



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Meeting of the Parliament

Tuesday 6 February 2018

Session 5



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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Scottish Parliament

Tuesday 6 February 2018

[The Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 14:00]

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Good afternoon. The first item of business today is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader is Pastor David Fraser, from Alva Baptist church in Clackmannanshire.

Pastor David Fraser (Alva Baptist Church, Clackmannanshire): Thank you, Presiding Officer and members of Parliament, for your invitation. It is an honour to lead you today to reflect on our roles as leaders—as fellow human beings who have been entrusted with leadership. Your willingness to bear the weight of responsibility for decisions that are taken in this chamber is appreciated by any person who has honestly considered the role of leadership with any understanding of what that entails. I thank you for that.

I stand before you not as a foreigner but rather as an immigrant who has been welcomed by the people of Scotland and as a person who contributes to society and, indeed, civic life, as you do. And I stand today as a messenger of the gospel of Jesus Christ, may his name be praised. The bible represents him to be the only son of God, and his message is this: God loves the whole world. The father sent his only son on a mission for the good of all nations and all people.

It is difficult to find fault with the teachings of Jesus. His sermon on the mount is appreciated by people of all faiths and no faith. I ask you to reflect on the core message of Jesus to the people of earth: repent of sin and follow God, who loves people.

I have not come to declare my judgment of what sin is or to prescribe my estimation of its cure. I am not here to lobby for my understanding of what it means to follow God. I have come as a messenger, a modern-day prophet, if you will. I have come merely to read words that are historically attributed to Jesus—words that have stood the test of time and which, if they are true, will be a standard of measure for all the people of the earth, whom God loves.

This is Jesus' message as recorded in the holy bible:

"God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God's one and only Son. And the judgment is based on this fact: God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants."

I know, of course, that not everyone agrees with that. It is the prerogative of every person to determine their course through this life. I respect that. However, our tolerance of people's ideas requires that we consider those words, as well. For, if they are true, the consequences for each one of us here today is serious. Further, the consequences for the nation as a whole and, in fact, for the entire world are serious.

You lead and people follow. In light of the words that I have read out today, spoken by Jesus, about light and dark, evil and right and judgment and salvation, please consider well where you are leading the nation and how you are doing it.

Thank you for your time. I hope that you will agree that we have spent it well.

Business Motion

14:04

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-010339, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a revised business programme for today and tomorrow.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revisions to the programme of business for:

(a) Tuesday 6 February 2018—

delete

5.00 pm Decision Time

and insert

5.30 pm Decision Time

(b) Wednesday 7 February 2018—

after

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions
Economy, Jobs and Fair Work;
Finance and Constitution

insert

followed by Ministerial Statement: HMICS Strategic Review of Undercover Policing

delete

5:00 pm Decision Time

and insert

5:30 pm Decision Time—[*Joe FitzPatrick*]

Motion agreed to.

Topical Question Time

14:05

University Applications

1. Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service recording a fall in university applications by 18-year-olds from the most-deprived areas. (S5T-00913)

The Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science (Shirley-Anne Somerville): UCAS figures that were published yesterday show that the number of applicants of all ages from our most-deprived communities, and in particular those in their 20s, is increasing. That is welcome. However, we have also seen a small decrease, of around 70, in applicants who are aged 18, and that is of course of concern. In 2017, we saw a 13 per cent increase in the number of people from the most-deprived communities getting places to study at university. If we are to see a similar increase in 2018, there is clearly is much more work to do.

The commission on widening access made a clear recommendation for universities to try to maximise applications from disadvantaged learners by promoting access thresholds to pupils, parents and teachers. Universities must do all that they can to make learners aware where there are still opportunities to apply before the 30 June deadline.

Iain Gray: It is indeed the case that modest progress has been made in closing that gap. That makes it all the more important that we examine the reasons why that progress appears to have stalled.

In his report late last year, the commissioner for widening access pointed out that not only are students from more-deprived areas less likely to apply, they are also less likely to be accepted or to complete their course. We should be concerned indeed. One factor that Sir Peter Scott identifies is support for living while studying. Does the minister agree that a worthwhile response to those figures would be to restore the cuts to grants that her Government made in 2013?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Mr Gray is absolutely correct to point to the commissioner's concern about not just who gets into university but who completes it. I have made that concern clear to university and college principals since I became minister, and it is a concern that we are intensifying through our outcome agreements with the universities. When they are making good progress, we will encourage them to keep doing

so, and when we believe that they need to pick up the pace of change, not just in access to applications and entrance but in completion rates, we will address that through the outcome agreement process.

The commissioner pointed to a variety of issues that may impact on application, entrance and completion rates; student support was one of them. As Mr Gray knows, the Government has recently increased the income threshold from £17,000 to £19,000, which ensures that an extra 3,000 students will get a non-repayable bursary. We will increase the payment threshold and reduce the payment period for loans. The Government has taken action and will continue to take action to ensure that we support the poorest students at university.

Iain Gray: I think that the Government and the minister know that student support matters, as it is one of the factors driving the gap in applications. If the Government did not know that, why would it have commissioned the independent review into student support? However, that review reported, with some modest proposals to improve the circumstances for both higher and further education, back in November 2017. When will the Government respond? "In due course" is not a good enough answer.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: The Government will respond in due course to the review.

I disagree entirely with Mr Gray when he talks about "modest proposals". As I said to him in the chamber last week, the review is asking us to look in particular at an entitlement to funding for further education students. That would have an implication for their ability to access social security. As I said to Mr Gray last week, we could get into a situation in which the Government makes a rush decision to ensure an entitlement or to make changes to FE bursaries only for the Department for Work and Pensions come along and say, "That's great—we will now take that money off the benefits from social security." We are continuing to discuss our progress on the matter with the National Union of Students, and we are discussing progress with the DWP in relation to the interaction between what the review has asked us to do and what the social security benefits system will do, but I will not take action for the sake of an easy headline if, at the end of the day, students would lose out.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): Yesterday, I met the principal of Maxwelltown high school in Dumfries, who told me that students from less privileged backgrounds often take time out of education before going on to university. For example, one student took a year out before enrolling at the University of the West of Scotland for mental health nurse training. She is now

attending university, but the numbers do not recognise that. Does the minister agree that there are different routes for young people into higher education and that the figures quoted do not take account of that?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: It is important that we bear in mind the different ways in which people can get into university and indeed higher education at our colleges. It is important to recognise that it may not be the right track for a young person to leave school and go directly into university, and we should respect them and allow them the flexibility in the system to make that decision if it is right for them. That is entirely the point of us looking at the matter through the prism of what is right for the learner and not what is right for the statistics or indeed for institutions. We intend to continue to encourage that approach.

The figures from UCAS suggest that more people of all ages are applying to go to university. The number of Scotland-domiciled applicants aged 21 to 24 has increased by 4 per cent and the number aged 25 and over has increased by 7 per cent. That is welcome news.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): The minister will be aware from the deliberations of the Education and Skills Committee that there are issues to do with careers guidance in schools and that the real focus, if we are going to improve the situation, should be on talking to youngsters who are much younger than the university application age. Does she agree that much more work needs to be done on careers guidance to ensure that, in future, we do not have the patchy advice that the evidence to our committee shows that we have had?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Liz Smith is correct to point to the work that we need to do long before we get to young people sitting with application forms. This is about encouraging young people to decide what is right for them and recognising that success for them may be an apprenticeship, going to college or going to university: it is about what they want to achieve and the best way for them to achieve that.

An important aspect of that is careers guidance, and a great deal of work is continuing to ensure that we are getting better careers guidance out there and getting the message out, not just to the young people but to teachers, parents and anyone who has an influence on their decisions, about the parity of esteem that we should hold for the different opportunities that are available to our young people, university being an important one of those.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): How does the number of applicants to Scottish higher education institutions compare with the

number of applicants in the rest of the United Kingdom? Does the increase in the number of non-European Union international applicants have an impact on the places that are available for students applying from Scotland?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: The number of applicants to Scottish higher education institutions has increased by 1 per cent to 114,160, and that includes a 13 per cent increase in the number of non-EU international applicants. It is something that we can be exceptionally proud of as a country, and our universities should take great pride in the fact, that we have seen an increase in the number of non-EU international applicants. The number of non-EU international applicants has no impact on the number of places that are available for Scottish students. Scotland-domiciled students, those from the rest of the UK, those from the EU and international students all play equally pivotal roles in making our campuses the proud and diverse campuses that they are today.

Live Animals (Export)

2. Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): I declare an interest as the convener of the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on animal welfare.

To ask the Scottish Government for what reason it does not support a ban on the export of live animals. (S5T-00925)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing): The Scottish Government is committed to the welfare of all animals during transport, whether within the United Kingdom or for export purposes. Animals should be exported only in line with strict welfare standards, which ensure freedom from harm and sufficient rest and nourishment, and ensure that transport welfare rules are fully complied with.

The current European Union regulations and standards provide a rigorous framework to protect and promote the welfare of animals, and have been adopted into our law through the Welfare of Animals (Transport) (Scotland) Regulations 2006. We have been clear since the outcome of the EU referendum that we wish to maintain adherence to current EU standards and regulations, particularly regulations on animal and plant health and food safety, because those remain essential for our reputation and for access EU and other international markets. We will therefore not support any move that creates further challenges or difficulty for our livestock sector or that places Scottish agriculture at a disadvantage.

Christine Grahame: I refer the cabinet secretary to a written answer—albeit that it is from 10 years ago—by Richard Lochhead. It states:

“we would prefer to see a trade in meat rather than live exports. This avoids long distance travel of live animals whilst ensuring better returns across the industry from added value product.”—[*Written Answers*, 22 January 2008; S3W-08022.]

Apart from the not-insignificant matter of animal welfare, can the cabinet secretary outline why he thinks that better returns for the industry are secured by live exports, which seems to depart from what his predecessor said?

Fergus Ewing: I do not agree with that. I agree with Richard Lochhead that live animal exports for breeding are vital for the pedigree livestock sector, and his expressed sentiment that, ideally, animals be killed as close as possible to their farm of origin.

The important point that I wish to stress is that animal welfare is paramount and that the rules and regulations cover very detailed provisions to secure that objective. They do so by making provisions on nourishment, rest and hydration that must be strictly complied with. That is the approach that the Scottish Government believes should be taken and it is one that I believe is supported by the NFU Scotland and other key stakeholders in the sector.

Christine Grahame: I thank the cabinet secretary for his answer, although I think that some of the issues around animal welfare in long transportations will be disputed—and are disputed—by many animal welfare organisations. Can the cabinet secretary reconsider having, at the very least, a consultation on banning live exports, because we are exiting the EU and will not be tied to the regulations? I have to say to the cabinet secretary that I would hate to become by default a fan of Michael Gove.

Fergus Ewing: I am not responsible for whose fan clubs Christine Grahame is in. However, I am responsible for agriculture and can assure the member that the matters to which she has referred are taken with the utmost seriousness.

The position down south on the issue is very confused. There is talk about a ban of live exports for slaughter, but very few or no animals are exported for slaughter from Scotland. The export of live animals from Scotland is done for other reasons—breeding and production. Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs has indicated that the value of that totals £50 million a year. Unless one takes the view that that £50 million should be reduced to zero overnight, it would be better to concentrate on ensuring that we all support the high standards of animal welfare that are rightly required by the regulations.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): I declare an interest as an honorary member of the British Veterinary Association.

What evidence does the cabinet secretary have that a UK-wide ban on live animal exports would damage the livestock sector, specifically in Scotland? Does what the cabinet secretary has said now mean that he will oppose the ban on the export of live animals from other UK countries? In effect, will the Scottish Government be leading a race to the bottom in animal welfare standards?

Fergus Ewing: No. That is complete nonsense. The proposals from Westminster are not clear, although I understand that the manifesto commitment by the Conservative Party was to restrict the ban to animals that are exported for slaughter.

We have taken the view—as, I think, the vast majority of members would—that most animals should be slaughtered as close to the farm as possible. That is why it is so important that our abattoirs continue to function properly. Of the official veterinarians who work in our abattoirs, 95 per cent are European Union nationals, so the greatest practical matter that we should consider at the moment is to ensure that those EU nationals, many of whom are from Spain, are able to continue to staff the abattoirs. Otherwise, the practical problem will be to ensure that slaughter of animals—if Mr Ruskell will care to listen, rather than chattering incessantly behind me—will continue to be done in local abattoirs, which will depend on whether the people from the EU who work in them will be able to stay to carry on their good work.

I emphasise to Mr Ruskell that we are all concerned about animal welfare, consideration of which remains paramount in such matters.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): Mr Gove is reported as wanting a ban on exports of live animals from UK ports. If that occurs, what would be the practical implications for exports from Scotland?

Fergus Ewing: The question is this: what is Mr Gove proposing? I do not know whether Mr Rumbles is clear what is in Mr Gove's mind, but I am not, because he has not set the proposal out clearly. The manifesto commitment was restricted to a ban on exports for the purposes of slaughter. As I understand it, no animals are currently exported to other EU member states for the purposes of slaughter, so the impact of such a ban would be zero, at the moment.

An impact would result if the ban were to be extended to exports for other purposes: namely, pedigree breeding or production. The impacts would be felt by the poultry sector in particular, and by the pig and other livestock sectors. The value of such exports to Scotland was estimated in 2015 by HMRC to be £50 million. If the figures are accurate—I have not had time to study them,

because this topical question was raised only yesterday—the answer to Mr Rumbles's question is that there would be a considerable impact on farmers and farming, especially in the Scottish islands, where transportation of animals, albeit that it is intrastate, is a necessary fact of life.

Draft Budget 2018-19 (Equalities and Human Rights Levers)

14:22

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item is a debate on motion S5M-10214, in the name of Christina McKelvie, on making the most of equalities and human rights levers. I invite all members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons. I call Christina McKelvie to speak to and move the motion on behalf of the Equalities and Human Rights Committee.

Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP): A hundred years ago today, the Representation of the People Act 1918 gave some women the vote, provided that they were aged over 30 and that either they, or their husband, met a property qualification. I noticed that, oddly, the people who drafted it could not bring themselves to refer to women in the long title of the 1918 act. It is clear that we were lumped in with the “other purposes connected therewith” in the introductory paragraph.

A hundred years on, the progress that has been made is apparent. I speak as an elected member of the Scottish Parliament and convener of the Equalities and Human Rights Committee. We have a woman First Minister and a second female Prime Minister, and countless women lead businesses and stand up for their rights and the rights of others. I pay tribute to two such women: Emma Ritch of Engender and Angela O’Hagan, a lecturer at Caledonian University, who have helped the committee’s understanding of the impact of public policy on women and made the case for gender budgeting.

However, I cannot help thinking that more could have been achieved in those 100 years. If we fast forward through the next 100 years and look back, what will we have achieved? Will society truly be more equal, not just for women but for other underrepresented groups? We cannot afford to be complacent. I recognise that members will, by now, be a bit budget weary, but I hope that today’s debate will re-energise members by focusing on the fundamental need for equalities and human rights to be the starting point for budget setting and budget scrutiny.

The public discourse about sexual harassment and equal pay serves as a timely reminder that we must keep pushing forward. More can and must be done to make our society fairer and to make it one in which everyone is respected and treated with dignity. Without women standing up and being heard, would addressing gender inequality to enhance economic growth have been at the top

of the agenda for the World Economic Forum in Davos recently? I really do not think so.

I want to draw the Parliament’s attention to the Equalities and Human Rights Committee’s report entitled “Looking Ahead to the Scottish Government’s Draft Budget 2018-19: Making the Most of Equalities and Human Rights Levers”. By making the most of those tools, we can be more assured that there will be less disconnect between public policy making, resource allocation and stated outcomes. I say a special thank you to all the witnesses who came along to the committee and shared their experiences with us—particularly on the inequality that is faced by the black, Asian and minority ethnic population in Scotland—and those who provided written evidence. I also thank the clerks, the Scottish Parliament information centre and everyone else who helped us to understand some of the technicalities.

I am glad to say that Scotland has been at the forefront of equality budgeting. I couch the rest of my remarks with that in mind.

We are, of course, keen to welcome the Scottish Government’s increased budget for promoting equality. The Government has told us that that £22.7 million will be used, among other things, to resource

“frontline services to tackle violence against women and girls ... to address social isolation and loneliness ... to strengthen community cohesion, and ... to address discrimination and inequality across the protected characteristics.”

The budget is the financial reflection of Scottish Government policy: it displays the Government’s values and priorities. It is therefore important that, rather than being a post hoc exercise, the equality budget statement informs budget setting. I am pleased that the budget process review group recognised that and that the Scottish Government has committed to work with the group to improve the equality assessment of the budget process.

I want to focus on three core areas that featured in our report: the mainstreaming of equalities and its continued importance; the public sector equality duty and its value in gathering data to inform budget setting in times of budgetary challenge; and human rights and what they mean in allocating resources.

As we know, “mainstreaming” has been a buzzword since the 1990s. Some greet the word with a sigh and others say that we already do it. The mainstreaming of equalities is a continuous journey; it is not a destination. I want to reconnect members with what mainstreaming means and why we cannot lose sight of its transformative impact on equality.

Mainstreaming is about better decision making and implementation. It allows for making better

policy and reflects the diversity of different groups to effect change. It is about increased awareness of diversity and needs, and creating change in the culture of an organisation and society to be more open to diversity and differences. It is about social inclusion and cohesion. It ensures that all groups and individuals in society are duly served in the provision of public services and care and are represented in society. It is also about prevention, because consideration of discriminated-against groups should take place at the time of decision making, to prevent discrimination from occurring in the first place.

The committee recognises the substantial progress that the Scottish Government has made on mainstreaming and we welcome its commitment to us to further improve mainstreaming within the Scottish Government. It would be helpful if the cabinet secretary shared with us today what outcomes the Scottish Government has set for mainstreaming up to 2021 and how they translate into resource allocation.

I think that we all agree that embracing mainstreaming throughout an organisation can have a transformational effect and can help to inform difficult budget decisions and make them a bit more transparent.

The public sector equality duty, which underpins mainstreaming, has the potential to unlock a rich seam of equalities data to improve decision making. The duty's purpose is to ensure that public authorities and those that carry out public functions consider how they can positively contribute to a more equal society through advancing equality and good relations in their day-to-day business, to deliver improved outcomes for all. In doing so, public bodies should have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other prohibited conduct; the need to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; and the need to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. Those are collectively known as the three needs.

The committee expressed concern in its report that local authorities may not be consistently incorporating equalities into their budget-setting process, and we intend to write to them about that.

We appreciate and warmly welcome the Scottish Government's willingness to share what it has learned from its work on equalities and budget setting and to learn from other public bodies. We keenly await the Equality and Human Rights Commission's review of the public sector equality duty, which is expected in the spring. That should help to inform the way forward.

We note from the cabinet secretary's response to our report that, this year, the Government will conduct a review of the implementation of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012. It would be helpful if the cabinet secretary could provide further detail on what form the review will take. We would be happy to share the information that we receive about equality and local authorities' budget-setting processes with the Scottish Government to help to inform the review.

I will briefly discuss human rights and its integration into the budget-setting process, which is an issue of particular importance given that the United Kingdom is a signatory to a number of United Nations treaties. The committee has put its efforts into exploring that development and raising awareness about the concept, which is important to the progressive realisation of human rights and ensuring that there is no rollback of rights in times of budgetary constraint. There is a state obligation for no regression. Regression would mean that immediate action would have to be taken. Budgetary decisions as they relate to human rights must be monitored. To show my commitment, I will attend a human rights budgeting master-class tomorrow morning. I would be happy to share my new knowledge with any member who is interested in learning more.

We heard from Judith Robertson, the chair of the Scottish Human Rights Commission, why using the PANEL principles is important for getting budget decisions right. For those who are not au fait with the principles, they are participation, accountability, non-discrimination, empowerment and legality. Judith Robertson underlined their importance to us when she said:

"if we get the approach right in relation to the people who are most vulnerable, everybody will benefit."—[*Official Report, Equalities and Human Rights Committee*, 16 November 2017; c 9.]

We want to see the Scottish Government lead the way and adopt a national direction on human rights-based budgeting. Implementing a national framework for human rights-based budgeting would keep Scotland leading in this field. Today, I hope that members will agree that incorporating equalities and human rights and meeting people's needs make good business and societal sense.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the findings and recommendations in the Equalities and Human Rights Committee's 7th Report, 2017, (Session 5), *Looking Ahead to the Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2018-19: Making the Most of Equalities and Human Rights Levers* (SP Paper 246).

The Presiding Officer: I call Angela Constance.

14:32

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities (Angela Constance): Thank you very much, Presiding Officer. How long do I have?

The Presiding Officer: Six minutes.

Angela Constance: Thank you.

Ensuring that the budget tackles inequality in Scotland is a key priority for the Scottish Government, and I am pleased to discuss our achievements and areas for further improvement.

I extend my thanks to the Equalities and Human Rights Committee for its recent report “Looking Ahead to the Scottish Government’s Draft Budget 2018-19: Making the Most of Equalities and Human Rights Levers”. I have discussed the report at committee and responded in writing to it.

For the past nine years, the Scottish Government has undertaken equality analysis and assessment and, crucially, published that alongside the draft budget in the equality budget statement. Few countries in the world, if any, assess across the full range of protected characteristics as Scotland does, and I warmly welcome the constructive cross-party scrutiny of the statement.

As in previous years, the Scottish Government has been supported in the equality budget process by the equality budget advisory group. I thank its members not only for their insight and expertise, but for the challenge that they bring. I also thank the Parliament’s budget process review group for its very careful consideration of the budgetary processes and for its support to continued equality analysis of the budget.

As acknowledged by the budget process review group, the Scottish Government has made significant advances in equality assessment. I will mention some recent improvements, not least in response to the committee convener’s opening remarks.

We already provide measurement of outcomes through the national performance framework, with key indicators being published alongside the draft budget. A review of the national outcomes and national indicators is currently under way, and a fundamental aim of the review is to ensure that tackling inequality underpins the revised framework. We aim to break down as many of the national indicators as possible by the protected equality characteristics and by inequalities, in relation to deprivation and place.

We have started to publish analysis of how budgetary decisions impact on people across the income spectrum and across protected characteristics. Our recent income tax discussion

paper presented distributional analysis associated with example income tax changes. On draft budget day, we updated that analysis, publishing a paper on the impact of the income tax proposals in the draft budget. The analysis is provided for different income groups and is extended to assess the impact of income tax policy in relation to age, gender and disability.

The analysis showed, for example, that 44 per cent of women pay tax and that 79 per cent of those female income tax payers will pay less income tax in 2018-19 than they paid in 2017-18. Of course, we must look at the issue in the round. That finding reflects, in part, a lower-waged economy for women and the greater prevalence among women of part-time work, which enables them to meet caring responsibilities. We must always scratch beneath the surface of the headline statistics and consider what they mean in the real world and in people’s—women’s, in this context—day-to-day lives

Last year, the Scottish Government published our “Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2017”. Working with stakeholders, we set out a new suite of equality outcomes for 2017 to 2021. The outcomes build on a wide range of policies that have been developed and implemented over the past few years to drive forward equality, including the fairer Scotland action plan, the race equality framework, the race equality action plan, a fairer Scotland for disabled people, the equally safe strategy for the prevention of violence against women and girls, and the fair work framework.

The Scottish Government has shown its commitment to demonstrating leadership on human rights. The recently established First Minister’s advisory group on human rights has been asked to make recommendations to ensure that Scotland continues to lead by example in human rights. As part of that work, we will welcome advice from the group on how to further demonstrate budgetary commitment to human rights.

There has been a lot of action, but we are not complacent. There is always space to develop further and articulate our equality assessment of the budget, and we are committed to work with the equality and budget advisory group to seek improvements—indeed, that work has already started. Meetings with officials took place before Christmas, and just yesterday my colleague the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution met members to discuss the budget process review group’s recommendations, which he has accepted. I will follow that up when I meet the group later this month. When discussions have progressed, I will provide the Equalities and Human Rights Committee with details about our

plans on that and many other matters, as I committed to do.

14:38

Annie Wells (Glasgow) (Con): In the pursuit of equality across all Government portfolios, from justice to health to education, the draft budget has been accompanied by an equality budget statement for the past nine years. Last year, the budget process review group published an independent report in which it called for the equality dimension of the budget to be given even greater priority, so I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak about the recommendations in the Equalities and Human Rights Committee's report and to hear from the Scottish Government about what actions it will take to further shape its equality approach to the budget.

Scotland has much to celebrate when it comes to equality. I need only look at last year's collaborative work by the Equalities and Human Rights Committee and the Education and Skills Committee on prejudice-based bullying to see the impact that putting equality at the forefront of policy ambition can have. For all the positives, however, I hope that the Scottish Government will adopt some of the recommendations in the committee's report when it comes to the budget-setting process.

To make the most of equalities and human rights levers, we need to have mainstreaming and accountability, and there needs to be an improvement in the informed use of data. During its evidence sessions, the committee heard from Dr Angela O'Hagan of Glasgow Caledonian University's women in Scotland's economy research centre, who said that although Scotland has been a pioneer over the years, progress has been hindered by the disconnect that exists between positive discourse and its implementation in spending departments. It was frequently stated that equality mainstreaming was not yet routine across the portfolios and that spending should be planned and proactive. It was felt that the equality budget statement should include systematic consideration of known long-term issues, so that we might work ahead of them rather than in reaction to them.

I will give an example that was highlighted in evidence. If we are aware that there are around 15,000 wheelchair users in Scotland and that ethnic minorities are four times more likely to be in overcrowded housing, it makes business sense to resolve such issues in the context of the wider Government ambition to build 50,000 affordable homes. Paramount in that, of course, is the need to work within budget realities while being transparent about how equalities funding is allocated—at least in part—within departments.

Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab): Does Annie Wells agree that those affordable homes should be wheelchair accessible?

Annie Wells: Yes, I agree that we should look at what we need to do, because we know that adapting homes is dearer than making them ready for purpose.

Only by being transparent about funding allocation can we have full budget scrutiny. Furthermore, in any attempt to fully mainstream equalities in the budget process, there needs to be a concerted effort to move the onus away from the equality unit solely and to make it the responsibility of Government department leaders, to ensure that equality-based policies are working. As an example of that, Chris Oswald of the Equality and Human Rights Commission highlighted to the committee the 2014 apprenticeship scheme, which was felt to have missed a great opportunity to recruit people with disabilities and those from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Underpinning that more strategic approach is the continual need to improve the data that is available so that priority areas can be routinely highlighted, which was a long-standing issue for the former Equal Opportunities Committee. It is absolutely crucial that Scotland creates a robust database, according to protected characteristics, for the purposes of analysis, scrutiny and ensuring that resources are targeted most effectively. That way, we can use data to our advantage and improve the pathway from evidence to policy and spend. Of course, the equality evidence strategy already exists but, as the committee's report suggests, it would be helpful, over time, to hear more about how gaps will be prioritised and what specific projects will be set up.

I want to finish by thanking the committee's clerks, the SPICe staff and all those associated with the committee, and everyone who gave evidence to inform the report. As the report tells us, it is vital that, in putting equality at the forefront of the budget, we take a business-like approach to implementing equality frameworks across Government departments so that that priority can become part and parcel of everyday decision making. To do so, we need to identify priority areas with the help of improved data in relation to protected characteristics, to target resources strategically and to make honest assessments of what is and what is not having an impact. Only by doing that can we achieve a fairer Scotland.

14:44

James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab): It gives me pleasure to open, on behalf of Scottish Labour, the debate on this important committee report on making the most of equalities and human rights

levers. I put on record my thanks to the committee's staff, members of the Scottish Parliament and all who were involved in developing such an important body of work.

In summary, the report seeks to advance the work that has been done in relation to equalities in the budget, to make more progress and to give much greater priority to a human rights-based approach to budgeting. That approach is correct for a number of reasons. As well as being the right and the fair thing to do, establishing equalities and human rights as part of our budget process will benefit the community and not just the process in the longer run. If we look at the number of stakeholders and budget holders who are involved in the process, we can see that if we ensure that an equalities and human rights-based approach is taken, we will have a much more joined-up budget process. That will ensure that we deliver a fairer approach, and it will save the Government money in the longer run.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): How does the member think that central Government can play a role in ensuring that local authorities also implement equality policies?

James Kelly: Ultimately, the responsibility for local authority budgets rests with local authorities. I accept the point that has been made that local authorities need to step up and do more, but central Government has a leadership role to play. It needs to ensure that it takes more responsibility for local authority budget processes and embeds equalities and human rights approaches in them.

It is important for there to be a good element of transparency in the processes, and the collection of data is critical in that regard. To be able to properly understand the impact of the decisions that we make and whether they give the right priority to equalities and human rights, we must not only collect data but publish it, and make it available in a form that is understandable to everyone who is involved in the budget process, not just the accountants who draw up the budget.

The committee draws attention to a couple of interesting areas. More can be done on procurement and capital investment. The Government spends billions of pounds of its budget each year in that area. The processes can be simplified, and more can be done to ensure that there is an equalities and human rights approach in that area.

Another area of interest that the committee draws attention to is that of ring fencing. There is always a tension in local authorities with regard to what money should be ring fenced. There is a natural move at local authority level to have more flexibility, and therefore to resist ring fencing. However, if we want to be serious about

introducing more equalities approaches, we need to look more seriously at ring fencing.

All that needs to be taken in the overall context of the budget. The current budget comes on the back of £1.5 billion of cuts to local councils. The Scottish women's budget group tells us that the majority of users and providers are women. I do not believe that the budget serves equalities, human rights and women to the best of its ability. If we really want to tackle austerity and redistribute power and wealth, we need to do much more with the Parliament's available powers.

The committee's report makes some important contributions on the process, but we also need to deal with the overall politics and allocations of the budget if we are serious about making the most of the levers that are available to us on equalities and human rights.

14:49

Gail Ross (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): As a member of the Equalities and Human Rights Committee, I thank everyone who gave evidence to the committee as part of our budget scrutiny on how we are doing in Scotland with regard to equalities and human rights. I thank the clerks, SPICe and my fellow committee members for all their hard work in producing the report. Like the convener, I welcome the increase in inequality funding in the budget.

The committee touched on several aspects of the budget and discussed several portfolios, including education, health, housing, planning, justice and local government. We can be in no doubt about the importance of working with organisations and individuals who have experience in the field, such as the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights, the Scottish Women's Convention, Engender, BEMIS, the Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations, the Scottish Human Rights Commission, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the equality and budget advisory group and the WISE research centre, which all gave evidence.

Human rights is a new remit for the committee and it is the first time that a single Scottish Parliament committee has had that remit, but as well as being the remit of our committee, human rights should form the basis of every policy across every portfolio and should underpin every decision that we make.

There is no starker example of that than the budget. Some concern was expressed by witnesses that, although equalities and human rights are considered in some aspects of our budget process, they do not underpin the process to a large enough extent. We are doing well in some areas and could improve in others, and

there was a view that equalities can sometimes be looked at in a retrospective manner rather than being at the forefront of decision making.

Dr Angela O'Hagan of the WISE research centre believes that equalities and human rights budgeting should "activate mainstreaming" so that spending allocations and revenue decisions are integrated. She emphasised that committees, when scrutinising, and policy makers, when formulating proposals, need to ask

"whether a policy or legal intervention will advance equality and realisation of rights."—[*Official Report, Equalities and Human Rights Committee*, 16 November 2017; c 5.]

In their joint submission to us, Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector, the Scottish Council on Deafness, Voluntary Action Scotland and Volunteer Glasgow said that an

"explicit statement and a distinct methodology on human rights must underpin the process and evidence gathered to monitor impact in the short, medium and longer term."

Chris Oswald of EHRC stated that human rights analysis was "largely absent" from the budget. He said:

"There is a Government framework around disabled people's rights and independent living, but it is entirely predicated on the delivery by local authority, health and other agencies, which are rightly independent of Government. However, there is no checking."—[*Official Report, Equalities and Human Rights Committee*, 16 November 2017; c 10.]

Local authority budgeting, in particular, has to focus more on equalities and human rights. The removal of concessionary bus fares, reductions in grants to the third sector, the closure of play parks and reductions in budgets for vulnerable adults are just a few of the proposals from some local authorities that are questionable in those terms.

One of the key recommendations that the committee makes is:

"The Scottish Government's leadership in this key area of activity would prove to be an exemplar for other public authorities facing difficult budget decisions. We believe adopting a national direction on human rights-based budgeting would demonstrate meeting people's needs makes good business sense. In an environment where there are financial constraints, a human rights framework can provide objective guidance which will assist balanced decision making on the use of resources and importantly limit the extent and duration of any retrogression."

We have to take equalities and human rights into account when we make all our decisions in this chamber, and I welcome the remarks that the cabinet secretary made in her opening statement. I note the commitment in the programme for government to establish an expert advisory group to make recommendations on how Scotland can lead by example on human rights, including economic, social, cultural and environmental rights. I look forward to our committee working

with the Scottish Government and other committees on the issue, and to the convener's feedback from her workshop tomorrow. I commend the report to the chamber.

14:54

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I am pleased to take part in today's debate on the findings and recommendations of the Equalities and Human Rights Committee in its report, which was published ahead of the draft budget in December. Like others, I thank the members of the committee for their efforts in putting together the report. I am not a member of the committee, but I applaud the work that it has done so far.

Today, I will focus on the report's comments on local authorities. As the report suggests, given the autonomous nature of local authorities, it can sometimes be difficult to ensure that national policy priorities are implemented at a local level. The report gives a number of examples in which the aims of certain pieces of legislation, such as the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, have not been fully realised because local authorities have, in many cases, decided not to fund the policies fully.

Although I recognise that that problem might frustrate some people, I am glad that the report does not insist on ring fencing as the solution to it in all cases, but rather suggests that the merits of such an approach be assessed case by case. There is a difficult balance to be struck between ensuring that the Scottish Government's equalities agenda is delivered locally and prioritising the independence of local authorities to determine how they spend their budgets. Although some local authorities may put less emphasis on equalities in the absence of ring fencing, others may come up with new and innovative ways of addressing issues. Therefore, it is important that we try not to be too rigid or restrictive when we allocate funds to our local councils.

The report also highlights the fact that the Equality Act 2010 puts a single equality duty on the public sector. It requires all public bodies to give due consideration to the needs of individuals with protected characteristics in their organisations and in any services that they deliver. However, there are some concerns as to whether the duty is being met. The Equality and Human Rights Commission said that, in the public sector,

"budgetary issues are rarely examined in detail through the lens of the duties",

and the Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations said that, as the Scottish

Government's budget is used to fund a variety of public bodies,

"It is virtually impossible to measure"

its impact

"on the PSED".

That is not necessarily a justification for greater ministerial oversight or direction of local authority spending in and of itself. There are different ways of tackling the problem.

Rebecca Marek from the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights made the valid point that the lack of use of equalities evidence to set spending priorities is much more severe at a local authority level. Although some authorities take the duty seriously, Ms Marek is right to suggest that others should evaluate all the evidence on equalities that is available to them when setting and spending their budgets and considering how to ensure that services are provided. On that basis, the committee is absolutely correct to see the public sector equality duty as an enabling mechanism rather than a tick-box exercise. I also commend the committee's plans to write to local authorities to ask them how they consider equalities information when determining their spending priorities.

It is important that politicians be mindful of equalities and human rights during the budget-setting process and that they give due consideration to the impact that their decisions might have on minority groups in particular. That applies when budgets are set at a local level, but is equally relevant for us in Holyrood. We should lead by example in the Scottish Parliament and encourage local authorities to do the same.

14:58

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): As a member of the Equalities and Human Rights Committee, I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate. I thank my fellow committee members, the committee clerks and all the witnesses who gave evidence to the committee.

The budget process is the Government's single most important act each parliamentary year. It should be fully transparent. It should be possible to trace the process from its inputs through to its outputs—its real impact on people's lives—because that is the only way that we can measure the effectiveness of the drivers that the Government should be using to tackle inequality.

Taking a human rights approach is key to making the budget process fairer. We should do more to ensure that human rights are at the heart of our political debate. I would like them to be at the forefront of all politicians' minds when they devise budgets and formulate legislation. If we

wish to have a society that is caring, diverse, inclusive of all and more equal, we must prioritise human rights during the scrutiny of our budget.

A critical driver in tackling inequality is the embedding of equality impact assessments in all the work that is done by national and local government. Despite the United Kingdom being a signatory to a range of United Nations human rights treaties, consideration of human rights issues is not at the forefront of the Scottish budget process.

The following example was highlighted by Chris Oswald of the Equalities and Human Rights Commission. He told the committee that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to which the UK is a signatory, outlines a commitment to independent living for all persons with disabilities. However, that commitment to independent living for disabled people is not reflected in the Scottish Government's housing and transport budget allocations and policies, despite those being two key areas where there are significant barriers to disabled people's active inclusion and participation in Scottish society.

A human rights approach should be fundamental to everything that we do. If we get the process of adopting a human rights approach to the budget correct, we will protect the most vulnerable people in our society, and doing that will benefit us all.

The importance of a more equal society must not be underestimated. A more equal society is happier and more trusting. The European countries that are ranked as the happiest in the world happiness survey are consistently those that have the lowest levels of inequality. For example, Denmark has been ranked as the world's happiest country for three of the past five years. I appreciate that no country provides a perfect example of the implementation of human rights or the adoption of a human rights approach, but Denmark provides an illuminating example of the benefits of a more equal society. Denmark is one of the most egalitarian and trusting societies in the world, and the level of its population's trust in its Government, politicians and fellow citizens ranks among the highest in the world.

I reiterate my support for the Equalities and Human Rights Committee's call for discussions on human rights in the Scottish Government's budget to be expedited. Adopting an approach to the Scottish budget that is based on human rights and equality is vital, because that would go some way towards reducing inequality in Scotland by protecting our most vulnerable citizens and, in doing so, helping to create a more equal, happier and more trusting Scotland.

15:02

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I thank the committee for bringing the debate to the chamber. I suggested to the Minister for Parliamentary Business that, as part of the budget scrutiny process, there ought to be some time in the chamber—Government time—to debate the equalities aspects, particularly the gender analysis aspects, of the budget. However, having a committee debate instead of a Government debate is helpful and probably a better approach. Such a debate in Government time, with motions and amendments and votes at decision time, would inevitably lead to the yes it is, no it isn't arguments around the budget, when what is needed is some reflection on where we have got to and why we made the progress that we did.

Angela Constance spoke about the approach that has been taken to the equalities impact assessments of the budget and why that has been so good. However, we should also reflect on why that progress has not continued. We need to be honest about that. Today, I am relying a great deal on the evidence given to the committee by Dr Angela O'Hagan. Although she acknowledged a great deal that is positive, in her written submission she suggested that the draft budget, like budgets before it, lacks gender competence. In that one phrase, we need to recognise that there are serious criticisms of the process that we have.

Why has that happened? Why did we make progress in the good use of equality impact assessments but then did not go further and start to construct budgets with equalities and human rights as guiding principles rather than assessments after the fact? I think that that has something to do with the sharply constrained timescale that we now have for the budget process.

I have looked back at a previous year, back in my first session as an MSP. The then Finance Committee had its approach paper on the budget process in mid-June, with an expectation that the Executive—as the Government was then called—would publish a draft budget in mid-September. By November, all the parliamentary committees had had time to look at the draft budget—the numbers, not just the broad brush strokes—to report to the Finance Committee and to feed back to the Government. The Government then responded to all of that. Months of proper, in-depth budget scrutiny was normal.

If we compare that with what—for different and understandable reasons—we have had this year and last year, we can see that the draft budgets were published in December, followed by a very tight timescale for scrutinising Government proposals.

Long-term budget scrutiny allows for the development of new ideas, such as how to do equality impact assessments better. If we were still taking our time over budget scrutiny, we would have been led on to the arguments that Angela O'Hagan and others make so convincingly: equalities and human rights need to be at the starting point of the budget process as the Government develops its budget, rather than the assessment of equalities impacts just getting better after the budget has been produced.

To be fair, I put some of those points to the cabinet secretary during our constrained budget scrutiny process in committee this year, and he agreed that we need to get a lot better at this. I hope that Mr Mackay will close for the Government in the debate, when I hope that he will be able to say specifically what it is that will be done differently in future.

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Patrick Harvie: I will certainly give way to the Finance and Constitution Committee convener.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): Mr Crawford, your microphone is not on. You do not have your card in.

Bruce Crawford: Sorry, Presiding Officer—I just did a Harvie, as Mr Harvie said about somebody else last week.

Despite all the points that Mr Harvie just made, does he agree that, whether in relation to the mid-term financial strategy or other mechanisms employed as part of the budget process, the significant amount of work that the budget process review group has been undertaking will considerably help the budget process?

Patrick Harvie: I certainly share the hope that it will. There is a great deal of work to be done to turn that objective into a reality. I think that we all share that view.

I will make a couple of brief comments on some of the specifics that we have heard. There is a great deal of emphasis on capital expenditure as a stimulus for the economy and as something that will create jobs. However, we know from the evidence that investment in social infrastructure such as care services not only generates more employment but ensures a more positive gender impact and social class impact when it comes to the question of who gets the benefit of the economic activity that is generated.

As the Scottish women's budget group has said, when we talk about economic activity and inactivity, we persist in referring to women as "economically inactive" and in not recognising the economic relevance of work that is not part of the paid, employed labour market.

I hope that, in those areas, we can not only do better at assessing the equalities, gender and human rights impact of budgets once we have set them but take those principles into the formation of the budget. It is the Government that needs to take up that opportunity. If Parliament can allow more time in future for the scrutiny process, we will be in a stronger position to place that expectation on the Government to take what we have done well in the past, but not rest on our laurels in taking new ideas forward.

15:09

David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP): I thank the clerks, SPICe and everyone who gave evidence to the committee, as well as my fellow committee members, for their hard work in drafting the report "Looking Ahead to the Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2018-19: Making the Most of Equalities and Human Rights Levers". I am proud to be a member of the committee in one of the world's leading countries with regard to progress on human rights commitments, and I welcome the Scottish Government's response to the report's findings.

Provisions for equality should be at the heart of all Government policies and decision-making mechanisms, which should take into account the demands of all groups in our society. Government budgets are crucial for financing human rights and equality measures, because they set the stage for future policy developments and potential progress.

The Scottish Government has worked hard to take an active role in integrating an equalities discourse into our legislation and in ensuring its appropriate implementation. That is a crucial aspect of a democratic society, and it must be applied at all levels of Government. Our goals remain clear. We want to raise awareness of equalities issues that are relevant to Government budgets on issues such as gender, race, sexual orientation, mental and physical disability, age, education, work, living standards, health, justice and participation in civil society. We also seek to increase Government accountability by raising the importance of the impact of budgets on equality, and we want to improve budget allocations to foster equality.

Despite our progress over the past few decades, we must make improvements to the implementation and accountability of Government budgets and their impact on equality. Our capacity for changing our relationship with equality is not necessarily restricted to the Government's wallet but involves wider societal change. Although we must continue to work with other stakeholders, we must also recognise that the Scottish Government plays a leading role in promoting a more equal future. I have high hopes that the findings of the

report that is being discussed today will open the door to the changes that are needed to promote equality.

One of the main challenges that we—not just the committee but the Government—face is in ensuring that the hours of evidence that we take are translated into meaningful and practical policy. The report emphasises that obstacle, highlighting national performance indicators for monitoring and evaluating evidence as a means for overcoming some of the challenges that we face.

The evaluation of evidence is essential for assessing progress and understanding where our challenges lie in achieving equality. However, as the report clarifies, quantifying evidence that is ultimately qualitative is, in itself, a huge challenge. We must foster partnerships with other relevant stakeholders such as non-governmental organisations and human rights groups to ensure that the emotional evidence that is given at our committee meetings is not only taken seriously but translated into meaningful legislation. I appreciate the Scottish Government's commitment to helping us to achieve that.

Over the past year, we have heard evidence from a range of equality and human rights groups such as the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights, the Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations and the Scottish Women's Convention, to name just a few. It was clear from those evidence sessions that there is great room for progress. We need to create political infrastructure in order to establish the capacity and power for budget-setting standards.

We need to monitor the impact of progress by including a wider range of stakeholders as well as by improving accountability and scrutiny. We must set an example for other public institutions that face similar challenges and actively engage in our political and economic civil society to develop policy from an equality perspective. We must also pay attention to international human rights law and ensure that Scottish standards are in line with those of the international community.

In conclusion, I thank the Equalities and Human Rights Committee again for its engagement in assessing the potential improvements to the Scottish budget. Although I praise the progress that we have made, I also look forward to future improvements. We cannot afford to miss any opportunities to tackle inequality and must start with the Scottish Government's budget to ensure that adequate funding is allocated to political opportunities to help those who are impacted by inequality.

We have to support inclusive economic growth, community empowerment and civil society participation in order to hear the voices of those

who are marginalised. We must recognise that integrating equality into our Government budget is a multi-faceted process that requires a holistic approach, and, as our report did, we need to continue to put equality at the forefront of the budget-setting process.

15:13

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

There is universal agreement that more needs to be done to equality proof the budget. We have been talking about that for years, ever since the Parliament first sat, but we appear to be no further forward. Mary Fee pointed out that the happiest countries are those that promote human rights and equalities and that, therefore, we all gain by having an equal society. We need to start creating that equal society through the budget.

Human rights is a theme that has run through the debate this afternoon but, with declining resources, the services that help to deliver human rights are the services that are being cut. People with disabilities need assistance to access the things that we all take for granted and enjoy, but the charges for services are increasing faster than inflation due to cuts in council budgets. That raises issues for people's dignity.

Elaine Smith's intervention about the fact that new homes should all be accessible helps us to see how we can build equality into our everyday work and planning.

Women are, for the most part, service users and service providers, and they have caring responsibilities. As Patrick Harvie pointed out, we may need to place a greater value on that unpaid work and, indeed, interrogate the value of it. As charges increase, services are being cut, and that is having an impact on women as well.

The women who provide services are often in low-paid jobs. For example, two thirds of the local government workforce is made up of women, and they are the ones who have experienced redundancies and long-term pay freezes, which have had a big impact on their income.

We previously heard reports that disabled people are the new council tax payers because, due to their dependence on services, they are now paying more. Therefore, the cuts to council budgets are detrimental to equalities and create a much more unequal society. We need to address that.

We also need to address race inequality. There is a race equality framework, and an action plan was published at the end of last year. However, it is not clear what the outcomes of that action plan will be and how they will be measured. What will success look like for that action plan?

We talk about developing tools to assess all of those things, but we have been talking about that for a long time and those tools are desperately required now. Angela Constance talked about inequalities analysis and the issue of deprivation with regard to place. I have been exercised about that issue for a long time, because the indicators that we use to identify deprivation often ignore rural deprivation. For example, car ownership is seen as a measure of wealth even though it is a necessity in rural areas.

James Kelly talked about the need for procurement to provide services that promote equality, but it should also be used to ensure that jobs are available for those with protected characteristics, who also tend to be those who have less access to the workforce. If we use procurement for that purpose, we could go a long way towards our aims.

Mary Fee said that we need to track inputs through to outputs. That is important, because mainstreaming equalities through the budget process is desirable but needs to be measurable, and we need the tools to interrogate it. No real progress has been made on that, and we need action now.

15:18

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): I welcome the opportunity to speak in today's debate. I thank my colleagues on the Equalities and Human Rights Committee for helping to put the report together, and I thank everyone who gave evidence to us. I am grateful for the opening words of our convener, Christina McKelvie. In the short time that I have today, I will reflect on some of the specific findings of the report and summarise some of the points that I have taken away from today's brief debate.

James Kelly mentioned that capital investment projects can be used by the Government to tackle inequality. In my view, that is a two-pronged situation. The first issue involves ensuring that those who are involved in the delivery and build of such projects are themselves from a diverse range of backgrounds and that the projects allow for inclusive recruitment in workplaces. The second issue is centred on those who benefit from the projects and on ensuring that improving equality is at the heart of such major public investment.

At present, there is not enough joined-up thinking about how we can target our investment programmes to mitigate specific factors relating to inequality. Whether that involves making affordable housing available or ensuring that housing is accessible, as has been mentioned, the evidence that the committee took points to a conversation around how capital infrastructure

projects can benefit society but not necessarily contribute to the equalities agenda.

We heard a lot of evidence over the course of our budget considerations, and Dr Angela O'Hagan provided some excellent contributions. She gave the example of a Government initiative—the Scottish national investment bank—that I think proves the point. The national investment bank could have provided an excellent opportunity, as an instrument for investment by default, but the consultation on it contained no reference to how the institution could be mandated to address issues of equality. It is easy to see how such an institution could undertake such a task, so it was a surprise that that reference was not there. As a result, the committee said:

“there is no systematic approach to address equalities through capital investment programmes, initiatives or procurement. We believe the Scottish Government needs to tackle this matter urgently”.

I hope that the cabinet secretary will address that matter in his summing up.

To put that in context, I will give some examples. We received comments on how, for example, city deals could go some way to improving equality through specific projects that could be involved in city deal funding. On large-scale infrastructure projects, such as builds of motorways, rail tracks and housing developments, what measures are in place to ensure that the workforce is as diverse as the end user? That includes the workforce of contractors that use public money.

We have heard much on the issue of mainstreaming, which comes up frequently when we talk about public policy. Later in this session of Parliament, we will discuss the Islands (Scotland) Bill, the purpose of which is to look at how public bodies and agencies may or may not negatively affect islanders when they make policy decisions or policy changes. I would say that there already is a requirement on Government bodies and public bodies to do the same with regard to equalities.

As we all know, when individual committees of this Parliament review legislation or the budget, there is often an equalities and human rights section in the papers. Yet how much attention and time is really given to that subject if, on the face of it, the bill does not seem to directly influence or affect the equality agenda? For that reason, the Equalities and Human Rights Committee has agreed to write to all the conveners of parliamentary committees, reminding them of the evidence tools that are available to them. I welcome that move.

We made some very specific asks of the Government in the report. I do not have time to go into them in detail, but I will mention them in the

hope that they will be addressed. We asked for a consultation panel that would represent all protected characteristics, from which the equality and budget advisory group could seek advice on specific issues. We asked for an update on the timescales for the independent review of the race equality framework. Also—this is linked to my previous comments on capital investment—we asked the Scottish Government to provide more clarification on the use of procurement as a way of addressing equality. What guidance is out there to ensure that tenders and contracts improve equality? Improving equality should be at the heart of every portfolio in Government, even if it is not obvious how that can be done.

These debates are often filled with buzzwords such as mainstreaming, ring fencing, data gathering and example setting. Those terms are all valid, but it is important to say that every public body—whether elected or not—should embed improving equality at the heart of its policy decision making.

I thank members for their input this afternoon and hope that the committee's thorough and detailed report gives the Government renewed focus on the wider equality agenda and the important role that the Government has in delivering it through everyday policy.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Derek Mackay. You have around five minutes, please, cabinet secretary.

15:23

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution (Derek Mackay): Thank you, Presiding Officer. A great deal of content has been discussed in this afternoon's debate. I have agreed with most of it, although not in its entirety, particularly in respect of some of the quantum issues; but in respect of the process and the principles that we should follow, I agree absolutely.

I do not agree with Rhoda Grant's point that we are no further forward than when devolution first started. All members, I think, can reflect on the great progress that we have made on the equality agenda, including on how we approach the budget. There is a great deal of international recognition of many of the policy interventions that we have made.

Christina McKelvie very helpfully took us through some of that progress on this significant and auspicious day. She referenced budget fatigue, which Patrick Harvie wants more of—quite rightly—as we extend the transparent approach that we have taken. Bruce Crawford was right to point to the budget process review group recommendations, as accepted, with regard to

how we address some aspects of the issue going forward.

I have benefited personally from the work of the equality and budget advisory group, as has the Government corporately and collectively, in looking at matters of process and language as well as policy content and impact. Angela Constance touched on a number of the recommendations that the group made. Annie Wells is right: our approach should involve not just the finance, equalities or communities sections of the Government, but the whole of Government.

A number of members mentioned data, but the use of data should also be proportionate. I remember the bad old days of a lot of administration and resource being spent on unnecessary evaluation and monitoring. We should be proportionate and use data intelligently to inform our decisions. That is essential because we do not have the critical mass of data that would allow us to understand some of the issues. I absolutely believe in that forensic approach.

Jamie Greene: Last year, I held an event in the Parliament about big data, which a lot of representatives from local government attended. The minister mentioned the bad old days, but much has changed in terms of technology and how we can analyse and use data. What more is the Government doing to ensure that it is using technology to properly analyse data in order to improve outcomes?

Derek Mackay: It is a good question. Wearing my digital public services and digital transformation hat, I could go on at great length about being more creative in the use of data, about projects such as CivTech and about the use of data as evidence to inform how we design systems. It is about being more creative, rather than just coming up with a specification for a project that we think we might require. There is much in that. We need data to drive both our decisions and our understanding of their impacts.

Gail Ross was right to mention local authority budgeting, and Alexander Stewart focused briefly on community empowerment, which is important as well. Mary Fee mentioned the prioritisation of resources, and Patrick Harvie reflected on where we are with scrutiny.

When we talk about resources or even just the 2018-19 budget, we need to consider how we approach income tax, and we had a deep and meaningful look at what the tax policy will mean for individuals and groups in society. When it comes to spending, I will use infrastructure as an example, as Jamie Greene mentioned it. There is massive infrastructure spending on housing, which we know tackles inequality. That is about not just

the completion of houses, but how they are constructed and—

Elaine Smith: Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

Derek Mackay: I do not have time, as I have just five minutes and I would like to cover a little more ground.

Another aspect is childcare, which is about the appropriate upskilling and training of staff as well as the physical improvements that are required for the policy of improved childcare to be delivered.

The budget is the financial expression of the Government's and the Parliament's priorities, which is why it is so important. It follows on from the programme for government, which expresses the vision for the country and the priorities of the Government and Parliament.

A couple of members touched on the great opportunity that we have at present in respect of the national performance framework, which is being reviewed. The Government's purpose, the outcomes that we believe are important and the measurements by which our success will be judged are all up for review. That work is being delivered on a cross-party basis and with key stakeholders. There is a wonderful opportunity to look at that afresh and to ensure that we are tackling inequality.

Across a range of policy areas, we have shown that we have an inclusive agenda to tackle inequality. I agree with Mary Fee that, according to all the evidence, the happiest societies are not necessarily the richest, but those that have tackled inequality most effectively. What we are trying to do on pay policy around a pay uplift that is more progressive, just as tax is more progressive, is the right kind of intervention.

Fundamentally, we have been able to make a range of interventions in respect of human rights. We have made progress, but I think that we can do more. Today's debate has been very helpful in providing focus and I, as finance secretary, working with the communities secretary, will be more than happy to take forward the suggestions that have been raised and to report back on further progress.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call on Alex Cole-Hamilton to wind up the debate on behalf of the Equalities and Human Rights Committee.

15:29

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): I echo the cabinet secretary's remarks about the consensual nature of the debate. The Parliament does best when we cross party lines

and recognise the shared ambition on the equalities and human rights agenda.

I thank the members of the Equalities and Human Rights Committee for all their hard work, all the witnesses who came before us and our clerks, SPICe team and other officials for their never-failing support.

The focus of the report is how the outcomes for people who are protected under the Equality Act 2010 can be improved as well as how human rights can be integrated into the budget decision-making process. I hope that today's debate has shown our committee's dedication to pursuing opportunities for improvement and building on the significant progress that has been made since devolution.

Over the past decade, the equalities issue has rightly moved closer to the centre of discussions about public expenditure. We know that the principles of equality, social inclusion and human rights are acknowledged as important Scottish Government goals, which is welcome. Nevertheless, there is always room for improvement, which the cabinet secretary acknowledged in her response to our report. Although the political will certainly exists, we are still a considerable distance from equalities being uppermost in decision making and driving the budget process. We also have some way to travel before we can fully measure how different sections of society are impacted by specific policies.

Last year's report from the budget process review group, the commitment of the Scottish Government and the expert advice of the equality budget advisory group demonstrate the willingness to develop a budget process that links with the national performance framework so that there are measurable outcomes. Performance budgeting is key to tracking real and measurable results. We recognise that that can be challenging, but I think that we all agree that it is a worthwhile endeavour.

The debate has been great. The committee convener, Christina McKelvie, reminded us of the importance of today's date—an auspicious day on which to hold the debate—and of the fact that, even 100 years after the partial extension of suffrage to some women for the first time, we still have many frontiers to reach in respect of the equalities agenda. She took us through the three core themes that the report touches on.

Christine McKelvie's remarks were met with a comprehensive response from the cabinet secretary—as comprehensive as her written response to the report. I am grateful to her for her co-operation with our inquiry and for the time that she has spent on addressing the points that the committee raised. It is important to stress,

however, that just because we have the mechanisms, strategies and apparatus in our decision-making processes to make equalities real, that does not mean that that is happening. Such measures are only as good as their application—we must always be conscious of that as we apply each of the duties that we have set out.

Gail Ross gave an excellent analysis of the distance that we still have to travel to reach a full human rights-based approach to both policy and expenditure. That theme was picked up by David Torrance and Mary Fee, who referenced in her speech the evidence of Chris Oswald about the lip-service that we sometimes pay to things such as the independent living rights in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Patrick Harvie reminded us of a time when Parliament could adequately scrutinise each budget line from at least six months out, giving us the chance to close the stable door before the equalities horse had bolted. Rhoda Grant also referred to the fact that, although much progress has been made, we have slipped backwards in certain areas.

I will make some further observations in relation to the committee's deliberations. The gap between stated policies and their satisfactory translation into funded measures has long been recognised—the disconnect between policy making and resource allocation is a feature. If we are to address discrimination and inequality across society, there needs to be a joined-up approach by central Government and local government to the delivery of national equalities priorities while, of course, acknowledging that local authorities remain autonomous bodies.

We received evidence that national policy does not always translate into local action. Alexander Stewart reminded us of part 1 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, which is on children's rights and which imposed duties on local authorities to implement policy under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, as no budget line was attached, the number of children's rights officers has halved, despite the intent of the 2014 act. James Kelly addressed that and raised the possibility of ring fencing targeted at the equalities agenda.

In evidence to the committee, the Equalities and Human Rights Commission provided another example, stating that money had previously been set aside for Gypsy Traveller site development but that, because of the concordat with local authorities and the loosening of ring fencing, such aims were now not achievable without the full consent and buy-in of local authorities, which meant that equalities in that area was suffering. *[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Excuse me, but can we have a wee bit of hush, please, while Mr Cole-Hamilton finishes on behalf of the committee? Thank you.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: I am grateful to you, Presiding Officer. I am almost there.

We would like to see greater co-operation between the Scottish Government and local government in that area.

Annie Wells highlighted the lack of adequate data on protected characteristics, which makes it impossible to ensure that there is a direct line of sight between the columns of the ledgers of Government expenditure and the groups that they target. In our report, we acknowledge that and the significant amount of work that is being undertaken by the Scottish Government and the Equality and Human Rights Commission to improve the equality evidence base. Witnesses such as Danny Boyle from BEMIS debated whether action should be focused on dealing with long-term, known systemic issues or on filling identified evidence gaps through funded initiatives—there will always be competing priorities. Jamie Greene referenced Angela O'Hagan, who gave the committee an amazing treatise on that.

Many countries have followed Scotland's approach to equalities, which Derek Mackay was right to reference. A central plank of that approach has been the equality budget statement that accompanies the draft budget. The committee recognises the significant work that has gone into preparing that statement and I record its thanks for that.

Today's debate has brought a focus to how the process should reflect the principles of equalities, social inclusion and human rights. We welcome the Government's commitment to making Scotland a more equal place in which to live, as we welcomed the contributions of the strategy bodies, stakeholders and individuals who have worked tirelessly to shape progress on that.

Equalities and human rights have to be the core business of budget making to achieve a fairer society. I commend the findings in the report of the Equalities and Human Rights Committee to the Parliament.

Women's Right to Vote (Centenary)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-10285, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on celebrating 100 years of women's right to vote. Members who wish to speak in the debate should press their request-to-speak buttons. I call the First Minister to speak to and move the motion.

15:37

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): It is a pleasure and a privilege to move today's motion, as we mark the centenary of the Representation of the People Act 1918—the landmark law that gave not all but some women the right to vote for the first time. Today, above all, we pay tribute to the people whose sacrifices secured a fundamental right that we all now take for granted.

There is an old Scots proverb that was often used on suffragist and suffragette banners—indeed, its first part later provided the title for a history of the movement. The proverb says simply:

"A guid cause makes a strong arm".

The guid cause that we honour today was given strength by the commitment of tens of thousands of women, and many men, from right across our country. By 1914, there were suffrage associations in every part of Scotland, from Orkney and Shetland to Kirkcudbright and North Berwick.

If we look for them, we can see reminders of the suffrage campaign all over Scotland. When I was a student at the University of Glasgow, I must on countless occasions have walked past the famous suffragette oak in Kelvingrove park. The First Minister's residence, Bute house, overlooks Charlotte Square, which was the starting point for the Scottish suffragists' march to London in 1912. I occasionally look out of the window across Charlotte Square and wish that I could spend a few moments with those women, to pay tribute to their courage and sacrifice and to thank them for enabling a woman like me to occupy the office that I occupy today. Charlotte Square is also where Elsie Inglis, one of the very greatest of Scottish suffragettes, went to school.

This morning, with the suffragette flag flying outside, I chaired a meeting of our gender-balanced Scottish Cabinet in St Andrew's House, which stands on the site of the old Calton jail, where many suffragettes were imprisoned in the years before the first world war. That poignant fact is a reminder that many of the women who campaigned for the right to vote made immense sacrifices that are beyond our imagination today.

Some—especially those who adopted militant tactics in response to Government intransigence—were not just jailed, but were horribly mistreated and even force fed. Many more devoted their energies and countless hours of their time to the cause. All too often, they encountered public ridicule, disapproval, anger and contempt.

We in this generation know that, even today, it is not always easy for women to speak up in public life, but whatever the challenges that we face now, it was far more difficult then. The Glasgow and West of Scotland Association for Women's Suffrage described what women often went through. It said:

"she defies convention and throws aside that much-prized virtue—respectability. She gives up friendships that she values; often she renounces all her past life."

As I stand in the chamber as a female First Minister to be followed by a female leader of the Opposition, my overriding emotion today is deep gratitude. All of us—women in particular—owe an immeasurable debt to the suffragettes and suffragists whom we are honouring today.

For that reason, the centenary is being marked not just by this parliamentary debate, but by events and commemorations across the country. Yesterday, the Scottish Government confirmed that we will provide funding for local projects that will mark the anniversary. We will support the Glasgow Women's Library, which is developing a programme of commemorative events, we are organising a cross-party event for young people in our Parliament, and we will fund projects to improve women's representation and participation in public life.

Those final two strands to the programme are important. The commemorations should not simply be about marking our past; they should also look to our future. After all, although some women secured the parliamentary vote a century ago and women have had voting rights equal to those of men for 90 years, the uncomfortable truth is that gender equality is still an unwon cause, which it is the duty of our generation to win.

The gender pay gap still stands at 9 per cent in the United Kingdom and at almost 7 per cent in Scotland. Women are more than half of the population, but make up just 27 per cent of the members of the boards of the UK's largest companies. We still need to address the gender stereotyping that means that just 6 per cent of our engineering modern apprentices are women and only 4 per cent of our childcare modern apprentices are men. It is worth thinking deeply about all that.

A key reason why women secured the vote, of course, was the contribution that they had made to the war effort, from the munitions factories of

Clydeside to the field hospitals of the Balkans. They demonstrated quite irrefutably that women's competence and capability are equal to those of men. However, 100 years later, that equal capability is still not reflected in equal pay or equal status. In addition, as we have been reminded all too recently, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and sexist behaviour are still far too widespread across our society.

Inequality also persists in political representation. When members of the Scottish Parliament were first elected in 1999, more women were chosen to represent Scottish constituencies than had been elected at Westminster in the previous 80 years. However, the hard reality is that there has been little progress since then—in fact, we have gone backwards. In 1999, the proportion of women MSPs in Parliament was 37 per cent; that proportion now stands at just 35 per cent. In my party, the figure is 43 per cent, which represents progress since 2011, but it also means that we, as all parties do, need to do more.

However, there are areas in which Parliament has genuine grounds for pride. Just last week, every single member supported the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill, which has been acclaimed as setting a new gold standard in protecting women from coercive and controlling behaviour. We also approved legislation last week to ensure 50 per cent female representation on public boards, and that the public sector will lead by example in appointing women to leadership positions. There will be a massive expansion of childcare during this parliamentary session, which will help parents—especially mothers—to return to work and pursue careers. Much of Scotland's international development work in Africa and Pakistan prioritises empowerment of women.

We still need to do far more, but we can—and we should—draw strength from those significant recent accomplishments. When we look at some of the wider social developments of the past year, such as the public response to stories of harassment and unequal pay, and the development of the #metoo and time's up movements, there is a chance to achieve even more significant and rapid change. After all, public scrutiny of discrimination has never been higher and public tolerance of it has never been lower. That gives us all not just an obligation, but a huge opportunity to make much greater progress towards true gender equality. It is an opportunity that we must all work together to seize.

When I was first elected as First Minister by Parliament in 2014, I commented on the fact that my niece—who was then just eight years old—was in the gallery. I said then that my fervent hope was that she would, by the time she is a young

woman, have no need to know about issues such as the gender pay gap or underrepresentation, or about the barriers, such as high childcare costs, that make it so hard for so many women to work and to pursue careers. I hope that this Parliament will play a vital role in consigning those issues to history. I want young people in the future to be able to see those issues in the same way that we see voting rights for women—as causes that were argued for, and won, by earlier generations.

We are here today to honour the perseverance, courage and self-sacrifice of the suffragists and the suffragettes. Ultimately, the best way of doing that is not through parliamentary debates or commemorative events—important as they are—but by renewing our resolve to use the powers that we have, which in so many ways we owe to the brave women of the suffrage movement, to make the world a better place for the girls and young women who are growing up today. If we can add our strength to that good cause, we will pay a fitting tribute in this centenary year.

It falls on us and our generation through deeds, not words, to complete the work that the suffrage movement started, in order that we ensure that no longer is gender a barrier to any woman achieving her dreams. That, in my view, is the only truly appropriate way for us to repay our enormous debt to the heroic movement that we celebrate and honour today.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises that it is 100 years since the Representation of the People Act 1918, which finally gave some women the right to vote, and the Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act 1918, which allowed women to stand for the UK Parliament; welcomes the activity taking place in Scotland and across the UK to celebrate and commemorate the centenary of women's suffrage; further welcomes the considerable progress that has been made in women's political representation over the last 100 years; pays tribute to the suffragettes and suffragists who fought to ensure women's right to vote, in some cases at considerable personal sacrifice, and welcomes the work of many organisations and individuals seeking equal representation for women.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Ruth Davidson—[*Interruption.*] Sorry, but I am getting all emotional—it has been quite a day. I call Ruth Davidson to speak to and move amendment S5M-10285.2

15:47

Ruth Davidson (Edinburgh Central) (Con): Along with many in this chamber, I have been asked over the past few weeks—as a woman in elected politics—to talk and to write about the centenary celebrations of women receiving the vote and what it means to me. Every time, I, like others, have been keen to point out that the Representation of the People Act 1918 did not, as

the shorthand would have it, grant women the vote, but granted some women—and almost all men—the vote. The newly enfranchised—women over the age of 30 who were householders, the wives of householders, occupiers of property with an annual rent of £5, or graduates voting in university constituencies—were those who were considered to be responsible enough to vote, which amounted to about 8.5 million women.

My great-grandmother, Bessie Ritchie, would not have been among them. Despite hurdling the age barrier and raising five sons to adulthood and a daughter who died young, she did not qualify. Because she left school at 14 and lived in a Glasgow Corporation tenement in Tradeston, she had neither the means nor the education to be deemed worthy of political decision making.

Voting was not a universal right, but a value judgment given only to those who were thought up to the task. It took another 10 years before universal suffrage was achieved—equal voting rights between men and women that were offered to all who were over 21, irrespective of property. Therefore, this centenary is not necessarily a celebration in itself but a celebration of a staging post to a better system. However, staging posts are worth marking, too. Like the First Minister, I commend all those across the country who are supporting or attending the programme of events, the talks, the marches and the exhibitions that are bringing together the stories of our grandparents and great-grandparents for the next generation.

I say “great-grandparents” rather than great-grandmothers for a reason: men are part of this story, too. It was men who passed the law—and men who objected to its passing. An argument that was employed by those who stood against it was that women would simply want more. The right to vote would not quench women's thirst for equality, they thundered. Rather, it would encourage women to do things like enter politics and become MPs or even—shock, horror!—cabinet ministers.

I wonder whether those unenlightened souls could have imagined a time in UK politics when, simultaneously, women would hold the offices of Prime Minister, First Minister of Scotland and First Minister of Northern Ireland, plus the leaderships of Plaid Cymru, the Welsh Liberal Democrats, the Scottish Conservatives, Sinn Féin and the Alliance Party in Northern Ireland, along with the co-convenerships of the UK and Scottish Green parties. In every part of the United Kingdom, young girls growing up can look at politics, see that women can make it to the top and conclude that they, too, can do that.

We have come a long way in 100 years, right enough. However, when it comes to parity, equality and representation, we are still not there. As proud as I am to be a member of the first

political party to admit women members, the party that saw the first female MP take her seat and the first and second female Prime Ministers, and, in a devolved context, the only party represented in this chamber that has had more female leaders than male ones—long may that continue; my party is on an unbroken run of more than 13 years of female leadership in Holyrood—I know that we have a lot more to do if we want to see parity.

That is why, along with other parties, we have established an organisation—ours is Women2Win—to help to identify, recruit, train, mentor, support and advance women into elected positions at all levels of Parliament and local government. It is why I, along with other members, support campaigns such as #AskHerToStand, which encourage more women to consider coming forward as candidates.

I am pleased that last year's general election returned more women than ever before, but it is telling that if we add up all the women who have been elected to the House of Commons in the 100 years since the Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act, we are still 165 shy of filling the green benches. There are 650 members returned every election; only 485 women have been returned in the whole of history.

It is not just in politics that we see equality in law but disadvantage in practice. We need only look at the world of work to see that women are more likely to be paid less than men, more likely to be harassed in the workplace, less likely to be promoted, irrespective of qualifications and experience, and more likely to have their career progression hampered by having children.

According to the Fawcett Society, the gender pay gap in the UK is 14.1 per cent for women in full-time employment, and it has sat at that level for the past three years. I currently share my birthday, 10 November, with equal pay day. That is the day when women stop earning, relative to men, because of the gender pay gap.

Rectifying that is not just morally right. Equality between men and women in the workplace is proven to lead to better outcomes for companies. The idea of equality exists only if a woman is given the same opportunity to make progress, the same rewards for hard work and the same treatment in the job as the man who stands next to her. That is the next fight.

Closing the gender pay gap, gender-blind recruitment and promotion, confronting sexual harassment and cracking down on real-life and online misogynistic attacks are the next frontiers in a war that is not yet won. There is much more for us all to do, and anniversaries such as today's focus our attention on that work and prompt us to action.

More than 1,000 women were imprisoned during the battle for equality prior to the passing of the 1918 act. Sam Smethers, the chief executive of the Fawcett Society, says today that it would be a fitting tribute to pardon them now. I agree. That would, of course, be a symbolic step, but symbols matter, and 100 years on from the battle to win equality, we should recall the women and men who fought, not as criminals but as righteous trailblazers.

I am indebted to Chris Deerin, columnist at *The Herald*, who used a recent article to recall some of those forgotten names, which I can add to those that the First Minister mentioned. There were fearsome Scots women, such as Flora “the General” Drummond, who was born in 1878 and died in 1949. She qualified as a postmistress but was refused entry because she was too short, and she campaigned for equal rights on the back of a huge charger—hence the nickname. She was imprisoned nine times, and while she was in prison she taught fellow suffragettes Morse code so that they could communicate. She was a 5-foot 2-inches tall reminder that those of us who live in luckier times stand on the shoulders of giants.

Today we give thanks to those women of courage and bloody-mindedness and we recommit ourselves to finishing their work. There is much still to do.

I move amendment S5M-10285.2, to insert after second “100 years”:

“recognises that the country is still far from achieving equal representation at any level of politics; welcomes campaigns such as #AskHerToStand, which encourage women to consider a career in politics”.

15:54

Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): Today we commemorate an important milestone on an important journey. We celebrate a crucial victory in the fight for equality and we remember that those things worth fighting for the most demand struggle and sacrifice—and what sacrifice there was. Many paid with their health and some even paid with their lives to secure women's suffrage, yet we cannot say today in this Parliament or outside it that this long march to equality is over. The path that those campaigners first trod at the beginning of the last century still has many miles to run. While this afternoon we look back, we must also face the future. We must face the future with a renewed commitment and a renewed purpose to deliver real equality in our society and in our time.

The women's suffrage movement had many members and martyrs. The Pankhurst sisters, Emily Davison and Millicent Fawcett are just some of the women whose tireless fight for equality has

seen their names written into the history books, but many others remain hidden from history, such as Janie Allan, a member of the Independent Labour Party in Scotland, the Women's Social and Political Union and the Women's Tax Resistance League, who, addressing the courts in 1913, while refusing to pay taxation, said:

"Government rests upon the consent of the governed, and that consent I consider women are justified in refusing until they are enfranchised.

I object to pay this tax, my Lord, because I hold that taxation without representation is tyranny, and so long as women are denied any voice in the expenditure of the money derived from taxation, so long are they perfectly justified in refusing to pay taxes."

The first leader of the Labour Party, Keir Hardie, was also one of those who valiantly took up the cause of a woman's right to vote. For the prophetic Hardie, equality was paramount to improving both society and the economy, yet he was one of just a handful of men in Parliament who stood four-square behind the women's suffrage movement. Hardie believed emphatically, as his 1905 pamphlet on this topic attested, that it was

"Only by removing the disabilities and restraints imposed upon women; and permitting her to enter freely into competition with man in every sphere of human activity, that her true position and function in the economy of life will ultimately be settled."

While Hardie's detractors accused him of focusing on the wrong idea—of trying to prevent universal suffrage for all men—Hardie knew that if women were not given the franchise in their own right, any further extension of adult voting rights would continue to exclude women.

That message should be our continued calling today, because when just one woman is paid less than a man for the same day's work, all society is short changed. When just one woman suffers abuse or discrimination, all society is degraded. When just one woman is denied the same rights as a man, all society is unequal.

The scale of the struggle before us is huge but, just as it did for those women and men a century and more ago, the magnitude of our task should serve not as an excuse for inaction but as a motivation for action—not as a reason to back away, but as a cause to move forward with renewed vitality. While we may have a female First Minister, only 45 of our 129 MSPs are women; while we may have a female Prime Minister, just 208 of our 650 MPs are women; and while the Equal Pay Act 1970 may be on the statute book—introduced by a Labour Government and driven by Barbara Castle—we know that pay inequality remains stubbornly widespread.

Let us today commemorate and celebrate, but let us also continue that work. Let us harness the spirit of the suffragists and the suffragettes to fight

on for equality and to fight on for justice in our society. A century has passed since some women won the right to vote; we should not let another century go by before women and men are equal in all things.

I move amendment S5M-10285.1, to leave out from “, and welcomes” to end and insert:

“; commends the many organisations and individuals that continue to work to realise women's equal representation in public office as parliamentarians, local councillors and across society, and accepts that there is more work to be done to achieve equal representation for women.”

16:00

Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP): The House of Commons passed the Representation of the People Bill in June 1917. It was the House of Lords that held the bill up until February the next year. The Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act 1928 finally corrected the injustice of women not getting a mention in the original long title—they had not been mentioned before—so there was progress indeed.

From February 1918, it took Parliament another 10 months to enact the Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act 1918, which allowed women to be elected to the House of Commons as MPs. Technically, it took nine months—how apt—for some women, who could vote for an MP, to be able to stand as an MP.

Some 50 years later, when Dr Winifred Ewing was elected to the UK Parliament in the Hamilton by-election, she recounted many times the way in which she was treated in the House of Commons with misogynist disrespect. She was treated very well by a few good men, and I will come back to those allies later. Let us hope that, now that another 50 years have passed since that by-election, the treatment of women parliamentarians is better—I am sure that we can all live in hope.

The women's suffrage movement grew from a sense of frustration, with militant women pledging to argue at every by-election at which the Liberal party stood, because the Liberal party kept refusing to give them the vote. With Prime Minister Asquith in Fife and Churchill in Dundee, Scottish suffragists had clear targets in their fight for the right to vote. While campaigning in Dundee in 1908, Irish suffragette Mary Maloney followed Churchill for a week, ringing a large bell every time that he started to speak. That would be an interesting tactic to deploy in this Parliament, but I fear that the Presiding Officer would not be too happy.

We look back now and wonder how it could ever have been the case that women had fewer rights than men, but we need only look at the serious

inequalities of today to see that that difference still exists.

Many suffragettes were imprisoned, beaten and, more importantly, taken home to their husbands who were encouraged to discipline them physically. It was with great pride that last week we passed the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill in our Parliament. In Edinburgh, the suffragette Ethel Moorhead became the first in Scotland to be force fed. Let that sink in.

The Pankhursts, the Davisons, our grandmothers and my grandmother, my great-grandmother and our great-grandmothers were perhaps a regimen of monstrous women, but they were women who were brave, who had conviction, who stood up against the patriarchy and won—using some of that patriarchy along the way. Those women deserve their legacy to be honoured by a new generation of monstrous women: those who wear pink pussy hats, the women against state pension inequality, those who call out that “time’s up”, and those who stand and are counted every day in every way for that good cause.

Our sisters call out to us from 100 years ago and they say “deeds not words”, and I am sure that they would welcome the funding that was announced today by the First Minister. I say to our male allies here and across Scotland that men of quality do not fear equality, and I ask them, too, to stand with us in our fight.

I will finish with the words of Emmeline Pankhurst. She said:

“We are here, not because we are law-breakers; we are here in our efforts to become law-makers.”

Every woman in our Parliament should remember that. We are here to become those lawmakers and we are here to stay.

16:04

Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con): Today, we celebrate 100 years of women’s, or at least some women’s, right to vote. In the great scheme of things, that is a relatively short period of time and, in family terms for me, it represents just one generation, as my mother was born in 1911. That was almost seven years before the Representation of the People Act 1918, which gave women over the age of 30 the right to vote in general elections if they met certain conditions. Ten years later, the Representation of the People Act 1928 extended that right to women aged 21 and over. Therefore, my mother’s first opportunity to vote in a general election was in 1935, and the war meant that she had to wait 10 years to vote in another. Thereafter, she voted in every election, be it local, national or European, and she insisted

on going to the poll in person to exercise women’s hard-fought and hard-earned democratic right.

Politics mattered to my mother. As a young girl, she was a junior imp—short for imperialist—and she was a lifelong supporter of the union and the Conservative Party. She was born in Coatbridge, where she lived all her life. Times were hard and, as part of a large family, there was no possibility of her enjoying the educational opportunities that we easily take for granted today, because money had to be earned to contribute to the household income.

Two world wars saw her generation of women taking on roles that, previously, were exclusively male occupations. They worked in munitions factories or as engineers, mechanics or land girls or, like my mother, they were in the timber corps in Tighnabruaich in Argyll. All played their part in the war effort as our democratic freedoms hung in the balance.

After the war ended in 1945, men returned home and resumed their previous occupations. When women such as my mother married, many employers prohibited them from working. Housework was labour intensive as it was the time of gas power, which pre-dated electricity as a household commodity. Clothes and bedding were washed by hand on a board, fed through a ringer and hung out to dry. Coal fires were cleaned daily. The absence of fridges or freezers meant frequent trips to the local butcher, fishmonger, baker and grocer, and the nearest thing to online shopping was the grocer boy’s weekly bicycle delivery.

In the 60s and 70s, technological change introduced the labour-saving gadgets that we rely on today. Coupled with the widespread availability of the pill, they further increased women’s emancipation, which brought new freedoms but also new pressures. Although women’s earning power increased, the same gender prejudices remained. I discovered that for myself when applying for a loan for my first car and, despite being employed full time as a teacher and having my own current and savings bank accounts, being told that the loan would not be approved unless my husband was guarantor. It still rankles that he had to fix that.

In 2003, four years after the Scottish Parliament was established, my mother completed a journey from gaining the right to vote to watching proudly from the gallery as many women, including her daughter, were sworn in as MSPs.

Huge challenges lie ahead to achieve equal pay and to crack the glass ceiling. Although domestic abuse is being tackled, much more needs to be done. Here in Scotland, women are being trafficked and subjected to sexual exploitation and forced marriage. Globally, in war and conflict

areas, rape is being used as a weapon of war against women.

However, on this significant anniversary, it is good to pause to acknowledge and pay tribute to another generation of women, whose tenacity and courage made it possible for us to exercise our democratic right to vote and to be here as legislators, addressing the challenges of the future.

16:09

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): Presiding Officer, 1918 marked a huge step forward for women's equality, but it is important to bear it in mind that we are celebrating 100 years of the right to vote for some, not all, women. Only a select group of women were deemed worthy of the right to vote in 1918, including those over the age of 30 who were also either householders, the wives of householders, occupiers of property with an annual rent of £5 or graduates voting in university constituencies. In other words, they were well-off and well-educated women, so the ancestors of many members would not have benefited from the extension of the franchise.

I do not know whether my great-grandmothers took an interest in politics. In 1918, Isabella Walker was gutting fish in Torry, Aberdeen and 19-year-old Sarah Thomas worked mixing creams in her uncle's pharmacy in London. However, I know this: they did not yet have the right to vote. It was to be another decade until universal suffrage was achieved, so this centenary is less a celebration of an end goal than an important marker on the path towards equal voting rights for women.

We could say that we are in the same position today. Much progress has been made, but much remains to be done. All women now have the vote and we have women as First Minister and as Prime Minister. Despite that, women remain stubbornly underrepresented in politics and in public life. In 2016, I was one of only 45 women MSPs elected to serve in the Parliament. Women make up only 35 per cent of MSPs. That is the exact same proportion as in 2011 and a smaller proportion than in 1999, when our Parliament was first created.

Just as there was more to do in 1918, there remains a power of work to be done today, before we have real equality. It is not enough for women in positions of power just to say, "Well, I'm here, so that'll do." Neither is it enough to say that women just need to have a little more confidence and be encouraged a little more. We need to break down the structural barriers that are in their way. Deeds not words.

That is why, as a councillor, along with my colleague Mairi Gougeon and Labour and Lib Dem councillors, I argued for and won a change to the constitution of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to ensure gender balance in the leadership team. All of us who want our council and parliamentary chambers to reflect the country that we serve must vigorously support action to make it happen. Deeds not words.

That is also why I was proud to vote for the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Bill last week. As has often been said, including by our own First Minister, it is not enough simply to be a woman in politics; we have to use our power and influence to benefit other women. Although we still have work to do, the Scottish National Party's action on all-women shortlists in constituencies with retiring MSPs had a clear and positive impact on the number of women MSPs. Scottish Labour's action on quotas also ensured a strong representation on its benches. The overall figures in Holyrood have stagnated in large part due to the increased number of Conservative MSPs, of whom not even 20 per cent are women. The representatives of that party all voted against increasing women's representation on public boards last week. Deeds not words.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the great Ayrshire suffragette, Flora Drummond. Flora grew up on Arran and became known as "the general". She led the great procession and women's demonstration in Edinburgh in 1909 on top of a horse and dressed in military uniform. She was known for her daring and headline-grabbing stunts, including slipping inside the open door of 10 Downing Street. She was pregnant when she was imprisoned for her campaigning and, as with many other brave suffragettes, the torture of force feeding took its toll on her health.

As we celebrate the step forward for women in 1918, we should never forget just how much brave women such as Flora sacrificed and suffered for our rights and we should resolve to do all that we can to continue to further women's rights. Deeds not words.

16:13

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): Presiding Officer,

The proudest day of granny's life was when the vote was won.
The papers said it's over; but gran had just begun.
Her women's committee went on to organise,
And challenged the union, the council and their lies.

Granny was a suffragette—only five feet tall;
Granny was a suffragette—took on city hall,
Singing: votes for women is just the beginning,
You haven't seen anything yet
Granny was a suffragette.

Now here I stand so proudly with my college degree,
 And my daughters have more options than granny could
 foresee,
 But if you think we're satisfied, take a look around,
 There's lots of angry women who won't let their granny
 down.

Granny was a suffragette—it's as if she's still alive;
 Granny was a suffragette—their voices still survive,
 Singing: votes for women is just the beginning,
 You haven't seen anything yet
 Granny was a suffragette.

It is right that we come together to mark 100
 years of women's suffrage, although I struggle a
 little with the words that we use. Is it a celebration,
 when the right to vote is so fundamental?

Is it a commemoration? We commemorate the
 start and end of wars, and I suppose that this is a
 war of sorts. Commemorations remember sacrifice
 and service, and we are certainly doing that. They
 also serve as opportunities to learn the lessons of
 history and apply them to the present.

What did we learn from the suffragettes? In the
 simplest terms, we learned that the path to
 equality is full of obstacles and that those
 obstacles can be overcome. We have also learned
 that not only can we find a way over those
 obstacles, but we must remove them to ensure
 that the path of the people who follow is easier.
 The suffragettes removed the obstacles that would
 have prevented us from standing in this chamber,
 so it follows that, in this chamber, we must remove
 the obstacles that women outside it face, many of
 which have been named by colleagues across the
 chamber already.

Commemorations are also moments of
 reflection. What would Emily Davison, the
 Pankhursts and Mona Geddes have made of the
 past 100 years? I suspect that they would have
 been proud but far from satisfied. Would they
 believe that women are still underpaid for the work
 that they do? Could they believe that, 100 years
 on, two women would die every week at the hands
 of their violent partners, that 80,000 women a year
 would be raped, that 400,000 women would be
 sexually assaulted and countless more harassed?
 Would they rally against 21st century
 workhouses? Could they comprehend that they
 would still see low pay and insecure work and that,
 100 years on, women could still work for a full
 week and struggle to put food on the table? Would
 they believe that we still have to argue every
 single day that the unequal distribution of wealth
 and power holds women back? Commemorate,
 yes. Celebrate, no. I am too angry and I am still
 marching.

Looking at Twitter this morning, I was struck by
 how many people were wearing ribbons of white,
 green and purple, the colours of the movement,
 and how many of those ribbons were tied to
 statues and monuments across London that are

connected to the suffragettes. We cannot do that
 here because, as I have said before in this
 chamber, there are more statues for dogs in this
 capital city than there are for women. We still
 teach too little about women's history and the fight
 for equality; if it is not taught, how will we ever
 learn?

I cannot and I will not wait 100 more years for
 gender equality. I will not wait 10. I want it now
 and I strive for it with every breath of my working
 life. Its absence is a natural injustice and a block
 to economic progress. That is as true of our
 country today as it is of every other country around
 the world.

We should look at the world beyond our shores.
 The first place in the world to give women the vote
 was New Zealand in 1893. It is no coincidence
 that that same country barely blinked when its 37-
 year-old Prime Minister announced that she will
 give birth while in office and that her husband will
 take extended leave.

At the other end of the scale, as recently as
 2015, Saudi Arabia was debating the merits of
 universal suffrage. One planet, the same debate,
 125 years apart.

Richard Leonard asked us to consider where we
 will be in 100 years' time. I will ponder on what
 that generation will make of us and what we did in
 our time. In 100 years' time, might there be
 statues for Malala, who history remembers as
 championing the rights of women to an education,
 first in Pakistan and then across the globe? Might
 they remember Gina Miller, who took the
 Government to court and won Parliament's right to
 vote on article 50? Might history tell us that that
 was the day that the path of Brexit was altered?
 Might we see statues for women such as Fadumo
 Dayib, who fled the violence of Somalia in the 90s,
 only to return to stand for the presidency in her
 own country, doing so solely to champion the
 rights of women and the end of female genital
 mutilation? The stories of those women, and those
 of many others, will be known only if they are
 taught and told.

There is more to do here, at home. In the first
 six weeks of this centennial year, we have had the
 #MeToo campaign, the time's up movement, the
 gender pay gap crisis at the BBC, millionaires
 flaunting their cash in front of scantily clad women
 at the President's Club, and the debate over
 Formula 1 grid girls. God, even Doritos felt the
 need to produce a crisp that is more ladylike and
 less crunchy—just yesterday.

The evidence that women remain unequal can
 be seen everywhere we turn, so we must redouble
 our efforts to deliver that gender equality.
 Commemorate, yes. Celebrate, no. I am too angry
 and I am still marching.

16:19

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): On Friday, I was privileged to host, here in the chamber, young women from Leith academy who are working with the Amina Muslim Women Resource Centre and Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre on a fabulous project called my big beating voice. It aims to give ethnic minority women and Muslim women a safe space to explore issues to do with gender inequality. It seeks to help them amplify their voices and express their views, and from my experience on Friday I can assure members that it is working.

Their visit could not have been more timely. We discussed the underrepresentation of women in our Parliaments and local authorities and we asked how political parties here in Scotland could help to attract more black and minority ethnic women to join us. We need to do that, because their absence in our politics means that we are all losing out. Then we played a game—an educational one, of course. The young women had photographs of BME women's rights campaigners who were active in the fight for votes for women. My colleague Andy Wightman and I had to match the photographs with slips of paper containing text summarising the life stories of those truly remarkable women, one of whom—Ida B Wells—is widely known for her relentless work on behalf of the anti-lynching movement. She marched in the first suffrage march in Washington DC with the other 21 founders of the Delta Sigma Theta sorority, which was the only African American women's organisation to participate.

Mary Church Terrell, a sorority member, marched too. Like Ida, she was the daughter of former slaves. Mary was determined, despite calls to the contrary, that African American women would be represented on the march, saying that they were

"the only group in this country that has two such ... obstacles to surmount ... both sex and race".

She pleaded:

"My sisters of the dominant race, stand up not only for the oppressed sex, but also for the oppressed race!"

They were asked to march at the back to avoid upsetting any white delegates from the southern United States. Ida said:

"Either I go with you or not at all. I am not taking this stand because I personally wish for recognition. I am doing it for the future benefit of my whole race."

She characteristically took matters into her own hands and joined the Illinois unit in the body of the march as it progressed, walking with white co-suffragists, Belle Squire and Virginia Brooks. Ida Wells famously said:

"The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them",

and she was commemorated on a US postage stamp in 1990.

On the 15th of this month, the Royal Mail will issue a stamp featuring Sophia Duleep Singh. It is a photograph of her selling the suffragette newspaper—outside Hampton Court, I believe, where she lived. Thanks to my wonderful visitors on Friday, I know more of Sophia's story. Born in England in 1876, she was the daughter of a maharaja and therefore a princess. Her godmother was Queen Victoria.

Sophia Duleep Singh could have chosen a life of luxury. Instead, she became actively involved in the movement for women's suffrage, campaigning on the streets, selling and auctioning some of her fashionable belongings to raise money for the cause, and occasionally attracting police attention. She knew that because of her elegant clothing—her expensive coat and hat—no one would suspect her, so she hid a banner underneath her coat, threw herself at the Prime Minister's car and revealed the banner, which said "Votes for Women". She became a princess with a criminal record. King George V was so astonished by her behaviour that he exclaimed, "Have we no hold on her?"

She was active in the women's tax resistance league. She withheld payment of taxes and, when defending herself in court, said:

"I am unable conscientiously to pay money to the state, as I am not allowed to exercise any control over its expenditure; neither am I allowed any voice in the choosing of members of Parliament, whose salaries I have to help to pay ... If I am not a fit person for the purpose of representation, why should I be a fit person for taxation?"

Women—even those under 30—now have the vote, but progress is not linear. The number of women in this chamber proves that. As the struggles of those women—and those my colleagues have so eloquently spoken of—highlight, progress in this area has not been easy to achieve. It has been hard won. Cuts have an impact on the ability of women affected to get involved in politics to the degree that they might wish to.

When I was born, women aged 21 and over had been allowed to vote for only 37 years. This is such recent history. I warmly welcome the First Minister's announcement today. Women in Scotland were incredibly active in campaigning for the vote. Their actions were widespread, varied and brave. Read the account by Fanny Parker—alias Janet Arthur—of her brutal force feeding by a doctor when imprisoned. Women endured being assaulted, tripped and verbally abused, merely for marching for the right to be involved in the democratic process.

I was heartened to find that information about Fanny in the Scottish archive for schools. I would ask the Government what it might do to make the curriculum as inclusive as possible to ensure that the young women to whom I spoke have an opportunity to learn about role models from their own and different backgrounds.

I thank Engender, the Fawcett Society, Women 50:50, and each and every organisation still working for equal representation for women. It is 2018. Women have the vote but we are far from equally represented. The job is not yet done. Let us honour the memory and legacy of all those remarkable campaigners and let us work to close the gap.

16:25

Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): Robert, Alexander, John, David, James, James, James, John, James, Robert, John, Robert, William, William, Robert, William, James, James, James, John, James, Robert, Robert, John, Henry, Alexander, James, Archibald, James, James, John, Barry, Menzies and Stephen. East Fife, which today is North East Fife, is the seat in which I grew up and it has only ever been represented by men, both in Holyrood and in Westminster.

It was the constituency of Herbert Henry Asquith, who was the first Earl of Oxford and Asquith and a Prime Minister. In 1913, Asquith bestowed on his constituents a visit to the town of Leven, which is in my constituency. I am extremely grateful to the Glasgow Women's Library for providing me with the following information from the book, "A Guid Cause: The Women's Suffrage Movement in Scotland" by Leah Leneman.

Leneman describes how a group of suffragettes attempted to rush a public meeting that Asquith was addressing. One individual threw pepper in the face of a policeman. She was later arrested and taken to Methil police station, whereupon she smashed all the windows, turned on the water, flooded the jail and then threw a bucket of water over another policeman. The day after, at her trial in Cupar sheriff court, the Dundee *Courier* reported:

"Miss Morrison's enthusiasm for the cause is probably sincere. Her sense of the injustices under which women labour is possibly strong and deep. But the actions which spring from these quite legitimate foundations fail lamentably to impress."

Talking of failing to impress, it beggars belief that not just one, but two men from my party thought it appropriate to comment on the 2016 Holyrood intake in the national press yesterday. One described us as

"a group of political lightweights".

That is important in the context of today's debate, because my party's Holyrood 2016 intake included 17 new elected members, 13 of whom were women. I hope those men will think carefully in future before bandying about gendered stereotypes of what constitutes an effective politician.

I digress. Going back to Miss Morrison, it would later transpire that she was in fact Ethel Moorhead, a huge figure in the suffragette movement in Scotland, as we have already heard. In her home city of Dundee, she once threw an egg at Winston Churchill, and it was due to Churchill's actions as Home Secretary that Moorhead became the first suffragette in Scotland to be force fed in Edinburgh's Calton jail, as my colleague Christina McKelvie mentioned earlier.

The suffragettes are rightly lauded for winning voting rights for the majority of the population, but we are not there yet. Deeds, not words. We all have a responsibility to ensure that this Parliament is reflective of civic Scotland. After all, let us remember that Gail Ross is the only woman on the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee. She sits on that committee with 10 male MSPs and it looks awful for our Parliament and our country. It is time that every party in this place looked at the gender make-up of our parliamentary committees, particularly in the current climate.

I read the amendments from Labour and the Tories last night, and I cannot understand why Labour made no reference to its own deeds, which helped to ensure that this place became one of the most gender-balanced Parliaments in the world at the time. Conversely, my party held back at that time and our numbers of female MSPs dropped. We quickly realised that taking such action was not only the right thing to do, but the politically expedient thing to do in order to become a group that more accurately reflected our country.

The Tory amendment calls for us to welcome "campaigns such as #AskHerToStand". In November 2013, the group that started that campaign submitted a petition calling on the UK Parliament and political leaders to do something to ensure a better gender balance in Westminster. I had never heard of the #AskHerToStand campaign before, although I had heard of Women 50:50—the cross-party campaign in Scotland, to which I am aware that no Conservative member has yet signed up. I had also heard of the Tories' Women2Win campaign, which was, of course, started by Ruth Davidson's boss, Theresa May, back in 2005.

In 2003, four of the 18 Tory MSPs—or 22 per cent—were women. By 2011, that had rocketed to 40 per cent, making the Tories the second best party in this place in terms of their representation of women. Where stands Scotland's Opposition

now? Women now make up 19 per cent of its MSPs, which is the worst level of women's representation for the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party since 1999. "Deeds, not words", said Pankhurst.

As Ruth Maguire said, last week, the Conservative group voted against the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Bill. Last week, a male Tory MSP thought his own political point of order was more important than passing the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill, and last year, the female leader of the Opposition whipped her MSPs not to take a single intervention during the rape clause debate.

The #AskHerToStand campaign sounds like a well-meaning initiative. From the website, it sounds like its premise is that filling in forms is the real impediment to change, but the impediment to greater numbers of women in Holyrood is clear: it is the Conservatives' consistent refusal to enact measures to increase their number of female MSPs. Until they do, this Parliament will be held back.

Scotland's women need every political party to take action to ensure that we get more women into politics. We can pass all the progressive legislation that we want to in this place, but it matters not one bit if we do not live by the standards that we set others.

Deeds, not words.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): I call Willie Rennie—a male voice at last.

16:30

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): Listening to the excellent speech by Jenny Gilruth, it would be too easy to think that women being denied the vote is of a different age. However, even though the events that we are talking about were 100 years ago, the era when women did not have the vote is still of the current world. Everyone has been talking about their grannies this afternoon, and I am going to do so, too.

My granny, Jean Rennie, was one of the first women to earn the right to vote on an equal basis with men. Born and brought up in the miners rows called the Happylands in Lochgelly in Fife, she knew and talked of Jennie Lee. The life paths of my grandmother and Jennie Lee could hardly have been more different. Both were from mining stock, both were intelligent women and both faced the gender barriers of the time. However, Jennie Lee won a scholarship to university, thanks to the Andrew Carnegie Trust in Dunfermline, and escaped the circumstances of her birth. She became a radical Labour MP and, during a long

parliamentary career, established the Open University, which created a ladder of opportunity for many women just like her.

What was remarkable was that Jennie Lee became a member of Parliament just one year after equal voting rights were introduced in 1928, and she did so at the tender age of just 25 years old. What an inspiration it must have been to women, to the people of Lochgelly and to those mining communities to see such a young woman breaking that glass ceiling and getting into Parliament just after equal rights for women were introduced. She was clearly an inspiration to my granny, who often talked about her.

My grandmother was pressed into service in a home in Cupar. She was intelligent and, if she were a young woman today, she would probably be studying at one of our best universities. She had a happy and fulfilling life and may well have chosen the same route if she had had her time again—but that is the point; she did not really have the choice. However, I have a choice—a choice to make change.

I am sure that it has not gone unnoticed that I am a white male leader of an all-male parliamentary group. I am impressed by the contribution that my colleagues make to this Parliament, but that does not stop me being determined to use my leadership to change the composition of this parliamentary group for the future.

Christina McKelvie: Would a young Willie Rennie, with the powers of time travel, go back 100 years and tell the Liberal Prime Minister to give women the vote?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Do you have a TARDIS, Mr Rennie?

Willie Rennie: I think that we would all do things differently if we had the power of time travel. The decisions that were made at that time were of an age, and we are now in an age in which we can make a difference. That is why I persuaded my party to change its selection rules for candidates, so that we can achieve that 50:50 representation.

The first test was last year, at the general election. We increased the number of our members of Parliament, and half of those elected were women. I say to Jenny Gilruth that, with two more votes in North East Fife, a majority of our group would have been women. It was a modest change, but I am determined for it to signal a long-term change.

There will be change for 2021, too. For the next Scottish parliamentary elections, Liberal Democrats will have a number of all-women shortlists. That is action, not just words. We have

dedicated funds to help women win and have instituted improved training and support.

My ambition is that the Liberal Democrats will more accurately reflect the people whom we seek to represent and that we will remove the barrier to getting good women elected. For a young woman even contemplating a life in Parliament and in politics, I cannot imagine that the thought of being the only woman in a room full of white men for five years is particularly attractive. That is why I want the change. Even if all those men are charming and welcoming, I want it guaranteed that that woman will not be the only woman in the room and that she can sit alongside other quality women who can make a quality contribution to the wellbeing of our society.

That is why we need to guarantee that change, and it is my ambition that we will deliver that change. When I think of the battles of my grandmother's generation and the sacrifices that they made, I believe that there is a responsibility on all of us—men and women—to change the world for the better.

16:35

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): The motto of the suffragettes—"deeds not words"—was born of frustration. Peaceful attempts to extend the parliamentary franchise to include women began in the 1860s with John Stuart Mill, a Liberal member of Parliament—they were not all dinosaurs—who tried to change both the English and Scottish reform acts to include women getting the vote. That failed. Two million people signed petitions demanding the reform and that failed, too. So arrived the age of direct action—the age of the suffragette.

I will devote my speech to remembering the Scottish suffragettes who, unlike the Pankhursts, are not household names but surely changed the course of history through their courage. The Scottish artist Marion Wallace Dunlop was the first to go on hunger strike in Holloway prison and, as others have said, there were many women across Scotland who took direct action. The movement was strong here because of their organisation, as the First Minister said, and also because of the presence of high-profile members of the Cabinet in Scottish seats—Winston Churchill and Herbert Asquith, in particular.

Those women included Maude Edwards, who was jailed for damaging a portrait of King George V at the Royal Scottish Academy, and Frances—or Fanny—Parker, who has already been mentioned, of the Scottish University Women's Suffrage Union, who attempted to set fire to Burns's cottage to draw attention to the rights of women. Helen Crawford, from the Gorbals in

Glasgow, was a red Clydesider who left the Women's Social and Political Union in protest at its support for the first world war and focused her attention on the Glasgow rent strikes in 1915, which was another important civil disobedience movement that was led by women.

Ethel Moorhead, who has been mentioned for throwing an egg at Churchill in Dundee, was the first suffragette in Scotland to be force fed. As a result of her treatment in Calton jail, she contracted aspiration pneumonia, as the vaseline-coated tube that was forced down her throat entered her lungs. That was very serious at a time when there were no antibiotics. Other women lost teeth or sustained permanent damage to their vocal chords. Moorhead's case was raised in Parliament, along with that of suffragette Frances Gordon, who was jailed in Perth. Perth jail became known as the King's torture chamber because of the mistreatment of the women there.

The Irish nationalist MP Timothy Michael Healy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, Thomas McKinnon Wood, about the way that those women were treated. Mr Healy asked whether it was

"by the doctor's orders that Miss Gordon was held down by the assistant doctor and wardresses for an hour and a half after the forcible feeding",

whether a hand or a towel was

"held over her mouth to prevent vomiting"

and whether the Secretary of State for Scotland would

"state why the doctor found it necessary to administer three enemas daily to Miss Gordon".—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 27 July 1914; Vol 65, c 914.]

That graphic description of the barbaric practice of force feeding through the rectum, which left many women horribly injured, is not widely known, although it was reported in *Hansard*. The popular portrayal of suffragettes as jolly posh ladies in hats chaining themselves to railings does a great disservice to the women from all walks of life who, like Miss Gordon, were abused in prisons such as Perth and Calton.

There were lighter moments as well as tragedy. I particularly like the account of Prime Minister Asquith and the Home Secretary, Reginald McKenna, being accosted at the golf in Dornoch by Lilius Mitchell from Leith and Elsie Howie, who was one of the first female graduates of St Andrews University. One newspaper report at the time said:

"The ministerial golfers were halfway through a pleasant game and were putting on the tenth green when the advocates of Votes for Women appeared, Miss Mitchell at once shouting out: 'Mr Asquith, you are responsible for forcibly feeding and torturing our women!'"

The Home Secretary unsuccessfully attempted to push Miss Mitchell away and then began struggling with both women. A detective who ran to help the politicians appealed to the caddies for help but, according to the report:

“The caddies were evidently finding some enjoyment in this departure from the routine of their work and failed to make any response.”

I rather prefer to think that that was a gesture of solidarity from local working-class men who probably did not have the vote either.

I have used the debate to remember the women behind the demonstrations—some destructive, some mischievous, none causing any loss of life or physical injury. I suggest that it is time to consider pardoning such women, who broke the law so that we could make the law. We have praised them today in word, but the time has come for deeds: to use the power of lawmaking that they gave us to clear their names.

16:40

Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con):

In 1914, Dr Elsie Inglis approached the War Office to offer her services as a medical professional. She was promptly dismissed and told to

“go home and sit still”,

because commanding officers did not want to be

“troubled by hysterical women”.

In just four years, women went from being told to go home and sit still to being enrolled in the armed services, marking the beginning of the end of gender inequality.

We have all seen the films and heard the stories. We know the history of the women’s suffrage movement and the events that led up to the Representation of the People Act 1918. The sacrifices that those women were willing to make afforded us freedoms that many of us now take for granted. They gained us rights that enabled us to stand here today and that directly determined our futures as women. They made sure that we would no longer be governed by laws that we had no say in making, and they were willing to challenge the status quo when many dared not. That courage to question and to pursue what one believes in is a legacy of the suffrage movement that cannot be overrated. It is a legacy that led us all to this chamber, where we stand free to question and to pursue our beliefs.

The centenary marks a change in attitudes. Politics would no longer be just for the elite and the privileged. The move towards equality across class as well as gender was an indication of a radical shift in societal perceptions following the first world war. I believe that the significance of the

debate extends beyond women’s right to vote and is an opportunity to celebrate our progress over the past century towards universal equality.

We have continued to see that equality evolve over generations. For example, the number of women who are in work has risen by 67 per cent since the 1970s. However, as we have heard, more can still be done. The fact that just 6 per cent of science, technology, engineering and mathematics apprenticeship starts in Scotland are women suggests that we all still need to find ways to encourage more girls to see that as a career path.

Promoting the rights of women does not mean reducing the rights of men. The focus must be on creating real parity. Issues such as equal pay remain a fundamental stumbling block to equality, and although the continued empowerment of young girls has greatly increased the prospects for women in work, the creation of more flexible working conditions would go a long way towards increasing the equality of opportunity in this country.

That being said, the majority of young girls today do not suffer the inequality of opportunity that those in previous generations did. Girls are no longer told that their vision should be limited. Today, our daughters are encouraged to achieve just as much as the boys they grow up with. When H H Asquith replaced Campbell-Bannerman as Prime Minister in 1908, the suffrage movement claimed that it had

“lost a weak friend and gained a determined enemy”.

Today, I believe that we must see ourselves as surrounded by determined friends and with very few enemies who would stand in the way of equality in this country.

The most important aim for the anniversary should be to re-engage people in politics. Between 1906 and 1914, more than 1,300 women were imprisoned for their work in the suffrage movement. Some were force fed up to 200 times. However, between 1992 and 2010, the number of women who voted fell by 18 per cent, and in the 2017 general election just 62 per cent of women who were eligible chose to cast their vote on polling day.

We must do more to reach out to those women and understand what will re-engage them in our society and why they feel that their voice does not matter. This year, we have the opportunity to inspire women’s participation in politics and to make people remember the significance of their right to vote and the value of universal suffrage in Britain. If we cannot convince more women of the importance of voting, this anniversary will have lost its meaning. We can honour the suffrage

movement only by using the right to vote that those women's bravery gave us.

16:45

Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP): The First Minister thanked those who sacrificed their freedom, their comfort and their names for our votes, which were first granted to certain women in 1918. However, the four years before 1918 were marked by other sacrifices too: men and women dying in the bloody conflict of the first world war—a war that they were led into by leaders for whom they had not voted and in which they fought for a cause over which they had no vote, no say and no influence. They gave their lives without representation and they returned home to rebuild society without influence. That is what sticks in my throat—that anybody should bear the brunt of decisions over which they are powerless when it is their lives, their families and their homes that bear the impact. Today, decisions are still made by elected members of whom only 34 per cent are female that shape the lives of all women, who represent 50 per cent of the population.

As other members have reminded us, in 1918, only women over a certain age could vote. Women of 27—my age—would have had to wait another 10 years, until 1928, to be able to vote. After 1918, only two in five women—8.5 million women—could vote. The other women could not vote—not for lack of resolve, ability or desire, and not for lack of hard work, determination and integrity, but simply because they were women. They worked, lived and loved, but without any say over the decisions that were made and the laws that were passed that would change their lives.

I come from a long line of strong and able women. We have all been mentioning our grannies, and I will continue the theme by mentioning my two grandmothers, who came from utterly impoverished backgrounds, one of whom put herself through university while her father was an unemployed ship's carpenter in Clydebank and walked every day over 5 miles to university and 5 miles back home to save the bus fare. That is determination. She continued to work as a primary school teacher near Inverness even when five sons came along and the chores of keeping home and helping with the farm remained the same. I have no idea when she slept. She did not change the world, see her name in lights or write sell-out memoirs. She was a very ordinary lady—competent, wise and compassionate—but she had a say: she had a vote. However, without the Representation of the People Act 1918, she could never have used those qualities to shape society, elect wise leaders and have a say over her own future, her family's future and her work and home.

That is the past, but the past leaves a legacy of determination. It is the same determination as that of the 27 women who, as Christina McKelvie mentioned, followed Churchill during the 1908 campaign and forced him to hide in a shed during one meeting—campaign meetings in sheds are not all that novel. Nevertheless, it took decades for women to get the vote, 86 years after the first petition for women's votes was presented to Parliament by Henry Hunt, in 1832, although changes to the law in favour of women getting the vote were presented in Parliament almost every year from 1870 onwards. It is that determination that I hear in the chamber today and that keeps fighting against injustice, supports other women to stand for Parliament and opens up opportunities—not just in Scotland and in other prosperous parts of the world. Last year, I met a female MP from another country who regularly faces down machetes outside her surgeries. Her immense bravery and determination get her back on the road every single morning to represent the women who would otherwise be unrepresented in that Parliament.

At every crossroads on my own political journey, what kept me marching forward was the support of other women and men, and it is still the sheer talent of all my female colleagues across these benches, the determination of my parents, who never let me take the easy road and waste my time or ability, and the memory of the women who were willing to break laws and suffer the horrors of prison, hunger strikes and forcible feeding so that I might stand here with my female colleagues and make the law.

16:50

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): If we speak to young girls in primary school and tell them that, just 100 years ago, they and their mothers, grandmothers, aunts and female friends and family would not have been allowed to vote, they are rightly astonished. That is a real testament to the work of the pioneers of the campaign for women's suffrage in the early 20th century and the continued campaigning of countless women between then and now. It is because of their efforts that so many women are represented in this Parliament—women of all parties and political persuasions. However, we have some way to go to reach genuine equal representation.

The suffragettes fought—quite literally at times—against the ugly face of bigotry and against accusations of hysteria and insanity. They endured violent oppression, imprisonment and degrading treatment by the authorities, and some gave their lives. Their unwillingness to give up against the might of the state and their radical direct action and sacrifices paved the way for

progress; they gave confidence and showed leadership to those who followed in their footsteps.

However, as members have mentioned, the Representation of the People Act 1918 was only the first step. Its scope was limited to women who were property owning or graduates over the age of 30. The establishment worked against extending the franchise to working-class women and minorities. The divide-and-rule tactics of the ruling class was as strong then as it is now. Gender equality is a class issue: women are disproportionately on low pay and in insecure work and suffer exploitation in the workplace. We have been sharing our granny stories, and I will share mine. Her job title was “domestic servant”, and that is how women like her were viewed—as servants.

The campaign for women’s rights and the labour movement have gone hand in hand over history. Great socialist women have shaped the work of the labour movement, changing history and changing the lives of many who came after them. The Labour Party has always been the party that drove new and radical change that would benefit women, and all of us, across society. Some of the great figures who achieved that were Margaret Bondfield, the first Labour woman Cabinet minister; Ellen Wilkinson, the Minister of Education in the 1945 Government; Jennie Lee—mentioned by Willie Rennie—who fought for equal access to education and created the Open University; Barbara Castle, who brought in the Equal Pay Act 1970; Maria Fyfe, in Scotland, who was the only woman out of 50 Labour MPs who were elected in the 1990s; and Diane Abbott, who was the first black woman MP. The experience of those women showed why we had to move to positive discrimination.

We should not forget those outwith Parliament, particularly in the trade union movement, from the match girls in the late 1800s to the Grunwick strikers, the women at Ford Dagenham, Lee Jeans and Plessey, the women against pit closures movement, and trade union leaders such as Brenda Dean, Mary Turner, Frances O’Grady and, in Scotland, Lynn Henderson and Denise Christie. The Labour movement’s history is one of women who have worked together in the interests of equality, justice and solidarity.

After nearly 90 years of so-called universal suffrage, we would like to think that all problems of disenfranchisement would be solved by now, but, sadly, that is not the case. Women and men who are aged 16 or 17 are still denied the right to vote in UK elections. We should harness the energy in the new wave of youth political engagement that we have seen in recent years by giving the youngest and brightest in our society the right to vote. It does not make sense that young women

and men who contribute to society in many ways and are able to pay taxes are still denied the chance to have a meaningful say. Taxation without representation still exists for some.

Furthermore, many disabled women and men are still unable to vote because of inaccessible polling places or a lack of accessible information. People are still being disenfranchised.

It is now more important than ever that we extend the franchise as much as we possibly can, remove barriers to voting, continue what the suffragettes started, and ensure that the right to vote extends to everyone so that democracy and debate truly reflect our diverse society and can thrive and flourish in the future.

16:55

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): I pay tribute to and thank the many women who have given everything—including, in some instances, their lives—for women’s rights. I wear my “Votes for Women” brooch with pride, and I thank the person who gave it to me many years ago.

I want to mention two women in particular: Janie Allan, who I think has already been mentioned, and Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, who was from Ireland.

Janie Allan was born into a wealthy Glasgow family, which owned the Allan Line shipping company. She was an early member of the Independent Labour Party and edited a column that covered women’s suffrage issues for the socialist newspaper “Forward”.

In May 1902, Allan was instrumental in refounding the Glasgow branch of the National Society for Women’s Suffrage as the Glasgow and West of Scotland Association for Women’s Suffrage and was a member of its executive committee. She was a significant financial supporter of the association and, as one of its vice-presidents, took up a position on a National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies committee in 1903 in order to represent the association following its affiliation.

In March 1912, with more than 100 others, Allan participated in a window-smashing protest in central London. We have heard about direct action: those women certainly took direct action as well as doing among many other things. As in an example given by Joan McAlpine, no one was injured. Allan took part in that protest along with many of her associates, and was arrested, tried and sentenced to four months in Holloway prison. Her imprisonment was widely publicised, and around 10,500 people from Glasgow signed a petition to protest for her freedom.

Margaret McPhun, a fellow suffragette who was imprisoned in Holloway prison for two months in 1912 after breaking a Government office window, composed a poem entitled “To A Fellow Prisoner (Miss Janie Allan)”. That poem was included in the “Holloway Jingles” anthology, which was published by the Glasgow branch of the Women’s Social and Political Union later that year.

When she was in Holloway prison, Janie Allan was force fed—Christina McKelvie mentioned force feeding—for a full week. We all know about forcible feeding; it was a terrible ordeal. Emmeline Pankhurst described it as a “horrible outrage”. It has been likened by the women’s history scholar June Purvis to a form of rape. In a letter to a friend, Allan said:

“I did not resist at all ... yet the effect on my health was most disastrous. I am a very strong woman and absolutely sound in heart and lungs, but it was not till 5 months after, that I was able to take any exercise or begin to feel in my usual health again—the nerves of my heart were affected and I was fit for nothing ... There can be no doubt that it simply ruins the health.”

In February 1914, forcible feeding was implemented in Scotland during Ethel Moorhead’s imprisonment, which has already been mentioned. Allan was a key part of the campaign against that action.

Allan was back in court in 1913. I think that Richard Leonard mentioned the Women’s Tax Resistance League, which she supported. She died aged 100 in April 1968. She therefore lived well into her later years to see exactly what happened.

The other lady I want to mention is Hanna Sheehy Skeffington. I should probably declare an interest: she was the great-great-grandmother of my granddaughter in Edinburgh—I think that I got that right.

Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, who was born on 24 May 1877, was one of Ireland’s most ardent promoters of women’s rights. She was an influential figure during the suffragette movement, tirelessly campaigning for the equal status of men and women in Ireland. She founded the Irish Women’s Franchise League in 1908 with her husband, Francis Sheehy Skeffington, and Margaret Cousins. The league was a militant suffrage organisation that played a very important role in the pursuit of human rights.

In 1911, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington became one of the founding members of the Irish Women Workers Union, an autonomous branch of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union. She threw rocks at the windows of Dublin castle in reaction to the third Home Rule Bill, which led to her losing her teaching job. She was one of many who risked arrest to fight against the curbs placed on women’s freedom.

Hanna Sheehy Skeffington was a pioneering force for the cause of women’s rights in Ireland. I will leave members with this quote from her:

“Until the women of Ireland are free, the men will not achieve emancipation.”

That sentiment applies to any country in the world.

17:00

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): It has been 100 years since women got the vote. It was won through hard work and sacrifice by the suffragists, who were led by Millicent Fawcett, and the suffragettes, who were led by Emmeline Pankhurst. This day should rightly be celebrated: it is a huge landmark in our history that resulted in women being elected into politics and becoming Prime Ministers.

Our party has much to be proud of. The Conservative Government gave some women the vote in 1918 and gave all women the vote in 1928. In 1979, the first-ever female Prime Minister was Conservative and, in 2016, Theresa May was elected as the second female Conservative Prime Minister. Those statistics are all well and good, and this day must be a time to reflect on what has been achieved, but we have a long way to go.

All parties are working towards getting more women into politics—to get closer to equal representation in our Parliaments—because the more women there are in politics, the more women’s concerns and issues can be voiced and fought for.

To mark the centenary of voting rights for women, the UK Government has allocated £5 million to fund projects to raise awareness of the milestone and to inspire people to play their part in the political system across the UK.

The Minister for Transport and the Islands (Humza Yousaf): I have been listening very carefully to what has so far been an excellent debate. Does Rachael Hamilton agree that, for all the barriers that all women face, black and minority ethnic women face some of the highest hurdles and most difficult barriers? Does she agree that it is a shame on us all across the chamber that, after 19 years of devolution, not a single ethnic minority woman has been elected to this Parliament? Given that, we must all redouble our efforts; we must have them at the forefront of our minds.

Rachael Hamilton: I understand the issues that have been raised in this Parliament recently. The Conservative party is absolutely behind getting more BME candidates elected to Parliament.

I was privileged to be elected first in 2016, and then re-elected in 2017 on an all-women shortlist. That was not by design: it just so happened that,

in 2017, the best candidates for the Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire by-election were all women. It was only the third time in the history of the Scottish Parliament that that had happened—it happened in Edinburgh Central in 2007 and in Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse in 2016.

I am honoured to be the first woman to be elected for Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire. The man whom I replaced, John Lamont, was a driving force who supported me during my election campaign. The point is that if women are to succeed in politics they cannot do so alone.

I am also proud to be part of Women2Win, which was set up by Prime Minister Theresa May and Baroness Jenkins. Women2Win works to help female candidates to knock down barriers and obstacles, and aims to encourage more women into politics. The first part of doing that is standing for election: I refer members to #AskHerToStand.

Many women are reluctant to stand because of the vile abuse that candidates receive online. The sole aim of that abuse against female candidates is to intimidate them. It is simply unacceptable and is a practice that all parties must work to stamp out. Any form of abuse, threats or intimidation against women by men or, indeed, by women should end. We must call it out and bring an end to trolling.

We must not ignore the impact of such public abuse on candidates and on the young people who witness it. If the behaviour goes unchallenged, the message is that it is acceptable not only that someone should be treated in such an abhorrent way, but that one should treat other people that way. The abuse has the potential to turn young girls and boys off politics or, worse, to lead them to regard abuse as being an acceptable part of political discourse.

If we are to bring an end to such behaviour, we must do more at grass-roots level. Young people need to grow up in a world in which women have an equal role in politics. Just yesterday, I visited Selkirk high school to speak with the national 5 modern studies group, which was particularly interested in discussing democracy and freedom of speech. Last week, I welcomed an engaging group from the primary 5 class of Eyemouth primary school, and members might remember that pupils from Kelso high school took prime seats at First Minister's question time two Thursdays ago. It is really important for politicians to work at grass-roots level to encourage young people to engage in politics and healthy debate, in order to enable them to shape an inclusive future and to change perceptions, unconscious bias and prejudice.

I thank and pay tribute to Millicent Fawcett and Emmeline Pankhurst, and I acknowledge the work

that has been done by all women in public life and the people who helped to get them there. A lot has happened in the past 100 years, but there is still a lot to do. In marking the centenary, we must commit to changing women's lives for the better for the next 100 years.

17:06

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): Neither I nor any of my fellow women MSPs would be here in the chamber if not for the bravery, dedication and determination of the diverse sisterhood across these islands who took part in the suffrage movement.

As we celebrate the Representation of the People Act 1918, it is important that we remember that, as many members have said, not all women got the vote. Just like Ruth Maguire's great-gran, who was at the fish in Torry, Isabella and Agnes McKenzie, my great-gran and my great-aunt, who worked in the Broadford mill in Aberdeen, did not get the vote in 1918. Electoral equality was not achieved through the 1918 act, and progress did not begin with it.

By 1918, women had spent many decades campaigning. Isabella Fyvie Mayo was one of the most prominent activists and suffragettes in Aberdeen at the time of the 1918 act, but 66 years before her birth, the Aberdeen Female Radical Association, which was led by another Isabella—Isabella Wilson Legge—began campaigning for the vote for women. We should always pay tribute to the many women who campaigned but never lived to experience putting their vote in a ballot box.

Isabella Fyvie Mayo was an anti-imperialist, a pacifist and an anti-racism campaigner. She was truly ahead of her time, but had to publish her novels and poems under the name Edward Garrett in order to be taken seriously. Records of her activities are kept in the archives of the University of Aberdeen. I enjoyed reading that while she was presiding over a meeting of the Women's Social and Political Union during an Aberdeen by-election campaign in 1907, she admonished a group of boisterous men in the audience to "behave like gentlemen". Perhaps our Deputy Presiding Officer can relate to that; I know that I can.

Mrs Fyvie Mayo was also the first woman to be elected to a public board—she was elected to the Aberdeen school board in 1894. At that time, school board elections were the only means by which women could involve themselves in the public sphere. I reckon that Mrs Fyvie Mayo would be delighted with our Parliament's decision last week to legislate for gender parity on all public boards—although, on reflection, I think that she might be astonished that society has not moved on enough in 120 years and that there is still a

pressing need to legislate on gender parity. Who knows?

I want to speak about another north-east suffragette and women's rights pioneer, Caroline Phillips. She risked her job to campaign with the Women's Social and Political Union. There were not many female journalists from Kintore at the start of the previous century, but Caroline worked for the *Aberdeen Daily Journal*. When she was not smashing the glass ceiling in journalism, she was chaining herself to railings, smashing windows and organising trips to suffragette rallies. Her activism riled her bosses at the very conservative *Journal*. It was a paper whose editor had written:

"when Suffragettes, or women generally, try to compete with men on their own ground they are not only unequal, but, as a rule, they become mere imitations of third-rate men."

It was no surprise, therefore, when Caroline received a letter from management at the paper threatening that her suffragette activity was putting her job at risk. However, Caroline just got smarter about her campaigning activity. She continued to use the newspaper offices and stationery for her campaigning, and she carried out covert acts of protest, including traipsing round Balmoral golf course, anonymously and under the cover of darkness, replacing the flag in each hole with the colours of the WSPU.

Another significant figure in women's representation is Mrs Trail, who was the first female bailie in Fraserburgh, in my colleague Stewart Stevenson's constituency. She was elected in 1920 and held the role until she died.

It has been an absolute joy to hear stories of all the Scottish women who have campaigned for our right to vote, and I am pleased to have added just a few names of north-east women to the *Official Report* of the Parliament. They would have been proud to know that this place, with its 45 female MSPs and the first-ever female First Minister, was their legacy.

We can use our voices to honour those women today, but I reckon that if we could hear their voices, they would be asking us why women make up 35 per cent of MSPs and not at least 50 per cent.

17:11

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): The original suffragettes and suffragists campaigned for the vote because they wanted change. To them, voting was about more than just the privilege of going to the polling booth; it was about seeing a tangible difference in the lives of women. They wanted equality and fairness, not just on the face of it but in how wives, mothers and female workers were treated by the law.

The suffragettes and suffragists felt not just that they were equally qualified and capable, but that they had something else to add that was valuable. They had experiences and opinions that were missing from Parliament and the democratic process, and which could inform better laws, which could in turn make society function much better.

This is the centenary of votes for women but, as Neil Findlay pointed out, initially women were able to vote only if they were over 30 and owned property or had a degree. Therefore, only 40 per cent of women became entitled to vote 100 years ago today: the rest needed to wait 10 years to get the vote. Ruth Davidson said that we are celebrating

"a staging post to a better system",

but how many more staging posts will we have to celebrate before we are truly equal?

A number of members talked about what the suffragettes and suffragists suffered. The most stark account was probably from Joan McAlpine, who described their being force fed, jailed, cast out and assaulted. It is grim, but people were treated that way just because they tried to get the right to vote.

Kezia Dugdale pointed out that women are still suffering today due to inequality, poverty and violence. When I read the papers, I sometimes wonder whether we are going backward rather than forward. We lack equality in Parliament and on boards and, with a 14.1 per cent gender pay gap, we lack equality in pay. There is also gendered pay, in which jobs that are done predominantly by women are paid much less, even though they need the same levels of skills and qualifications as much better-paid jobs that are done predominantly by men. We need to value the work that women do.

Christina McKelvie talked about the need for men in our cause: we need male feminists who support equality. Richard Leonard spoke about Keir Hardie's commitment to votes for women. Hardie was told that that was the wrong thing to pursue, but he recognised that to build a fair society it was essential to give votes and equality to women.

I am proud of my party's decision to take positive action to encourage women into politics, but we cannot take any of our achievements for granted because, as we all know, we can slip back quickly. However, I encourage other parties to join us, and to stand up and make a firm commitment to women's equal representation in public life—not only to ask her to stand, but to make it possible for her to stand.

The Scottish Labour Party has the highest proportion of women here, at 46 per cent. In the first parliamentary session in 1999, the Scottish Labour Party had 50:50 representation, and we were absolutely derided for it. How times change. I wonder whether, had it not been for those women, we would have made the progress that we have made in Scotland on equal pay, domestic violence and the like. If those women had not been fighting the cause, would those changes be happening now?

A number of members talked about women in history who have fought for the vote. Many members quoted people from their own areas, but just as many talked about women who are making a difference now; those who are still fighting the fight—trade unionists and women in other countries who face death in order to express their vote. When I am on the doorstep, I often say that people, especially women, must use their vote, because people are still dying today in order that people can do so.

There is something very humbling in recognising that I would not, were it not for the struggle of those women 100 years ago, be standing here addressing Parliament today. I wonder what those women would say if they could see us. Would they be proud of their achievement, or would they be disappointed that we are still fighting for equality? Let us together create a truly equal society of which they would be proud. Let us not wait another 100 years; let us do it today.

17:16

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):

When Emily Davison was fatally injured at the Epsom derby on 4 June 1913, it was one of the most contentious moments in the history of political protest. Even to this day, the details are not clear and exactly what happened is still a matter of dispute. What is clear is that there was no dispute whatsoever about the reaction. There was a complete divide between those who saw Emily Davison as a brave martyr and those who saw her as an irresponsible anarchist. One spectator was heard to say on the day that women should never have the right to vote because, “They know not what they do.” He said that the country was too dignified to be held to ransom by an uncultured and uneducated mob of women who did not know their place in society. How wrong he was—not just because Emily Davison was in fact a highly educated woman, but because he had no understanding of what the rest of the country was up against. Women dared to believe in themselves and would marshal their cause with courage and determination that knew no bounds.

That incident was, of course, 10 years on from the founding of the Women’s Social and Political

Union by Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters, Christabel and Sylvia. Two years later, in 1905, Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney interrupted Winston Churchill—perhaps in the manner that Christina McKelvie suggested—to ask him and Sir Edward Grey whether they believed that women had the right to have the vote. When neither replied, the women unfurled their banner and were thrown out of the room. They refused to pay the fine and ended up in prison.

As many members have said, very movingly, women refused to bow to that intimidation. Instead, they chose to burn down churches that were against their cause, they vandalised Oxford Street, they chained themselves to the railings at Buckingham palace, they sailed up the Thames to hurl abuse at Westminster, they refused to pay their tax and they attacked MPs as they made their way to work. They attacked anything that was a physical reminder of the structures of power from which they were excluded—they did whatever it took to shake the prejudice out of the establishment.

That prejudice has been described in the debate by many members: that a woman’s place was only in the home; that going out into the rough world of politics would change a woman’s caring nature; that most women did not want the vote and would not use it if they got it; that women did not fight in wars; that the vast majority of women were too ignorant of political issues; and that if women were given the vote, it would not be the intelligent ones who would stand for Parliament. Those are attitudes that we find reprehensible today, but they were sincerely believed at the time. Those attitudes, of course, were to change.

The biographies of Churchill by Roy Jenkins and Martin Gilbert make it clear that Churchill felt provoked by the early suffragette manifestations, particularly in terms of the violence that they were perpetrating. He worried greatly about the addition of 8 million women to the electorate, but he changed his mind because of the huge respect that he had for the women’s war effort between 1914 and 1918, which the First Minister spoke about. That changed Churchill’s view and those of the people in this country.

It is perhaps difficult for us to imagine Britain without universal suffrage, but it was a very different world at the time. A world war was taking place, some Governments were suspicious of democracy and others were watching the rise of Bolshevism from afar. There were many conflicting views and much uncertainty in the world, and it was against that backdrop that the suffragettes managed to persuade the country that their cause was rational and just. There began the long road to universal suffrage.

What message does the legacy of the suffragette movement have for us today? There are three messages that have been most prominent in today's debate. There has been nothing inevitable about women getting the vote. It did not happen in Switzerland until 1971, and it was 2015 when women were first allowed to vote in municipal elections in Saudi Arabia. The message from that must be that there is nothing inevitable about our ability to resolve on-going issues unless we show the same courage, determination and reason as the suffragettes. On that point, I agree whole-heartedly with Humza Yousaf, as would my colleague Nosheena Mobarik, in his plea about BME, as there is a lot of work still to do in that area.

This morning, Helen Pankhurst said in her BBC interview that the biggest concern is how many women still feel abused, including by the pernicious effects of social media, and how many still feel vulnerable and unable to have their voice heard, and that the necessary changes do not come about just because of legislation. Last week in this Parliament, we took a further step forward by passing the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill, but there is still much to do to change attitudes.

Rhoda Grant and Willie Rennie reminded us what we have to do for the rest of the world, where many women remain vulnerable and repressed.

We salute the suffragettes, but we recognise that their legacy is not complete. Rightly, there has been much talk in recent weeks about the power of words but, if we are to honour the suffragettes, the power of deeds matters even more.

17:22

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities (Angela Constance): Members from parties across the chamber have made fitting tributes to some of the many tenacious women of the suffrage movement, without whom we would not have the rights that we enjoy today. There has been much reflection in the debate on women's place in history. I somewhat enjoy the ironies of history, such as that the first woman to be elected to the House of Commons, Countess Constance Markievicz, was an Irish nationalist and that, as has been mentioned before, the first woman to represent a Scottish seat, the Duchess of Atholl, was a Conservative who was not in favour of women's suffrage but who stood for Parliament because she believed that it was the best way to get Tory men used to women being in politics.

Like Ruth Davidson and Ruth Maguire, I am an admirer of Flora Drummond, who was nicknamed Bluebell after the brand of Scottish matches,

because she was "more than a match" for any cabinet minister.

Christina McKelvie and Joan McAlpine spoke powerfully about the treatment of women in prison, which included force feeding and physical and mental abuse, and how that compounded the sense of powerlessness that Kate Forbes eloquently spoke about.

The First Minister and Michelle Ballantyne spoke of Elsie Inglis, who attended a girls' school in Charlotte Square. The girls were not allowed to play in the gardens in Charlotte Square, but young Elsie was told that, if she persuaded all the householders in the square to agree, the girls could play in the gardens. She was obviously given that challenge under the presumption that not everybody would agree, but she got everybody to agree and the girls were allowed to play in the Charlotte Square gardens. That is a reminder to us all that, through education, we need to bring up our children—our girls in particular, but also our boys—to challenge the status quo. That is part of the work that the First Minister's advisory council on women and girls will do. The children who have the audacity to challenge that status quo will change the world that they inherit.

I am glad that Gillian Martin mentioned women in local government. We have spoken a lot about women parliamentarians, but I pay tribute to Lavinia Malcolm, who was the first woman town councillor in 1907. In 1913, she became the provost of Dollar because all the men councillors fell out over something to do with the purchase of the village hall. She held that post until 1919. I hope that George Adam is listening, because I also pay tribute to Jane Arthur, who in 1873 was the first woman elected to public office in Scotland when she was elected to Paisley school board.

All those women and many more had a vision of a different society: one where women were valued and had the same opportunities and equality as men. They had the spirit to keep fighting for what they believed in—sometimes at great personal sacrifice—when the rest of society, including some women, was against them.

The past always speaks to the present. I urge members, if they have not had the opportunity to do so, to look at the anti-suffrage postcards that were made by companies in the early 20th century. They send a clear message to women to stop nagging, shut up and know their place. The women depicted on those postcards are silenced with violence. They are shown with their tongues nailed to a table or cut out, their mouths bolted and padlocked shut and with rhymes or words to reinforce their silence—rhymes that amount to words of abuse.

The shocking thing is that, 100 years on, women still hear such abuse not on a postcard but in social media. I am thinking about the verbal attacks and threats that Caroline Criado-Perez was subjected to for daring to suggest that Jane Austen should be the face of the new £10 note. Indeed, I am also thinking of the despicable daily barrage of abuse faced by Diane Abbott who, according to Amnesty International, received almost half of the abusive tweets sent to female MPs in the six weeks before the most recent general election. That is not 100 years ago; it is today. Every man and woman should be united in condemning that abuse in all its forms.

Members have reflected that, in many areas, women's lives are now unrecognisable compared with what they were 100 years ago. However, in far too many areas, the pace of change has been remarkably slow. Ruth Maguire and Kezia Dugdale are absolutely right that we are still marching. We are still marching for equal pay, to challenge occupational segregation, finally to smash the glass ceiling and to end violence against women and girls and sexual harassment.

It has also been reflected that it took until the most recent UK general election for the total number of women MPs in the past century to surpass the number of men who are currently MPs in the House of Commons. As Humza Yousaf said, equal representation and diversity are important because Parliaments should feel, look and sound like the folk that they seek to represent. It widens their horizons and their understanding of the society that they seek to serve. It also leads to better decision making.

Although the Scottish Parliament has a good record on female leadership and representation, we must remember that it is not an equal record. We have fewer elected women now than in 1999. The lesson of that is how progress must be protected if it is to survive. That is why the passing of the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Bill and the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill last week was important. It shows that the Parliament is about not just defending progress, but building on it.

Alexandra Runswick, the director of Unlock Democracy, fittingly said:

"The Centenary is a moment of celebration and a time to reflect on the great strides made towards gender equality. However while politicians and those in power celebrate the Centenary they must not just pay lip service to the principle of equal representation; we need urgent action from politicians, not overtures."

That is why this Government will, with the support of others, continue our massive expansion of childcare, continue with our work on the STEM strategy to ensure that women are well placed in the jobs of the future, continue to promote the

living wage and fair pay, and continue to promote flexible working and the value of unpaid care. That is why the Government funding that has been announced by the First Minister will support activity to celebrate and commemorate 100 years of women's right to vote and look to the future to see how best we can ensure equal representation of women in politics, Parliaments and public life.

I am all for statues of Malala and other pioneering women, but the best tribute to those who have sacrificed so much will be through our deeds and our ensuring that, in the next 10 years, perhaps as we celebrate the 1928 act of universal suffrage, we make as much progress or indeed more progress than has been made in the past 100 years.

Presiding Officer, there is a time to reflect and a time to act, and the time to act is now.

Decision Time

17:31

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The first question is, that motion S5M-10214, in the name of Christina McKelvie, on making the most of equalities and human rights levers, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament notes the findings and recommendations in the Equalities and Human Rights Committee's 7th Report, 2017, (Session 5), *Looking Ahead to the Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2018-19: Making the Most of Equalities and Human Rights Levers* (SP Paper 246).

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-10285.2, in the name of Ruth Davidson, which seeks to amend motion S5M-10285, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on celebrating 100 years of women's right to vote, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-10285.1, in the name of Richard Leonard, which seeks to amend motion S5M-10285, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on celebrating 100 years of women's right to vote, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-10285, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on celebrating 100 years of women's right to vote, as amended, be agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament recognises that it is 100 years since the Representation of the People Act 1918, which finally gave some women the right to vote, and the Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act 1918, which allowed women to stand for the UK Parliament; welcomes the activity taking place in Scotland and across the UK to celebrate and commemorate the centenary of women's suffrage; further welcomes the considerable progress that has been made in women's political representation over the last 100 years; recognises that the country is still far from achieving equal representation at any level of politics; welcomes campaigns such as #AskHerToStand, which encourage women to consider a career in politics; pays tribute to the suffragettes and suffragists who fought to ensure women's right to vote, in some cases at considerable personal sacrifice; commends the many organisations and individuals that continue to work to realise women's equal representation in public office as parliamentarians, local councillors and across society, and accepts that there is more work to be done to achieve equal representation for women.

Cyber-resilience (Young People)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-09921, in the name of Gillian Martin, on encouraging cyber-resilience among young people. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament believes that one of the biggest issues for young people in Aberdeenshire and across the country is the pressure to share images of an intimate nature online with their peers; notes the view that an increased awareness of the career consequences, legal implications and bullying and mental health repercussions of such behaviour should be encouraged; acknowledges that recent figures from the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service show the number of children reported to prosecutors for sexual offences has risen by 21% in four years and the number of reported cases involving a child committing a sexual offence against another increased by 34% over the same period; understands that so-called sexting is one of the main reasons for this increase in sexual offences among children, and welcomes campaigns, such as the Young Scot programme, Digi, Aye? Programme, which aim to tackle these issues.

17:33

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): I start the debate by saying thanks to an anonymous young woman. After weeks of flattery, cajoling and wearing down of resistance, she sent a photograph of herself semi-nude over Snapchat to a much older boy. Within half an hour or so, the photo was saved on the phones of multitudes of people in the area. She could see it being screen-grabbed and shared and, of course, she panicked.

I thank her because she was brave and did the best thing she could do: she told her mother and together they went to the police to report the incident; then they went to the press to raise awareness among other families. The girl was just 11 years old.

We all know stories about online bullying and shaming. We have seen it; we might have children who have experienced it; or we might have consoled a friend who has been through it. However, in the past few years, it has taken on a new dimension that is becoming normalised.

I have been quoted as saying that the practice of young people asking for nude photographs to be sent to them or sending unsolicited nude photographs of themselves to others is endemic. I do not use that word lightly. I have been talking to many young people about this for more than two years now and I am convinced that it is an issue that could affect the mental wellbeing of many young people and influence how they form healthy relationships.

This is not just a behavioural issue that should be tackled solely in schools—most of the image sharing happens outwith school and the consequences make school difficult for the victims. Guidance teachers I know tell of issues that are resolved by home time escalating online overnight and coming back in through the school doors the next day, increased in intensity and seriousness. Personal and social education—PSE—can and should raise these issues, but it cannot operate in isolation.

I was on the BBC this morning and my interview was trailed with the question, “Should schools do more to make teens cyber-resilient?” However, I think that we should all do more. Looking to schools to take full responsibility is not just unfair; it is unrealistic—it just would not work.

Parents, I believe, are not as aware as they could be about what is happening, and they will be shocked to learn that the practice is thought of as no big deal among many young people. Certainly I was completely in the dark about it, and I have worked with teenagers since mobile phones became everyday items—much less mini computers with apps and cameras. I have spoken to hundreds of parents about this, some of them debating alongside me today, who say, “We don’t know the half of it.” Indeed, it was my friend and colleague Christina McKelvie who first raised the issue of revenge porn in this Parliament, having been made aware of it by her own teenager, and she got legislative action on it in the form of the Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Act 2016.

Sharing nude photos is not just about young people exploring their sexuality; it can be about control. Do not fall into the trap of thinking that it is just boys asking girls to share their bodies with them online. One of the most shocking conversations I had was with a teenager who told me about a girl who was one of the leaders of her friendship group who held nude photographs of her friends in order to control them. If they did not do what she wanted, she could deploy the photographs to shame her so-called friends. The photographs were a bullying tool—talk about “Mean Girls”.

What can parents do? They can perhaps take a lesson from me on how not to react. On hearing about this kind of practice, my first reaction was a fairly primal one. I have a 14-year-old daughter, who will not thank me for mentioning her, and—I am not going to lie—I began to relate to the queens and kings of Grimms’ fairy tales who wanted to build towers to keep their princesses in until they were adults. However, to have an effective impact, parents have to tread a fine line between allowing their growing children a degree of privacy—recognising that they are developing

as adults—and being aware of what they could be subjected to online.

As with most things, the best way is to talk and—most important—to give space to listen. It will possibly be the most difficult conversation that parents will have with their kids, but it will mean that they can cancel the delivery of bricks to build the tower.

I do not believe that further legislation is the way forward; we already have sufficient laws. However, from talking to many young people, I am convinced that there is a lack of awareness that by soliciting naked photographs or sending unsolicited photographs of themselves, they are breaking the law. As we know, it is an offence to possess, send, make, take, distribute or show indecent photographs of children. That means that the person taking the photo and the person who receives it is breaking the law. If it gets forwarded on, that recipient is also breaking the law, and we know that these images can end up anywhere. Once an image is off someone’s phone and away, they have no control over where it ends up and it can be online forever.

The impact that the practice could have on a young person’s future is obvious. Our best result would be to empower our young people to refuse to be pushed into sharing images of themselves that they would not be happy to have shared widely in the first place. I would like us to get to a situation in which young people feel empowered enough to call out those who prey on others to share or send unsolicited photographs—not easy for teenagers.

The most effective action will come from young people themselves. I was told repeatedly by a teen I know that young people will not respond to adults standing in front of them telling them how to behave online. That is why I am delighted that students from North East Scotland College’s television production department are in the public gallery today, along with representatives from Young Scot’s digi, aye? campaign. They have been working to produce two films, written by young people for other young people, about sexting and nude-image sharing.

Members and their guests are going to be the first to see the two films—one is called “Cyber Attraction” and the other is called “Overexposure”—at a reception in Parliament tonight. From tomorrow, the films will be on Young Scot’s website, to be viewed and shared by anyone. Teachers and parents can use the films as a way to start that tricky but vital conversation, and I hope that they will be watched and shared by thousands of young people and will spark conversations that empower them. I hope that these realistic, well-produced dramas—I had to say that, because it is my old college—will get us

all talking about consent, self-esteem and resilience.

To conclude, I would like to tell a wee story. Ten years ago, when I was a college lecturer, I took 12 students, mostly in their late teens, on an exchange trip to Finland. On our last night, we went to a nightclub. I sat my beer on the bar and went up to dance. I was on the dance floor for less than a minute when one of my male students ran after me with my beer and gave me a right talking to about never leaving my drink unattended. Why? Because his generation had it drummed into them that they must always be vigilant in case their drink was spiked. In fact, they all laughed at me for being so naive.

I would like to think that, with a concerted effort from all of us talking about the dangers of sexting and image sharing, young people will be in a position to protect themselves and their friends from that in the same way as they protect them from spiked drinks. Putting themselves in a vulnerable and dangerous position by sexting will be so 2018 and it will be a change that is led by young people. [*Applause.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have a wee note for everyone: I ask those in the gallery please not to clap, catcall or shout, if you do not mind. Perhaps at the end you can show your appreciation to everyone who takes part in the debate.

I ask those who are taking part to be quite strict with their timing, because a lot of people want to speak. I do not want to leave anyone out, but time is limited. Speeches should be absolutely no more than four minutes.

17:42

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): I thank Gillian Martin for securing this important debate and I take the opportunity to thank my young helper, Calum McKay, for putting together his first speech for this debate and for his research on underage gambling online.

As a parent myself, with two children growing up in the midst of the cyber-revolution, the topic is one of serious concern. We have an obligation to educate our children about being online, but who should take responsibility? For social media companies just to shrug their shoulders is not good enough. The fundamental lack of action on developing safeguards lies at the centre of many online problems. We must not and cannot sit on our hands, waiting for action. The companies that are turning a blind eye must realise that their lack of action is akin to allowing the exploitation of our children and young people. As we accelerate relentlessly towards a digital world, the reach of social media influencers becomes more

pronounced. Children are driven by peers and the desire to emulate their modern role models towards increasing exposure to online danger.

It is the duty of the influencers to set a precedent, although that also means holding them to account for their actions. In cases such as that of the well-known YouTube star, Logan Paul, who recently posted a video showing graphic imagery around suicide victims to his 16 million followers, our duty as adults is to react and to dispute such actions without dropping to that level ourselves, as we saw when many so-called responsible adults sent a series of death threats to Mr Paul.

Setting examples and ensuring that internet companies do the right thing are important issues. However, perhaps the best way forward is to empower our children in matters concerning their online behaviour. As well as creating legislation, we can bring about change by supporting charities such as the Rotary peace project, which facilitates and supports school children through life-skills-based programmes that are delivered student to student. The goal of the organisation is to empower the next generation to develop their own ideas about the challenges that the 21st century produces, including about how to avoid making poor decisions online and make the right, but often the most difficult, decisions.

It is important to note that the internet has succeeded in giving youth a voice and, therefore, greater influence and responsibility than have been available to any past generation—responsibility that young people did not previously hold in society. Young people have the ability to mould themselves, learn, adapt and stay on top of the evolving online industry, whatever its nature, but they need our support.

Other online dangers include the increasing prevalence and normalisation of gambling fundamentals through online gaming. Its ubiquitous presence has consumed the entire industry, leaving children as young as 11 exposed to the pressure of ideologies such as pay to win, for example through skin betting, which involves players betting with in-game items. The Gambling Commission reports 11 per cent participation among 11 to 16-year-olds, with as many as 20 per cent of boys claiming to have participated. However, like everything, with great power comes great responsibility, and it is evident that many children lack the self-control that is needed to recognise and avoid the exploitative nature of modern online games and the potentially disastrous consequences.

Until now, we have sat back and handed responsibility for safeguarding children to game developers, without society seeking a framework to prevent exploitation and the potential normalising of gambling-like activities. In many

cases, online game developers continue to distance themselves from the debate on the basis that those concerns are outwith their responsibility or jurisdiction. Their avoidance of voluntary regulation is tantamount to them denying their moral responsibilities, which arise from the fact that their games might—indirectly or directly—contribute to our worrying underage gambling rates.

In order to safeguard our children, we must look not only to the online industry to make changes through voluntary or legislative action. As politicians and parents, we have a responsibility to empower our young people, allowing them to make the best, the right and the most appropriate choices for themselves in their ever-increasing online activity.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: If people take more than their time, it could penalise other people and—given the list in front of me—perhaps prevent people from being able to speak at all.

17:47

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): I thank Gillian Martin for bringing this important topic to the chamber and for all the work that she is doing on it.

I am sure that Gillian Martin will not mind me saying that, for people of our generation, who grew up in a world that is very different from the one that our young folk inhabit, the sheer scale of this topic can be quite overwhelming. It affects every constituency in every part of Scotland. It affects young people of both sexes and of all sexual orientations and spans several age groups, from those who are barely teenagers to young adults. It affects people of all classes and all backgrounds, regardless of their other interests and aspirations. Although the immediate impact is on young people, it affects all of us, too, because we all have young people in our lives whom we care about and want the best for.

For current generations of young people, for whom the divide between the real world and the online world is increasingly blurred, I guess that it is only to be expected that aspects of their romantic lives take place in the digital world, too. We are not going to be able to change that. Teenagers have always fallen in love with and wanted to have sex with one another and they will continue to do so. In a healthy and respectful context, fair play to them—it is part of growing up. However, although we cannot and do not want to stop hormones raging and romances blossoming, we can and must raise young people's awareness of the new dangers and risks that go along with that in a digital age. We will never be able to protect our young people from unrequited love or a

broken heart, but we can do our best to protect them from the mental anguish of seeing intimate images of themselves appear in public or ending up with sexual offences charges on their record.

A big part of that is about understanding how teenagers' brains work and the pressures that they are under. Recent research into the teenage brain has shown that there is heightened risk taking during adolescence; and, at the same time, the influence of peer pressure peaks. That is quite a combination, and thinking about it can help us to understand why our young people sometimes take risks that most of us would find utterly terrifying and would never think of taking.

The example that Professor Sarah-Jane Blakemore gives in her TED talk on the subject—which I recommend to anyone who is interested—is of an intelligent 13-year-old girl who knows all about the health risks of smoking but who, if she is out at the weekend and her friends offer her a cigarette, is very likely to smoke it. As neuroscience shows us, for a teenager, the risk of being ostracised from their peer group completely outweighs any of the health risks that they would think about from smoking.

In the context of viewing, sexting and sharing intimate images, it helps to understand the pressures that our young people are dealing with. If they are seen as something that everyone else is doing and if they are presented as a normal part of a relationship and as validating, the pressure on young people must be immense. When, at the same time, the area of the brain that is associated with self-regulation and judgment is still developing, teenagers are prone to taking risks.

It seems to me that our emphasising the career consequences, legal implications, potential for bullying and mental health repercussions is not going to be good enough. It will not do what we want it to do—in fact, I am quite sure of that.

As my time is ending and I do not want to overrun, I will just echo Gillian Martin's sentiment that we should work with young people themselves and really listen to what they tell us will help to keep them safe, well and happy.

17:51

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): I, too, thank Gillian Martin for bringing the debate to the chamber so that we can discuss the very important issue of cyber-resilience.

The internet has been one of the greatest inventions in our history. It connects the world in many ways and offers many opportunities to all our citizens and their communities. The benefits of being online are far reaching. However, as with all things, there are many disadvantages. Despite the

opportunities of the internet, there are risks that can affect almost everyone, but especially young and vulnerable people.

Children and young people today connect with each other in a wide range of ways that were not available to any generation before. Therefore, we need to encourage open conversations with young people about the dangers of the internet and social media. Too many children and young people are being exposed to bullying and pressures online, resulting in quite serious implications for mental health and social stigma. Raising awareness of the career consequences and the legal implications is a positive step that should deter perpetrators from bullying and trolling online.

The damaging and shocking increase in the number of sexual offences committed by young people shows that we need a connected approach among Government, schools, parents, charities, youth organisations and—most important—social network companies in order to tackle the scourge of the sharing of private and intimate details between young people and of so-called sexting. The digi, aye? campaign by Young Scot is a fine example of a programme that warns young people about the dangers of the internet and promotes safety and resilience when dealing with peers online.

The Equalities and Human Rights Committee produced the report “It is not Cool to be Cruel: Prejudice-based bullying and harassment of children and young people” in July last year. During our evidence sessions, we heard from young people and youth organisations that more and more young people, especially girls, are being subjected to sexual harassment online. I encourage everyone in the chamber and everyone who listens to the debate to read that report. I guarantee that you will be shocked to hear about the wide-ranging harassment that young people are facing online, and not just in our schools.

As a society, we need to be far more proactive in encouraging young people to become more cyber-resilient and to have open conversations about cyber-bullying or harassment when they have been subjected to it. We all have a role to play in ensuring that our young people are safe and that they can enjoy the real benefits that the internet can bring. Debates such as the one that we are having tonight are an important step in raising awareness. I close by once again thanking Gillian Martin for bringing the debate to the chamber.

17:54

Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP): I thank my colleague Gillian Martin for bringing this

important debate to the chamber on what is, I understand, safer internet day 2018.

My colleague Ruth Maguire made the point that this is a huge issue. I note the speeches that we have heard so far, which have focused very much on the dangers of image sharing. I intend to focus on some of the broader issues that I suggest are pertinent to cyber-resilience. Before I do that, however, I echo that the key is to empower young people and work with them, which can start at home. Teaching responsible use of the internet should be as much the role of a parent or care giver as, for example, advising a child of the dangers of road traffic, the railways, water or electricity. I recall from my childhood learning those basic skills of how to stay safe in the world. We need to adapt them for the world that we now live in, where the internet is pervasive and will only become more so.

A balanced approach is required when we are bringing up kids, because, just as we cannot wrap them in cotton wool, isolate them from the world and put them in a tower—as much as I am sure that every parent wants to do that—we cannot cut children off from use of the internet, as it is a vital skill for the jobs of the future. It is important that this generation of digitally native people are allowed to develop such skills naturally. For that reason, the balanced approach is correct. The excellent resources that are out there include the UK safer internet centre education pack for parents and carers, Young Scot’s digi, aye? programme and the resources that Police Scotland provides.

I will turn to some of the broader issues. It strikes me that, in many aspects of life now, be it in the workplace or in the family, we often sit with our mobile phones next to us and we check and re-check them. We are constantly looking to see what is happening on Twitter, Facebook and other social media platforms. We live a very distracted life, and it impacts on our relationships with other people and our capacity to sleep. Do we really need our phones at our bedsides?

When I was a kid, growing up, my mother refused to allow me to have a games console until I was 11 years old, although I begged and begged to get one for Christmas. She was convinced that sitting in front of the TV would not be a good idea at all and that I should be out playing. I do not know what she would have thought if, when I was five or six years old, I could have had a hand-held phone with 10 times the power of a PlayStation—as it was then—and access to an abundance of information.

There is a question about how we all—children, young people and adults—relate to the internet and the information that it provides. Cyber-resilience skills are also about, for example, being

able to identify fake news, misinformation and scams. Those skills are incredibly important as well. Fundamentally, it all comes down to a skill of critical thinking, and it is incredibly important that that is incorporated when we think about cyber-resilience.

We also need to look to the future. As the excellent briefing from Barnardo's highlights, there are both opportunities and risks. As we move forward, the internet is going to become more and more a part of our lives, including the internet of things and augmented and virtual reality. In the future, the children of today will be working alongside robots and artificial intelligences in the workplace. Indeed, our bodies may well be cognitively enhanced with machines and computers.

However, when we look at the coming revolution of technology in future decades, it is important to remember that our brains are not changing. We are still subject to the same risks and dangers that we have always been subject to. When we talk about cyber-resilience, it is important that we have that much broader concept as well.

Once again, I thank Gillian Martin for bringing the debate to the chamber.

17:58

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): Gillian Martin's thought-provoking and, indeed, challenging remarks reminded me of the significance of three things: first, mental health; secondly, relationships; and, thirdly, and maybe above all, the resilience of young people. I know that it seems a long time ago for many of us, but we all went through childhood, and developing the resilience to deal with what was going on in the classroom or in wider social settings was easier because things called mobile phones did not exist. There are no two ways about that. We all had our challenges, but they were nothing compared with the challenges that my kids face in school or post-school life now.

Finlay Carson is right about the power of large corporations that have a major role in how our young people grow up. Are we doing enough about that? I am not sure that we hold those people to the fire in the way that we could. Gillian Martin is right about the need for resilience and the importance of measures that we can take to address that. Part of the challenge is for people of a certain generation to keep up to date with the technology and to understand it. I suspect that much of the work that needs to be carried out is as much about helping parents as it is about—as the many sensible speeches from across the chamber have identified—helping young people in schools, at home and in other environments such as youth

clubs. For parents, that is, without a doubt, pretty scary stuff.

I will highlight three initiatives that have taken place in Shetland, because I think that the debate is as much about what can be done as about analysing the problem, which members across the chamber have done sensibly. First, the Shetland child protection committee has done a huge amount of detailed work in the area that we are discussing over the past number of years, and, over the past few months, virtually safe, virtually sound youth conferences have been held in many schools across Shetland. The important point is that it is young people who have designed the courses that are involved. They have talked to each other and have looked at what is available and how best to take that knowledge and those topics into workshops so that their peers can learn. That has been done not by people of my age, people wearing uniforms or people from different agencies, but by young people themselves taking the initiative, which is at the heart of why those youth conferences have been successful.

Secondly, most secondary 1 pupils across the islands have now attended a child exploitation and online protection safety workshop. Again, S6 young people have been trained to deliver those internet safety sessions in schools, and new materials that are supported by some of the initiatives that are taking place across Scotland have been made available to keep that training up to date and specific to real-life situations.

Thirdly, the school parent councils in many areas of Shetland have arranged internet awareness sessions that are aimed not just at children but at parents. The other week, Karen Fraser, the vice-chair of the mobile phone and internet safety committee, which is a sub-committee of the Shetland CPC, said:

"The workshop is about staying safe online and focuses on bullying and effects it has on everyone—the victims, the bullies and the bystanders. It raises awareness about the risks associated with internet use and explores with participants issues that affect them."

The local library in Lerwick is using an important book entitled "Chicken Clicking", which is aimed at three and four-year-olds and is a dark and scary story about online troubles. Although the book is written for and aimed at three and four-year-olds, I think that it can be read by young people who are much older than those pre-school children. To me, the use of that book shows how we can find innovative solutions to help young people in these most trying of times.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I got distracted there and let you go way over time, Mr Scott.

18:03

Ash Denham (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP): I pay tribute to Gillian Martin for securing this debate on a very important issue to which, as a mother of young teens, I have given quite a bit of thought.

As has been mentioned already, children today are growing up in an environment that is very different from the one that my generation grew up in. I cannot be the only person in the chamber who is very glad that Facebook did not exist when I was 17. When I tell my children that I did not get a mobile phone until I was in my 20s, they just stare at me and do not know what to say. I do not think that they can comprehend the idea of a pre-mobile and pre-internet world, where people did not have a home computer or access to the internet in their pocket.

However, our lives are now partly lived online, with all the benefits, challenges and dangers that that brings for both children and adults. It is obviously children, though, who are most at risk from the potential dangers, and it is young teens who are thought to be the most at risk from certain activities. I will focus specifically on one that is known as sexting.

Kate Burls is an education team co-ordinator with child exploitation and online protection command, or CEOP, which is a command of the national crime agency. She said that their work with young people has found that sexting increasingly feels like the norm for behaviour in that peer group. I am not sure whether teenagers would recognise the term “sexting”, as they would probably call it something like “nude selfies” or “dodgy pics”.

I also have that impression of the normality of the practice. I had a bit of time when I visited a local high school recently and spoke to a group of S5 girls. I asked them what they thought about the subject and whether it was happening. They said that it was and proceeded to give loads of examples, such as, “Last week, it happened to so-and-so”—it was very normal. The varied examples included one called snaking, in which a boy—it is usually a boy—befriends a girl and puts pressure on her to produce pictures, which he then distributes to his friends and even posts online. Teenagers can all give examples of when that has happened, so it is probably more prevalent than we realise and is probably going on all around us. The pictures can be around the school within half an hour, with horrible and quite devastating consequences for the teenagers concerned. Girls are reporting more instances of being put under pressure to send those pictures, which is heaped on them using insults that I remember as quite familiar: if they do not send the pictures, they are frigid, but if they send them, they are easy. There

is no way for girls to win in that scenario—as usual.

Because it seems normal and it seems like everybody is doing it, it can be hard to resist the pressure and easy not to think about the consequences. As a parent, I have spoken to my teens about the practice in an attempt to show that they can talk to me about such things, and to give them space and time to think about the situation before they might be faced with it. We need to educate children about the risks and to offer them support if and when they might need it.

When I got pregnant, a friend who has been a teacher for 20 years advised me, “Never get your children a smartphone until they are at least in their 20s.” That was based on things that she has seen on mobile phones. I am not sure that that is the solution that we are looking for, but I understand the sentiment that was behind the advice. Teens talking to teens is clearly the way forward, and the videos and short films that were mentioned by Gillian Martin and are being promoted by Young Scot are part of the solution.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There are still a few members who wish to speak. I am therefore minded to accept a motion without notice to extend the debate.

Motion moved,

That, under Rule 8.14.3, the debate be extended by up to 30 minutes.—[*Gillian Martin.*]

Motion agreed to.

18:07

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): That is an excellent decision. Are we all sitting comfortably? I refer members to my entry in the members’ register of interests; I am a member of the west of Scotland National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children board. I add my thanks to Gillian Martin for securing time in this chamber once again to raise awareness of the dangers that being online can pose, especially for younger communities, which she continues to champion in the chamber.

Without doubt, the internet and the ease of online access have had many benefits in learning, education and communication, and we should not gloss over that fact. As a tool used properly, it can open up the universe and transport us to places limited only by our imaginations. Recently, as part of a school project, I and my youngest stood on the deck of the Titanic and we visited the ship in its watery grave. We have come face to face with titanoboa, a prehistoric snake that is estimated to have been up to 50 feet long and to weigh more than a tonne. As an educational tool, the internet’s potential is almost limitless. However, we are all

too aware of the dangers that can lurk online for the vulnerable and the unaware. From online bullying to much more sinister issues, it is clear that we are struggling to stay ahead of the curve.

I will help Ash Denham out and say that I remember getting my first mobile phone when I was 32 years old. I had just retired from athletics; my employer handed me the phone and I thought that I had made it. It was akin to carrying a brick around with me. At the time, my eldest daughter was young and I had no need to think about her cybersecurity.

Roll on a few years, and my middle daughter had started to get to grips with the internet, but there was no need to worry about social media.

I now have a nine-year-old, who has one of my old smartphones attached to her mother's contract. That costs buttons, and she now has access to the internet, social media and her friends whenever she has her phone. That is great for me, because I can FaceTime her at breakfast time and in the evening, but there is always the lurking threat of online abuse.

I have grandchildren aged five and six who can do things with an iPad that baffle me. They will watch something on the iPad and, all of a sudden, with a swish of a finger, I will have lost control of my television as their viewing preferences appear on the screen. Perhaps that is part of the issue. Technology is moving faster than some of us are learning. We are not keeping up; rather, we are falling behind and therefore struggling to understand as online safety issues develop.

To that end, I commend the be share aware NSPCC programme, which offers advice on how to keep our children safe online. As the NSPCC has pointed out, we are fine talking to our children about

“crossing the road, bullying and speaking to strangers”,

but we are less likely to discuss

“staying safe in the digital world”

and social networks, apps and games that our children are using. As I have mentioned, perhaps that has something to do with our understanding of the digital world.

While I am on that subject, I want to mention a slight bugbear of mine. Computer games come with an age recommendation for a reason. I see too many youngsters playing computer games for people aged 18 plus. We all need to be a bit more aware.

Online bullying is a pretty new problem, but most of us in the Parliament are all too aware of it. If we make a comment, post a speech or—God forbid—make a mistake in the chamber, it is like jackals round a wounded wildebeest, but we

accept that as a hazard of our job. I wonder whether we really should do that and whether we are normalising that kind of behaviour. As supposed adults, we will deal with that in the main, although I suspect that few will go unaffected in some way by that kind of ritual attack. However, if our children experienced that, the effects could be much more profound and longer lasting. That is abusive behaviour.

Childline has reported a 12 per cent rise in cyberbullying counselling sessions. I once again commend the NSPCC for its work in helping primary schools to recognise abuse in all its guises. As I have said before in the chamber, many children who are being abused do not recognise that they are being abused, especially online.

I reinforce the point, which other members have made, that our children's safety online is all our responsibility. We need to be aware of what they are accessing and what their online activity is and, as the front-line internet police, we sometimes need to be unpopular and say no to certain apps, games and social media. It can be as simple as having an on-going conversation and talking to our children. Would that not be a breakthrough?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will tell you what would be a breakthrough: people listening and keeping their speeches to under four minutes.

Brian Whittle: You gave me half an hour.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No. People are likely to lose out and have their speeches cut down. That is not fair to colleagues.

18:12

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): I thank Gillian Martin for bringing this important debate to the chamber and for all the work that she has done on the subject.

As we have heard in speeches from across the chamber, young people growing up today are under much more pressure than my generation was. My childhood was spent playing, going to school, watching television or swimming. In my teens, I spent endless hours on the phone to my best friend—much to the frustration of my mum and dad, as she only lived next door. There were, of course, no mobile phones and there was no internet, Facebook, Instagram or Snapchat, and I have no doubt that life was simpler. Our parents told us not to talk to strangers, and that was the extent of the personal safety messages that we got. For most of us, home was a safe and secure place, and what happened in the playground with friends stayed in the playground.

Now, young people are contactable 24 hours a day and, despite our best efforts, their relationship

with cyberspace in their own virtual reality is largely their world. It has been estimated that 69 per cent of 12 to 15-year-olds own a smartphone, and that percentage jumps to 90 per cent for 16-year-olds. That much access to photo-sharing and video-sharing technology combined with hormones and curiosity has created the perfect storm for sexual imagery and cyberbullying.

Studies have found that the majority of teenagers think that sexting is normal and harmless. That is shocking and scary. Without intervention and education, teenagers who store and share that content begin to view others as sexual objects. Psychologists have seen that, over time, those thoughts lead to a lack of empathy, an increase in anger and an increase in sexually aggressive crimes. Unfortunately, we are already seeing that. As Gillian Martin mentioned in her motion, in four years the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service has seen cases in which a child has committed a sexual crime against another child rise by a troubling 34 per cent.

Our objective is not to shame the young people who send sexual images for their decisions; instead, our goal is to understand the driving motivation behind their behaviour. After all, we must remember that we created the world in which they live.

Social scientists have found that many young people share explicit materials of themselves in the search for social validation from and acceptance by their peers, as Ruth Maguire outlined. However, receiving a negative response can have catastrophic consequences: the national health service has reported that cyberbullying increases the risk of suicide by 30 per cent.

What can we do? First, we must accept that resilience does not mean simply telling children to avoid the behaviour, because that will not work. Although children, parents and teachers need to be aware of the ramifications of their choices, we must remember that resilience is built by how we respond to opposition and difficulty. We have a responsibility to provide young people with resources that teach them healthy ways to manage their sexuality and self-esteem.

There are an increasing number of resources that can help—we have heard about some of them today—including Young Scot's *digi, aye?* initiative, the International Justice Mission, which does good work, and the Scottish Government's cyber-resilience programme.

On internet safety day, I urge social media sites to take more responsibility by tightening up their security rules and practice. They have a moral responsibility to do so.

This is a difficult issue to resolve, but we must resolve it. It is impossible to predict exactly what

will help every child in Scotland, but even taking action on behalf of the wellbeing of one child is worth it. The children of Scotland deserve to have wonderful lives, and by making sure that they are cyber-resilient we can help them to stay safe in this world that we adults have created.

18:16

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):

I, too, thank Gillian Martin, not just for bringing this undoubtedly important debate to the chamber, but for reassuring me that I am not the only one who would like to construct a tall tower. The only point that I want to clarify is the age at which we can safely lock up our children. Is five too young? That would certainly be my instinct.

In reality, technology is part of the world in which our children grow up. It is not something different; it is not something other. It is part of their everyday existence; it is part of their futures, too. That point was underlined to me when I watched my eldest daughter when she was just two go up to our television screen and try to swipe it. That showed me how she perceived technology and what she understood she could expect from it. It was part of her experience—she saw a screen and she expected to be able to interact with it. It is from that perspective that we need to look at the issue.

In some ways, the debate is summed up by a combination of what Ruth Maguire and Gillian Martin said. Teenagers are still teenagers, and they will do the things that teenagers have always done. What they do online is an extension of the behaviours with which we are all familiar.

The other key point is that if we as adults come thundering in and say, "See this new internet thing—I want you to turn it off and not use it," we are not getting it. We need to understand that, in treating the internet as something alien and different, we are perhaps perpetuating the problem. This debate is about extending freedom to our children, as opposed to protecting them, although we must seek to do that and to balance those two aspects. We must provide children and young people with the skills and the ambition to explore the world while trying to instil the habits and behaviours that will help them to act safely and keep them safe.

I recently took part in a debate hosted by the Edinburgh Mela that involved young people exploring those issues. I was struck by two things. First, how conversant they are with the broad range of internet-related issues, from cyberbullying to freedom of speech and copyright. The young people talked about those issues seamlessly, underlining not only how sophisticated their views

can be, but how they do not see divisions between the things that they do.

The second issue that struck me was listening to an academic, who pointed out that a lot of issues that we deal with on the internet are not new. Issues related to the media and free speech have existed as long as the printing press has been around. The moral panics that we have had about the ability to freely distribute pamphlets are similar to those that we have with the internet. The difference is the scale, pervasiveness and pace of change of the technology and therefore of the trends and behaviour that we have been discussing this evening. We need to understand how we can contextualise the very real concerns that we have always had about how to handle teenagers and make our approach relevant to the internet age.

It is about ensuring that our teenagers have a space in which they can talk openly to adults and to one another about the issues that they face. We must provide teenagers and young people with the skills that they need if they are to navigate the world, while giving them the sense of freedom that they need if they are to engage with the world.

I was interested in the point that Barnardo's made in its briefing. We must talk about not just the risks of the internet but other issues, such as inclusion. We must not assume that all young people are innately aware of the internet and are engaged in internet activity. Some young people are excluded from social media and the internet. We must consider all those things in the round.

I will stop there, because I see that I am 20 seconds over time—sorry, Presiding Officer.

18:21

Liam Kerr (North East Scotland) (Con): It is customary to congratulate the member who brings a members' business debate, but in this case I prefer to thank Gillian Martin, because what worries me most about this debate is that I now realise how little I know about young people's online experience—and I am an average and reasonably tech-savvy parent in my early 40s.

For example, there is a game called Roblox—I am not sure how to pronounce it—which has more than 30 million users. Players build a kind of Lego virtual world. Apparently, it is one of the most popular games, if not the most popular game, among children aged between five and 10 in the UK. According to the headmaster of a primary school in Coventry, who wrote a warning letter to parents recently, more than half the school's five to six-year-old pupils and more than 70 per cent of its six to seven-year-old pupils play the online game.

The issue, or one of the issues, is that Roblox has a chat feature, which, according to the app, is “the best place to Imagine with Friends”.

According to a primary school head in Manchester who also felt compelled to write to parents, there is no way to screen contacts or disable messaging.

The Coventry study showed that most of the children who were surveyed had online friends in Roblox about whom their parents did not know. Many children said that their accounts were maxed out, which meant that they had 200 online friends. The children had received many in-game messages from strangers, and the study reported that a lot of the messages were inappropriate. That echoes the report of a Sunderland mother that her daughter received the message, “Hello cupcake, do you want to meet up?” Her daughter is eight. In all cases, the children reported not telling their parents about inappropriate messages.

If I may pick up on a point that Brian Whittle made, Roblox claims to be a “kid safe” site, which monitors use by under-12s. However, the Manchester headteacher was able to set up an account, register as a three-year-old and then play 18-certificate games, including Grand Theft Auto, Call of Duty and Halo.

I am talking about anecdotal evidence that I have heard; we need more research into the impact on underage children's health and wellbeing—and on their attainment at school—of playing games that contain inappropriate language and violence.

Finlay Carson talked about online gambling. In a recent report, the Gambling Commission suggested that 370,000 children aged between 11 and 16 participate in gambling-related activities in a single week and that up to 31,000 underage children are classified as “problem” gamblers, with many more children classified as “at risk”.

That is terrifying, but it is perhaps not surprising. Apparently, the game Candy Crush Saga uses game-play loop psychology, whereby a repeating chain of events establishes an addiction-like attraction to the game through the regular release of a neurochemical reward in the brain. That is achieved by ensuring that the game presents the right play:win ratio. As a consequence, people—in this context, I mean children—are susceptible to proposed purchases, so that they can continue the reward cycle and advance at the same rate through the game. I understand that such principles are not regulated and permit the potential exploitation of an age group that might be susceptible to suggestion and manipulation.

I congratulate Gillian Martin on securing the debate and I thank her, because anything that raises awareness among young people and those

of us who are not so young, as this debate has done, must be a good thing. I wish the campaigns that she mentioned every success.

18:25

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I thank my colleague Gillian Martin for bringing this important issue to the chamber on safer internet day.

I will focus my words on a conversation with my nephews, and on two programs that, in addition to the digi, aye? campaign, have been used to help to increase cyber-resilience. I will probably shuffle my papers about a bit.

Members have talked about digital devices, phones, computers and tablets, and about texting, sexting, and posting and sharing negative or harmful words. The digital era is upon us, so we must empower our children to be smart and responsible users of the technology while avoiding risk and harmful online activities.

I had a conversation with my twae young nephews—one is 13 and the other one is 15—about what they think cyber-resilience meant. “Be safe online” they said. “We get told that in school.” “Okay”, I said. “What does that mean?” “Well, my mum tells us not to accept friends we dinnae ken face to face, and we dinnae ask lassies to send naked pictures—that’s not on.” I said, “What if the lassie sends it to her boyfriend and he promises not to share with his pals?” “Aye, right”, the boys laughed. “She should ken better. Once it’s out there, it’s out there forever.” “Okay”, I said. “What about you lads. Should young people like your mates or people your age post photos of themselves drinking Buckie or smoking cigarettes? Why is that not recommended? What are the risks?” They shrugged their shoulders, so we discussed that, and talked about the possibility of job interviews in the future. I asked, “Are you likely to get a job interview if you have photos on your profile that show you up to nae guid?” The boys had not thought of that, but they said that they would talk about it with their pals when they went back to school, because we had also focused on peer support. If we can get the kids to engage with the kids, that is part of addressing the issue.

I found an online resource called DQ World, which has been developed in Singapore and is a digital intelligence educational initiative and research framework. DQ World engages with kids between eight and 12, which is a lot younger than the 11 to 26 age group that digi, aye? is aimed at. A pilot study of the program, which is focused on online cyber-resilience, showed a positive impact on children’s awareness and development across several areas.

I visited Maxwelltown high school in Dumfries yesterday and learned about an anti-bullying programme in Finland. Gillian Martin also mentioned Finland. The programme is called KiVa—there is no translation for that—and it includes an online focus. It has been shown to work in Finland and is being tested at Maxwelltown high school with support from pupil equity funding. The pupils will measure the outcomes, and will share them so that we can teach our kids about the best ways to engage in activity online.

Gillian Martin’s motion

“notes the view that an increased awareness of the career consequences, legal implications and bullying and mental health repercussions of such behaviour should be encouraged”.

We need to make sure that our kids are equipped to deal with the internet and the online challenges that they will face as they grow up.

18:29

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): I thank Gillian Martin for raising this issue. It is not uncommon for a generation to face issues that parents and teachers of the previous generation might struggle to prepare them for. Growing up with the internet, many young people today are familiar with its uses and possibilities, from social media and job hunting to handling bills, or just finding information. With a few clicks, we can do everything from turning our heating on at home or watching a cat play the piano to connecting with someone on the other side of the world.

Being familiar with the internet does not mean that people have the digital skills that they need. When someone grows up with something being so normalised, it is easy to be unaware of the dangers. When the technology is relatively new and parents or teachers might be unfamiliar with it, a trial-and-error approach, which does not work, is too often the result.

It can be a particularly hard issue for us to debate without sounding hopelessly out of touch to any young person who is listening. I am conscious that I sound like someone who I might have stopped listening to some time ago. We must engage with the challenges of the digital world, but even using phrases such as “the digital world” can make us sound like scared luddites who are hostile to what is an utterly normal part of life for young people.

Although the overwhelming majority of a young person’s online engagement will be entirely positive and something to be encouraged, there are dangers, just as there are in the real world, and it is our responsibility to address them.

Pornographic material is easily accessible, even with a supposed nominal restriction to viewers over the age of 18, which is, in practice, impossible for a service provider or website to verify. Negative consequences do not end if the viewer is over the age of 18. The normalisation and widespread availability of pornography have contributed to misogynistic social norms that objectify women and create entirely unrealistic expectations about sex and relationships. There is plenty of research that shows the negative impact on the wellbeing of young people, particularly of young women.

There are also distinct dangers around sharing sensitive personal information. As smartphone use has become more widespread among young people, sexting has become a major issue, as has been mentioned, but it is one that many parents and teachers are unprepared for and unfamiliar with. As Gillian Martin's motion highlights, it has led to an increase in children being reported for sexual offences. The sharing of intimate photos without consent has an obvious impact on wellbeing. Scotland has introduced new laws to criminalise sharing such images, which is a welcome legal protection, but a debate needs to be had about the approach that we take to the young people involved and whether reporting them for an offence is always the most appropriate approach. I hope that the minister will touch on that and the positive work that is on-going in that area.

I want to look briefly at the cultural rather than legal issues that come up. The education of children and young people about online safety must address the individual impact of, for example, sharing intimate images. However, it is critical that there is an appreciation of the wider cultural impact that that has on how sex and relationships are viewed, and of how society perceives and values women in particular.

That is why I have pushed so hard over the past year for personal and social education in our schools to be reviewed and overhauled. Given that three in four young people across the United Kingdom did not learn about consent as part of sex and relationship education at school, we have a long way to go before we can say that all our young people are prepared with the life skills that they need. With the relationship between consent and online safety being so clear, we cannot view education on either topic as existing in a silo, nor can we view those issues in isolation from mental health education and a range of other health and wellbeing areas. A holistic and consistent approach to personal and social education is essential.

That approach will happen only when young people are the co-designers of the curriculum.

That would resolve the issue of teachers being expected to address issues that are generationally alien to them, and it would foster the kind of buy-in and commitment from young people themselves that we need.

I look forward to the results of the Government's review of personal and social education, following our committee work. I hope that the minister's closing remarks will make some reference to it. This is often an awkward issue for politicians to address, but it is too important to avoid, and we are well past the time for getting to grips with it.

18:33

The Minister for Childcare and Early Years (Maree Todd): I am very pleased to have the opportunity to close today's debate on the crucial agenda of encouraging cyber-resilience among young people. I thank Gillian Martin for bringing this important issue to the chamber and I thank all members present for their valuable contributions.

As Gillian Martin said, we do not know the half of it—as a parent, I am quite glad of that. As Liam Kerr mentioned, there are some dangers that very young children are exposed to, from which we need to protect them. It is perfectly appropriate that our older children have some privacy—some private life—in order to grow and develop. However, we, as adults, need to teach them the skills to operate in what is a perfectly normal world, but a world that many of us did not grow up in and that is very unfamiliar to us. As a number of members mentioned, we do not let our children go swimming without first teaching them how to stay safe in the water, so it is very much our responsibility to give them the skills to navigate that world.

As a representative of the Highlands and Islands, I found it great to hear Tavish Scott mention the children and young people of the Shetland islands. I am always delighted to hear about young people taking the initiative. Young people taking the lead is the solution. They can help to educate us and, in many ways, can do the job of educating themselves better than we can.

Tavish Scott, Rona Mackay and Finlay Carson mentioned holding corporates to account, which is a valid point. I very much agree with that and I am delighted that my colleague, Kevin Stewart, had a recent success with Snapchat taking the location of primary schools off its app, which is useful progress to have made.

Ash Denham said how pleased she was that she spent her young years without Facebook. I, too, am happy that my youth and years of development were spent largely without photos, never mind Facebook. Pictures of the hideous 1970s haircuts that have survived that little-

photographed era are not a pleasure to look at, and I am glad that there is not a record of every misdemeanour that I engaged in as a teenager. Emma Harper said that there is a risk of leaving a permanent record of what is relatively normal boundary pushing by teenagers that will not be viewed positively when children reach adulthood.

Mary Fee and other members talked about the need for conversation. We need to talk about the issues, as that is definitely the best way to help folk to stay safe.

Like many members in the chamber, I am a parent and I agree that, as Finlay Carson, Brian Whittle, Daniel Johnson and others mentioned, in many cases it is us adults who need to take the lead in demonstrating good online behaviour. Mine is probably not the only family in which the adults regularly break the rule about not going on our devices at the dinner table. Undoubtedly, I am not alone among members in having suffered online abuse in the world of politics. The people who hurl that online abuse at me are, largely, not children; they are adults. Therefore, we adults need to take some responsibility and up our behaviour, too.

I loved the little touch of neuroscience that Ruth Maguire threw into her speech, which I think was especially to help me to feel comfortable in my first time responding to a debate as a minister. She is quite right that the teenage brain is designed for heightened risk taking and is very susceptible to peer pressure. Teenagers have an excuse, but we adults do not.

It is particularly timely for us to be discussing the issue today, as it is safer internet day, the theme of which this year is create, connect and share respect: a better internet starts with you. The theme encourages us to continue to explore better ways in which we can support children and young people to use technology responsibly, respectfully, critically and creatively.

What happens to us as children shapes who we are and has a huge impact on us throughout our lives, especially if those childhood experiences are adverse ones involving exploitation or abuse. We have a responsibility to do all that we can to ensure that we protect our children and young people from harm, wherever that harm occurs. We also have a responsibility to equip our children and young people to be informed and prepared to make the most of digital technologies, with full knowledge and understanding of the consequences of their actions online. Decisions about what our children and young people share online, and with whom, have really serious ramifications for their future.

In 2016, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice commissioned research to analyse recorded crime statistics, which showed that “other sexual

offences” had become the largest category of sexual offences. Forty per cent of recorded sexual crime is made up of “other sexual crimes”, which is the largest individual category, just ahead of the category for sexual assault.

The research report “Recorded Crime in Scotland: Other Sexual Crimes, 2013-14 and 2016-17”, which was published in September last year, highlighted that half of the offences that fall within the “other sexual crimes” category are “communicating indecently” and “causing to view sexual activity or images”. They are often committed online and most likely relate to the sharing of intimate images. Those online crimes are much more likely to have younger victims, who are mainly female, and younger perpetrators, who are mainly male.

As a result, we have established the expert group on preventing sexual offending involving children and young people to identify further steps to prevent sexual offending by young people. The group will bring together expertise from across justice, education and health to consider how we prevent and respond to sexual crime committed by young people, not least by considering how to protect our young people by educating them about their rights and responsibilities under the criminal law.

In September last year, we made commitments in the programme for government to address the modern challenges of enabling children and young people to enjoy all of the unparalleled opportunities for which increased technologies provide and to do so safely. We committed to continue building on the good progress that we have made towards implementing key measures in the “National Action Plan on Internet Safety for Children and Young People”.

I thank members for their thoughtful reflections throughout the debate. My ministerial colleagues and I are absolutely determined that Scotland’s children and young people be afforded protection from harm wherever that harm is caused. We are taking action across Government to continue to raise awareness among children and young people of how to stay safe online and of the consequences of their actions.

We are also taking action to provide support to professionals, parents and carers and to drive forward progress in understanding how to prevent offending behaviour. What better year to drive that progress forward than in 2018, the year of young people?

I will finish with wise words that were given to me this morning by a young girl at Holy Rood high school, when I asked the kids what they wanted me to say in the debate. She said, “I realised that all of my best memories were not online, so I take

a day off each week.” We could all take her advice.

Meeting closed at 18:41.

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Published in Edinburgh by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

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