year-to-year increase since the ONS time series began. This is an emergency and requires emergency measures. The announcement of the £236 million and an urgent review to tackle rough sleeping is insufficient and shows that the Government are in denial of the problem. They have failed to properly address the issue over the past 10 years and must finally make it a priority, beginning with properly funding homelessness services. Such funding, in combination with supportive housing, has been cut by £1 billion a year, leading to 9,000 fewer hostel beds. Will the Minister tell the House what the Government will do to replace the beds that have been lost and provide new ones?

In recognition of the role local authorities can play, the Government must introduce a duty for councils, and proper funding with that, to deliver shelter and support, building on the emergency cold weather support that many already provide. The Government must, however, also look at why individuals and families become homeless in the first place. Many have found themselves on the streets after losing their privately rented accommodation—perhaps through extortionate rent increases or unliveable conditions, or through substance abuse. The Government must make renting affordable and give tenants the right to hold their landlords to account. There must also be recognition

of the root factors that can trigger homelessness, be they substance abuse, domestic abuse, violence or mental health problems, so that support can again be offered to tackle these wider causes.

We can look back to the record of the Labour Government on homelessness and find that, by 2010, this had been virtually eliminated. Here we are back again, 10 years later, and it is back with a vengeance. Homelessness is not inevitable in a country as well-off and decent as ours, but the levels of rough sleeping under this Government have shamed us all. It is action, not words, that will put an end to this crisis; simply saying that rough sleeping is a priority for the Government is not good enough.

Just outside this noble House, in Westminster Station, there are people sleeping rough there now. In London Bridge—I walk through it most evenings—there are people sleeping rough in the station. I walked down Victoria Street to Victoria station: there are people sleeping in the doorways. Opposite Charing Cross station, people wait every night to get soup and bread from those who come to support them. We are one of the richest countries in the world; the homelessness we see on the street is an utter disgrace. As I said earlier, this was virtually eliminated by 2010 and the situation in which we find ourselves today is shameful and entirely of the Government’s own making. They get no credit for claiming to be solving the problem that had already been solved many years ago.

Baroness Thornhill (LD): My Lords, I echo much of what my fellow local government vice-president has said. This is a huge public concern, and on these Benches—particularly from within the local government family—we have always had a “credit where credit is due” policy. On this occasion, however, we have to say that so far, it is not good enough. Context is all, and as the noble Lord, Lord Kennedy, has said, we need to be careful with the interpretation of the figures. Any decrease is welcome, so let us not be churlish about that, but in reality, according to the Government’s own figures—and they are surely not challenging their own figures—rough sleeping is still 141% higher than it was in 2010.

We all knew—those of us who have been out on the local authority counts night, searching under every flyover and in every station and shelter to make sure that we had an accurate count for the night—that we were underestimating the number of people because we knew all the homeless people in Watford by name. So where was Fred that night? That night he was probably sofa-surfing with somebody he had managed to get into a house with. I hope we can all agree, at least, that the current figures are inevitably an underestimate.

Likewise, we hear that local authorities have suffered considerable funding loss in their budgets, but that is particularly so in relation to homelessness funding: £1 billion less was spent on these services last year than a decade ago. If that level of funding had been sustained—not increased, but just sustained—there would have been £6.2 billion more in services. On a very practical level from the homeless charity that I am involved with, all the funding is short-term: it is one-year funding. This gives charities and councils

great difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff, as well as in sustaining long-term delivery. It is essential for these groups of people that we know that we can provide the services for the longer term. My question to the Minister is: is all the funding ring-fenced? Is there any chance, now that the Government are more stable, that they will look at three- or even five-year funding?

I particularly welcome Dame Louise Casey's role. I think that she is a Dame who is prepared—as we northerners would say—to call a spade a shovel and that she will lift up stones. Can the Minister reassure us that her role will be to look holistically, compassionately and, particularly, cross-departmentally about the issues that affect homelessness? Let us take universal credit. Sanctions are automatic—we know this—but they do not take into account an individual's circumstances or their vulnerability. Sanctions being implemented can make their situation more perilous. Delays in the housing element of universal credit being paid directly to the landlord lead to further issues. Issues around zero-hours contracts—if they eventually get work, it is very often in that area—can lead to a fluctuation that puts their situation in peril. As a direct consequence of all these things, private landlords are extremely reluctant to take these people on as tenants. That puts all the pressure back on local authorities to house people. The logjam is very much in move-on accommodation, which this money is for, which is why, on these Benches, we welcome it.

However, we see the issue as being the lack of social housing. It is noticeable even in the Statement that the terms “social” and “affordable” are being used interchangeably all the time. Affordable is 75% of market rate and social is 50%. Can the Minister explain the Government's policy? Is it to provide more affordable homes and have they given up completely on social homes to rent? Are they relying on councils to build social homes to rent? The unfreezing of the local housing allowance part of housing benefit is welcome, but in high-rent areas such as Watford and most of the south-east, it is still considerably less than the average rent. The shortfall is too great. It is certainly too great for this group of vulnerable people to make up the shortfall, so the private sector is largely out of the question.

Will Dame Louise also be looking at policies such as the Government's Housing First initiative? When I saw this, it was about developers giving priority to veterans as one group, but when I looked at it further, I realised that it actually meant that there would be even fewer social homes available to vulnerable people. It sounded really noble and people agreed with it, but the actual reality of it will mean fewer social homes. A colleague on the Benches opposite—the noble Lord, Lord Young of Cookham—actually mentioned last week in Oral Questions what we have come to know as the viability loophole. We have been letting developers off the hook from providing social housing for years. As a result, social housing in this country has been decimated. Social housing is what this group of vulnerable people and others need. Surely, if the Government's own side is saying that it is time to close the viability loophole, it must be time. Finally, is it not time to stop making homelessness a crime and to repeal the Vagrancy Act?

Lord Kennedy of Southwark: My Lords, I should make it clear to the House, because I forgot to earlier, that I am a vice-president of the Local Government Association.

The Earl of Courtown: I thank the noble Lord and the noble Baroness for their contributions and the questions that they put to me. I was particularly pleased that the noble Baroness acknowledged the good news that there has been a fall and I hope that this is something that we can build on and keep reducing this abhorrence on our streets so that we can reduce homelessness throughout the country.

The noble Lord mentioned statistics and the Government's method of a snapshot view of homelessness throughout the country. As noble Lords will be aware, local authorities across England take an annual autumn snapshot of rough sleeping using either a count basis of visible rough sleeping and an evidence-based estimate meeting with local partners, or an evidence-based estimate meeting, including spotlight counts in specific areas. The snapshot can take place on a single date, chosen by the local authority, between 1 October and 30 November. We found that it is better to do this in the autumn than in the summer, when numbers are likely to be higher due to warmer temperatures, or in winter, when numbers may be lower as there are more temporary night shelters set up to ensure that people do not sleep on the street in very cold weather. The snapshot is collected by outreach workers, local charities and community groups and is independently verified by Homeless Link. The noble Lord questioned more details of the statistics and I will write to him on that.

The noble Lord also drew attention to the figures produced by the BBC. Those figures refer to cumulative data that provide a picture of the overall number of people sleeping rough across the year; therefore, that figure is higher than the single-night street count or estimate figure. Those figures have not been standardised, published or quality assured, whereas, as I said earlier, the snapshot figures are verified by Homeless Link, which is a collection of groups interested in homelessness.

The noble Lord also talked about the shameful deaths of homeless people on our streets. Basically, every premature death of someone homeless is one too many, and we take this matter extremely seriously. My right honourable friend the Secretary of State is working closely with the Health Secretary to ensure that rough sleepers also get the health and care support they need. That is why, as part of the rough sleeping strategy—this was also mentioned by the noble Baroness—the Government have committed to £30 million of funding from NHS England for specialist mental health provision to help rough sleepers. We are also working to implement test models of access to community-based provision across six projects. These projects are designed to enable access to health and support services for people who are sleeping rough, with both mental ill-health and substance dependency needs, and are being managed by Public Health England.

The noble Baroness also inquired whether this money is ring-fenced. It is not, but there is a memorandum of understanding on that matter.

[THE EARL OF COURTOWN]

On rents and housing, I remind the noble Lord that the renters' rights Bill was introduced in the Queen's Speech, and in due course we will debate that legislation, which I have no doubt the noble Lord will take a keen interest in.

The noble Baroness also drew attention to the fact that these figures could well be underestimated. As she pointed out, it is extremely difficult to count and estimate the amount of homelessness that there is. But using local people and local charities to do this means that they know the areas where people sleep rough and, as the noble Baroness said herself, they know some of the individuals as well. That is a great help in establishing the correct figure. If I have missed any other issues, I will write to the noble Baroness and the noble Lord.

3.23 pm

Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top (Lab): My Lords, I congratulate the Government on appointing Dame Louise Casey to do a review. As her first Minister in 1998, I appointed her to her first job in the Rough Sleepers Unit, and within two and a half years together we managed to more than halve rough sleeping and then to bring it down to less than two-thirds of what it had been when we started in 1998. However, can the Government guarantee that she will have the freedom and the support from government to report on what she wants to report on? I know that she will want to do the comprehensive stuff and all the rest of it, because I know that she, almost more than any other person I ever worked with in government, will speak truth to power. She is part of a team which last week managed to get the United Nations to recognise a commitment and to agree a resolution to tackle homelessness worldwide, and in the last few years she has worked on the international programme on tackling rough sleeping.

We should not be in this position. The Government can have no complacency about this—it is shameful. We know what we could do—we did it—and the Government will now have to work hard, listen to Dame Louise and make sure that we do not all go home ashamed of this every night when we go through Westminster station.

The Earl of Courtown: The noble Baroness makes some good points, and I can agree with almost everything she said. The noble Baroness, Lady Thornhill, also drew attention to Dame Louise's role and asked how the report will be handled in government. I will answer both questions now, because that will help the House understand the scope of the review, which I think the noble Baroness was asking about. The review will consider the evidence around the causes of rough sleeping and look at what the Government need to do to meet their manifesto commitment to end rough sleeping. It will also consider the links between 24-hour street activity and rough sleeping and how best we can support this group.

In addition, we recognise the ambition of our commitment on rough sleeping, which is why we have appointed Dame Louise, with her extensive experience with both government and the sector, as mentioned by the noble Baroness, to drive forward this work.

Dame Louise will report to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government. She will work with a team of officials from across government, so many government departments will be involved in this. She will also provide recommendations to the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. Dame Louise will provide government with advice on what is needed to end rough sleeping, building on existing programmes and making recommendations ahead of the comprehensive spending review.

The Lord Bishop of Leeds: My Lords, I am grateful for that Statement and look forward to the review by Dame Louise Casey. Does the Minister agree that many elements of civil society, particularly churches, faith communities and charities, while waiting for this, are out on the streets almost every night? I refer to what we call floating shelters in many parts of the country through the winter months—which can be five months—which skew the figures a bit, because they take people off the streets. There are some excellent examples in my neck of the woods, where the churches host rough sleepers overnight and the mosques provide the curry.

The Earl of Courtown: Excellent, my Lords. The right reverend Prelate is quite correct that I should draw attention to the amazing work done by these various groups. Most local authorities consult with the voluntary sector, the police, outreach workers, substance misuse agencies, faith groups, mental health agencies, drug and alcohol treatment teams, and local residents and businesses. It is important that this is done on a local basis because, as I said before, local people know their area and know the individuals involved.

Lord Balfe (Con): My Lords, I often get the impression that we talk just about Britain. Can the Minister draw Dame Louise's attention to the fact that last week in Brussels a report on homelessness in Europe was published, showing that it has increased by a minimum of 70% in the last 10 years and that the dimensions have changed significantly because of the enlargement of the European Union. Some 50% of those who are homeless in Britain were not UK nationals. Even in Spain, 44% were not Spanish nationals. In Belgium, 43% were not Belgian nationals. There is a tremendous imbalance between the new and old member states. When we look at it, I think we will find that the situation is quite complex. In the Minister's Statement, he said a new immigration system will be in place by 31 December 2020 when the transition period ends. What does that imply? Does it imply deportation? What is the meaning of that statement?

Finally, I have a parochial question. In the Minister's long list he did not mention Cambridge, which got some money out of the rough sleepers initiative. I would be interested to know whether it spent it as wisely as others and the numbers went down, because that is not the evidence I see when I walk into Cambridge city centre.

The Earl of Courtown: My Lords, I thank my noble friend for the points he raised. I will ensure that the department is aware of the report on homelessness throughout Europe, and I am sure it will draw Dame

Louise's attention to it. He mentioned a number of matters relating to the amount of homelessness throughout Europe. We also have to ensure that there is support for non-UK nationals sleeping rough in this country. We want to ensure that local areas have the tools they need to support non-UK nationals off the street. That is why the rough sleeping strategy commissioned training for front-line staff on how best to support this group, and provided £5 million of funding to help local areas take action to get non-UK nationals sleeping rough off the streets. My noble friend asked about Cambridge, but I do not have any information relating to that at the moment.

Baroness Royall of Blaisdon (Lab): My Lords, I live in Oxford, where there is certainly a problem with homelessness. I pay tribute to the efforts of the council and the Oxford Homeless Movement, an umbrella organisation that does a brilliant job working with homeless people, trying to provide help for people with complex needs—shelter overnight and move-on accommodation. I particularly welcome the amount of money going into move-on accommodation.

The noble Baroness, Lady Thornhill, mentioned universal credit, but the Minister did not answer her question. I wonder what statistics there are demonstrating that universal credit—or the lack of universal credit when people are sanctioned—has an impact on homelessness. It is absolutely clear in Oxford that there is a link between people who have had problems with universal credit non-payments and homelessness.

The Earl of Courtown: I thank the noble Baroness for reminding me of a question I did not answer. I do not have that detail but I will write to the noble Baroness, Lady Thornhill, and ensure that the noble Baroness, Lady Royall, is copied in.

The noble Baroness, Lady Royall, also referred to the move-on fund and the great work it has done. It is a larger fund and reflects our greater ambition to eliminate rough sleeping. The 2016 Budget announced £100 million of grant for the new move-on fund, which will provide homes. The fund is split equally between the Greater London Authority and Homes England, which is administering the fund outside London, particularly in areas such as Oxford. Homes England—leading on the rest of England, outside London—has to date awarded £27.4 million to deliver up to 725 homes.

Earl Attlee (Con): My Lords, surely the problem is our planning system, which restricts housing development, inflates the cost of housing and adversely affects the most vulnerable members of our society while the rich get richer.

The Earl of Courtown: My Lords, I will not move on to planning at this time. The Statement and comments by noble Lords have underlined the importance of affordable housing and having housing available. As I referred to just a moment ago, the move-on fund is very important to provide housing for homeless people.

Lord Lea of Crondall (Non-Aff): My Lords, given the connection between homelessness and local government finance, am I right that the Minister said there would be more local authority housing directly

arising from this review? If so, will he confirm how that would work in practice in the prioritisation for local government housing? At the moment it is not clear whether the Government are committed to this being part of the review he has announced.

The Earl of Courtown: I am sure Dame Louise will cover all issues when she begins her review. As I said earlier, she will work across government. As the noble Lord said, obviously homelessness is paramount, and to not be homeless means you have to be accommodated. We have to start with getting people off the streets. This is where this new, additional funding will help.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston (Non-Aff): My Lords, I refer noble Lords to my entry in the register as chair of the Charity Commission. I was recently in Manchester and visited a homelessness charity that supports rough sleepers. One of the things I learned during that visit was that there is a significant increase in providers of support for rough sleeping in places such as Manchester, but that not all of those providing the support are as well intentioned as they might be. In worst-case scenarios, some are potentially exploiting the most vulnerable. Others might be well intentioned, but the way in which they go about trying to provide their support potentially makes a serious problem much worse, instead of solving it.

Does the Minister agree with me that it is important that those registered charities doing very important work make clear their registered status—as something that distinguishes them from others operating in this field, whether well intentioned but not doing the right thing or worse than that—and in doing so provide some assurance to those in need of that support? It is important to remind the charities carrying that important status to distinguish them from others—charities that so many people rely on—of the expectations of standards that they must meet in doing their work.

The Earl of Courtown: Manchester is one of the areas that was funded by the government rough sleepers initiative, which overall saw a 12% decrease across the country. Manchester itself was down by 26%. My noble friend went on to mention the charity status of some of the organisations involved in this area. As noble Lords will be aware, if an organisation carries charity status there is immediate confidence among the people it aims to help that it will do the right thing. I am glad that she drew to my attention the fact of operators that do not have charitable status. I will discuss it with my colleagues in the department.

Offender Management: Checkpoint Programme

Question for Short Debate

3.39 pm

Asked by **Lord Bates**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the findings of the Checkpoint programme, run by Durham Constabulary, to reduce reoffending rates and custodial sentences.

Baroness Scott of Bybrook (Con): My Lords, since today's list was issued, the noble and learned Lords, Lord Judge and Lord Mackay of Clashfern, have withdrawn from this debate. Therefore, the time limit for Back-Benchers speaking will now be three minutes, not two minutes.

Lord Bates (Con): My Lords, the Checkpoint programme is a multi-agency pre-court diversion scheme used by Durham Constabulary for adult offenders who have committed what is termed "low-level crime". It was introduced in 2015 and initially funded by the Home Office innovation fund. It is a four-month programme which aims to tackle underlying causes of offending behaviour such as drug and alcohol misuse and mental health issues. It takes the form of a contract which has several conditions—the most obvious being not to reoffend—but it also has a restorative justice element, should the victim require it, and a community service condition for the offender to recognise the wider impact of their behaviour. Completion of the programme under close supervision of a designated navigator normally results in no conviction. A key strength of the programme is that it requires no plea or admission of guilt, so treatment and rehabilitation can begin immediately, rather than being subject to long delays before the case comes to court.

Early indications show that over 90% of those who agree to the four-month scheme complete it successfully. Initial analysis by Cambridge University, published in the journal *Policing*, found that those who took part in the scheme had lower reoffending rates—13.3% less in a sample cohort of offenders. Further analysis and results are due to be published in May. The initial findings of Checkpoint are consistent with a similar scheme, Operation Turning Point, run by West Midlands Police between 2011 and 2014. The results are also consistent with the reduction in reoffending rates observed as a result of the four-hour national speed awareness course that over a million offenders take each year as an alternative to a fine and points on their licence. The costs of operating the scheme are estimated at £480,000 per year and internal estimates suggest that, for every 1,000 offenders, it saves at least £2 million in reduced crime. So far, 2,660 offenders have taken part in the scheme in Durham and Darlington. I am grateful to Stephanie Kilili, policy officer in the office of the Durham police, crime and victims' commissioner, for her helpful briefing on the operation of the scheme.

There are, rightly, several questions which need to be addressed about how any programme of this nature might work. Chief among these is: "How does it impact the victim?" A key function of our criminal justice system is to maintain public confidence by justice being seen to be done and wrongdoing being seen to be punished. Included in the excellent House of Lords briefing for this debate is a quote from Professor Lawrence Sherman of the Institute of Criminology at Cambridge University, which points out that victim satisfaction increased from 50% to 75% within the programme cohort because "the focus was on preventing reoffending rather than vengeance". Another survey, undertaken by the Centre for Justice Innovation, saw victim satisfaction increase by 43%.

The basic mission of the police service has not changed since 1829, when Sir Robert Peel declared it to be

"to prevent crime and disorder".

Speaking to police chiefs yesterday, the Home Secretary said that the task of the police service was to produce "less crime, safer streets and no excuses".

I agree. Less crime means fewer victims of crime, and fewer criminals means less cost. If schemes such as Checkpoint reduce crime, increase victim satisfaction and reduce costs, why are they not operating in all 43 constabularies in England and Wales? It may be because they require an up-front cost from police budgets, funded through the Home Office, with many of the interventions being from the health and social care budget, while the major benefits of cases not going to trial and potentially resulting in custodial sentences will be found in the budgets of the CPS, courts and Prison and Probation Service, funded by the Ministry of Justice.

I have a number of questions for my noble and learned friend Lord Keen, who I am delighted to see is responding to this debate. First, while I recognise and welcome the increase in budgets announced for the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice, how might such costs and complex benefits be recognised across multiple departmental budgets? Secondly, would he be willing to facilitate a briefing by officials from the Home Office, Ministry of Justice and Department of Health and Social Care for interested Peers, on how they evaluate the effectiveness of such schemes and allocate resources to them? Thirdly, if pre-court diversion schemes such as Checkpoint and out-of-court disposals are, on this evidence, the most effective ways of reducing reoffending, does he accept that all the available evidence also shows that short-term custodial sentences of less than six months are the worst, especially in the case of female offenders? Finally, would he be open to extending the reach of such schemes to young offenders? Will these matters be within scope of the remit of the forthcoming royal commission on the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice process?

Such schemes have a wider societal benefit which goes beyond calculations of cost and benefit analysis. Through an offender's facing up to their wrongdoing and the harm caused to their victim, and showing remorse, society is offering them a second chance—a chance to mend their ways and avoid a criminal record, a possible custodial sentence and all that it incurs. I am inspired by those victims who, despite their suffering, found their satisfaction increased, not diminished, by a focus on preventing reoffending rather than vengeance. I believe in a criminal justice system which is tempered by mercy, and which holds out the possibility of redemption. I believe that justice and society are not weakened but strengthened by mercy for, in showing mercy, we also acknowledge with humility the very thin line of chance and circumstance which often separates us from those whom we might otherwise harshly judge. In the words of Shakespeare:

"The quality of mercy ... is twice blest:
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes."

In that spirit, I gladly put what is left of my remaining allotted time at the disposal of the wealth of knowledge and expertise among noble Lords who are about to follow, and I beg to move.

3.47 pm

Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top (Lab): My Lords, it is a real pleasure to follow the noble Lord, Lord Bates, who was a Member of Parliament in the same region as me, although he did not come from Durham—just near Durham. I want to intervene in this debate largely to recognise what Durham did, but I do that from the perspective of someone who, for a long time, has worked particularly with women to keep them outside the criminal justice system, and with schemes that really will reduce reoffending. We, as a society, do not deal with those who have offended very effectively. Even if we think they should be punished, it needs to be in a way that means they are less likely to cause harm to themselves and others when they come out of prison. We do not do that, and we are very bad at doing that. Reoffending is a real problem: we have a higher rate than many other western countries and we really need to do something about it.

I think I am the only person down to intervene in this debate who is from Durham, so I wanted to say a little bit about the Durham-specific position. Its police force is the only one in the country that has just had its third outstanding rating from the police inspectorate. One of the reasons it was able to be a driver in this programme was because it had the confidence that it was doing the basics well in the county. When I was at the other end, a lot of my constituents would come in to complain about crime, but the county had less crime than virtually anywhere else in the country. Ironically, I lived in Crook, but we had less crime than the rest of the county, so we were not doing badly as an ex coal-mining community.

The other reason was because of the inspirational leadership at the top of the force. We had Mike Barton, who was an exceptional chief constable. I got to know him when he was deputy chief constable. He rescued a village in my constituency that had become subject to one particular family terrorising everybody. He became chief constable and Ron Hogg became PCC. Ron had previously been a policeman, which gave me a few anxieties in terms of his new role, but he was superb. Tragically, he died last year, very quickly after having motor neurone disease diagnosed. The chief constable said at his funeral that it was his leadership, bravery and commitment to innovation that allowed this scheme to go forward. That is what we need in the rest of the country.

3.50 pm

The Lord Bishop of Gloucester: My Lords, I too would like to thank the noble Lord, Lord Bates, not least for his important mention of mercy, which is so important to me in my Christian faith. I too would like to commend the work of the Checkpoint programme, especially on behalf of my right reverend friend the Bishop of Durham, who also wanted to pay tribute to Ron Hogg—so it is good to have heard that.

There are pockets of good practice across the country. The important question is: what is the Ministry of Justice doing to support and replicate them? The Nelson Trust, of which I am president, has liaison and diversion

keyworkers who meet with women in police custody with the aim of diverting them away from the criminal justice system at the earliest opportunity. They also deliver a women-specific point of arrest referral scheme with Avon and Somerset Constabulary, which has supported over 500 women in just two years. The women's centre is key to this preventive work, so I ask the Government what they are doing to support diversion and alternatives to custody for women, as promised in the *Female Offender Strategy*?

3.51 pm

Lord Elton (Con): My Lords, I spent a great deal of what I used to regard as my middle age, and now regard as my youth, addressing the problem of keeping children out of crime. I am delighted to support and applaud the Checkpoint scheme and many like it which address the problem of people who have become criminals. It has seemed to me increasingly lunatic throughout my career that we spend so much on that and relatively so little on stopping people becoming criminals, which is far cheaper and more effective.

Of young people, I will say one or two things. First, most of them come into the world imbued with huge enthusiasm, energy and inquisitiveness that need to be channelled and directed. If they are not and find no release of their own, the young people turn to desperate actions, from stealing cars and driving away, to burglary or arson—you name it—or something else for a kick and a thrill. The channelling idea of this energy was highlighted in my career when I was commanding a Territorial Army squadron and two rather nondescript youths came into the drill hall, plainly bent on having a good laugh and disturbing things. We actually got them interested, and within two years they were the two best junior NCOs that I had ever had—because we got that energy, this vital quality that practically every human being has which can be used to make them creative, beneficial and lovely people.

The second thing that was brought home to me was during my middle years as a Minister when I spent six months in the Department of Health. I was introduced to a scheme in which children who had been convicted of crimes were referred to an Outward Bound course, where they were under the care of an adult on a ratio of one adult to two children all the waking hours of every day for a considerable period. It became abundantly clear that a considerable number of those children had encountered on that course for the first time in their 15 years or more of life an adult who actually cared about what happened to them, day by day and in the end. In other words, they were starved of love.

It is an elementary fact of human nature. My friend the right reverend Prelate will confirm that the essence of creation is love. We are too hesitant to talk about it, because the word has so many different meanings, but good parental and spiritual love is the essence of good behaviour. Without it, people fail to mature into the people they are meant to be. With it, they flourish, they do not commit crimes and we save a huge amount of money thereby.

3.55 pm

Lord Carey of Clifton (CB): My Lords, I also am very grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Bates, for securing this debate, and I gratefully receive his offer of some time.

[LORD CAREY OF CLIFTON]

I am also from Durham—at least, long ago, I was for seven years the incumbent of St Nicholas Church. One day, the Bishop of Durham invited me to serve as part-time prison chaplain at Durham prison and Low Newton prison. Low Newton is very special. It is a few miles to the north of Durham. It was a demanding assignment, for one day a week for seven years, working with more than 120 young men aged under 21 and some 30 to 35 women in the women's section. It brought home to me the wonderful work done by prison officers and other groups, such as teachers, probation officers and prison chaplains. That experience left me with great admiration for the people who served the prisoners I worked with, but, I am sad to say, with a very low expectation of the value that prison itself gives to those who end up there. Very little redemption can go on there. So it is with great pleasure that I welcome this initiative, which gives people an opportunity to break free from a life of crime.

It is very odd that this debate has followed a Statement on rough sleepers, as that is how many prisoners often end up. Checkpoint offers great hope and is something that we in the House of Lords ought to applaud and encourage. However, it is far from an easy option in its demands on those entering the programme to address root causes, and in offering hope. This initiative, together with the parallel scheme offered by David Lammy MP to help black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, has a huge potential to turn lives around. Do the Government intend to encourage other police constabularies to take on similar initiatives?

One aspect that I would certainly like to emphasise in my remaining seconds that comes out in the Checkpoint programme is the very strong social bonds that often inhibit but might also promote good outcomes if harnessed properly. This is a critical factor in the desistence element that the Checkpoint framework offers. The organisers recognise accurately that the programme offers co-operation with families, good friends and the wider community to offer hope to others. A question therefore arises: how might the wider community be of assistance in the reform of individuals who desire to change their lives?

3.59 pm

Lord Woolf (CB): My Lords, it is a great honour to follow the preceding speakers, who are all so knowledgeable about this subject, and I also endorse what has been said already as to the achievement of the noble Lord, Lord Bates, in securing this debate.

For me personally, this debate raises issues which cast in proportion the remarks which were made in a Sunday newspaper last weekend, which I read when I had the good fortune to be sitting on a Caribbean beach. I think we do not realise that the way we operate so often causes us to focus on the negative because we start off every day by asking questions, and you do not ask questions about things going well. What is important about this debate is that we are focusing on something which goes well.

I am glad to see here our newest Member of the House, who made a maiden speech when I was not here recently but which I have read. She will be very conscious of that point, because she has as great a

knowledge of the working of the criminal justice system as anybody I know. Of course I refer to my fellow Cross-Bencher, my noble and learned friend Lady Hallett, who is here with me today. She would know how finding the positive things and making them work is so important and how sad it is that, again and again, useful initiatives do not result in long-term ends.

Octogenarians can have a very valuable service to perform—and I claim to do this today—because they have seen and heard it all before, and they have the long experience of what could work. This is not exploited in the way that it should be exploited so as to prevent the need to return again and again. I say that on the basis of the report I did into the prison riots, which were held a long time ago now, and on the basis of the speech I gave on the 25th anniversary of my report into those matters.

One thing that I hope will happen today as a result of this debate is that this excellent initiative, which has been shown to have so many important qualities, is taken up and embedded. If we cannot manage big reforms, let us focus on many little reforms and achieve a good result as a whole.

4.02 pm

Earl Attlee (Con): My Lords, I congratulate my noble friend Lord Bates on introducing this QSD. I agree with everything he said, and I look forward to the answers from my noble and learned friend the Minister. I also agree with the noble and learned Lord, Lord Woolf, about his points on positivity, and I can assure him that I have read his report very carefully.

Your Lordships will recall that I recently proposed to the House that we have a new sentence available to the courts of being “Detained for Training” at Her Majesty's pleasure. Like both Checkpoint and Turning Point, my proposal contains a strong element of training designed to address the offending behaviour and act as an alternative to short prison sentences that all noble Lords know—and agree, I believe—are ineffective. My proposal is very much as a part of the criminal justice system, but these two approaches are absolutely complementary and would work together. The whole point of Checkpoint is to keep young people out of the criminal justice system and therefore I very strongly support it.

My understanding is that, very cleverly, Checkpoint is not too intensive, as this would be counterproductive and make matters worse rather than better. The architects of these schemes are to be congratulated.

4.05 pm

Lord Blair of Boughton (CB): My Lords, I, too, am grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Bates, for this debate. Because of the short time limit, my speech will mostly be a set of questions to the Minister.

I am not sure whether the Minister is aware of a new strand of police research called evidence-based policing—EBP for short—the brainchild of Professor Larry Sherman, who was mentioned by the noble Lord, Lord Bates, at the Institute of Criminology at Cambridge. Is he aware of the Cambridge Centre for Evidence-Based Policing? I draw attention to my registered interests, because I lecture on its behalf here and abroad.

Evidence-based policing is based on the use of randomised control trials modelled on medical research techniques. I am sure the Minister is aware that Checkpoint is an EBP randomised control trial, but is he aware that it is only one of a large number of such experiments in the UK influenced by, and part of, the Cambridge EBP centre's master's degree programme? Randomised control experiments have, for instance, proved that police body cameras reduce conflict, that specific patrol patterns can reduce crime in hot spots and that issuing tasers to whole shifts of police officers does not improve citizen or police safety. The biggest gain in knowledge so far is the Cambridge crime harm index, which proved that in Northamptonshire 80% of harm caused by crime was the work of 7% of offenders.

Is the Minister aware of the UK Society of Evidence Based Policing, which is now replicated in many countries? Is he aware that Peter Neyroud—formerly chief constable of Thames Valley Police and now Professor Sherman's academic colleague—recently explained evidence-based policing to a meeting of chiefs of police in India, which was chaired by Prime Minister Modi, who directed that the technique be adopted on a pan-India basis?

Is the Minister aware of how much interest in or support for this work has been shown by Her Majesty's Government? The answer is practically none—and there has been almost nothing from Her Majesty's loyal Opposition either, with the honourable exception of David Lammy MP, who noted the effectiveness of the West Midlands scheme Turning Point, which has just been mentioned, with black and Asian victims. This technique proves what works to reduce crime and, equally importantly, what does not. I have never seen anything as exciting as this in my police career.

The Home Secretary has indicated this week that nationwide targets for crime reduction will be reintroduced. They had a detrimental and distorting effect when they were in place. The Home Office and the Ministry of Justice should be aware of what really does reduce crime before such targets re-emerge, so my last question to the Minister is: is he prepared to meet me, Professor Sherman and Peter Neyroud, preferably with the Police Minister, to see how this British invention can best be nurtured? Of course, I would be delighted if the noble Lord, Lord Bates, wished to join us.

4.08 pm

Baroness Wheatcroft (Non-Aff): My Lords, I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Bates, on securing this important debate. It is clear that our justice system is not working. We lock up too many people. The noble Lord, Lord Bates, referred to the quality of mercy. I fear that is not a word we are likely to hear very much from our current Home Secretary, but we should find a way to use it.

Almost two-thirds of adults released from prison after sentences of 12 months or less go on to reoffend, so the Durham experiment is clearly a step in the right direction, but four months' rehabilitation is just the start of turning people away from a life of crime. The crucial thing is getting offenders into employment. Ministry of Justice statistics show that only 17% of offenders get a job within a year of leaving prison.

Those not in regular employment are almost twice as likely to reoffend. That is why, in its 2017 manifesto, the Conservative Party pledged to give employers a national insurance holiday if they took on any ex-offender. Last year, I asked what had happened to this manifesto promise and the Government told me that they were consulting on it. Is consultation yet about to turn into action?

Women who leave prison and fail to secure employment are just as likely to reoffend as men and, although the numbers are much smaller, the effects are potentially even more damaging. Every year, imprisonment of female offenders separates more than 17,000 children from their mothers. I applaud the efforts of Working Chance, a charity that helps female offenders into jobs. Its supporters include Pret a Manger and Virgin but, sadly, a lot of the companies that the charity has approached fail to see that this would help them and their staff, but ex-offenders become very loyal workers as the Timpson example has demonstrated. Only 4% of people that Working Chance has placed in a job go on to reoffend, which demonstrates why it makes such sense to fund organisations like it.

A survey by the Government in 2016 found that only half of businesses would consider employing an ex-offender. Can the Government tell me what they will do to encourage businesses to take on these people and help society in general?

4.11 pm

Baroness Sater (Con): My Lords, I am very grateful to my noble friend Lord Bates for introducing this debate and I welcome innovative and holistic approaches like this one which build on much of the work I have witnessed over the years in the youth justice system.

We know that early intervention and out-of-court disposals have been effective in contributing to the reduction of youth custody and keeping children out of the criminal justice system. While there are, of course, differences between this approach and the Checkpoint programme, the principle of early intervention is the key parallel. Subject to successful completion, specifically designed interventions will help address the underlying causes of offending, including drug and alcohol abuse and mental health issues and will leave offenders without a criminal record, which so often is a huge barrier to breaking the cycle of reoffending. It will also allow them to go on and lead a life free of crime. Prison will remain the right option for those who commit serious crimes, but prisons themselves are all too aware that rehabilitation outcomes are not good enough, although there are notable success stories,

We should and need to focus our time and resources on dealing with these underlying issues at the earliest opportunity because of how prevalent they are among offenders entering prison. It is good to see that Durham Constabulary's interim impact figures are promising—as my noble friend Lord Bates mentioned—and that other police forces around the country are adopting innovative programmes to tackle these issues head on. Prison, after all, is the last resort.

We must not forget the victim and at no time should the safety of the public be compromised. We owe it to the offender and the victim, as well as society, to find a

[BARONESS SATER]

way to reintroduce reformed or reforming individuals so that they can become fully contributing members of society. Unless we continue to try and explore alternative solutions such as Checkpoint and address the underlying issues before people end up in prison, we will not make progress.

Getting the balance right between tough sentencing and rehabilitation will always be challenging, but there can be no greater prize than taking someone out of a life of crime and supporting them back into being a contributing member of society. This will always be worth fighting for.

4.14 pm

Lord Beith (LD): My Lords, this is a short and compressed debate, but I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Bates, on introducing such an important topic. I thank Durham Constabulary for having been a pioneer in this field. It is not one of our largest police forces but it has really achieved something. As the current chief constable Jo Farrell said, we are talking about a cohort of people for whom this cycle—the cycle of repetitive convictions and, in many cases, repetitive trips to prison—will never end unless we do something different. Prison does not work for these people. It consumes massive resources; every decision to send someone to prison commits massive resources that could be used in more effective ways.

The Checkpoint programme is a managed form of out-of-court disposal that is contract-based. As the academic literature says, all the indications and evidence are that it works. I think that we should continue this process of evaluation and then learn from it what we can do with schemes of this kind, such as those that some other forces are pursuing.

Mention has been made of victims. My experience when talking to victims is that what they want most of all is for what happened never to happen to them—or anybody else—again. If they can be engaged in a situation where they see some prospect of the offender changing, so that he recognises what he has done and does not do anything like that again, they are very much attracted to that. I have observed this kind of restorative justice in practice in Durham jail, indicating that quite a lot of experimentation in this field takes place in Durham.

On wider public perceptions, we hear a lot from leading figures in some parties about prison working and locking more people up for longer, as well as all the newspaper headlines that follow that kind of rhetoric. But when you confront people with the facts of what led people to commit offences, which methods of dealing with them had any chance of success and which very little chance, the public are much shrewder about these things than we give them credit for.

This project has been properly conducted and is being properly evaluated. It is, as the noble Lord, Lord Blair, pointed out, an example of evidence-based policing and evidence-based policy. As the noble and learned Lord, Lord Woolf, said, when something is evaluated as being successful, it should be embedded and used more widely. We on these Benches would like to hear less of the empty rhetoric and more about practical schemes such as this.

4.17 pm

Lord Tunncliffe (Lab): My Lords, I, too, thank the noble Lord, Lord Bates, for securing this debate. I also thank him for his introduction and his review of the scheme. It was a comprehensive presentation and I thought it particularly important in bringing out the fact that victim satisfaction radically improved—and the impact of avoiding short sentences, with their known failures.

Our criminal justice system is failing in its key task of tackling reoffending. This failure has created more victims and left their communities less safe. Reoffending costs are estimated at £18 billion per year, and nearly two-thirds of short-term prisoners go on to reoffend. Despite the Government admitting that their privatisation of the probation service was a disaster, they are still insisting that millions of pounds' worth of new contracts should be handed to private probation companies. Rehabilitation and probation do not produce the best results when they are run for private profit, as Checkpoint's welcome findings demonstrate. The programme's tailor-made approach to cutting reoffending tackles underlying issues such as mental health and alcohol and drug misuse, and aims to improve life chances.

The first results from the trial have found a 15% drop in reoffending. Of the 2,660 offenders involved in the trial to date, only 6% have reoffended. It also appears cost-effective, suggesting that for every 1,000 offenders it saves at least £2 million a year in reduced crime. What research have the Government done on the most cost-effective ways to bring down the rate of reoffending? Does the Minister believe that short, ineffective sentences are unnecessarily adding to the cost of reoffending?

Labour has long argued that our criminal justice system needs to be rebuilt, with a focus on crime prevention and early intervention, giving people the best chance of rehabilitation. We have also said that effective police work requires the police to work collaboratively with youth workers, mental health services, schools and drug rehabilitation programmes. Checkpoint's findings are impressive and I commend the work of the Durham Constabulary. I hope that the Government will sit up and listen.

4.19 pm

The Advocate-General for Scotland (Lord Keen of Elie) (Con): My Lords, I add my thanks to my noble friend Lord Bates for securing this debate. I note that Durham Constabulary is making a notable contribution to innovation and evidence-building through the locally led Checkpoint initiative. I seek to address this and to consider the wider context of the Government's policy on out-of-court disposals and efforts to reduce reoffending.

Ultimately, it is for police forces to determine how they choose to use the flexibility that they have to adapt their own local policy and practice around the use of out-of-court disposals, albeit within the constraints of national rules and guidance. We, as the Government, take an interest in evidence from the police and their partners about the effectiveness of such novel approaches. MoJ officials are in contact with partners in Durham

and we look forward to seeing and analysing Durham's forthcoming peer-reviewed findings of the randomised control trial phase.

That said, we have seen the promising early findings indicated in the media, including an estimated 15% reduction in reoffending compared with a control group, which appears to be a notable achievement in itself. I am also aware of the positive feedback on the role that specialist navigators play in delivering the Checkpoint initiative. It is encouraging to see offenders being supported in so many ways to identify and comply with meaningful steps to tackle the issues that sit beneath their offending and, therefore, to help to address reoffending.

To maintain public confidence, it is important that such schemes are operated effectively. It follows that only suitable cases should be identified as falling within such schemes. There is accountability required on the part of offenders, if they fail to meet the terms of such a scheme. But we recognise that early intervention provides an opportunity to address an offender's issues, before they escalate into more serious offending.

We should be clear that police out-of-court disposals, including any local variants, should be for lower-level offences. They are not considered appropriate alternatives to prosecution for individuals who would be likely to receive a custodial sentence in court for the offence in question. Out-of-court disposals are therefore available to deal with lower-level or first-time offending, but in a swift and efficient manner. They can certainly maximise the use of police officer time and achieve a satisfactory outcome for the public, while allowing officers to tackle more serious crime issues.

The Government support the policy set out in the 2017-21 strategy of the National Police Chiefs' Council for charging and out-of-court disposals, which favours a simpler set of options for the police, with only conditional disposals in use. By "conditional disposals", I mean that the offender needs to comply with one or more conditions, which may be rehabilitative, reparative, restrictive or punitive. The conditions provide the opportunity to address the underlying causes of offending and to intervene early, before a potentially more serious future offence occurs.

Conditional out-of-court disposals allow victims to be involved in decision-making as well. Out-of-court disposals with rehabilitative conditions are an opportunity for early intervention and prevention. This is particularly important for vulnerable groups, such as offenders with drug or alcohol issues. In addition, the Government's strategy for female offenders and accompanying police guidance promotes the opportunity for police to direct women into appropriate services, such as women's centres, as part of a disposal. I note the interest of the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Gloucester on these issues, which are of direct interest to the department.

Durham's Checkpoint initiative is one example of various models that have been termed deferred prosecution. Not all police areas are carrying out rigorous trials, but we are of course interested in any other meaningful evidence about the impact of different approaches. In fact, and I note this in the context of the observations of the noble and right reverend Lord, Lord Carey, we are trialling a Chance to Change

scheme in north-west London and West Yorkshire in partnership with local police and the police and crime commissioners. Obviously, results on reoffending and other outcomes will take time to come through, but we will share those findings in due course.

One key difference between what is termed a conditional caution—the statutory disposal that is a formal structure to set enforceable conditions to offenders—and a deferred prosecution is the impact on an individual's criminal record. Where a caution is a criminal record, a deferred prosecution may offer the opportunity to avoid that. Clearly that may have beneficial effects and implications—for example, for the future employability of an individual who is directed away early on from criminal activity. We take an active role in understanding what seems to work in reducing reoffending and we will continue to do so.

Reducing reoffending is of course a complex issue and it needs to be combined with efforts across government and local partners. I fully accept the observations that have been made, most recently by the noble Lord, Lord Tunnicliffe, about the need for collaboration in order to achieve results in this area. We work alongside a wide range of partners, including other departments, to ensure that support for offenders is given on what is as far as possible a joined-up basis.

I shall address some of the questions that were directed at me. My noble friend Lord Bates asked four questions. He asked how we are able to recognise the costs and complex benefits of such schemes. I can only go so far as to say that the Treasury considers flows of cost and benefit when reaching allocations, but I cannot give further detail of that at this time. On his second question about where we are with regard to the analysis of these schemes, I have to remind noble Lords that this is not our scheme; they are individual schemes. We await the report on the Checkpoint scheme and we will give consideration to it.

On the matter of short sentences that my noble friend raised, we consider that they should be an option, but of course custody is a last resort. In the Queen's Speech, we announced plans for sentencing legislation that will include tougher community sentences, which we hope will take the place of shorter terms of imprisonment. My noble friend also referred to the matter of the royal commission. I can say that we are in the process of considering the scope of that commission and we will update the House with progress. However, at this stage I cannot say that it will embrace the matter of sentencing.

The noble Lord, Lord Blair, asked a series of questions about my knowledge of and interest in the Cambridge Centre for Evidence-Based Policing. I am not going to claim detailed knowledge of that scheme at all, but clearly we are interested in such initiatives and I would be pleased to meet representatives from the centre and the noble Lord himself to discuss those initiatives. I cannot seek to bind a Home Office Minister with regard to that matter, but I hope that the noble Lord will accept that the Ministry of Justice would be interested in engaging on that topic.

The noble Baroness, Lady Hayter, talked about taking people out of a life of crime. Clearly that has to be one of our objectives, but over and above that it appears to me that one of the real objectives of Checkpoint

[LORD KEEN OF ELIE]

is to prevent people from entering a life of crime in the first place. If we can employ this sort of methodology, we can prevent someone from beginning with a criminal record by diverting them away from the acquisition of such a record, so it has additional benefits of that kind as well.

I hope that I have addressed the points raised by noble Lords. I repeat my thanks to my noble friend Lord Bates for securing this debate and for his questions.

Israel and Palestine: United States' Proposals for Peace

Motion to Take Note

4.30 pm

Moved by Baroness Tonge

To move that this House takes note of the United States' proposals for peace between Israelis and Palestinians, announced on 28 January.

Baroness Tonge (Non-Afl): My Lords, I am very pleased that we have the opportunity to air our views on this matter. I am sorry that it is in what I call the graveyard slot of the week but there it is. That is not my fault; I suspect it is down to the Government Whips but, anyway, I am very grateful that we are having this debate.

Many have dismissed the proposals as yet another plan in the decades-old series of talks which have never produced any benefit for the indigenous people of Palestine but have served as a smokescreen for the relentless expansion of Israel into Palestinian lands, against international law and against United Nations Security Council resolutions. But we have to take the plan seriously so let us look at it, while remembering that years ago, the PLO had already accepted a state on only 22% of the land designated by the original United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine.

This plan consolidates a string of land islands, with more to come—many call them Bantustans—which have been created by the relentless expansion of Israeli settlements into the West Bank, cutting off Palestinian communities from each other. As compensation for the land taken, Israel proposes that the Palestinians should have a patch of desert land near the Egyptian border—a hugely generous gesture. They are promised that roads and bridges, underground and overground, will link these Bantustans and make sure that Israelis do not ever have to come into contact with Palestinians. Many people have described that as apartheid.

I do not apologise for mentioning the two words Bantustans and apartheid because today, as anyone who is a *Guardian* reader may have seen, there is a letter in it from 50 ex-Ministers and leaders in Europe and across the world, describing the plan as similar to South African apartheid. It is not just me but those people, who include Douglas Alexander, who used to be the Secretary of State for International Development, Ben Bradshaw and Alan Duncan, who are both still in Parliament, the noble Lords, Lord Hain and Lord Patten, who are in this House. I recommend that your

Lordships all look at this letter because they have more authority than I will ever have. Who else? There is Jack Straw, our former Foreign Secretary, and the noble Baroness, Lady Warsi, another Member of this House. They are all past Ministers; looking now at the Minister sitting in his place, I hope that he will have similar sentiments when he is a past Minister, even if he cannot have them now. I am only teasing.

East Jerusalem will stay in the hands of Israel, and the Palestinians are told to make their capital in Abu Dis. That is a village just outside the barrier wall, of course, with no access whatever to East Jerusalem or the mosque. Nothing really has changed from the present situation and in case some of your Lordships are happy for the Palestinians to have their own defined borders at last—never mind it looking like a Swiss cheese, as someone once described it—we must add that the most important part of this derogatory offer is that Israel will control all security, all Palestinian territorial waters, all airspace and all the crossings between Palestine and Israel. Palestinians will have no sovereignty.

Hamas, of course, is blamed for almost everything. Last night it was pointed out to me by a colleague that in the 181 pages of the so-called plan for peace and prosperity, Hamas is mentioned 181 times. There is an obsession with Hamas. Nothing is suggested to stop the suffering of the people of Gaza—the slow starvation, deaths, mutilations and misery of the people there, who are mostly refugees themselves—until Gaza is, in the plan's words, “demilitarised” of the few weapons it manages to smuggle in or make. We know that cannot happen until the blockade is lifted, and the Israeli Government know that.

There is no return for refugees—ever—and no compensation. Many of them have been living in camps on the West Bank, in Gaza and all over the Middle East, including in Syria, where I visited them on one occasion, and Lebanon. All over the Middle East, there are millions of people who have been living in camps for decades, waiting to go home. The plan, in effect, dissolves refugees as a problem; they are not to be considered. UNRWA is to be abolished—it is already starved of funds by the USA—and the Palestinian state, such as it is, and surrounding Arab states will have to find a solution for refugees and their camps. Over 7 million people are, in effect, being ignored; they do not exist, they do not matter. If this plan were ever implemented, there would still be—and the Israeli people need to realise this—a majority of Palestinian people living between the River Jordan and the sea. I shudder to think what will follow. I wonder what other plans Netanyahu has for the future.

The heralded economic plan, which is given much space in the document—I think more than half the document is devoted to it—and its assumed investment from other countries cannot work while Palestine is under occupation. This plan is for continuing occupation; whatever else can be said about it, the people will not have any freedom of movement or freedom for goods. However its promoters try to dress it up, an economic plan cannot work in this situation.

Is it yet another plan that will gather dust, with its failure no doubt blamed on the Palestinians? I am sure that someone in this Chamber—I am not looking at

anyone in particular—is planning to say that the Palestinians never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity but neither does Israel miss an opportunity to betray an agreement. It has done it many times. It simply cannot be trusted. The Palestinian leaders were not consulted about this before its publication, and neither was anyone else for that matter—we were not consulted in this country. It is just like the Balfour Declaration, in fact: we did that 100 years ago without consulting anybody. No doubt the Palestinians were rather put off by the eviction of the Palestinian delegation from Washington a couple of years ago and the relocation of the US embassy to East Jerusalem. It is not a very encouraging start to a peace and prosperity plan for the country.

There is still no recognition of Palestine as a sovereign state, and yet we are all expected to recognise Israel as a state even though we do not know what that country's borders are. Let me be clear: I recognise the statehood and the right to exist of Israel and Palestine within agreed borders for both countries—as I have always hoped, on the 1967 peace line. When will our Government recognise the state of Palestine? It is such an important thing for them to do. What is their reaction to the publicised letter from some noble Lords that Palestine cannot refer Israel to the International Criminal Court because it is not a state? Where are the noble Lords, Lord Pickles and Lord Polak, by the way? They are not present, which is a bit disappointing because I was hoping to hear from them. Are they not interested? Do the Government subscribe to this view? Is the Minister acquainted with the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, which has long been accepted in international law and under which Palestine certainly qualifies as a state?

Whenever I am asked to talk about Palestine—it happens an awful lot—the word “humiliation” always comes to mind. For decades, the Palestinian people have been humiliated by the actions of Israel and its forces occupying their land. They have been humiliated by the inaction of the international community and the total disregard of UN resolutions. The Balfour Declaration, which was our country's responsibility, said that

“nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine”.

This whole terrible injustice is the responsibility of this country. We started it; we are responsible; they are our people and we should be looking after them. We have denied them any protection and we have also humiliated them by our neglect.

I am told every week by Ministers in answer to my Questions that the Government do not approve of this or that atrocity, they have made representations and had discussions with representatives of the Israeli Government and they thoroughly decry what is going on, et cetera. So why can we not set right a wrong that has caused such misery for over 100 years? The people of Palestine are not going to surrender. They are still there, waiting for justice, and there are very many of them.

On a brighter note, does the Minister agree that now we have our freedom, our country can resume its historic place in the world? We have heard it often enough in the last few weeks: we are free; we can

implement our history again; Great Britain can be great again. We hear so much about it from the Prime Minister. If we are set free, we can now have our very own foreign policy, independent of anyone else, and with that we can bring justice to Palestine. Can the Minister assure us that we will do just that and not allow our country to fall under the shadow of the United States of America and its puppet master, Israel?

4.43 pm

Lord Judd (Lab): My Lords, the House should be grateful to the noble Baroness for giving us the opportunity for this timely debate. I declare an interest: I have been involved in the region for much of my life—during my ministerial days at the Foreign Office, obviously, but also I can never forget my first visit to Israel. I arrived one evening and the 1967 war started the next morning. I was there for the duration of the war and it was an extremely interesting experience in which I had some very deep conversations with Israelis. I should also mention, perhaps, that in more recent times I have been chairman of the Middle East committee of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

The first salient point in any consideration is that the formal recognition of the State of Palestine is long overdue, because, without that status, how on earth can the Palestinians feel that they have an equal place in any discussions? Secondly, our deep historical responsibilities always come home to me; we played a key part in the creation of the State of Israel. Another point is that, in international friendships, between states as well as between people, candour is absolutely indispensable. I take my friendship with many people in Israel extremely seriously, but that means that we must speak honestly and candidly, very often with them, to the Government of Israel. It also means that in our relationship with the United States, from which I have also gained a great deal in my life—a nation towards which I feel very warmly—candour is indispensable.

At the moment, that candour demands of us that we emphasise the indispensability of justice and respect. No people paid a higher price for the creation of the State of Israel than the Palestinian people. It has therefore been a grinding experience for them over the years to be humiliated, dismissed and denied an opportunity to play a positive and creative part in building their own future and the future of the region.

This present plan brought by President Trump was a disaster. I cannot understand why our Prime Minister felt it incumbent on him to say that it was a stepping stone from which we could build. It was a disaster, and if ever candour demanded that we should say so clearly, this was the time. In the formalisation of the creation of, in effect, Bantustans—the situation is very similar to South Africa, in which I have taken a deep interest over many years—what about the status of Jerusalem as the capital for the Palestinian people? What about the vast issue of refugees? Where were these in the proposals?

In a long life working in the sphere of humanitarian work, international relations and the rest, I have come to certain firm conclusions. One is that we must remember that an enduring peace is a peace-building process; it is not a matter of imposing solutions or of short-cuts.

[LORD JUDD]

Building peace is a patient, persistent task. If you are to build peace, that means that all parties to that peace feel a deep sense of ownership. We had better face that quickly, because otherwise we are in for a long, disturbing future in the Middle East.

4.48 pm

Lord Oates (LD): My Lords, if today's *Times* is correct, I should start by wishing the noble Lord, Lord Young of Graffham, a happy birthday, although I cannot help wondering what sin he must have committed to have to spend his birthday debating the intractable subject of the Middle East peace process. None the less, I wish him a happy birthday.

I read the Trump plan with disbelief and despair. If it were ever to be implemented, it would represent not only a disaster for the Palestinian people and a threat to world peace far beyond the Middle East, giving as it does the green light to annexation and dispossession, but above all an unmitigated and unparalleled catastrophe for the people of Israel.

The safety and security of Israel is, in my view, critical not only for the Israeli people but for the world at large. After the horrors of the Holocaust and the centuries of prejudice, pogroms and expulsions, the ability of the people of Israel to live in security in their own democratic state is essential to the values of a liberal international order. It is something that we must defend to the end.

We have heard some references to Israel and apartheid South Africa. I have always resisted those comparisons; anybody who has had the misfortune, as I did, of spending time in apartheid South Africa knows that the democratic State of Israel is a million miles away from the vile and poisonous ideology of apartheid. The Trump plan, however, resembles nothing so much as a map of the Bantustans. In any event, as I have said in previous debates in this House, there is no escaping the fact that while the State of Israel is a very different place from apartheid South Africa, the situation that prevails in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is very similar to that which operated in apartheid South Africa: the occupation and settlement of land; the checkpoints; the separate laws; the night raids; the destruction of homes and property; the closed roads; the ongoing humiliations; the deepening anger; the loss of hope; the spread of violence; and the steady dehumanisation of one side by the other. None of this should be the least bit surprising. Whenever one people seeks to dominate another through occupation and settlement, it is inevitable that similar methods are used and similar reactions engendered.

That is why the Trump plan represents such an unmitigated catastrophe for Israel. It is not a peace plan: it is a plan for the permanent national humiliation of the Palestinian people. It would make Israel de facto ruler over millions of people who do not wish to be ruled by it. As a consequence, it guarantees insecurity and instability for Israel, Palestine and the whole region for decades if not centuries to come.

I have always supported the cause of a Palestinian state, not only because it is a just outcome for the Palestinian people but also because it is the only just

outcome for the people of Israel. Throughout the time of the coalition, I urged the Government to recognise a Palestinian state. Each time I was told that this was not the right time. As every year passed, more settlements were built, more positions became entrenched and more intractability was introduced. Unless we act soon, there will be no viable state to recognise and no viable peace to achieve.

The only long-term resolution of this conflict will come from an understanding that the aspirations of the Palestinian people are little different from those of the Israeli people and that a just peace can be achieved only on the basis of international law. I have heard some Israelis say, "We have tried trading land for peace and it has not worked" but that is not right. There is only one occasion on which Israel has traded land for peace, when it made its historic peace with Egypt and returned the Sinai. It has lived in peace with Egypt ever since, but in Menachem Begin, it found a Prime Minister with courage. Today the Prime Minister's office is dripping with self-interest and cowardice. Wise men make peace from positions of strength. Fools believe that strength inevitably lasts for ever.

Prime Minister Netanyahu has sadly deceived many of the people of Israel into embracing the fantasy that it is possible to live in security alongside millions of people who are indefinitely denied their national aspirations and daily subjected to humiliation. The renowned Israeli writer Amos Oz has used this analogy:

"the drowning man clinging to this plank is allowed, by all the rules of natural, objective, universal justice, to make room for himself on the plank, even if in doing so he must push the others aside a little. Even if the others, sitting on that plank, leave him no alternative to force. But he has no natural right to push the others on that plank into the sea."

The Trump plan would push the Palestinians into the sea. As the founder of the State of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, said in a speech to the Knesset:

"our standing in the world will be determined not by our so-called material riches, and not by our military's bravery, but by the moral virtue of our undertaking."

It was the wisdom and humility of Ben-Gurion on which the State of Israel was founded. Let us pray that it is not on the foolishness and arrogance of Netanyahu and Trump that it will founder.

4.55 pm

The Lord Bishop of Southwark: My Lords, I am grateful to the noble Baroness, Lady Tonge, for securing this important debate. I also express my gratitude to the Minister and to his officials for the careful but clear Answers to my Parliamentary Written Questions relevant to this debate that he gave on 11 and 13 February.

Your Lordships' House will be aware from my interventions in earlier debates that I am the only Anglican bishop who is a member of the Vatican-mandated Holy Land Co-ordination group, which visits Christian communities in Israel and Palestine every January. I also make at least one other visit to the region each year and will be on ecumenical pilgrimage there next week. Last year, I was also in Egypt with His Eminence Archbishop Angaelos, Coptic Archbishop of London, and other church leaders.

In his Answers to me of 13 February, the noble Lord, Lord Ahmad, said that Her Majesty's Government want to see

"a contiguous West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as part of a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, based on 1967 borders", and I wholly share the Government's aspiration. However, in describing the plan published by the United States Government, Her Majesty's Government's statement that

"All serious proposals for peace deserve a fair hearing"

does, I believe, two things. The chairman of the Vatican Holy Land Co-ordination group, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Clifton, and I, wrote to the Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa on 7 February contending that the analysis of the local churches in the Holy Land is that these are not a serious basis for peace but amount to a codification of the Government of Israel's positions. Given that previous, serious attempts at peace, when they did not succeed, were followed by prolonged periods of bitter disillusionment, it can bring us no confidence when a plan such as this is published. I have to say that the manner of publication undermined any attempt to bring the Palestinian Authority to the negotiating table as an equal partner.

A second and related point is that, even if such arrangements as those proposed by the United States were begun to be enacted, including annexation of territory, I ask the House what peace—if peace it be—can be sustained on injustice? What agreement can there be when one party is not only absent but was not consulted substantively or proportionately in the first place?

My most recent visit to the West Bank, which included Gaza, Ramallah and East Jerusalem, brought home to me the worsening living conditions of the people. There is among the Christian communities a resilient faith and hope for a better tomorrow. But the initial imperative of security, which has created a narrative to justify intervention in more than 50 years of occupation, delivers—as all such unwanted rule does—barriers, confiscation, diversion of resources, curfews, and violence. It is hard not to conclude, as we would in any parallel scenario, that such occupation serves no good purpose.

There is much else one might say, including on what might legitimately offer the State of Israel security on its 1967 borders and its other concerns. One might lament the disappearance of the ancient Jewish communities from across the Middle East and the reasons why. One too might speak of the pressure on, indeed persecution of, the ancient Christian communities of the region. But today I ask again—in some sense I echo other contributors to this debate—whether it is now time for Her Majesty's Government to heed the views of Parliament and extend full recognition to the Palestinian state?

4.59 pm

Baroness Altmann (Con): My Lords, I declare an interest in that I am Jewish and have relations who had to flee Europe as refugees or were, sadly, killed for their religion. I understand that the Palestinians are angry. They are confined and suppressed and have no country. I am sure the Palestinian people want a civilised, democratic country, but unless and until their

leadership—both the Palestinian Authority and Hamas—accept and recognise Israel's right to exist, the Palestinian people are in limbo.

I support peace. I support a two-state solution. As anti-Semitism rears its ugly head again across the West, I absolutely support the need for a Jewish homeland. But the Palestinian people are languishing—their children fed hate and incitement against their Jewish neighbours—and continually reject offers of peace. They name their schools after terrorists. Their curriculum and school textbooks glorify suicide bombing and incite children to hate their neighbours.

Does my noble friend agree with me that, unless and until we can create an environment of acceptance, the prospects for peace—from whichever plan or quarter they may come—are vanishingly small? Israel has shown itself willing to withdraw from settlements in the hope of peace, but the evacuation of Gaza led to an intensification of violence, incitement, rocket attacks and terror tunnels.

These United States plans are a catalyst for restarting discussions, not a final version. They are aimed at promoting peaceful coexistence, but trust has broken down. Trust in a partnership for peace needs to be rebuilt, but we also need a home for the Jewish people after millennia of prejudice, oppression and death. As we recall the liberation of concentration camp prisoners just 75 years ago—still within the lifetime of survivors who had nowhere to run to, no country they could call home—the Jewish state is absolutely vital. Every piece of this land has been fought for with huge sacrifices.

Israel's Palestinian neighbours have not shown that they want a smaller Israel; they seem to want no Israel. There were no settlements in 1948, 1967 or 1973. The problem was not where its borders lie but that it has any borders. As so often in our history, it feels as if the aim is erasing the Jewish state and its people. Yes, criticisms can be levelled at the Israeli Government, as at any country's Government—I am not by any means claiming that the Israeli Government are perfect—but rewarding Palestinian intransigence has not brought peace. The Palestinians keep falling further behind. Are we really serving them well by encouraging unrealistic positions such as the right of return or even a return to exactly the pre-1967 borders, which proved so impossible to defend?

Israel was built by refugees. Many of those Jews were thrown out of neighbouring lands because of their religion—these were not just refugees from Europe—but they had somewhere to go. I therefore implore the Palestinians to be a partner for peace in the Middle East. The Israeli people want to live in peace. They do not want to dominate the Palestinians. They, and I, respect a Palestinian right to a state, but it must be in peaceful coexistence with an Israeli state.

5.04 pm

Lord Anderson of Swansea (Lab): My Lords, a leading German social democrat declared to his countrymen at the time of the Treaty of Versailles that the hand that signed the treaty would be signing its own death warrant. Such would surely be the fate of any Palestinian leader who dared to sign what Trump called the "deal of the century" or "peace vision". This bird will not fly.

[LORD ANDERSON OF SWANSEA]

The initiative was not an unexpected bolt from the blue but the culmination of a series of one-sided initiatives, all taken without any consultation with the Palestinians, brought down like tablets of stone from the mountain. All such initiatives were highly partisan and were greeted enthusiastically by the Israeli Government. These included the transfer of the US embassy to Jerusalem; the recognition of the exclusive sovereignty of Israel over Jerusalem and the Golan Heights; the withdrawal of US aid for Palestinian refugee camps; the closure of the PLO office in Washington; and, of course, the abandonment of US support for the Iran nuclear accord.

Cumulatively, these completely changed the parameters of US policy and distanced the US from Europe, which has become a mere bystander in the region. They were part of Trump's obsession to reverse all of Obama's policies. Can we now seriously expect any Palestinian leader to sit at the negotiating table over this deal? They receive only 70% of the West Bank, and land swops of arid land in the Negev. Yitzhak Rabin, a great leader, stressed that it takes two to tango, and was assassinated for his efforts at peace.

We in the UK boast that we understand the Middle East and its history. Therefore, I was surprised at the warm welcome and support given by Foreign Secretary Raab. I suspect, as a former diplomat, that this was not the position of the regional experts in the FCO but rather the wish of the PM not to have too many fights with the US when he is seeking a post-Brexit trade deal. The highest that can be said in favour of this proposal is that, by shattering all the old assumptions, the conflict might then be reconfigured in preparation for a new start on a new track.

My own background is clear. I joined Labour Friends of Israel in 1966 and had the privilege of chairing the Anglo-Israel Association for four years. I, like my friend, the noble and learned Lord, Lord Judge, wish to be a candid friend. I admire enormously the vibrancy of Israel's democracy, the rule of law, the scientific achievements that rival Silicon Valley. I well understand the force of their arguments about the lack of a credible negotiating partner who can deliver, the Palestinians' peddling of illusions about the possibility of a right of return, their fomenting of hatred against Israel among the younger generation, as the noble Baroness, Lady Altmann, said, by textbooks and other means, the existential threat to Israel and their concentration on security which follows.

However, Israel has never been in such a dominant position militarily in the region nor perhaps internationally, given their warm relations with Russia and the USA and with several Arab states, particularly in the Gulf. As Israel faces the long-term problems of demography and water supply, now may be the time for some calibrated concessions. Is there no hope of progress? Must we await some cataclysmic event to clear minds? Surely there are some signs of hope in the change of view by Arab states. Who can forget, in 1967, the Khartoum agreement of the "three noes", and the way in which several Arab states now respond fairly warmly to Israel—Egypt, Jordan, the Gulf states—a sea change of considerable importance?

Trump appears to believe that money—some might say bribes—can be decisive. Of course, money can help, but more fundamental are questions of identity. Solomon would surely have avoided a big bang and sought to enlarge islands of co-operation, as my noble friend Lord Stone and his colleagues tried to do. Such might, indeed, happen when a new US Administration takes a more balanced approach, with the emergence of a more realistic generation of Palestinians discarding the unrealistic rhetoric of their fathers, or when this dynamic Israeli society of 9 million people is prepared to look long and seek partnerships, not a humiliating domination of the Palestinians.

5.10 pm

The Marquess of Lothian (Con): My Lords, it is always a pleasure to follow the noble Lord. I am grateful to the noble Baroness for having secured this debate. For many years, I have been both a friend of Israel and a friend of Palestine—not always an easy balance to achieve in the ebbing and flowing of the two-state solution arguments—but President Trump's so-called "deal of the century" has totally upset that balance. I have long championed Israel's right to security within its legal borders, but when those borders are unilaterally changed by illegal acquisition or settlement—or even worse, as now, by American presidential diktat—that right to security is questionable, probably meaningless and arguably forfeited.

This deal would effectively mark the end of any acceptable two-state solution. The proposed illegal land grab and the quasi-Bantustan configuration of what would be left would hardly meet the concept of a genuine Palestinian state. The proposed swap of fertile land in the Jordan Valley for dusty land east of Gaza would understandably exacerbate—and it has—Palestinian resentment. With the Palestinians sidelined into the extremities of Jerusalem, gone too would be the possibility of a genuinely shared capital.

Over the years, I have spoken to Palestinians of all walks and politics, and I have no reason to doubt the universal intensity of their feeling. I fear violent consequences if these proposals are acted upon. This purported peace plan will strengthen the so-called resistance, and the spread of Israeli jurisdiction into Palestinian land will further stoke the flames of hatred and despair. I cannot understand how a United States Administration, who so frequently preach the importance of the rule of law, can propose a plan that so patently promotes illegality. The current occupation of the West Bank and the settlements within it are already illegal. Now, as well as entrenching these illegalities, they propose further illegal annexations.

United States presidential diktat cannot make what is illegal legal, whether it is in Jerusalem, on the Golan heights or, more widely, under the new proposals. Nor can the eerie silence of Arab neighbours make it any more acceptable. Currently our Government seem at best ambivalent and, at worst, quietly supportive of these proposals—although I still hope not. Since Sykes-Picot our involvement in this region has been somewhat less than honourable. The Balfour Declaration, and that which followed, undertook to respect the interests and rights of the Palestinians. If I may so: have we heck.

Backing the present Trump proposals would be one further betrayal. They are not about peace; they are about politics—the politics of the United States and the politics of Israel. The consequences could well be frightening. Violence in that part of the Middle East is never very far beneath the surface, and violence stoked by genuine grievances is a dangerous concoction. Before it is too late, we need to find our way back to a genuine two-state solution, opening up the possibility of genuine negotiations and, once again, the chance to be a friend of both Israel and Palestine. For that reason, I hope that the Palestinians continue to reject these dishonourable proposals and that, at the same time, we find the courage to do so too.

5.14 pm

Lord Palmer of Childs Hill (LD): My Lords, I declare an interest as president of the Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel. I thank my friend of a long time, the noble Baroness, Lady Tonge, for many, if not all, of the things she said, and in particular her support for a two-state solution, which I pray for.

However, the Trump plan must be looked at in context. The United States and Israel are both in the midst of election campaigns, as noble Lords might have noticed, even in our newspapers. Both President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu clearly believe that they are playing to their respective electorates: Trump sees votes in producing a so-called peace agreement; Prime Minister Netanyahu, who is just about to come before the criminal courts in Israel, sees it as a vote winner in the Israeli election in a few days' time. He bases this on justified Israeli fears about its very continuing existence.

President Trump is known as a deal maker, although the deals have generally been about pieces of United States real estate. What is the principle of a deal? It is not to offer your final deal until after your original proposals have been rejected. For any deal to be successful in negotiations, it has to be fathered or sponsored by a body or country that is considered reasonably balanced. I do not think that that can be said of the current United States Administration.

There is a role for the UK, Europe and Arab countries to set out what they see as the road to a two-state solution. I do not think that many in your Lordships' House will think this is the Trump plan. Yes, the border between the two states needs to be defined. There have long been plans for a land swap. When I say "land swap", it cannot be of pieces of desert; it has to be of suitable land. That was always the understanding of that land swap agreement. However, the main fault in the Trump plan is keeping so many isolated Israeli settlements. These towns and villages will be surrounded by a Palestinian entity. An Israel Defense Forces presence would thus be required to defend each settlement. Sadly, they would be defending them from a belligerent Palestinian entity.

It is time for the Palestinians and their supporters to accept that the international community will not deliver all that they want. Likewise, supporters of Israel will not get all that they want and desire. It is time for the Palestinians to move on from—I will not disappoint the noble Baroness, Lady Tonge, by not quoting this—the dogma of Yasser Arafat, who, as a

former Israeli Foreign Minister said and as the noble Baroness reminded us, never lost an opportunity to lose an opportunity.

It is time also for supporters of the Palestinians to accept that the Jewish populations of the Arab states have fled, as the noble Baroness, Lady Altmann, referred to. Can anyone name Arab states where Jews can live freely, if at all? I will give just one example among many in the short time that we are allowed. A century ago when the British—yes, we British again—invaded the country then known as Mesopotamia, one-third of Baghdad's 200,000-strong population was Jewish. That city has recently recorded only five Jewish people remaining, and I think that they have probably gone as well by now. This is the picture across the region. More than 800,000 Jews fled from Arab lands, mostly ending up as citizens of Israel, while in the West the Holocaust and the growth of anti-Semitism led to much-increased immigration from countries such as France. The noble Baroness, Lady Tonge, recently asked Her Majesty's Government in a Written Question "what assessment they have made of any correlation between the actions of the government of Israel and antisemitic incidents in the UK."

The truth is that anti-Semitism in the UK and elsewhere existed long before the emergence of the state of Israel. The lies about Jews and their supposed control is not new. You can go back to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a tsarist forgery published before Israel was even a tear in Theodor Herzl's eye.

So linking the two or saying that the victim is responsible is absolutely wrong. But let us all agree, hopefully, in this House, that what we aim for is a two-state solution with Israel having secure borders, not impossible borders, and the Palestinians having control over their own destiny in their own state, so that they and Israel can live as two states within the nations of the world.

5.20 pm

Lord Davies of Gower (Con): My Lords, I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in this debate. As the Prime Minister has rightly said, no peace plan is perfect, but I believe that this plan recognises the reality of the existential security threats that Israel faces, while proposing an optimistic future for the Palestinian people. It is, of course, disappointing that the Palestinian leadership failed to engage meaningfully with the US during the drafting process, so it came as no surprise that it rejected the proposals last month. Yet it was encouraging to see that Israel's Arab neighbours cautiously welcomed the plan after its publication, including Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain and the UAE, which remain under some pressure within the Arab League.

During the 1967 war, Israel gained control of the West Bank from Jordan and the Gaza Strip from Egypt, as well as additional territory. Days after the conclusion of the war, Israel said it was prepared to return most of the territory in exchange for peace treaties with its Arab neighbours. The three noes brought an end to this hope: no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with Israel. I hope that noble Lords will indulge this brief historical recap, which I believe demonstrates that the greatest obstacle

[LORD DAVIES OF GOWER]

to peace is the continued refusal of Israel's neighbours to recognise its right to exist and flourish as a Jewish state in any part of the land.

This is an opportunity for the Minister to urge our Arab allies to encourage the Palestinians to return to the negotiating table and finally accept that the Jewish people have the same right to self-determination that the Palestinians themselves demand. I mentioned that the likes of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain initially welcomed the US proposals before being pressurised. This is no doubt due to a gradual warming of ties between Israel and its Gulf neighbours, caused by growing mutual interests, particularly the increasing threat posed by Iran. Iran has not only breached the nuclear deal; it continues to fund regional terrorist proxy groups including Hezbollah and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, fostering instability and violence. On Tehran's orders, Palestinian Islamic Jihad has targeted Israeli soldiers with sniper fire and explosive devices in recent weeks and fired dozens of rockets towards Israeli communities. The motive is most likely an obvious one—to derail any long-term agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians, meaning that the rejection of President Trump's proposals is exactly what the Iranian leadership craves. I welcome this Government's firm response to Iran's latest breaches of the nuclear deal.

This firm response has been lacking, however, when considering the threat posed to the Middle East peace process by officially sanctioned Palestinian incitement to violence. The practice of honouring terrorists and glorifying them as martyrs is widespread in the Palestinian Authority, with even Palestinian Authority officials praising those who have killed Israelis. The Hamas terror group, which rules Gaza, seeks Israel's destruction and subjects Gazans to endless rounds of violence. We must confront this anti-Semitism as strongly as we do here at home.

It is also crucial to note that £65.5 million of UK taxpayers' money annually goes towards the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees, which carries out important humanitarian work, including the provision of education and healthcare to Palestinians. However, Palestinian refugee status is inherited in perpetuity, including for those living in internationally designated Palestinian territories, and current beneficiaries of the UN Relief and Works Agency's aid are evaluated on problematic criteria based on entitlement, not need. The number of Palestinians alive who were personally displaced during the 1948 war between Israel and its Arab neighbours is estimated to be around 30,000, yet today the UN Relief and Works Agency defines 5 million people as Palestinian refugees, split between the Palestinian territories, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. Palestinian children at UN schools in the West Bank and Gaza are taught that they are refugees, giving credence to the political position that more than 5 million Palestinians have a right of return, which would lead to the end of the Jewish state as we know it. These schools use official Palestinian Authority textbooks, which are currently under review due to their troubling content, including the promotion of martyrdom and the elimination of Israel. Can the Minister provide an update on this review, which should surely be expedited?

There is more we can do to promote peace in the region, starting with the consideration of the best mechanisms for delivering aid to those Palestinians most in need and ensuring that UK taxpayers' money reduces conflict rather than perpetuating it. Let us give the US proposals an opportunity and hope for their success, as it is ultimately in the best interests of all sides to resolve this conflict.

5.25 pm

Lord Davies of Stamford (Lab): My Lords, I disagree with this document on at least three principles. First, it is not at all even-handed. It is quite clear that the Palestinians are intended to have to earn certain concessions over four years whereas the benefits for Israel are available immediately. Part of it reads like a proposed diktat to the Palestinians, and I do not think that is very helpful if we want to restart the process of peace negotiations in the Middle East, which we all do.

The second thing I have against this document is the proposal on land. The proposal is to take away large areas of land from the West Bank, including the Jordan Valley, and give them to Israel and in exchange, as has already been said, to give the Palestinians an equivalent amount of territory in the Negev Desert. That really is absurd and insulting. It is quite wrong to consider extending Israel's borders in the West Bank beyond the green line. The green line is the line which the Israeli Supreme Court decided should be the limit of Jewish settlement and Israeli jurisdiction and control, and I do not think we should go beyond that. It would be crazy to suggest doing so, in my view, in the circumstances. Equally, I do not think we should push back the green line or the border further back, because over the past 53 years established communities have been growing and have been very successful. People have been living in that area and have had children and grandchildren and, as always happens in these cases, people are attached to their homes and if we pushed them out of them and said they had to go back to Israel, we would cause just one more problem of displaced persons in the Middle East, one more injustice and one more grievance, and I do not think that would be a good way to go either. The green line is the natural border and should be part of any discussions we take forward at this juncture.

Thirdly, I was very struck by the fact that nothing is said about the great injustice done to the Palestinian refugees, which was not their fault. That is very unfortunate. Most of the refugees left in 1948 in terror, particularly after the massacre of Deir Yassin, which was a hideous war crime. I recognise that there were quite different incidents in other parts of Israel in 1948. The Jews of Haifa tried to persuade their Arab neighbours not to leave, but most of them left because they were terrified. Some of them remained and their descendants are happily living there today, but nevertheless those refugees left in fear of their lives and we have to recognise that.

Equally, it is not at all sensible to think in terms of a right of return. Of course that would be impossible, as has already been said by my namesake the noble Lord, Lord Davies of Gower, who preceded me. That would be very disruptive for Israel, but economically it would simply not be realistic. Anyway, it would cause enormous

bitterness between the two parties if 2 million new refugees arrived in Israel. It is absurd. What I think ought to be done is that individuals who left in 1948—they are all by definition in their 70s, 80s or 90s—should be given a right of return. That should be recognised as a matter of law and principle. It is most unlikely that most of them would take it up because it would not apply to the younger members of their families. In return, those who do not want to take up that right could cash it in, as it were, and receive a decent amount of monetary compensation. I am thinking \$50,000 a head or something of that sort. Much smaller amounts of money would go to the second generation and smaller amounts still to the third generation. That would be a fair way of recognising the principle of the right of return. It would be regarded as worth talking about, at the very least, in Palestine. Clearly, money would be paid only when there had been a referendum in Palestine that resulted in a majority in favour of a settlement with all the details there. That is my view of the sort of document that we ought to be talking about now. I hope that we can get back to discussing how to solve this problem. It should not be allowed to fester indefinitely; that would be very dangerous.

I fear I must make the final point that we have this problem now very largely because of the extraordinarily bad Palestinian leadership over the last 100 years. Right from the 1930s and 1940s, the then leader of the Palestinian cause, the Grand Mufti, rejected any negotiations and any recognition of Israel and the Jewish settlements in the area. He preferred to go for violence and war. He had his war in 1948. He lost it dramatically and the Palestinians were worse off. He could probably have done a much better deal with the Jewish Agency in the 1930s than the Palestinians got from the United Nations partition resolution. It was another major miscalculation. His successor, al-Shukeiri, also put the emphasis on violence, with terrorist attacks on Israel and by encouraging the Egyptians to prepare a war against Israel. All that ended in disaster for the Palestinians in 1967. We then had Yasser Arafat, who famously turned down Ehud Barak's offer of 98% of the territories. That is a terrible record. The Palestinians have been betrayed. They have been betrayed, more than anything else by their own leaders, and we now must hope that somebody comes to the fore among the Palestinians with a slightly greater deal of realism and honesty in the message he delivers to his people.

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay (Con): My Lords, I gently remind noble Lords of the five-minute advisory limit.

5.32 pm

Baroness Morris of Bolton (Con): My Lords, we witness daily on our televisions, in our newspapers and on social media the dereliction of lives and property across the Middle East—from Syria, with families wiped out as they flee the bombs of Assad and the Russians, to the plight of innocent children caught up in the civil war in Yemen and the atrocities of ISIS in Iraq. In the middle of all that misery it is easy to suppose that the question of Palestine is no longer a main priority for the region.

It may not be the most pressing, but we must not forget those who day in, day out live lives which no one in your Lordships' House would consider to be normal. The occupation of the Palestinian territories and the associated hardships and humiliation that brings is now the longest occupation in modern history. But this intractable problem, while not being headline news, still captures, as it has over the years, the minds of leading statesmen in their quest to solve the never-ending conundrum of the Middle East peace process.

I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Tonge, for bringing this debate to your Lordships' House and for giving us the opportunity to discuss the latest proposals for peace. I declare my interests as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to the Palestinian territories, president of the Palestine British Business Council and president of Medical Aid for Palestinians.

All efforts to promote peace should be welcomed. It is not in anyone's best interests that this question remains unresolved, but any proposal must be rooted in reality and must always have international law as its compass. I am grateful to my noble friend the Minister for his robust reiteration, earlier this month, of the United Kingdom's long-held position of two states, based on 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as the shared capital.

I was particularly pleased by the sentiment expressed by my right honourable friend the Minister for the Middle East and North Africa in his Statement on the United States proposal, when he said:

"Only the leaders of Israel and the Palestinian territories can determine whether the proposals can meet the needs and aspirations of the people they represent."—[*Official Report, Commons, 30/1/20; col. 927.*]

This sentiment is amplified by the respected Israeli NGO Gisha, which has said of the latest peace proposals:

"A real solution to the conflict cannot be reached by coercion; it will only come by recognizing the rights of all residents of the region."

The irony is that for the past 18 years such a solution has been available. The Arab peace initiative put forward in March 2002 by His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, the then Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, offered comprehensive peace between the Arab world and Israel in return for a Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. This peace initiative was again proposed earlier this month, at a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Arab countries at the Arab League, as the basis for any deal between Israel and Palestine.

This region is brimming with potential and it is criminal that much of it languishes unused. As I said in the debate in the name of my noble friend Lord Cope of Berkeley last year—which was a forerunner to this debate—the first, not last, step to unleashing this potential, and to lasting peace and prosperity, is the end of occupation and the recognition of the state of Palestine, alongside the State of Israel, of which my noble friend Lady Altmann spoke so passionately.

I am sure I speak for all noble Lords when I say that I long for the day when we have no more need for debates such as this. However, I fear that the latest proposals for peace, with all the hard work that has

[BARONESS MORRIS OF BOLTON]

gone into them, and however well-intentioned they may be, will not meet the test of answering the needs and aspirations of the Palestinian people because they leave them with no hope of self-determination. As Norman Cousins, the late American political journalist, said:

“The capacity for hope is the most significant fact of life.”

5.36 pm

Lord Singh of Wimbledon (CB): My Lords, I too thank the noble Baroness, Lady Tonge, for securing this important debate. The Balfour Declaration for the creation of a Jewish homeland stated, as we have been reminded, that the rights of existing inhabitants would be fully protected. Over the years, we have seen these rights systematically eroded. The declaration, although politically understandable, was based on a conflict-perpetuating fallacy that people of different faiths are so different that they have to have separate countries to survive. It is a fallacy that perpetuates prejudice and lasting hostility, as seen in the partition of the subcontinent in 1947, and partitions in many parts of the Middle East and—closer to home—in Ireland. This fallacy is inherent in the continuing conflict between two sister faiths in Israel-Palestine. Sikh teachings, put forward at the time of horrendous religious conflict between India’s Hindus and Muslims, emphasised that we should look beyond superficial differences, to commonalities that unite us; that for peace and harmony between people, we must recognise our common humanity.

A few years ago, I visited Israel with the then Chief Rabbi, my noble friend Lord Sacks. We met Jews and Arabs from all walks of life in a beautiful country packed with history; a country that in more peaceful times could live on tourism alone—and a country holy to three of the world’s great faiths. In all the people we met, there was a common yearning for peace, security, food and a decent standard of living. The American so-called peace plan seeks to perpetuate existing injustices against the Palestinian people by legitimising Israeli occupation of illegally seized Palestinian land and by giving Jerusalem to Israel. It is doomed to failure. For true peace, it is essential to recognise and respect common interests.

A viable peace plan should begin with a need to recognise that the involvement of outside powers, on one side or another, inevitably exacerbates conflict. Outside involvement is rarely in pursuit of justice, but in pursuit of so-called strategic interests—trade and political dominance. Such interventions widen conflict and suffering. Can any noble Lord in this Chamber deny that the involvement of Russia and the West in the Middle East has added to the suffering of innocent men, women and children, and the desperate plight of refugees fleeing bullets, bombs and rockets, and the destruction of their homes?

A better way forward would be for the UN to appoint a senior judicial figure, remote from political involvement and acceptable to both sides, to start from small beginnings and look to common issues and concerns. With extensive Israeli settlements all over Palestinian territory, a two-state solution—never a good idea in itself—is also not viable. Instead, both sides should look to easing travel restrictions and developing

common social and economic initiatives to break down misunderstanding, leading to greater peace, security and trust. This is not easy but I believe it is the only way forward.

5.41 pm

Lord Leigh of Hurley (Con): My Lords, it is always an honour to follow the noble Lord, Lord Singh of Wimbledon. I congratulate the noble Baroness, Lady Tonge, on securing this debate. I refer your Lordships to my non-financial interests, as disclosed in the register. The noble Baroness certainly has an interest in the Jewish state; I notice that she has asked some 197 parliamentary Written Questions of the Government on Israel in the last 12 months. I am not sure if that is a record. It might be.

We meet for this important debate just a few weeks after Auschwitz remembrance and Holocaust Day, with “never again” ringing in our ears. There are now some 6 million Jewish people living in Israel, of whom 172,000 are survivors and witnesses to those terrible events, so I believe we have a moral duty to protect them from the existential threat that they face from some who, to this day, still call for the Jews to be driven into the sea.

The Washington Institute polled West Bankers last month, and two-thirds said that the top Palestinian priority, in the next five years, is to regain control of all historical Palestine, from the river to the sea, rather than permanent peace with Israel. At the same time, it cannot be acceptable to witness the suffering that happens daily in the West Bank, and in particular in Gaza. Political leaders there suppress their own people, inflicting on them a lifetime of misery, depriving them of basic human needs and devoting valuable resources to war, rather than to the peace that the decent people of that region yearn to see and deserve.

It is only one conflict in the world but, if we were to believe the United Nations and the ill-informed press, it is the only one. This unfortunate and incorrect assessment permeates global politics. Even Bill Clinton said that solving the conflict will

“take about half the impetus in the whole world for terror away”.

I doubt it. The atrocities in Syria, Libya, Yemen and even against the Muslim community in China are sidelined as the Middle East and Israel in particular are criticised. Since 2013, Israel has been condemned in 45 resolutions by the United Nations Human Rights Council. Since the creation of the council in 2006, it has almost resolved more resolutions condemning Israel than it has the rest of the world combined. Is Israel really that guilty or is it just an easy target for what Ben-Dror Yemini calls the “red-green alliance”? The green is not environmentalists but those ostensibly fighting for human rights, but actually supporting Hamas, Hezbollah and even the Taliban. By fighting what they see as western imperialism, they end up supporting a terrible form of fascism.

So it falls on someone else to come up with a proposal, as President Trump has done. It is not perfect, as Members of this House have observed. It suffers from not having Palestinian input, but then everyone knew that, whatever was proposed, their leaders would reject it. Such was the case with the Peel plan, the

Woodhead Plan, the Bevin plan, the partition plan—which was opposed, as the noble Lord, Lord Davies, said, by the Mufti, Haj Amin al-Husseini—right through to Camp David, without even offering a counterproposal. Of course, Ehud Olmert's peace plan and now the current US proposal have all been rejected, this one before they have even seen it. The consistent lack of leadership from the leaders of the Palestinian people—who, by the way, have no mandate for that title as they were elected 16 years ago on a four-year mandate—is disappointing.

Arabs living in Israel, however, are afraid of becoming Palestinian citizens because they see how those living in the West Bank are subject to human rights violations on a daily basis. In Israel, Arab citizens participate in general elections and enjoy freedoms such as freedom of speech, freedom of movement and freedom in academia, which are unimaginable in the West Bank and Gaza. A recent poll showed that 68% of Israel's Arab citizens said that they prefer to live in Israel rather than in any other country. It is of course worth mentioning that the concept of an Israeli living in nearly any other Arab country is nil, particularly as some 800,000 Jews were summarily expelled from Arab countries, where they had lived for generations and indeed millennia, just for being Jewish.

For any peace plan to have a chance, it will need a dramatic change in the leadership of the Palestinian people. The incitement to hatred that still exists—despicably fuelled by textbooks that we, the British taxpayer, helped to finance, particularly in Gaza, denying the thousands of years of Jewish heritage to the land—has to be addressed by our Government and others in the West who care about the region. In Jerusalem, a city that I know well as chairman of the Jerusalem Foundation in the UK, the plan indicates that all of Jerusalem's holy sites should remain under Israeli responsibility, particularly with regard to Temple Mount. This represents a significant acknowledgement of Israel's sensitivity in guarding Jerusalem's holy sites, as I am sure, if he were in his usual seat, the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Southwark would testify; they are open to people of all beliefs and tourists of all faiths.

In summary, we have seen that Israeli Arabs will not welcome this proposal and that the Palestinian leadership refuses to reassure Israeli Jews that a sovereign Palestinian state would not want to threaten Israel's very existence. So it behoves us, the international community, to engage with the Palestinians to facilitate serious negotiations, using this or any other blueprint as a basis. I very much look forward to hearing from the Minister whether such plans are currently being formulated by Her Majesty's Government.

I know noble Lords will indulge me a final 10 seconds to wish the noble Lord, Lord Young of Graffham, a happy 88th birthday.

5.47 pm

Lord Mitchell (CB): My Lord, the noble Baroness, Lady Tonge, is to be thanked for introducing this debate.

My wife Hannah and I have just returned from an amazing holiday. We went to Colombia for a momentous family reunion—momentous because until last year none of us really knew that the other members existed. This was an unusually happy ending to a classic Jewish

story of death, tragedy, separation and family loss. The original family lived in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia, and comprised 51 individuals, of whom only 15 survived the Second World War. Hannah was vaguely aware that there were other branches of the depleted family, but she had no idea who or indeed where. They had been lost for years. Then, suddenly, out of the blue, she received an email from a second cousin living in Atlanta, Georgia: "Are you the granddaughter of Hugo and Matilda Lowy?" Well, she is, and we agreed to meet up in New York. That was a joyous meeting.

Then the subject was raised of the one remaining brother, Isidor, who had survived Auschwitz and who it was rumoured had gone to live in Colombia. The internet went into overdrive and, lo and behold, the missing family was discovered living in Bogotá. In the chaos of the post-war period they had moved from pillar to post, trying to find a new home. Most countries put up barriers to Jewish refugees but, to its credit, Colombia admitted 750 in 1948, and that is how they arrived there.

This was the first family reunion since the one in Vienna in 1927, and what a happy event it was. But what of the others? What of the other family members? What of the millions who perished or were denied entry to other countries? When the noble Baroness, Lady Tonge, sees the passion that we Jews have for Israel, it is because so many more of us would have been saved had Israel existed before the war. That is why for us Israel's safety is paramount.

But there is another side to my family; for we Mitchells, life is always complicated. I have a daughter-in-law who is half-Palestinian. I have been to the West Bank several times and am under no illusion that the Palestinian people are oppressed. The checkpoints are humiliating and the desire for statehood burns brightly. I understand the Nakba—the catastrophe, as the Palestinians call it in Arabic. It is why I have always supported a two-state solution. In 1947, the United Nations agreed that British Palestine was to be partitioned between the Jews and the Palestinians. The Jews were to be offered 55% and the Palestinians 45%. To the Palestinians, that was the first Nakba and they rejected it. When Israel was founded a year later, five Arab countries attacked it with overwhelming armies, but they were defeated. Instead of 55% of the land, Israel ended up with 75%; that was the second Nakba. In 1967, the Arab states again attacked Israel. They lost again and Israel occupied the entire land of British Palestine—yet another Nakba.

Since the Oslo accords in 1993, there have been three intense peace negotiations, and each time the sides have come within touching distance. But each time, at the last moment, the Palestinians withdrew from the negotiations. They have had Nakba after Nakba; disaster after disaster. Now we have Donald's "deal of the century", where the Palestinians are being offered 20% of British Palestine—20%, when they could have had 45% in 1948. Barely a peep has been heard from the other Arab states. The Palestinians have become friendless even within the Middle East, and that is the biggest Nakba of all. How has that happened? It is because they have the most terrible, awful leadership, and have had since before Israel was formed.

[LORD MITCHELL]

Now we see Donald Trump on course to win his second term. He will continue to back Netanyahu, no matter how outlandish his demands, and—irony of ironies—the only chance of reversing American policy is held in the hands of a Jewish man born in Brooklyn. His name is Bernie Sanders.

5.51 pm

Lord Suri (Con): My Lords, I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Tonge, for organising this timely debate on the US Administration's recently announced proposals for a final status agreement between Israelis and Palestinians, based on a two-state solution. I will offer some comments based on my own experience, having visited Israel in recent years, and from the perspective of a lifelong businessperson.

I believe fundamentally that economic growth and prosperity for all sectors of society, in particular the youth, are essential for establishing a lasting peace for Israel and Palestine. I respectfully remind your Lordships' House that this proposal is one of two parts. Last summer in Bahrain the US Administration, along with regional partners, released their *Peace to Prosperity* economic plan for Palestine. The plan consisted of three initiatives aimed at supporting distinct pillars of Palestinian society: the economy, the people, and the Government. The principal aims of the plan are: to more than double Palestinian gross domestic product; to create over 1 million Palestinian jobs; to reduce the Palestinian unemployment rate to nearly single digits; and to reduce the Palestinian poverty rate by 50%. This plan is only the most recent effort to stimulate Palestine's economy and governance in advance of statehood. This approach was core to the endeavours by the former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, during his tenure as the head of the international quartet for peace.

Whatever we may make of the US President himself, of this proposal, or of any of the many proposals offered down the years, it remains true that Palestinians will not and should not be satisfied with a stalemate that has stymied economic growth and prosperity for decades. According to the World Bank's 2019 economic update for the West Bank and Gaza, the unemployment rate in the Palestinian territories continues to be unacceptably high. It reached 26% in the second quarter of 2019, almost the same level as it was in 2018. The most recent data agrees that around 24% of Palestinians live below the poverty line. Without a permanent status arrangement, forecasts predict that the Palestinian economy will witness contraction in the coming years—a prospect its already vulnerable population can ill afford.

I have been delighted to see trade increase between Israel and the United Kingdom by nearly 300% over the last decade. However, the political stalemate is limiting the expansion of our economic ties with Palestine, which has a similarly entrepreneurial and dynamic population. Yet, as of 2017, UK trade with the West Bank and Gaza was a mere £17 million. Put simply, we cannot have growth without peace. Despite the stalemate, others are, admirably, trying. I note the initiative announced last year by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development alongside the Palestine Investment Fund and a Dutch development company to finance impact bonds to address youth unemployment.

The scheme trains up 1,000 young Palestinians and has raised \$1.8 million in investment and \$5 million in outcome funds to date.

The private sector seems to be stepping into a vacuum left by the Governments mired in political inertia. I know that British organisations, such as the Portland Trust, have worked tirelessly to stimulate the Palestinian economy. In this respect, can the Minister say what recent efforts the British Government have made to stimulate the Palestinian economy, create jobs for the youth in Palestine and enhance UK trade with the West Bank and Gaza?

Others have pointed to the flaws in this proposal, not least the person and the process behind him, but surely the time has come for Palestinians and Israelis to come together and agree a solution that will revive the Palestinian economy and secure a prosperous future for both people—and for British businesses, which I have no doubt would welcome the opportunity to expand ties with a new, dynamic state of Palestine.

5.57 pm

Lord Warner (CB): My Lords, I will focus on the so-called Trump peace plan, which is of course nothing of the kind. It abandons prior US policy in the region. It has nothing whatever to do with fairness to the two sides. It is constructed to reflect Israeli power on the ground and abandons the norms of international law about the non-acquisition of territory through military force. The proposals would give US approval for Israel to annex the Jordan Valley and most of Area C, amounting to about 30% to 40% of the occupied West Bank. This contrasts with the 95% or so Palestinian control of the West Bank proposed by Bill Clinton in 2000.

This plan says it will retain existing Israeli settlements in the West Bank, not reduce them as international law requires. The new Palestinian state would have at least 600,000 Israeli settlers in it, all protected by the Israeli military. The involvement of the Palestinians in this plan was zero. The plan itself imposes on the Palestinians a large number of unrealistic obligations before they obtain a very small state with very little sovereignty. Israel would have “overriding security control”, with all entry and exit from the new state controlled by Israel. This Palestinian state would have no airport, Gaza would not have an independent port and Israel would control water and the electro-magnetosphere. The plan rules out any Palestinian capital in Jerusalem.

Unsurprisingly, the Palestinian leadership has totally rejected the Trump plan, seeking negotiations on a viable two-state solution based on 1967 borders, in accordance with international resolutions. The Arab League unanimously rejected the Trump proposals at its summit on 1 February and supported the Palestinian approach. Trump's plan has been rejected by the African Union and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. Cyril Ramaphosa, the South African President, has likened the Trump proposals to his country's apartheid experience.

Many Israelis have distanced themselves from Netanyahu, and the Trump plan is not in Israel's best long-term interests. I shall quote from an email sent to me by Breaking the Silence, an organisation of courageous former members of the Israel Defense Forces:

“We were the ones who entered Palestinian houses in the dead of night and patrolled their villages in order to create a constant ‘sense of persecution’, as we were ordered to do. We were the ones who limited their freedom of movement. We were the ones who stopped and searched children whose only crime was to live their lives. All of these things were justified for ‘security reasons’. Now that the idea of annexation is on the table, the Netanyahu Government isn’t even trying to disguise its expansionist aspirations. Now it is clear to everyone: this plan has nothing to do with security, but rather its purpose is to perpetuate Apartheid.”

This strand of Israeli opinion gets little coverage in our UK media; nor does it get much attention from the UK Government. The Government’s response to the Trump plan at the end of January was somewhat muddled, to put it kindly. They have shown little understanding that if the international community allows Israel to proceed with the Trump plan without sanctions, it undermines the Government’s own position on sanctioning Russia over the invasion of Ukraine or any other future illegal actions. When will we see a more muscular response to the Trump proposals and their lack of regard for international law? Perhaps the Minister could draw some comfort from the letter published in the *Guardian* today from 50 former European leaders and Foreign Ministers expressing their serious concerns about the Trump plan.

6.02 pm

Lord Young of Graffham (Con): My Lords, I am grateful to the noble Baroness for securing this debate, but I have to say that there is an elephant in the room. I am about to speak of things from my own direct personal experience over the years.

By the early 1990s most of the Arab states were tiring of war. This did not necessarily include the PLO but, gradually, prospects for peace began to improve, until there were talks in Oslo directly between the Palestinians and the Israelis and President Clinton presided over the famous handshake on the White House lawn. By that time I had left government and was the executive chairman of Cable & Wireless, a 100 year-old Arabist company with extensive links in the region. In the improving atmosphere—I had been invited to Saudi and had sat at the right hand of Crown Prince Abdullah discussing Jerusalem, something I would have thought inconceivable a few years before—I had a dream that the nexus between Tel Aviv and Beirut could be an off-Europe Hong Kong. They had all the skills and all the enterprise existed there. So Cable & Wireless bought 10% of Bezeq, the Israeli telephone company, we agreed to buy 49% of the Jordanian telephone company, and we were in a contract for about 1.4 million lines in Lebanon when the Lebanese Parliament brought a boycott resolution against Cable & Wireless and sent it to Damascus. Some 36 hours later, a most unexpected reply came: they would refuse the boycott and shortly invite me to discuss the proposal in Damascus. My proposal did not include the Palestinians. These were the early years of mobile telephones, so I decided that we could create a Palestine mobile phone company to be owned and operated by the Palestinians. We had agreed roaming rights throughout the region.

In December 1994, Yasser Arafat came to London and stayed at the Dorchester. I spent an hour with him. I offered Chairman Arafat a Palestinian mobile telephone company which could be set up within 90 days, with roaming rights all over the region. I told

him I believed it would be popular with Israeli Arabs as well as Palestinians and would be the first fruits of the new state. He was interested and said he would invite me to Tripoli. The weeks passed, but no invitation came. Then I read that they had granted a licence to the son of the Lebanese Prime Minister. A few weeks later, I read that they had granted a licence to AT&T. Finally, they phoned me and proposed a 60:40 company; we would have 40% and finance the operation. I agreed and negotiations started. Right at the end my people found out that of the Palestinians’ 60% shareholding, 80% would be held by Mrs Arafat in her own name. That was unsustainable.

At the same time, I was working with a group of Palestinians in London. During my time in London I was involved in employment and was trying to get things going there. They told me that they needed a technical school. I had recently retired as chairman of the World ORT union, a Jewish charity which is the largest of the vocational and training schools, with hundreds of thousands of students and good relationships with the World Bank. I came back within a week and said to them, “I’ve got £20 million for you from the World Bank, just give me the site.” They hummed and hawed for months and eventually rang to say, “Can we increase the £20 million to £24 million, as we’ve got people to look after?” That was equally unsustainable. Then the wind changed, Arafat refused to sign and the al-Aqsa intifada started; we were back to where we were and the days of hope had gone.

The biggest cause of poverty in the entire world is the corruption of rulers. If 87% of the Palestinian people believe that the Palestinian Authority is rife with corruption, who am I to doubt it? Until there is more open and transparent government for the Palestinians, I am fearful for their future. Look back over the long decades of war after war, peace offer after peace offer: every offer that they rejected was in time followed by a worse one, time after time. I am certainly not saying that this is a good offer, but I believe it will be better than the next.

6.08 pm

Lord Stone of Blackheath (Non-Affl): My Lords, in 1967 I was a volunteer in the June Six Day War in Israel. I went there to help the war and then to work to help repair the country the following year. Just after the war in that same June, the eloquent Israeli Foreign Minister, Abba Eban, spoke at the UN. He said:

“In the institutions of scientific research and higher education of both sides of the frontiers, young Israelis and Arabs could join in a mutual discourse of learning. The old prejudices could be replaced by a new comprehension and respect born of a reciprocal dialogue in the intellectual domain. In such a Middle East, military budgets would spontaneously find a less exacting point of equilibrium. Excessive sums devoted to security could be diverted to development projects. Thus, in full respect of the region’s diversity, an entirely new story, never known or told before, would unfold across the Eastern Mediterranean ... The challenge now is to use this freedom for creative growth. There is only one road to that end. It is the road of recognition, of direct contact, of true cooperation. It is the road of peaceful co-existence.”

He went on to say, “Let us be an active part in the constructive solution of peaceful and economic prosperity for all people in the region.” I was 25 then, and this has inspired me ever since to try to bring the people there together in peace.

[LORD STONE OF BLACKHEATH]

It is self-evident that peace between the Israelis and Palestinians is only possible if the basic aspirations of both peoples are met. Both peoples aspire to self-determination in their own sovereign, independent state. Nothing in the past 50 years has altered this, regardless of other changes. In 1993, under the Oslo accords, the Palestinians finally dropped their demand for 100% of the land and agreed to accept a state alongside Israel in 22% of the land, meaning the West Bank and Gaza, subject to land swaps. There is an overwhelming international consensus on this framework. Any proposal that significantly deviates from it cannot be taken seriously, however powerful the proponents.

This Trump plan, as a strategy to firm up right-wing domestic support in an election year in both the US and Israel, makes a lot of sense. However, as a strategy to bring peace between Israelis and Palestinians, it falls short in its current form. It is time now to recognise a Palestinian state with its capital in East Jerusalem alongside the Israeli state with its capital in West Jerusalem in the hope that the two neighbouring states will eventually form some sort of confederation. Then, something good could come out of the Trump plan.

Since 1967, I have worked to build bridges: through my work at Marks & Spencer with its suppliers in the region; as the chairman of the British Overseas Trade Group for Israel; with the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Egypt; with Palestinian and Jordanian farmers, textile workers, high-tech incubators—the noble Lord, Lord Young was a mentor to me all the way through that—and universities and educationalists; and with sensitive, dedicated NGOs across the divide. I have worked to build bridges and show what could be a better future life for the 125 million citizens of Egypt, Jordan, Israel and Palestine if they spent the same time, effort, money and resources on building peace and co-operation with compassion rather than squandering all that on war and enmity.

As we heard in today's Statement, we in the UK will soon be separated from the EU and will begin to develop a new chapter in our international relations. With our historic association with Egypt, Israel, Palestine and Jordan, which are in key positions in the Mediterranean, Africa and, of course, the Middle East, I suggest to the Minister that we form a group here in the United Kingdom that brings together the many experts that we have in this country to discuss how we might help. It would not be seeking to argue the rights or wrongs of either side but to suggest how, perhaps after a long, thoughtful, positive discussion, we might then invite the parties in the region to come here and discuss a workable plan that might be attractive to all sides. Britain was, after all, the mandatory power and the issuer of the Balfour Declaration. We have an historical responsibility that no European country—or any other country for that matter—has. We were instrumental at the start of the separation and thence discord; now, with our new place in the world, let us try to heal it for the benefit of all peoples.

6.13 pm

Baroness Northover (LD): My Lords, I too thank the noble Baroness, Lady Tonge, for securing this extremely important debate. We have heard some very

moving accounts, not least from the noble Baroness, Lady Altmann, and the noble Lords, Lord Leigh and Lord Mitchell.

As the noble Lord, Lord Mitchell, spoke, I retrieved a quote that I saw the other day from Bernie Sanders that is really worth quoting. He draws on his own family background and goes on to say:

“I see Israel as having the capacity to contribute to peace and prosperity for the entire region, yet unable to achieve this in part because of its unresolved conflict with the Palestinians. And I see a Palestinian people yearning to make their contribution ... yet crushed beneath a military occupation that is now over a half-century old, creating a daily reality of pain, humiliation and resentment.”

It is quite sad. So we come to his competitor, as it were, President Trump, and the plan of his son-in-law, which has been described as the deal of the century. From what we have heard in this debate, it does not look like it is quite that deal.

President Trump revealed the plan on 28 January 2020, alongside the Prime Minister of Israel. As others have noted, no Palestinian was present—not a good omen. As it turns out, the plan does not affirm that Palestinians have rights. Israelis have rights; Palestinians have obligations. The plan would be for Israel to annex the Jordan Valley and most of Area C, amounting to about 30% to 40% of the occupied West Bank. There would be a Palestinian state but with very limited sovereignty. Israel would have “overriding security control”. All entry and exit points would be controlled by Israel. Jerusalem would not be a shared capital. The state would have no airport, and no independent port. All the 150 settlements and over 100 outposts in the West Bank would be annexed to Israel. Israel would be free to expand in the annexed areas. The World Bank identifies 227 individual Palestinian areas in the West Bank, with “contiguity” given simply through a series of tunnels and corridors that might allow Palestinian transport. All these could be closed down if required by Israel. A similar corridor would connect the West Bank to Gaza—I note what my noble friend Lord Palmer said about defending that territory. Israel would be granted “sovereign” control of Gaza's territorial waters, including Gaza's offshore gas. Israel would retain overall control of the water supply.

Once the plan was announced, there were immediate fears that Israel would start annexing lands which the United States, not the UN, had taken it upon itself seemingly to grant it. So how was it that the United Kingdom responded so warmly to this plan? The Foreign Secretary stated:

“We welcome the release of the United States' proposal for peace between Israelis and Palestinians. This is clearly a serious proposal, reflecting extensive time and effort.”

He encouraged the parties to give it “genuine and fair consideration”. That was on the very same day that he stated:

“Today, the UK and our international partners have collectively sent a message to Russia that we do not and will not accept its illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol. We will impose serious costs through active maintenance of sanctions on those who seek to incorporate Crimea and Sevastopol into Russia.”

Could the Government not see the irony in the two statements they made on 28 January?

The following day, 29 January, when there was an Urgent Question in both Houses, this was added to the Government's position:

"The United Kingdom's position has not changed. Our view remains that the best way to achieve peace is through substantive peace talks between parties, leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, based on the 1967 borders, with agreed land swaps, Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states and a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees."—[*Official Report*, 30/1/20; col. 1516.]

By 31 January we have:

"The United Kingdom is concerned by reports of possible moves toward annexation of parts of the West Bank by Israel. Any such unilateral moves would be damaging to renewed efforts to re-start peace negotiations, and contrary to international law. Any changes to the status quo cannot be taken forward without an agreement negotiated by the parties themselves."

Any contribution that the noble Lord the Minister played in that shift in the Government's response to the Trump plan should be welcomed. I noticed that the noble Lord has a bit of a cold, and I hope that coronavirus will not remove him from his current involvement in this and other issues; he has a key position. Like other noble Lords, I seek categorical assurances from him that we will continue to adhere to our support for international law and opposition to the annexation of settlements.

The Arab League has unanimously rejected the Trump proposal. It has stated that there will be no co-operation with any implementation of the plan, which it was expected to fund. However, Israel's Prime Minister has now said he would reopen a project to build 3,500 homes for settlers in one of the most sensitive areas of the occupied West Bank.

There is talk of realities on the ground, but these must be subject to the rule of law. It is worth thinking about the examples of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, which the USSR illegally and unilaterally occupied, then incorporated in 1939. For several decades the reality on the ground was that they were part of the USSR, but international law said otherwise. Britain therefore continued to recognise them as independent, sovereign states, even though they had been forced to become Soviet republics. When the USSR collapsed, these states resumed their independence. Stalin could not unilaterally change international law—nor can Trump.

The international consensus for decades, rooted in international law, is that a proper, workable and sustainable basis for negotiations is a two-state solution, with a shared capital of Jerusalem, based on the 1967 lines. We cannot allow President Trump to rip up a cardinal principle of international law, the inadmissibility of acquiring territory through war. If we turn a blind eye to that, how will Russia interpret this in relation to Crimea, or Turkey in northern Syria, or China in its region?

As my noble friend Lord Oates so brilliantly expressed, it is essential—absolutely vital—that it is recognised that this plan is simply not in Israel's interests. It would surely mean the end of the two-state solution, as the noble Marquess, Lord Lothian, and others have said. A one-state solution has major implications for Israel, which rightly points to its history of democracy. That democracy must be based on equal rights for all its citizens. It is worth thinking through the implications for Israel.

It has become urgent that Palestine should be formally recognised as a state, as others have said. Almost 140 countries have now done that; it is time the United Kingdom did so. In the letter to which noble Lords have referred, 50 former European leaders and Foreign Ministers have expressed serious concerns about the Trump plan. They point out:

"Instead of promoting peace, it risks fuelling the conflict – at the expense of Israeli and Palestinian civilians alike, and with grave implications for ... the wider region."

They urge the international community to "prevent such a scenario from unfolding"

for the future of the Palestinians, the Israelis and the international rules-based order. The EU has already said:

"Steps towards annexation, if implemented, could not pass unchallenged."

Now that we have left the EU, what position do we take on this? What will we do? What actions will we take with our allies if the Israeli Government take the opportunity, which they may see as time-limited by November's US election, and annex the lands that Trump's son-in-law has offered them? How do the Government prove that we are not in a weakened position, out of the EU and needing a trade deal with the United States? What action will we take if the Israeli Government do not adhere to international law?

6.23 pm

Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab): My Lords, I too thank the noble Baroness, Lady Tonge, for giving us the opportunity to debate this very important issue. Like many of my noble friends, I have had a long association with Labour Friends of Israel. I am proud of that association and of Israel's stance on many of the human rights issues we have talked about in this debate.

We have also heard in this debate the long-standing policy of successive British Governments, not just this one, to seek a peace plan for the Middle East based on a viable two-state solution. However, as many noble Lords have said, this plan would give the Palestinians a state only after four years, consisting of just 75% of the West Bank, with fragmented bits of land joined by narrow corridors, plus Gaza linked by a tunnel. In place of East Jerusalem as their capital, they are offered the suburban area of Abu Dis. The plan has nothing in common with the Oslo accords and destroys any prospect of an independent, contiguous Palestinian state. It legitimises the illegal annexation of Palestinian land for settlers and puts the whole of Jerusalem under Israeli control.

As Amir Peretz, leader of the Israeli Labor Party, made clear,

"unilateral annexations or steps that undermine the concept of two states living peacefully side by side is a recipe for further trouble and turmoil."

Can I ask the Minister whether he or the Foreign Secretary made specific representations to their American counterparts on the idea of an undivided Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and tell them what a backward step for peace it would be?

As we have heard, the statement by Josep Borrell Fontelles, the EU high representative, stressed the EU's continued commitment to a two-state solution

[LORD COLLINS OF HIGHBURY]

based on the 1967 borders, in accordance with the international parameters. Mention has been made in the debate of today's *Guardian* letter on the plan from prominent European politicians. Does the Minister, like them, agree with the EU that Israeli steps

"towards annexation, if implemented, could not pass unchallenged", as they would impair the fundamental international norm banning the acquisition of territory by force? The Minister must make clear from the Dispatch Box today that Britain as a country still abides by all the international laws and UN resolutions which rule that the annexation of Palestinian land and the building of settlements is illegal, and that it must be condemned, not legitimised in the form of this plan. Labor Knesset Member Itzik Shmuli argued that it would not,

"contribute to security, negates the important recognition of the two-state solution, rejects any chance to achieve separation and will bring about the fatal demand for a single state, which contradicts our national and security interests",

as the noble Baroness just highlighted. Even Benny Gantz, Netanyahu's main challenger in the election on 2 March, has opposed immediate annexation, and, while welcoming Trump's proposals, suggested that he would not act in the unilateral manner Netanyahu is proposing, and would work,

"in full co-ordination with the Governments of the US, Jordan, Egypt, others in the region and the Palestinians."

The then Foreign Office Minister Andrew Murrison, in response to an Urgent Question on 30 January from Emily Thornberry, repeated official policy when he said that the UK wanted

"to see a two-state solution based on 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as a shared capital and a proper settlement for refugees."—[*Official Report*, Commons, 30/1/20; col. 933.]

However, despite these words of comfort, he went on to welcome Trump's proposals as a possible route towards restarting peace talks, with Prime Minister Johnson arguing that it,

"has the merit of a two-state solution".—[*Official Report*, Commons, 29/1/20; col. 770.]

How can they suggest that it will break the deadlock? It beggars belief. To impose something on one of the parties cannot be the basis on which negotiations can begin. Simply adding that they do not endorse the plan's contents will not change what many will see as a "shameful betrayal", as Emily Thornberry put it, of previous UK support for a viable two-state solution. As we have heard, Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian National Authority, in rejecting Trump's proposals declared:

"We say one thousand times 'No, no, no' to the deal of the century."

Murrison's hopes of a positive response from the Arab nations has also suffered a blow, as we have heard in the debate, with the unanimous rejection of the plan by the Arab League and subsequently the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. The Arab League said that Trump's plan did not satisfy

"the minimum rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people."

Instead, the Arab League reiterated its support for the 2002 peace initiative, as the noble Baroness has highlighted, which endorsed a Palestinian state on the 1967 lines with East Jerusalem as its capital. Does the

Minister accept that any peace plan without Palestinian participation is no peace plan at all? A lasting and sustainable peace will be achieved only through direct talks between Israel and the Palestinians, with compromise and concessions on both sides. This plan clearly fails that test and, far from breaking the deadlock, will entrench opinions. From this side of the House, we will continue to press for an immediate return to meaningful negotiations leading to a diplomatic resolution.

While there is understandable anger in Palestine over this proposed plan, does the Minister agree with me that this must not and cannot be used as an excuse by Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other terror groups to launch more indiscriminate attacks against innocent Israeli citizens, and will he join me in condemning anyone who takes such action? If the Minister agrees that the only way to achieve peace in the Middle East is through a two-state solution with a secure and viable state of Israel living alongside a secure, viable and contiguous state of Palestine, then—as many other noble Lords have asked tonight—why will this Government not recognise the state of Palestine?

6.31 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon) (Con):

My Lords, first, I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Tonge, for tabling this debate and for her ongoing interest in the Middle East peace process. I would also like to thank all noble Lords for their insightful and valuable contributions to what has been a very absorbing debate. We have had moments of birthdays being mentioned. I add my own best wishes to my noble friend Lord Young, who is 88 years young today—he lives up to his name—and who shares a birthday with my daughter. I fear she will be extremely disappointed that Daddy is still at your Lordships' House. Lady Ahmad will be even more displeased because, at this particular time, I should be at a parent-teacher evening—but such is the challenge of debates that are called in the House.

Leaving my personal challenges aside, we have before us a challenge and an issue that has, again, brought very expert contributions. It would be remiss of me not to look again at the personal insights we got, in particular those of the noble Lord, Lord Mitchell. I am sure I speak for all noble Lords when I say that we were truly delighted to hear of the family reunion, which, again, shows the strength of our global links and how, notwithstanding the challenges and the tragedy of the Holocaust—which was poignantly mentioned by several noble Lords, including my noble friend Lord Leigh—there is still hope from the tragedy and genocide that took place because, even now, families can still come together.

The UK's position on the Middle East peace process is clear and, I say to the noble Baroness, Lady Northover, has not changed. Our view remains, clearly, that the best way to achieve peace, as the noble Lord, Lord Collins, stated, is through substantive peace talks between the parties, leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders with agreed land swaps—which, as the noble Lord, Lord Palmer, mentioned, need to

be fair, with Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states and with a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees. We had some innovative suggestions on that, including from the noble Lord, Lord Davies. I am sure that other noble Lords reflected on the issue of refugees. The noble Lord, Lord Singh of Wimbledon, also talked about the importance of the humanity that brings communities and faiths together in the Holy Land.

However, we have to acknowledge that progress towards meaningful peace has stalled. I totally align myself with the comments of the noble Lord, Lord Collins, that, despite the stalling and despite whatever is on the table, at no time should this be used as an excuse by those who seek to cause further division. Hamas's and Hezbollah's actions, particularly those that impact on the security of the State of Israel, have to be condemned, and rightly so.

We should not forget that this is not just an issue of one religion over the other. I never see this in the eyes of religion. Many Arabs, as I have seen myself, live very peacefully and lead very prosperous lives in places such as Haifa in the State of Israel. They are integrated into society and, as my noble friend Lord Leigh reminded us, into political society in Israel.

However, it is true that the issue has stalled. Israelis and Palestinians deserve better. They deserve a durable resolution that brings dignity and security for all. As my noble friend Lady Morris said, Palestinians deserve self-determination and freedom from occupation—a point which was well made and poignantly articulated by the noble Lord, Lord Oates. Israelis equally deserve to live free of terrorist rocket fire and to enjoy fruitful co-operation with their neighbours in the region. As I said, I have seen directly how communities can live together. There should be a vision. If there is a Palestinian state and Jewish communities wish to live there, they should have that right, as Arab citizens do today in the State of Israel.

My right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary made clear in his statement on 28 January:

“A peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians that leads to peaceful coexistence could unlock the potential of the entire region”.

I pay tribute to my noble friend Lady Morris of Bolton, who, as a trade envoy, has sought under challenging circumstances to give hope to people on both sides and the opportunity of a brighter future. The noble Lord, Lord Stone, always provides a sense of hope and optimism. I have seen how Israeli and Arab communities in the West Bank are working together for a common good and common prosperity.

However, this will happen only if the parties can find a path back to negotiations, as the noble Lord, Lord Collins, said, and secure a settlement that is acceptable to all. That is why our first priority must be to encourage Israelis, Palestinians and international partners, including the United States, to find a way to reopen the necessary and essential dialogue. There is no other path to peace.

I assure my noble friend Lord Lothian that we work closely with the US on matters involving the Middle East—but this was and is an American plan. We were not involved in its formulation. I assure the

noble Lord, Lord Collins, and others that the US is aware that our position on the Middle East peace process has not changed. As my noble friend Lady Altmann said, the US proposals are now on the table. The UK looks to the Palestinian leadership to offer its own vision for a settlement, and to find a way to re-engage with the negotiation process so that its direct concerns and priorities can also be discussed.

We hope that President Abbas will return to the negotiations. However, as several noble Lords said—my noble friend Lord Davies of Gower made the point well—we must stress upon the Palestinians and President Abbas that negotiations are the way forward. However, if he declined to negotiate, I assure noble Lords that that would not justify unilateral action such as the annexation of parts of the West Bank by Israel, as the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Southwark referred to in his contribution.

Also, as my right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary said, the UK is concerned about the reports of possible Israeli moves towards annexation. We believe that any such unilateral moves would be damaging to the renewed efforts to restart peace negotiations and contrary to international law. No changes to the status quo can be made without an agreement negotiated by the parties themselves. Therefore, let me assure the noble Baroness, Lady Northover, and the noble Lord, Lord Collins, that we made it clear in our statement recently at the UN Security Council on 11 February that we remain committed to our long-standing position on the Middle East peace process and to previous UN Security Council resolutions. We strongly advocate for a two-state solution and for a meaningful return to negotiations, both in public and in private, to all concerned parties.

The noble Lord, Lord Collins, asked a specific question on the UK's position on Israeli settlements. That is clear; they are illegal under international law and damaging, we believe, to renewed efforts to launch peace negotiations. We also continue to make clear our view that the only way that we can see proper negotiations is if the leaders of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories can determine whether any proposals might be able to meet the needs and aspirations of the people they represent. Let me assure the noble Lord, Lord Warner, that that remains our position. My noble friend Lady Morris also alluded to this.

In parallel, we will continue our efforts to build the components of a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians, including through our continued support, through DfID funding and CSSF programmes. I hope that my noble friend Lord Suri is reassured by that. I particularly listened to his remarks on the importance of the private sector, and I am sure I speak for all noble Lords on the contribution in particular of my noble friend Lord Young, who brought great insight into some of the experience he had directly with Mr Arafat and others. Indeed, notwithstanding the lack of traction, I think that that still provides hope that there can be so much that can be achieved together.

Specific questions were raised by my noble friend Lord Leigh on the issue of Palestinian textbooks. The noble Lord, Lord Anderson, also alluded to this, as well as my noble friends Lady Altmann and Lord Davies

[LORD AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON]

of Gower. Let me assure noble Lords that the UK does not fund textbooks in the OPTs, but we are deeply concerned about allegations of incitement to violence in some of the newer textbooks. Indeed, it was following the UK's call for action—my noble friend Lord Davies asked this specific question—that the EU agreed to lead an independent review of the content in Palestinian textbooks, which is currently under way. We know that the Palestinian Authority is currently revising its textbooks, collecting a range of feedback, and will update them before the start of the new school year in September. In the interim, let me assure my noble friend that we will continue to raise any such concerns about incitement, as we do elsewhere, and the former DfID Secretary of State did so during a meeting with the PA Education Minister earlier in February.

To conclude, Israelis and Palestinians alike deserve peace, stability and opportunity. Meaningful dialogue offers the only path towards those long-overdue goals. That is why we are urging the parties to find a way to reopen the necessary dialogue. We hope that leaders on both sides will give the US peace plan genuine and fair consideration. The reasoning behind that, as articulated by my noble friend Lady Altmann, is that it offers, we believe, a first step on the road back to negotiations. At the same time, we will continue to caution against annexation, which would undermine the basis for a sustainable settlement and, in so doing, strip away hope for future generations of Israelis and Palestinians.

My noble friend Lord Young talked about the potential that exists when countries work together. The noble Lord, Lord Stone, talked about communities working together, as did the noble Lord, Lord Singh, and my noble friend Lady Morris, among others. I end my comments with a quote:

“Peace with the Palestinians will open ports of peace all around the Mediterranean. The duty of leaders is to pursue freedom ceaselessly, even in the face of hostility, in the face of doubt and disappointment. Just imagine what could be.”

Those were the words of a distinguished leader of the State of Israel, a visionary who knew that the pathway to peace, no matter how bleak the outlook, should be a flame that is never extinguished—the words of Shimon Peres.

6.44 pm

Baroness Tonge: My Lords, I would like to comment on every speech that has been made in this fascinating debate, but noble Lords will be relieved to hear that I shall not. I shall just thank all noble Lords. I still think that the British Government have an overwhelming responsibility in this peace process. We really must accept that, do something about it and give it some muscle this time, before more decades of suffering pass for both the Palestinians and the Israelis. I thank all noble Lords for the debate. I hope that the noble Lord, Lord Young, gets home while there is still some birthday cake left and that the noble Lord, Lord Ahmad, will through his front door without having it hurled at him. I hope he will wish his daughter a happy birthday from all of us.

Motion agreed.

Terrorism Act 2000 (Proscribed Organisations) (Amendment) Order 2020

Motion to Approve

6.45 pm

Moved by Baroness Williams of Trafford

That the draft Order laid before the House on 24 February be approved.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Baroness Williams of Trafford) (Con): My Lords, noble Lords will want to be aware that earlier this week we also laid an order under Section 3(6) of the Terrorism Act 2000, recognising that System Resistance Network or SRN is an alias of the right-wing terrorist organisation National Action, which was proscribed in the UK in December 2016. That order came into effect on Tuesday. We are clear that these groups should not be able to continue their activities by simply operating under alternative names.

The threat level in the UK, which is set by the Independent Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre, remains at substantial. This means that a terrorist attack in our country is likely and could occur without warning. While we can never entirely eliminate the threat from terrorism, we are determined to do all we can to minimise the threat to the UK and our interests abroad and to disrupt those who would engage in it. Recognising that terrorism is a global threat that is best tackled in partnership, it is also important that we demonstrate our support for other members of the international community in their efforts to tackle terrorism wherever it occurs.

The order before the House today adds Sonnenkrieg Division, otherwise known as SKD, to the list of proscribed terrorist organisations; merges the proscriptions of Kurdistan Workers' Party, otherwise known as Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan or PKK, and Teyrebazene Azadiye Kurdistan, otherwise known as TAK; and recognises Hezen Parastina Gel, otherwise known as HPG, as an alias of PKK by amending Schedule 2 to the Terrorism Act 2000.

This is the 24th order under that Act. Proscription is an important part of the Government's strategy to disrupt terrorist activities, and it sends a strong message that terrorist activity is not tolerated wherever it happens. Under Section 3 of the Terrorism Act 2000, the Home Secretary has the power to proscribe an organisation if she believes it is concerned in terrorism. If the statutory test is met, the Home Secretary may then exercise her discretion to proscribe the organisation. She takes into account a number of factors in considering whether to exercise this discretion. They include the nature and scale of an organisation's activities, the extent of the organisation's presence in the UK and the need to support other members of the international community in tackling terrorism.

The effect of proscription is that a listed organisation is outlawed and is unable to operate in the UK. It is a criminal offence for a person to belong to, invite or provide support for, or arrange a meeting in support of a proscribed organisation and recklessly to express support for a proscribed organisation. It is also an

offence to wear clothing or display articles in public, such as flags, which arouse reasonable suspicion that an individual is a member or supporter of a proscribed organisation, or to publish an image of an article of a proscribed organisation, such as a flag or logo, in the same circumstances.

Proscription sends a strong message to deter fundraising and recruitment for proscribed organisations. The assets of a proscribed organisation can also become subject to seizure as terrorist assets. Proscription can also support other disruptions of terrorist activity, including, for example, immigration powers that allow individuals linked to a proscribed organisation to be excluded from the UK on account of their presence in the UK not being in the public interest.

Given its wide-ranging impact, the Home Secretary exercises the power to proscribe only after thoroughly reviewing the available evidence on an organisation. This includes information taken from both open sources and sensitive intelligence, as well as from careful consultation across government, including with the intelligence and law enforcement agencies.

The cross-government Proscription Review Group supports the Home Secretary in this decision-making process. The Home Secretary's decision to proscribe is taken only after great care and consideration of each case. Given the impact the power can have, it is appropriate that proscriptions must be approved by both Houses.

Having carefully considered all the evidence, the Home Secretary believes that SKD is currently concerned in terrorism and that TAK and HPG are aliases of PKK. As noble Lords will appreciate, I am unable to comment on specific intelligence, but I can provide a summary of each group's activities in turn.

This order proscribes SKD, a white supremacist group that was established in March 2018 following a splinter of System Resistance Network, which is an alias of the proscribed group National Action. Members of the group were convicted of encouraging terrorism and possession of documents useful to a terrorist in June 2019. The group has encouraged and glorified

acts of terrorism via its social media posts and distributed imagery. This includes an image depicting the Duke of Sussex being shot—as part of its campaign against “race traitors”—following his marriage to the Duchess of Sussex, and home-made propaganda using Nazi imagery calling for attacks on minorities. The images can reasonably be taken as implying that these acts should be emulated and therefore amount to the unlawful glorification of terrorism.

This order also amends the proscription of PKK and TAK to recognise TAK and HPG as aliases of PKK. As I am sure noble Lords will be aware, PKK is primarily a separatist movement that seeks an independent Kurdish state in south-east Turkey. The group was formed in 1978 by Abdullah Öcalan. In 1984 the group launched an armed struggle calling for an independent Kurdish state.

PKK has been proscribed as a terrorist organisation in the UK since March 2001 and is also listed as a terrorist organisation in more than a dozen other countries, as well by the EU. TAK has also been proscribed in the UK since 2006. However, we now assess that it is an alias of PKK. HPG is also assessed to be an alias of PKK.

The Government keep their response to terrorism under review and it is entirely appropriate that we take all available opportunities to strengthen the UK's response to both domestic and international threats. Amending the PKK proscription to recognise TAK and HPG as aliases of this organisation is part of that response.

In conclusion, I think it is right that we proscribe SKD—and amend the PKK proscription to recognise TAK and HPG as aliases—on the list of proscribed organisations in Schedule 2 to the Terrorism Act 2000. Subject to the agreement of this House and the other place, the order will come into force on Friday 28 February.

I beg to move.

Motion agreed.

House adjourned at 6.54 pm.

Volume 802
No. 31

Thursday
27 February 2020

CONTENTS

Thursday 27 February 2020
