



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Meeting of the Parliament

Thursday 8 September 2016

Session 5



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 8 September 2016

[The Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 11:40]

General Question Time

Council Tax Changes (European Charter of Local Self-Government Obligations)

1. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): To ask the Scottish Government whether it considers that its proposals on changes to council tax comply with its treaty obligations under the European Charter of Local Self-Government. (S5O-00111)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution (Derek Mackay): Our reforms to council tax will protect household incomes, enable more support for those on low incomes and provide additional investment in our schools. We have every right to legislate on council tax matters, and it remains the case that local authorities will keep every penny of council tax raised. We consider that the reforms will have no impact on our continuing compliance with the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

Patrick Harvie: I thank the cabinet secretary for the answer, but it seems to be a little confusing. I draw members' attention to article 9 of the charter, which states:

"Local authorities shall be entitled, within national economic policy, to adequate financial resources of their own, of which they may dispose freely within the framework of their powers."

It goes on:

"Part at least of the financial resources of local authorities shall derive from local taxes and charges of which ... they have the power to determine the rate."

Overall, the Scottish Government's proposals to reintroduce rate capping and to determine centrally how councils will spend any extra revenue that is gained from the changes to the multiplier seem clearly to conflict with those objectives. That is at a time when the Government has arbitrarily dismissed the report of the commission on local tax reform without even a debate in the chamber. Are we really to take seriously the claim that the Scottish Government's proposals comply with the spirit as well as the letter of the charter?

Derek Mackay: Mr Harvie asked whether our proposals are legally compliant and I answered yes—they are in keeping with the spirit of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, in that local authorities will, as I said, keep every

penny of council tax that they raise. I look forward to on-going engagement with local government through the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the other authorities on the way forward in our budget approach. I also offer to have further discussions with Mr Harvie on options for the budget ahead. However, the Parliament and the Government have every right to legislate on council tax. If we did not, why would we be laying regulations to legislate? We will take forward the manifesto on which we were elected.

Trussell Trust (50th Food Bank in Scotland)

2. Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on the Trussell Trust opening its 50th food bank in Scotland. (S5O-00112)

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities (Angela Constance): It is unacceptable that in 21st century Scotland there are people who cannot afford to feed themselves and their families. According to emergency food providers, the main drivers of food-bank use are benefit delays and sanctions that are imposed on people by the United Kingdom Government, as well as unemployment and low income.

We are committed to doing all that we can with the powers that we have to lessen the effects of those UK policies, and to ensure that everyone in Scotland can access affordable nutritious food. We want to eradicate the need for food banks from Scotland. Our £1 million per annum fair food fund supports community-based responses that help to reduce reliance on emergency food provision.

Stuart McMillan: Universal credit is being rolled out in Inverclyde in the next couple of months. Does the cabinet secretary have any advice for volunteers at my local food bank as they brace themselves for increased requests for assistance due to the UK Government's continued attack on the most vulnerable people in our society?

Angela Constance: The Scottish Government has long made clear its concerns about the implementation of universal credit. In practical terms, we already know that the built-in delays to the universal credit system can cause long waits for the first payment, which then increases pressure on volunteers at food banks and other community food providers. Claimants can be advised to apply to the Department for Work and Pensions for a short-term benefit advance to help to tide them over, and they can also apply for a crisis grant from the Scottish welfare fund. However, there is no doubt that the basic problem is the design of universal credit, in the first place. The Scottish Government continues to call on the UK Government to address those issues before full roll-out of universal credit goes ahead.

International Development (Scottish Government Contribution)

3. **Linda Fabiani (East Kilbride) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it contributes to international development. (S5O-00113)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): As a good global citizen, Scotland works to help to tackle global poverty and inequality. The Scottish Government has contributed to international development through its international development fund, which has supported a range of projects in our priority countries for the past 11 years. This Government has committed to increasing our support for international development from £9 million per annum to £10 million from next year, as well as to establishing a new £1 million per annum humanitarian emergencies fund. That will enable us to do even more to help some of the world's most vulnerable people, and to continue to respond to the increasing number of international humanitarian crises.

Linda Fabiani: I thank the cabinet secretary for that answer. I was also interested to note that, through its climate justice fund, the Scottish Government is contributing to the United Kingdom Government's targets.

The Independent newspaper reported a few days ago that official UK figures show that Britain is now the second-biggest arms dealer in the world, with most of the weapons fuelling deadly conflicts in the middle east. Does the cabinet secretary agree with me that it is ironic on the one hand to fund international development and on the other to profit from the immorality of the arms trade, the results of which we see every day on our television screens and in our news bulletins? Will she, on behalf of Scotland, raise that matter with the UK Government?

Fiona Hyslop: On international development, we can agree that some of the real causes of poverty are conflicts across the world and therefore that early resolution of conflicts is an important part of what we can try to achieve. Clearly, many of the issues—as Linda Fabiani pointed out—are reserved to the UK Government. However, peace-process support, including our programme to support women in resolving conflict situations—Syrian women in particular—is something that we, as a Government, can do.

However, Linda Fabiani is right to identify issues around the conflict between arms trade relations on the one hand and official development assistance and the commitment to international development on the other.

One of the key tenets and principles of our policy, as set out in our manifesto, is a “Do no harm” approach. We will certainly make sure that

in our meetings with Priti Patel and the UK Government we make it clear that we expect them, too, to adhere to that principle.

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for indicating that there has been an increase in Scotland's international development fund. It is something that the Conservatives pledged to do and I am glad to see that it has happened. Are any further developments being proposed for the fund?

Fiona Hyslop: I am glad to have support from the Conservatives for international development. At the start of this parliamentary term, I will say that one of the hallmarks of this Parliament has been the cross-party support for all our work on international development and, in particular, our relationship with Malawi. I hope that that will continue.

We are committed to peace and justice at home and abroad, and we are committed to tackling inequalities. We can showcase that by what we do in our policies at home and internationally. Our climate justice fund is world leading and adding it to our contribution has, as Linda Fabiani pointed out, meant that from January to December last year, we contributed £11 million. That will be counted as part of the UK Government's ODA target of 0.7 per cent.

New National Park (Galloway)

4. **Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress it has made on the creation of new national parks and what consideration it has given to creating one in Galloway. (S5O-00114)

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham): There are no current plans to designate new national parks in Scotland. The creation of new national parks requires considerable planning and the support of all local authorities in the area, and it carries cost implications. For those reasons, we believe that it is essential to focus support on our two existing national parks to ensure that they continue their valuable contribution to tourism and sustainable rural economic development.

Finlay Carson: I thank the cabinet secretary for her response. Is she aware of the Scottish Campaign for National Parks report, “Unfinished Business”, which was produced in conjunction with the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland? The report has identified seven potential areas for consideration as future national parks and flags up the very considerable economic benefit of national parks to rural areas.

If the Scottish Government is serious about rural regeneration, how can it rule out the possibility of

further national parks, which do not need to be the same size or scale or to have the same regulations as the two current parks?

Roseanna Cunningham: I do not think that I said anything to indicate that we are ruling out national parks in the future. I said

“There are no current plans to designate new national parks”,

and there are very good reasons for that.

First, I am not aware that there are before us any specific proposals from local communities in respect of the creation of national parks. Of course, I am aware of the broader studies that are being done. However, the member should be aware that when Parliament—through the Public Petitions Committee—looked closely at the matter in 2015, it ultimately concluded that there was insufficient support and a lack of consensus among stakeholders. Such consensus is absolutely essential for national parks to work.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): Does the cabinet secretary agree that there is a need for us to look again at how we can promote south-west Scotland as a visitor destination—in particular for wildlife and green tourism—including options for future landscape designations? Does she agree that an assessment of the potential costs and benefits of any proposal would need to be undertaken?

Roseanna Cunningham: I do, and I endorse the latter part of Emma Harper’s question. The south-west already hosts a number of designated areas. There is the Galloway forest park, which is a long-standing park, and there is the Galloway biosphere, to which—interestingly enough—I gave the go-ahead when I was Minister for the Environment. There are also national scenic areas in the south-west.

There are other options. People have pursued options for regional parks, and a geopark is being considered for the south-west. There are a number of options for designation, each of which require would different things to bring them into being. I encourage all communities to consider the variety of options to look for which one might be most appropriate for their area.

Monklands Hospital (Trauma and In-patient Orthopaedic Services)

5. Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will take action to prevent NHS Lanarkshire from closing trauma and in-patient orthopaedic services at Monklands hospital. (S5O-00115)

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Shona Robison): NHS Lanarkshire, supported by the Academy of Royal Colleges and Faculties

in Scotland, has been clear that the interim changes are necessary in order to ensure the safety, quality and resilience of local services.

I have been assured that the interim plans will not impact materially on the provision of accident and emergency services at any of the three main hospitals in Lanarkshire. The A and E department at Monklands sees around 66,000 patients per year, and the board estimates that 98 per cent of patients will be unaffected by the interim changes. That means that the number of individuals who will be treated at either Hairmyres or Wishaw general as a result of the interim changes should amount to only three or four patient referrals each day. I expect the health board to keep the actual activity information under close review.

The health board has given assurances that it is committed to retaining three district general hospitals with A and E departments as part of its longer-term plans, which are now subject to public consultation. I encourage all stakeholders, including Richard Leonard, to play a full part in that consultation.

Richard Leonard: It is customary for members to thank the cabinet secretary for their answer, but I sit in this Parliament in a representative capacity, and the people of Lanarkshire will not thank the cabinet secretary for her answer.

People rightly expect genuine consultation before decisions that affect them are taken. The one section of the document “Achieving Excellence”—which I am holding up now, and to which the cabinet secretary referred—on which there is no public consultation is the withdrawal of trauma and in-patient orthopaedic services from Monklands next month. That goes to the very heart of how our democracy works. Will the cabinet secretary call the decision in—yes or no?

Shona Robison: As I said, NHS Lanarkshire’s interim plans are about ensuring clinical safety and the quality of care, as supported by clinical experts at the Academy of Royal Colleges and Faculties. They will help to address the issues—of which I am sure the local member is aware—around recruitment, retention and the training of key clinical staff. In addition, as I said in my initial answer, the longer-term service plans are currently the subject of a formal public consultation, which will run until 1 November.

I point out to Richard Leonard that it was this Government that saved the A and E department at Monklands from closure in 2007. Since then, we have seen more than half a million attendances at that department: half a million people who would not have been able to attend that hospital if Mr Leonard’s party had had its way back in 2007. I am sure that local people will remember the reality of that.

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): Will the minister confirm, for the avoidance of doubt, that the guarantee that the Scottish National Party gave 10 years ago, when the Labour Party voted to close down the Monklands A and E department, still stands and that, as long as there is an SNP Government, there will be A and E services at Monklands?

Shona Robison: Absolutely—I can guarantee that there will be A and E departments at all three hospitals in Lanarkshire.

I can also give the member the reassurance that there has been significant investment in Monklands hospital over recent years, including in the provision of a new theatre, a critical care unit upgrade, a new pathology laboratory and, of course, the £22 million Lanarkshire Beatson radiotherapy centre. Further investment is planned, including in improved facilities for day surgery and an immediate assessment unit adjacent to the A and E department, as well as in a single centre of excellence for cancer services in Lanarkshire, which will be consolidated at the hospital.

In addition, I am sure that the member will be aware that we have welcomed NHS Lanarkshire's preparation of a business case for the redevelopment of the hospital or for a new-build replacement. I think that that shows that this Government is absolutely committed to the future of Monklands hospital.

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): The cabinet secretary may not be aware that, this week in his local paper, her party colleague Alex Neil promised the people of Lanarkshire that the trauma and in-patient orthopaedic services at Monklands would not be closed under the SNP. Has she given him that assurance?

Shona Robison: I am happy to meet Alex Neil or any other local members to discuss any of their issues around this development.

NHS Lanarkshire has been very clear about the reasons for the interim plans: they are about clinical safety and the quality of care. We cannot ignore the expertise of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties in Scotland or the concerns that it has raised.

What is clear, as I have said in all my answers today, is that NHS Lanarkshire and this Government remain absolutely committed to having three A and E departments in Lanarkshire. The configuration of those departments and the way in which they work together towards the final aim of having a single trauma site and a single elective site is extremely important. This is about the provision of sustainable, safe services, and I am sure that all local members will want to support that aim.

Alex Neil (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): First, just for the record, I point out that the Labour leader of North Lanarkshire Council, Jim Logue, has given unqualified support to NHS Lanarkshire's proposal to transfer trauma and orthopaedic services to the other two hospitals. Not for the first time, the Labour Party speaks with more than one voice when it suits it.

Secondly, as Mr Simpson is a former *Sun* reporter, let me be accurate about what I said.

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): I hope that there will not be a "Thirdly", Mr Neil.

Alex Neil: I put it to the cabinet secretary that my point is that, when it comes to the designation of a permanent site, the new Monklands hospital that is planned by the Scottish Government for 2023 would be a logical place to put the single elective centre for orthopaedics.

Shona Robison: I thank Alex Neil for his question—[*Laughter*—and for putting on record the very interesting views of Jim Logue.

I think that there would be a very strong case for the single elective site for orthopaedics to be at the new or refurbished Monklands hospital. There is obviously a lot of work to be done in the lead-up to that decision, which is why the issue is open to consultation at the moment. I am sure that Alex Neil and all the other local members will want to input into that consultation and make known very strongly to the board their views about where that site should be.

Highland Games (Support)

6. Gail Ross (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): At this time, I would like to inform the chamber that I have been appointed as parliamentary liaison officer to the First Minister.

To ask the Scottish Government what support it gives to Highland games. (S5O-00116)

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell): The Scottish Government is committed to protecting the Highland games as a tradition that is enjoyed by many communities across Scotland. Our national agency for sport, sportscotland, also shares that commitment and recognises the Scottish Highland Games Association as the governing body of traditional Highland games in Scotland.

Gail Ross: During the recess, I attended a number of games and gatherings in my constituency. There are concerns from some that it is difficult to put on games, especially smaller ones that rely on volunteers, given the amount of bureaucracy that is associated with that. Is there any way that the Scottish Government can help to lessen the amount of bureaucracy that is associated with Highland games or any support

that it can offer organisers to make the process easier?

Aileen Campbell: I am happy to meet Gail Ross to discuss the issue and look at the specifics and details of what she describes. I know that she has been working hard on the issue along with local games in her constituency.

Games rely heavily on pools of dedicated volunteers, and we are all appreciative of that commitment and their work to keep this proud tradition alive. In addition to meeting the member, I will task my officials with discussing the issues that she has raised with the Scottish Highland Games Association.

First Minister's Question Time

12:00

Engagements

1. Ruth Davidson (Edinburgh Central) (Con): I take this first opportunity to congratulate all of team GB on its Olympic success and to wish all our Paralympians the best of luck in the forthcoming games. [*Applause.*]

To ask the First Minister what engagements she has planned for the rest of the day. (S5F-00159)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I also take the opportunity to warmly congratulate team GB on its stunning success and to wish all our Paralympians every success in Rio over the next two weeks. I am sure that the whole Parliament will agree that they are an inspiration to us all and they do us proud.

Later today, I will have engagements to take forward the Government's programme for Scotland.

Ruth Davidson: Will the First Minister spell out why the public will be made safer as a result of the Scottish Government breaking up British Transport Police and absorbing it into Police Scotland?

The First Minister: Scotland is being made safer by the decisions of the Scottish Government and, more important, by the actions of our police officers the length and breadth of the country. We have a situation in Scotland right now where crime is at a 41-year low, and I think that that is a credit to police officers working in every single community across Scotland.

As Ruth Davidson knows, responsibility for the British Transport Police is being devolved to the Scottish Government and, given that we have created Police Scotland and ensured an efficiently running police service, I think that there is a strong case for also including the British Transport Police within that framework while allowing it to continue to provide its specialist policing functions. That will be the subject of legislation in the current session of Parliament, as I announced on Tuesday, and I am sure that all members will want to participate in full scrutiny of that legislation.

Ruth Davidson: As in the statement on the programme for government on Tuesday, there was not a word there on either why or how the change would improve safety, and I think that I know why.

Since the Scottish Government first outlined its plans, I have received a series of emails from some of the 300 serving British Transport Police officers in Scotland. Let me tell the First Minister

what some of them say. This came from an officer with nine years' experience:

"If this goes ahead the effect on policing services would be horrific. We are a specialist force for a reason. Cross-border crimes would potentially become unmanageable."

Another police officer with 17 years' experience said:

"Like many others imposed on us, this is a ludicrous idea with no consultation to those actually doing the job at hand."

Another with 24 years' service said:

"I cannot understand why this decision can possibly be made without full consultation with the travelling public ... or even Police Scotland."

Added to that, the British Transport Police Federation said this week that the change could leave the whole network "unguarded".

Why is the federation wrong, and why are serving police officers who keep us safe on the railways wrong, too?

The First Minister: We will fully consult and listen to all views. Let me quote the British Transport Police Federation just before this Parliament went into its summer recess. It said:

"We are fully involved in the consultation process".

In a blog in August—last month—the federation chair said:

"it is fair to say we are achieving a healthy working relationship with the Scottish Government".

Those are the direct views of the British Transport Police Federation. I am sure that there will be a range of views across the British Transport Police and the wider public about the right course of action to take, and we will consider that carefully.

Let me address clearly the issue in Ruth Davidson's first question. She said, "Why?" Integration will enhance railway policing through giving it direct access to the local, the specialist and the national resources of Police Scotland while ensuring that it continues to carry out its specialist railway policing function and retains the expertise and the capacity that it already has, but within the broader structure of Police Scotland. That is the right step to take, and as we take that step and develop the legislation that comes before this Parliament, all members will have the opportunity to contribute. I am sure that many members of the public, as well as members of the British Transport Police, will take the opportunity to contribute, too.

Ruth Davidson: The First Minister says that she is consulting on the matter, but—as she knows well—she is consulting only on how to carry out the takeover, not on whether it is right to do so. The First Minister should know that the British Transport Police has laid out two other more

practical options that are still consistent with the Smith commission.

People might accept the First Minister's reforms if the British Transport Police was failing, but the opposite is true. Indeed, 83 per cent of passengers say that they are satisfied with safety levels on Scottish trains, which is above the level seen in England and Wales—and no wonder, because crime on our railways has halved. Why is the Scottish Government imposing a reform that the police do not want on a system that does not need to be tampered with?

The First Minister: I have set out very clearly the reasons why we think it is the right thing to do. Why is the decision on the table right now? It is because of the devolution of responsibility for the British Transport Police. As Ruth Davidson rightly says, there was cross-party consensus on that within the Smith commission.

Specialist railway policing expertise and capacity will be maintained and protected, allowing the British Transport Police to continue to deliver the excellent levels of service that Ruth Davidson has just said that it delivers. Of course, crime on our railways—just like crime across the country generally—is falling, and is at some of its lowest levels. By integrating the British Transport Police within the wider Police Scotland structure, we also give the BTP access to the specialist and national resource that Police Scotland has access to. That appears to me to be a commonsense way of proceeding—so commonsense that perhaps it eludes the Conservative Party.

As we go forward, we will continue to engage with the British Transport Police Federation. I remind Ruth Davidson that the federation appears to think that it has a good working relationship with the Scottish Government. I am not suggesting that that means it agrees with everything we are suggesting that we want to do, but we continue to talk and engage with it. That is the right way to proceed. Members of this Parliament will have the chance to contribute in the legislative process, as normal.

Ruth Davidson: The shortened version of that response is that the First Minister thinks that she knows better than police officers—[*Interruption.*] It is very hard to escape the conclusion that, when it comes to the Scottish Government, good practice always plays second fiddle to pretty shoddy politics, because the Scottish transport police federation does not want this, rank-and-file police officers on our railways do not want this, and the public see absolutely no need to change. However, as was the case with the single police force, the Scottish National Party Government wants to grab more control and to ram this through regardless.

Last week, the First Minister unveiled a massive listening exercise. Today, she is turning a deaf ear to our police. Her Government has made enough mistakes with police reform. Why will she not listen to those who are trying to stop her making another mistake?

The First Minister: First, this Government has protected 1,000 extra police officers on the streets of Scotland, while the Conservatives south of the border have decimated police numbers on the streets of England. That is point 1. Point 2 is that because of our police officers' dedication, crime in our country is at a 41-year low. It is important to remember that and to give credit to our police officers.

Ruth Davidson always tells us that the Tories are going to be a strong Opposition—we have not seen any evidence of that yet—but then she comes to this Parliament and suggests that this Government can just “ram through” legislation. She is always telling us that we are a minority Government, so if we want to get the legislation through Parliament, we will have to persuade people of the case. That is what we will seek to do.

Instead of coming to this chamber today and indulging in “shoddy politics”, perhaps Ruth Davidson can do her day job and contribute constructively to the process when it gets under way.

Prime Minister (Meetings)

2. **Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister when she will next meet the new Prime Minister. (S5F-00177)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I have no immediate plans, but I expect to speak to the Prime Minister regularly as we continue to discuss the implications of Brexit for Scotland and the United Kingdom.

Kezia Dugdale: Today, we woke up to the news that in the past year 900 Scottish children had phoned Childline contemplating suicide. That news followed official figures released this week showing yet more missed waiting time targets for child and adolescent mental health services. Will the First Minister tell the chamber how many children and young people have waited more than 52 weeks for treatment since the start of last year?

The First Minister: There have been several hundred young people waiting more than 52 weeks, and that is far too many—one young person waiting more than 52 weeks is far too many.

This is one of the most important challenges that we have to deal with over the years ahead, not just as a Government—although it is our

responsibility—but as a society. Demand for child and adolescent mental health services has increased by more than 30 per cent over the past two years. Actually, I take the view that that is a positive development. It does not sound like one, but that increase means that the stigma associated with mental health is decreasing and that more people—in particular, more young people—are feeling able to come forward for help. The figures from Childline that Kezia Dugdale quoted are deeply shocking, but they mean that more young people are coming forward for help.

The challenge that that poses for us, and the responsibility on my shoulders and on the Government's shoulders, is to make sure that, in the face of that rise in demand, we are building up services to cope with it. That is what we are doing. We have increased funding and resourcing for mental health services, and of course we plan to further increase that funding and resourcing over the course of this parliamentary session.

Kezia Dugdale: In the summer, Labour revealed that 460 young Scots had waited more than a year for the treatment that they desperately need. In this week's figures, the number has risen to 608. That is utterly shameful and nothing short of a national scandal. It is also just the tip of the iceberg. Since January last year, more than 9,000 Scottish children have been referred for mental health treatment, only to have that referral rejected or denied. We do not know why. I say to the First Minister that I am sorry, but I do not consider that to be a positive development.

Can the First Minister explain why thousands of children seeking help have been turned away? If she cannot, will she task her health secretary with commencing a review?

The First Minister: Of course I will ask the health secretary to look into that. There will be a number of clinical reasons why people who are referred are not given treatment, but that does not mean that there will not be underlying system reasons as well.

I absolutely agree that the numbers of young people waiting too long to access services are not good enough, which is why I am absolutely committed—as we have been over the past few years—to building up services. Since this Government took office, investment in mental health services in the national health service has increased by almost 40 per cent. The number of CAMHS psychology posts has more than doubled in the period that we have been in office, and we were the first country in the world to set a target for access to child and adolescent mental health services.

I readily acknowledge that there is more work to do, which is why we set out in our manifesto

commitments on health service spending that outstripped by a long way those set out by Labour in its manifesto. As part of that, we have committed to bringing forward a new mental health strategy, as I said on Tuesday, and to backing that strategy with an additional £150 million of resources over the course of this parliamentary session.

I do not deny the importance of the issue and I do not take issue with Kezia Dugdale about its importance, but I hope that she will acknowledge the significant extra investment and significant planned extra investment.

Kezia Dugdale: The Information Services Division report says that clinicians are making the referrals, so to suggest that decisions to reject referrals are clinical decisions is a weak argument. I would ask the First Minister to look at that again.

I welcome the £150 million investment. Labour's manifesto in May proposed guaranteed access to a qualified counsellor for every high school in Scotland. That would cost £8 million, which is a fraction of what the First Minister has committed to spending, and it is exactly the type of early intervention that she tells us she supports. Given that we are the only country in the United Kingdom without a national strategy for school-based counselling, I ask her to seriously examine the proposals that Labour is publishing. If today's figures do not move the First Minister to act, what will?

The First Minister: The last part of Kezia Dugdale's question was unfair. There is not one person in the chamber who is not moved by any young person coming forward to seek help for mental health issues. To suggest that the Government is not serious in its intent to tackle the issue is unfair.

I will consider all and any suggestions that anybody makes. If Kezia Dugdale wants to send me proposals, I will ensure that the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport considers them.

One of the things that are already being considered as part of our plans for a new mental health strategy is the provision of link workers in general practitioner surgeries as well as in schools. Of course, the person who is already actively considering that is Maureen Watt, who is the dedicated Minister for Mental Health I appointed after the election in May.

There is an absolute commitment on the part of this Government to building up services to deal with the increased demand. However, I say to members across the chamber that we must recognise the context in which we are talking about the issue. This is not about resources having been reduced; resources have increased substantially. The number of people who are

working in the area has increased substantially. I mentioned psychology posts, and—although I acknowledge that this is a local authority responsibility—we are also seeing an increase in the number of mental health officers working in Scotland. Resources are increasing but, because demand is also increasing, we must do more. That is exactly why we have in place plans to do more in terms of the strategy and the resources that back it.

The Presiding Officer: We have a local supplementary question from Oliver Mundell.

Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con): What action is the Scottish Government taking to help avoid 140 potential job losses at Penman Engineering, which is in my Dumfriesshire constituency and which entered administration last week? Will she guarantee that Scottish Enterprise will pull out all stops and give future financial support in order to help assist the administrator find a suitable buyer?

The First Minister: Scottish Enterprise is already doing just that. Obviously, I was disappointed to hear that Penman Engineering had entered administration, putting 140 jobs at risk. I know that this will be a really difficult time for those who are affected—for the families as well as the local area.

Scottish Enterprise is already working closely with the administrators to help them find a buyer for the business and retain as many jobs as possible. Of course, our partnership action for continuing employment organisation is actively engaged as well, providing support to those who might be faced with a redundancy situation. It has already contacted the company to offer support in the event that redundancies proceed. However, I stress and underline the fact that Scottish Enterprise is working with the administrators to try to avoid redundancies taking place.

The Presiding Officer: We have another local supplementary question, from Sandra White.

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): What action does the Scottish Government propose to take in light of recent revelations regarding the investigation into the Clutha tragedy?

The First Minister: I was concerned to read the revelations that Sandra White talks about. My thoughts—and, I am sure, the thoughts of everyone in the chamber—continue to be with the families and friends of those who were killed and injured in the Clutha tragedy.

Following the publication of the air accidents investigation branch report into the tragedy, the Crown Office is conducting further investigations into some of the issues that were raised, and a fatal accident inquiry will be held as soon as

possible. It is absolutely right that all the evidence can be vigorously tested in a public setting and can then be the subject of judicial determination. The Crown Office will continue to keep the families advised of progress with its investigation.

Given the scale of the tragedy and the impact that it has had on many lives and on the city of Glasgow, it is vital that the families who are affected get the answers that they deserve so much.

Cabinet (Meetings)

3. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): To ask the First Minister when the Cabinet will next meet. (S5F-00161)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Tuesday.

Patrick Harvie: I was disappointed earlier this week that the First Minister's colleagues at Westminster were unsuccessful in persuading the United Kingdom Government to take action on the scandal surrounding Scottish limited partnerships, which are legal entities that are openly marketed as tax avoidance vehicles and which have been associated with corruption and money laundering. This is a scandal that the Scottish Greens first raised last year in the chamber. Since then, there has been growing attention to the matter, including investigative journalism by *The Herald* and now a campaign by Oxfam in Scotland, which is calling on all politicians to back its statement against tax avoidance in general and to take action on Scottish limited partnerships in particular. The Scottish Greens support that statement. Will the First Minister give her backing to it as well?

The First Minister: Yes, I certainly support the sentiments. I was also disappointed that the debate that was sparked by Scottish National Party MPs in the House of Commons did not result in the action that Patrick Harvie and I wanted to see. I was disappointed that the Conservatives voted against the SNP amendment—that does not sit well with the new Prime Minister's stated commitment to taking on the unethical practices of some big businesses. We need to be firm in saying that companies should pay the taxes that they are due to pay, because those taxes fund the public services that we all rely on. It is a reserved issue, as Patrick Harvie is aware, but SNP MPs in the House of Commons and the Scottish Government, to the extent that we are able, will continue to press for action in the area.

Patrick Harvie: I am glad to hear that answer and hope that the Scottish Government will be vociferous in rattling the cage of the UK Government on the matter. My colleague Andy Wightman is in correspondence with ministers about the issue as well, and I hope that every

opportunity will also be taken to use devolved responsibilities where they connect with the issue of tax avoidance.

I have called for the Scottish Government to restrict the availability of taxpayer-funded support to businesses that indulge in tax avoidance—for example, by using tax havens. The First Minister has this week announced a new £0.5 billion fund to provide loans and guarantees to companies. Surely we have a right to expect that such taxpayer-funded or taxpayer-guaranteed schemes are not available to the corporate kleptomaniacs who indulge in tax avoidance. Will the First Minister give us a guarantee that such taxpayer-funded and Government-provided support schemes will not be available to tax dodgers?

The First Minister: I was in the chamber the other day when Keith Brown answered a question on that very point—from Patrick Harvie, I think, although I may have got that wrong. Keith Brown said that we will, of course, take account of that issue in any schemes that we are responsible for. The growth scheme is principally designed to help small and medium-sized enterprises, particularly new ones in emerging markets. We will continue to press the UK Government to take action on the issue that Patrick Harvie raises and SNP MPs will continue to take the actions that I have spoken about.

Patrick Harvie might be interested to know that the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution wrote to Greg Clark, the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, last month to ask that SLPs be included in the central register of people with significant control under the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act 2015.

We will continue to press the UK Government to take action where it has responsibility and, where we have responsibility, we will continue to act accordingly. I know that the point has been made in the chamber many times before but, where we have tax responsibility, we have put in place some of the toughest anti-tax avoidance measures that exist anywhere in the world.

The Presiding Officer: We have a number of open supplementary questions.

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): Last week, Ruth Davidson's office issued a comment on Christian Allard, the former MSP, questioning his right to comment on issues in his home constituency due to the fact that he is a European Union citizen. Rather than immediately apologise and withdraw the deeply offensive and xenophobic remark that had been issued from her office, Ruth Davidson first asked her spin doctor to apologise and, when pushed, last night issued a contemptuous, sarcastic response that in no way

acknowledged the seriousness of the issue. Does the First Minister agree that, in the tense political climate that has been caused by the EU referendum, all politicians have a duty to lead by example and set the right tone for political debate? Does she agree that Ruth Davidson should publicly issue a personal apology without further delay?

The First Minister: I saw Ruth Davidson laugh when James Dornan asked that question, but I think that this is a serious issue. The remarks that were made about Christian Allard from Ruth Davidson's office, suggesting that an EU citizen—even though they live here and contribute here—does not deserve a say about the community that they live in, are unacceptable. In the current climate, political leaders have a responsibility to set the tone. This week, we heard that the Home Secretary has had to assure the Polish Government that the UK Government takes seriously the concerns that exist about hate crimes being committed towards Polish citizens in the UK. How much are those efforts undermined when the leader of the Conservatives in Scotland casually dismisses completely unacceptable remarks about EU citizens?

If another day passes when Ruth Davidson fails to offer a full retraction and an unreserved apology for the remarks that were made from her own office, the people of Scotland will be entitled to question the character of the Conservative Party.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): During the parliamentary recess, the "Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland" figures were published. The figures demonstrated that there is a union dividend worth £1,600 for every man, woman and child in Scotland, equating to more than £7,000 for a family of four in one year. The First Minister claims to be concerned about the impact of austerity. Why would she impose that super-austerity on Scottish families by taking that money away from them?

The First Minister: I know that the Conservatives are desperate to talk about anything right now except the uncertainty that they have visited on the Scottish economy in the form of Brexit. It is the Conservatives' reckless gamble over the EU referendum that has taken us to the exit door of the EU against our will and it is the Conservatives' complete inability to answer any questions about what Brexit might look like that is causing so much uncertainty for the Scottish economy. It is about time that, instead of scaremongering about other things, we got some answers from the Conservative Party. Maybe the Scottish Conservatives can answer the question that Theresa May could not answer yesterday: should we be in the single market, yes or no?

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): Earlier this week, the First Minister referred in her legislative programme to the development of a strategic action plan to reflect the significant possibilities of oil and gas decommissioning, which will require facilities around the country. She may be aware that Lyness, in my constituency, is under consideration for the development of such proposals, drawing on the deepwater harbour at Scapa Flow and indeed the proximity to the North Sea, which WWF has said makes environmental sense. Will she assure me and my constituents that, in developing the strategic action plan, Scottish Enterprise will fully reflect the skills, resources and opportunities for development of those facilities?

The First Minister: I am delighted to give that assurance; in fact, I will ask the chief executive of Scottish Enterprise to arrange a meeting between relevant officials there and Liam McArthur in order that the legitimate and valid points that he has raised today are fully incorporated in that action plan.

International Council of Education Advisers (Update)

4. Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): To ask the First Minister whether the Scottish Government will provide an update following the first meeting of the international council of education advisers. (S5F-00184)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): The first meeting of the international council of education advisers was very successful and extremely helpful. The advisers were able to share their wide experience of working in education systems around the world. Discussion was wide ranging, but had a focus on Scotland's twin aims of excellence and equity for all children.

Going forward, the council will look in more detail at capacity building, collaboration and closing the equity gap. It will meet again in plenary session in February.

Jenny Gilruth: Presiding Officer,

"teachers in the 21st century need to be critically informed with professional values, knowledge and actions that ensure positive impact on learners and learning."

Those are not my words, but those of the General Teaching Council for Scotland, which is the body that sets professional standards for teachers in Scotland. Does the First Minister agree that headteachers and local authorities must work collaboratively in planning appropriate professional learning opportunities for all staff, thereby ensuring that teachers can engage with educational research to develop teaching practice and thus contribute to closing the attainment gap?

The First Minister: Yes, I agree with that. Ensuring that our teachers are supported to have opportunities for professional development is absolutely central to giving children the best-quality education possible. That is why this year we are investing £1 million in masters-level training for teachers.

I agree with the General Teaching Council that collaboration and high-quality professional learning opportunities are important. Teacher professionalism and school leadership feature strongly in the national improvement framework and delivery plan that was published in June by the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education. In fact, one of the key themes of the discussions at the international council of education advisers last week was the importance of supporting teachers to develop professionally as much as possible.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Will the First Minister confirm whether her international panel of experts has provided the evidence that shows that there is a very strong link between a rise in educational attainment and greater school autonomy?

The First Minister: The international council of education advisers met for the first time last week; we are asking it to advise us and give us the benefit of its expert opinion on a range of issues. However, there is evidence on the link between school attainment and the amount of autonomy that individual headteachers have. That is why one of the key themes of the governance review that John Swinney will publish next week, and on which we will then consult, is how we can empower headteachers and give teachers much more responsibility so that they are able to drive the improvement that we need. Our council of education advisers will advise us on the best ways of doing that and will scrutinise our plans. The link is one that I think we have already accepted in formulating our plan so far.

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): It emerged this week that the only educational advice underpinning the Scottish Government's national standardised assessments amounted to four emails from two educationists, and that most of their advice was not taken. Even at this late stage, will the First Minister undertake to ask the international council to examine and advise on that central policy?

The First Minister: The council advises us on all such issues and will do so on an on-going basis.

I have to say that last time that I looked Labour supported the approach that we are taking on standardised assessments, although the way

things change in Labour, I could be forgiven for missing something.

As I have said repeatedly in the chamber, standardised assessments are not tests; they are assessments to inform the judgments that teachers make about the performance of young people. It is important that they exist in order to ensure that those judgments are informed in an objective way and that, from that, we are given information that allows us to assess the attainment gap and to set targets to close it so that we can be accountable to Parliament and the wider public on the commitment that we have given to close that gap. I am absolutely determined that we will do that. We will take advice from our council and others, but we will be unwavering in our commitment to deliver the best education for all young people across Scotland.

Inward Investment

5. Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con): To ask the First Minister what measures the Scottish Government is taking to reverse the reported decline in inward investment, including as a share of the United Kingdom total. (S5F-00153)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We are looking in detail at the recently published Department for International Trade figures, which showed a small decrease in inward investment to Scotland over the past year. Those figures have a different methodology from the more specific foreign direct investment figures that were published by Ernst & Young in May. The EY survey has placed Scotland in the top two locations for foreign direct investment outside London for the past six years. It also showed that 2015 was a record year, with 119 foreign direct investment projects secured, which is a 51 per cent increase on 2014. That reflects the important role that Scottish Development International plays in attracting inward investment to Scotland.

Scotland remains a highly competitive business location, but one of the key reasons why inward investors come to Scotland is access to the single market. That is why it is essential that we retain that.

Gordon Lindhurst: I am aware of the figures and the different studies to which the First Minister referred. However, the DIT figures are the latest ones and they show the reality that investment in Scotland is down 9 per cent on last year, new jobs are down 23 per cent and Scotland's share of new UK projects is down from 6 per cent to 4.9 per cent. It is not the European Union referendum that can be blamed for that but, rather, the First Minister's threat of a further independence referendum, which hangs like a dark cloud over Scotland. The people of Scotland have spoken in

plain English. No means no. When will she accept that?

The First Minister: The EY figures are for the calendar year 2015, whereas the DIT figures are for the financial year 2015-16, so there is a difference of a few months. Let me wonder: what was the uncertainty that hung over the Scottish economy in the latter part of the financial year 2015-16? The only uncertainty that hung over the Scottish economy at that point was the looming referendum on EU membership.

I still remember 2014, when the Tories went all around Scotland telling people that voting no was the only way to secure European Union membership, but now they are trying to wriggle off the hook because they have put that membership in jeopardy. The uncertainty that faces our economy now is the reckless gamble of the Tories in taking us to the EU exit door. For the people who have caused the problem to try to blame those of us who are trying to find solutions is a bit like an arsonist trying to blame the fire brigade. The Tories should be utterly ashamed of themselves.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I am sure that the First Minister shares the disappointment that, having seen positive inward investment figures, we are now seeing subsequent decline. We can argue over whose figures are right, but it is the case that inward investment figures are down, as is the number of jobs generated, and we appear to be doing less well than the rest of the UK.

I absolutely disagree with Gordon Lindhurst. It is not the case that Brexit has had no impact, but that Brexit and continuing uncertainty about a potential referendum have had an impact on inward investment. What will the First Minister do to address this?

The First Minister: It is not that long since Jackie Baillie agreed with Gordon Lindhurst; she, too, travelled Scotland in 2014 telling us that we had to vote no to protect our European Union membership. She should reflect on that.

Let me address directly inward investment. Scotland is a success story in inward investment—the EY reports going back six years show that. In the new climate that Scotland is in, we will have to work even harder to attract inward investment. That is why I announced in the programme for government the new investment and innovation hubs that we are establishing in London, Dublin and Brussels, that is why we are supporting Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Development International, and that is why we are announcing all the initiatives to support the economy.

Jackie Baillie talks about uncertainty. The problem for the Labour Party is that there is one

certainty now if Labour does not get its act together. Owen Smith said that the other day and Kezia Dugdale has said it. It is the certainty of Scotland being governed by the Tories for 20 years. Jackie Baillie and Labour have nothing to say about that. We will get on with the job of supporting the Scottish economy and leave Labour to stew in the juice of its own making.

Train Services (Safety)

6. Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the First Minister whether the Scottish Government will convene a working group of ScotRail representatives, passenger and disability groups and trade unions to review and report on the delivery of safer train services. (S5F-00147)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): We welcome the views of all parties on how we can further improve our railways. Elaine Smith will be aware of forums already established through the ScotRail franchise, such as the stakeholder equality group and advisory groups that include attendees from passenger and mobility groups. We will also shortly be publishing the accessible travel framework for Scotland to ensure that disabled people are involved in improving all aspects of transport from policy to delivery.

The safe operation of our railways remains our first priority, and of course we must respect the remit of the independent safety regulator in overseeing the safe operation of our railway, which continues to be one of the safest in Europe. The Minister for Transport and the Islands, Humza Yousaf, will be very happy to hold a meeting with Elaine Smith to discuss this issue further if she is interested in taking up that offer.

Elaine Smith: Rail passengers in Scotland—particularly those with disabilities—and the members of the National Union of Rail and Maritime Transport Workers in the public gallery today will be disappointed by the response that there will not be a working group convened. Is the First Minister aware that thousands of driver-controlled trains are operated by ScotRail without a second member of staff on board? Does she appreciate that the guards' safety-critical role is not just about operating doors—vitaly important though that is for safety? It involves numerous responsibilities around passenger safety, assistance, comfort and security.

Given the current suspension of strike action, I would be pleased to accept the offer to meet the transport minister to discuss how we can guarantee the safest possible operating procedures on our trains.

The First Minister: Elaine Smith raises very important issues and the transport minister will

engage fully, both with her and other members and with the RMT and other unions.

It is important to point out that, with driver-controlled operation, the rail safety regulator and the Rail Safety and Standards Board have publicly confirmed that in their view it is a safe method of working. They did that because Humza Yousaf asked them to reaffirm their view in the context of the recent dispute.

Positively, as Elaine Smith has indicated, industrial action has now been suspended while both parties look to work through an agreement. I hope that that process ends in a positive agreement and that we can look forward to a situation in the months ahead where passengers do not have any further disruption to the services that they rely on.

General Practice Surgeries (Training Places)

7. Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): To ask the First Minister for what reason more than a quarter of training places in GP surgeries were not filled at the end of the 2016 recruitment round. (S5F-00163)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): I am surprised that Alex Cole-Hamilton does not know that we are not at the end of the 2016 recruitment round yet—it is still on-going.

From the first round of advertising this year, three quarters of places have been filled so far; even at this interim stage, we have recruited 4 per cent more year 1 GP trainees than when the full recruitment process was completed last year.

This summer, a second round has started, which has advertised a further 100 places. That takes the total number of places advertised for recruitment this year to 439, which exceeds our target of advertising 400 places. This year, of course, we are also offering £20,000 bursaries for harder-to-fill places.

When we take all general practitioners in training into account—not just year 1 entrants—the current fill rate for GP training is 92 per cent.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: It is nevertheless clear from the statistics that making places available does not necessarily mean that trainees will emerge to fill them. Indeed, in the year since the Liberal Democrats started repeatedly to raise the GP crisis at First Minister's question time, we have lost a further 90 to the profession.

One in four patients presents to Scottish surgeries with underlying mental health conditions. Does the First Minister agree that we can relieve pressure on GPs' practices, such as those in my Edinburgh Western constituency in particular, by stationing qualified full-time mental health

practitioners—not just link workers—in every surgery in Scotland?

The First Minister: I very much agree with Alex Cole-Hamilton: it is a statement of the obvious to say that it is not just advertising places that counts; it is a matter of filling those places with doctors. That is why I hoped that Alex Cole-Hamilton would have welcomed the fact that, at this interim stage in 2016, we are already ahead of where we were at the end of last year's process. There is still work to be done, but clear progress is being made.

We are taking a number of steps, including the bursary that I spoke about, to ensure that places in harder-to-fill areas are more attractive to doctors to take up.

On the wider point about relieving pressure on GPs, that is, of course, why we are working with GPs to transform primary care. We have plans in place to put 250 community link workers into GP practices. That directly addresses the point that Alex Cole-Hamilton made about mental health support.

We also have plans to ensure that all GP practices get access to an enhanced pharmacist. We are investing in an additional 500 advanced nurse practitioners to bolster the skills of the profession, and we are looking to recruit 1,000 new paramedics to work in community settings. That will help to take the pressure off not just GPs but our accident and emergency services.

I recognise the pressure on GPs, and I thank them for the incredible work that they do. We are determined to work with them to ensure that we have a primary care system and a health service generally that are fit for the challenges of the future.

Brexit (Business Support)

8. Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): To ask the First Minister how the Scottish Government is ensuring accelerated funding and additional business support in light of Brexit uncertainty. (S5F-00183)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): Earlier this week, I announced that we intend to use the strength of our balance sheet to establish a new Scottish growth fund. Over three years, that will provide small and medium-sized enterprises with up to £500 million of investment guarantees and some loans up to a maximum of £5 million per eligible business.

I also announced 16 projects that will support and create employment as part of our £100 million capital investment package. They include a £20 million investment in energy saving measures for homes and public sector buildings, £23 million to

upgrade the higher education estate, and £10 million that will go towards local economic development projects throughout the country. All of that spending is, of course, accelerated into this financial year.

Responding to the Federation of Small Businesses, we have also created a new single point of contact for businesses in Scotland to enable individual companies to submit any questions or concerns that they have about the impact of Brexit.

Gil Paterson: Does the First Minister agree that it is high time that the United Kingdom Government followed our lead and announced its own economic stimulus package rather than continuing to brush off all concerns about the future of our economy by repeating its meaningless mantra “Brexit means Brexit”?

The First Minister: Yes, I do. On 10 August, when I announced the £100 million package, I called on the UK Government to urgently develop its own economic stimulus plans. One month on, we have not seen any meaningful action to alleviate uncertainty. For goodness’ sake, we do not yet even know the date of the autumn statement. That is the extent of the uncertainty that currently engulfs the UK Government.

I have great confidence in the resilience of Scottish business, but there are real concerns that the damage to the economy and jobs from the Brexit decision and the UK Government’s confusion since then will be severe and long lasting.

The Parliament has given the Scottish Government a mandate to seek to protect Scotland’s interests, and that is exactly what we will continue to do.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): Can the First Minister reassure our farming businesses across Scotland that the shambles of this year’s direct farm payments will not be repeated in the coming year? Never mind accelerated payments, I had farmers at my door at the weekend telling me that they still have not received the payments that were due from the Scottish Government nine months ago.

The First Minister: As we have said previously, we acknowledge our shortcomings when it comes to making payments to farmers this year. We have apologised for that, and I do so again today.

As of 5 September, of 18,300 eligible farmers, more than 17,700 have had payment, more than 17,400 have been paid in full and we have paid loans to those who are still awaiting the payment.

Fergus Ewing will give a full update to Parliament next week, on 13 September. As well as giving an update on payments for this year, he

will set out our intentions regarding the 2016 payments.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes First Minister’s questions.

Elaine Smith: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I am sure that all members—back-bench members, anyway—will appreciate the new arrangements for First Minister’s questions, which give back-bench members more opportunities. Could I clarify with you that supplementary questions on question 3 and question 4 do not have to be sent in advance to your office, and that they can be more spontaneous?

Also, Presiding Officer, you wrote to us about the subject matter of questions. Could you confirm that, although a subject might have been raised at general questions, that does not preclude it from being raised at First Minister’s questions? To give an example, I had hoped to ask about the downgrading of Monklands hospital and to issue a request to the health minister to attend. That was a subject matter at general questions but not at First Minister’s questions. Is that the kind of question that would be in order at question 3 or 4?

The Presiding Officer: I thank Elaine Smith for the question, and yes—she is correct on both points. Members do not have to submit to me the supplementaries that come after the final leaders’ questions. It might help if you do, if you think it is likely to increase your chances of being selected, but do not feel obliged to—it might decrease your chances. [*Laughter.*]

Secondly, Elaine Smith is right that members cannot ask the same question as is on the *Business Bulletin* for First Minister’s questions, but if the subject has been raised in general questions, they should feel free to ask again. I hope that is helpful.

Living Wage in Scottish Football

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-00253, in the name of James Dornan, on a living wage in Scottish football.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises the enormous cultural and economic contribution that is made by Scottish football, including at the home of the national game, Hampden, in Glasgow Cathcart; understands that only one of the 12 SPFL Premiership clubs is currently an accredited living wage employer, and notes the view that Scottish football would benefit from a more widespread adoption of the Scottish living wage.

12:48

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): I thank Willie Smith and Scott Robertson, who have been fighting for fairness for our young football players for many years. Without their tenacity and determination to do the right thing, we would not be having this debate today.

Scottish football employs thousands of people across the industry. The scale of football is no longer 22 men on a pitch with a referee in the middle. Football runs on a commercial basis now. Stadiums no longer host events only on a Saturday afternoon; they are a constant venue for conferences, parties, charity events, concerts and training days. Footballing organisations employ cleaners, cooks and administrative staff. Even the humble pie takes an employed person to reach the hands of supporters. On match days, staff can work, long, taxing and physical hours, running from one end of the ground to the other, yet many of those people will be on less than the living wage.

Football is one of the most—if not the most—influential sports in the world. Billions of people around the globe are engaged with the sport. The 2014 world cup reached an audience of 3.2 billion people, and 695 million people watched the final live. That is approximately 15 per cent of the world's population—that is some figure. That is the reach of the beautiful game.

We are all aware of the benefits that sports have in creating healthy communities—at least, we are now; we did not use to be. Football is now more than a sport that is focused on the big teams and their players; it is a vital community engagement tool. The sport is breaking down barriers and bringing people together.

Football also provides multiple benefits for physical and mental health. It supports good mental health through increased confidence and a sense of belonging and team spirit and as a tool to

reduce stress. The physical benefits are just as impressive. Recent research suggests that playing football is better for us than going for a run or lifting weights—that is good, because I was rubbish at both. The physical health benefits of football include a reduction in the risk of heart disease and in cholesterol, and it is a means of challenging obesity.

I had the pleasure of attending the University of Glasgow institute of health and wellbeing and Scottish Professional Football League Trust event in the Parliament on Tuesday night, which highlighted the good work that Scotland's football clubs are carrying out in many areas. There is clear evidence that it is no longer just men who feel the social impact of the game and that football is also reaching older people, women and children.

Given its power and its dependence on support from all members of society, traditionally those from working-class areas, football has a responsibility to ensure that it does the right thing by the people it employs, even if only by setting a good example to others.

For years, it has been understood that football has a massive impact on poverty. An attendee at a recent forum, attended by senior UNICEF figures, professional footballers and sports advisers, concluded:

"The resounding message was that sport does indeed have the ability to affect positive change and promote international development. Of course, it should not be seen as a silver bullet to the problem of poverty and disadvantage. The power of sport to affect change is as a tool, within a broader toolkit."

Sport has been found to have a profound effect on community health, education and morale, and clubs should not ignore their responsibilities. In that regard, I congratulate Heart of Midlothian Football Club and its forward-thinking chief executive and chair, Ann Budge, on Hearts being the first club in the United Kingdom to be an accredited living wage employer. For a club that has had financial difficulties in recent years, that is a remarkable achievement, which highlights, first, that becoming an accredited living wage employer can be done and, secondly, that benefits accrue from doing so. What better way to impact on poverty than to pay people a living wage?

Some clubs pay their own staff the living wage but are not accredited, because of contracts elsewhere. However, it is unfortunately the case that not all clubs are following the example of Hearts. The disparity between the two biggest Glasgow clubs could not be starker. Rangers Football Club—another club with massive financial difficulties in recent seasons—has made huge steps towards becoming accredited. Only some

historical contracts with outside suppliers of services are stopping the club in that regard.

The team that I support, however, has made it clear that it does not support the living wage. I should make it clear that it is the board of the team that I support that has made that clear; most of the fans that I have spoken to certainly support the living wage. I understand that one of the reasons that the club gave for its stance was that paying the living wage would have a knock-on effect on other wages. If Hearts and Rangers, with their financial issues, can afford to pay the living wage, I see no reason why the biggest and richest club in Scotland is unable to do so.

Many of us grew up with tales of how Celtic Football Club started out to help people who needed assistance. Maybe the board should get to know the club's history and reconsider its position. I am aware of thousands of Celtic fans who agree with me on that—even if they do not always agree with me on other things. I am also aware that Unite the union's youth committee wrote to Celtic today with a number of questions about the club's use of zero-hours contracts and about its commitment—or lack thereof—to the living wage. I look forward to seeing the club's response.

Scottish Football Association staff are paid a rate that is above the minimum wage, at roughly £10 per hour across the board, which is another step towards positive change.

I have spoken to representatives across players' unions, and it is recognised that some young players are paid even less than the minimum wage. I spoke about the work that Willie Smith and Scott Robertson have been doing to protect young players. There are issues to do with the length of the journeys that young boys have to make, often to get just 15 minutes of game time, if they are lucky. Even worse, there have been reports of top-flight clubs paying young players on contracts just £1 a week. Of course, it is any young boy's dream to play football, but that dream should not be manipulated by clubs to allow them to fail to meet legal and moral commitments.

Clubs are also involved in the modern apprenticeship programme. The Scottish Government says that an apprenticeship is a tool that provides an opportunity to earn a wage while learning skills and achieving an industry-recognised qualification—in other words, tools for life, such as employability, sustainability and a means of living. The Professional Footballers Association Scotland is concerned that some young men at apprenticeship level are not being paid the amount that they are due.

More than that, young footballers who do not make a career from the game, as most do not, are often left without a skill set. On occasions, that has

led to people suffering acute mental health issues, sometimes with tragic consequences. One young lad took his own life after being released from his club, which is devastating.

I am not saying for a second that the clubs should be nursemaids, but they have a duty of care to these young kids and they must fulfil it. One way that they could do that is by educating kids, and ensuring that they are, ready for the outside world when they leave the game.

There is no denying that football reaches into the lives of people across Scotland in a way that most other things, including politics, cannot. Although the Parliament aims to increase the number of living wage accredited employers, I firmly believe that organisations that already have a huge impact on Scottish life should lead the way. That is why I encourage the Parliament and urge all football clubs to set a good example, do the right thing and pay the living wage.

12:55

Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

I refer members to my declaration of interests, as I am a football referee with the Scottish Football Association. I was selected to speak in the debate by my chief whip at the beginning of the week, before my appointment for Saturday's game was made. I will not enter into some of the conversations that Mr Dornan began about the two biggest teams in Glasgow, because of the role that I will be taking there at 12 o'clock on Saturday.

I agreed with an awful lot of what Mr Dornan had to say, particularly his earlier points. I was interested to hear that involvement in football can be better for people than running or lifting weights. For my involvement in football, I have to run and lift weights, so sometimes all three can be combined.

I realise that members' business is normally a consensual discussion, and although I agree with much of the substance of what Mr Dornan said, I could not agree with comments that he made just last month, when he called for Scottish Athletics to pay the living wage, just as he is today calling for the Scottish Professional Football League to do so. He put out a press release and, two days later, he wrote to Scottish Athletics only to find out that it actually pays the living wage. I know a number of people in Scottish Athletics who were disappointed that he had not gone to it first to seek clarification. Indeed, he tarnished the name of Scottish Athletics through his comments in the press, which were factually inaccurate.

James Dornan *rose*—

Douglas Ross: I will give way to Mr Dornan on that point.

James Dornan: The letter was sent to Scottish Athletics before the press release was put out, although I accept that it might not have been received. The issue was that Scottish Athletics was not an accredited living wage employer. After discussions, Scottish Athletics accepted that it should do that so that it could set an example to others, and I believe that that will be the outcome. It was not about attacking Scottish Athletics; we highlighted a lot of good work that it has done, and we have allowed it to highlight that even more.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will give you some extra time, Mr Ross, for your courtesy.

Douglas Ross: Thank you very much, Presiding Officer.

Although Scottish Athletics may not have been accredited, it was a living wage employer. That point was lost in translation for some, so it is important to get that clarification on the record.

As I said, I will not get too involved in the club aspects, but I put on record the good work that Heart of Midlothian Football Club has done since October 2014, when it became an accredited living wage employer. We can encourage other clubs and, indeed, all employers to do that. The Government and the Parliament have a target of increasing the number of living wage employers throughout Scotland, and that is a target throughout the United Kingdom.

I have some sympathy for the Scottish Professional Football League, which feels that it is being victimised in this area, as it is the only operation that is being asked to give unanimous approval. Why is it being singled out? Neil Doncaster, the SPFL chief executive, has said:

“why is football the target of focus here and not any other individual sector? Our clubs and their staff carry out huge amounts of positive work in their communities and through charitable initiatives of which the SPFL is very proud and we feel these activities are richly deserving of attention and focus.”

I agree with him. We have to be careful that we do not victimise and pillorise the Scottish Professional Football League. Work can be done and there is cross-party consensus on encouraging people to move forward in that way. However, we should not single out what is, as James Dornan said, a great sport that is enjoyed by so many in this country for some of the criticism and demands that we have heard today when we are not willing to make those demands of every other sector in the country.

I am grateful to Mr Dornan for taking this matter forward. I know that he has written to a number of clubs and I believe that there is a will to move forward on this issue. Every club in Scotland, I understand, pays the minimum wage and some are moving towards the living wage. We would like everyone across Scotland to be able to provide

the wages to ensure that their staff can live comfortably but also do the work that they enjoy.

There is work to be done; there is more that we can do. I am pleased to take part in the debate, but I am slightly concerned that some of the comments could be seen as attacking one sector without looking at the breadth of issues that we have to face in Scottish society.

13:00

Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): I thank James Dornan for bringing this important matter to the floor of this Parliament. For my part, I do wish to associate myself with all his comments in his opening speech.

I pay tribute to the magnificent work of the Poverty Alliance in campaigning for a living wage, in promoting the living wage and in diligently accrediting private businesses, public bodies and third sector organisations that apply to become living wage employers in Scotland.

In recent days, I have asked the Minister for Employability and Training in committee and the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work in this chamber if they will consider whether a target of just 1,000 accredited living wage employers in Scotland by this time next year is ambitious enough. That is not a counsel of despair—far from it; it is a rallying cry of hope. With over 360,000 private enterprises in Scotland alone, I think that 1,000 employers is far too timid a target. I make that argument not to stretch the targets for the Poverty Alliance within its existing resources; I make it, gently, in order to set more ambitious targets for the Poverty Alliance, but with substantially increased resources.

The Minister for Employability and Training (Jamie Hepburn): In commenting on the resource of the Poverty Alliance, I am sure that the member will want to reflect on the fact that the Scottish Government provides resource to the Poverty Alliance to help to promote the living wage.

The member is right to remark that this is a matter that he has raised on two previous occasions this week—on three occasions, now. However, I hope that he will reflect on the fact that, given where we started from, we are fairly early on in the process. Surely a target of getting 1,000 accredited employers in such a short space of time is an ambitious target, although of course it is one that I hope we can exceed.

Richard Leonard: As I said at the committee meeting, I think that our definitions of “ambitious” are probably at variance.

I make it clear that, in the broader sense, the question before us is not simply about the individual standard of living of those working

people who are employed by Scotland's top football clubs. It is not even simply about their individual standard of wellbeing. It is, at its very root, about the kind of society that we want to live in.

It is not just a material question; it is an ethical question too. In our top football clubs, the lowest-paid workers especially not only endure the lowest hourly rate of pay but, because they are for the most part on part-time hours, have the lowest weekly rate of pay too. Also, because they are often seasonal workers, they have the lowest annual wage as well.

That reminds me of something that Tom Mann, the socialist pioneer and trade union agitator, said in response to the moralising of Thomas Carlyle to the working class. He said that the corollary of the biblical commandment, "Thou shalt not steal", is "Thou shalt not be stolen from". These workers in our top football clubs are being stolen from. That is not just an injustice; it is daylight—and sometimes floodlit—robbery, and we need to bring it to an end.

I say to those clubs and their supporters that this is not just about in-work poverty; it is about in-retirement poverty, too. Large inequalities in wages at work amplify into massive inequalities in household resources in retirement, too.

Finally, it is worth recalling that when Jimmy Maxton, John Wheatley, Jennie Lee and the Independent Labour Party first championed the living wage in the 1920s, while it sprang first and foremost from the harsh daily reality of working-class experience, it also had a theoretical underpinning, based on the economist J A Hobson's analysis that economic depression and mass unemployment were themselves a direct result of inequality. There was underconsumption and abject poverty on the one hand, with conspicuous consumption and wealth enough to export capital on the other.

I do not begrudge our top footballers high rewards in their often short playing careers, but if ever there was a case of conspicuous consumption in the midst of abject poverty, it would be at our top football clubs. Let us support the motion this afternoon, and join together with the trades unions, supporters' groups and the Poverty Alliance to step up the pressure on all our football clubs to pay the living wage in the season ahead.

13:05

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): I congratulate my colleague James Dornan on bringing to the chamber this debate on the living wage in Scottish football.

The social case for the living wage is clear. It is simply unacceptable that working people find themselves having to turn to food banks or build up unsustainable debt just to get by. Ensuring that everyone has a decent income for the work that they do, and that people can access the goods and services that most of us would deem necessary to live on and in order to participate in society, is something that I am sure every member in the chamber can get behind and support.

I put on record that my interest in the debate relates not only to the very important fair work agenda but to my position as a Heart of Midlothian season ticket holder and Foundation of Hearts member. Hearts was indeed the first club in Scotland—and in the UK—to introduce the living wage. As a fan, I am proud of how my club has conducted itself in the matter and in the investment that it has made in its staff, and of how it has been working with the Foundation of Hearts to make fan ownership a reality. I am grateful to James Dornan for acknowledging the good work of Hearts in his speech—along with the speeches from other members—even if the motion does not quite capture it.

In a football club, many of the staff who will benefit from the living wage will be involved in match-day hospitality. In North Ayrshire, where my own constituency is, around 3,500 people are employed in hospitality. It is an industry in which, unfortunately, far too many people are struggling with low pay and a lack of regular hours. During my time as a North Ayrshire councillor, I chaired an inquiry into non-standard lending and heard evidence from individuals who were employed in hospitality about just how tough it was surviving week to week on a minimum wage with no set hours.

The social case for fair work and the living wage is well rehearsed, but there is also an important business case to be made. Independently conducted research on employers who have introduced the living wage has shown increases in productivity, as a result of living wage employees contributing a higher level of effort and being more open to changing job roles in the organisation. That brings businesses cost-saving opportunities through increasing staff retention and reducing sickness absence.

The value of improved levels of morale, motivation and commitment from staff right across the pay distribution can have a hugely positive effect on the success of a business. As more and more people choose to consume fair trade products and look to spend their hard-earned cash with ethical businesses, it can provide a real competitive edge.

Hearts showed real leadership, and the chair Ann Budge was quoted as saying that the club was

“simply doing the right thing”.

Hearts has sent a very clear signal to other clubs, and to its employees and customers and its supply chain.

Ambitions for growth are not incompatible with acting to create a fairer society. The action that Hearts has taken benefits not just the club and the immediate community but wider society. I commend Ann Budge and Hearts for doing the right thing and I urge others to follow suit.

13:08

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green):

I congratulate James Dornan on his motion. Like the previous speaker, Ruth Maguire, I declare that I am a Heart of Midlothian season ticket holder and a member of the Foundation of Hearts, and I occasionally sit beside her when we both get to the game.

I am also an accredited living wage employer, as I know a number of my colleagues are. To pick up a point that my colleague Douglas Ross made, there is an important promotional role for all of us who are connected with the living wage. My wish to promote it is not related exclusively to football or to any other area; I believe that there is an obligation on us to promote it wherever possible. The levels of inequality that exist in this very rich society are a damning indictment on all of us, and we know that in-work poverty is a significant part of that.

My party talks a lot about pay ratios. An example of income inequality that previous speakers have mentioned is the disparity between the incomes of people who are in the same organisation. We know that, in the year in which Hearts took its decision, the top 10 per cent of earners had 15 per cent more wealth than the bottom 40 per cent combined. That is a damning indictment, and it represented an increase on the previous year.

The world is full of statistics, but the bottom line is that they often relate to individuals. The press release that accompanied Hearts’ announcement mentioned Peter Kelly, director of the Poverty Alliance, describing the club’s decision as

“an important step forward for the campaign to end poverty pay”.

He said:

“Almost two in three children in poverty in Scotland live in a household where someone works, and the Living Wage is a vital tool in lifting people out of in-work poverty.”

Importantly, he went on to say:

“Football clubs have an important role in communities across Scotland.”

That has been alluded to—football clubs are an extremely important part of our society.

Another declaration that I would like to make is that I am a member of Oxfam. Last night, I had the privilege of being at a meeting in the Parliament at which Oxfam released its report “Decent work for Scotland’s low-paid workers: A job to be done”, which followed work that it had commissioned from the University of the West of Scotland and the Warwick institute for employment research. The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work, Keith Brown, attended the event, and the positive response that he gave to the report was very well received. The report makes a number of recommendations to the Scottish Government and employers.

The project involved the use of street sampling, surveys and another method whose name escapes me. It involved 1,500 people across Scotland. There are various tables in the report about the priorities for decent work. It will not surprise anyone that the top priority that was identified by focus group participants was a decent hourly rate, which the report describes as

“An hourly rate or salary that is enough to cover basic needs such as food, housing and things most people take for granted without getting into debt”.

Oxfam has been involved in a lot of creative work, particularly around the humankind index, which has shown that people’s aspirations are fairly modest. People just want enough. I do not think that that is too much to ask in an industry such as football, in which obscene sums of money change hands. At the most recent game that I was at, I got a pie—some people might think that I got more than one. I was delighted that the young woman who served me said, “And enjoy the game after.” I enjoyed the fact that that person was properly remunerated.

As has been said, it is also good for business for staff to be properly remunerated. In its literature, the Living Wage Foundation quotes someone saying:

“Introducing the Living Wage is not only the right thing to do for our co-workers; it also makes good business sense. This is a long-term investment in our people based on our values and our belief that a team with good compensation and working conditions is in a position to provide a great experience to our customers.”

I am not going to promote the company concerned—it is a large Scandinavian furniture company. I want people to do things because they are the right thing to do and because they make sense. I like the fact that, in its press release on becoming a living wage employer, Hearts said:

“The club feels that implementing the Living Wage is entirely in keeping with the values that we hold dear as Edinburgh’s oldest football club.”

Those values are a sense of community and a sense of social justice.

I commend the motion and thank James Dornan for bringing the matter to Parliament.

13:13

The Minister for Employability and Training (Jamie Hepburn): I join other members in thanking James Dornan for securing the debate, and I thank those members who have contributed to it.

I will begin by picking up on Mr Finnie’s remarks. He is quite right to make the point that many members are signed up as living wage champions. I am happy to say that I am one such member of the Scottish Parliament, and I encourage those members who are not yet accredited to follow suit.

I thought that Douglas Ross’s performance today was much better than it was when I saw him running the line at Firhill park during the recess in the Partick Thistle v Hearts fixture. He called far too many Partick Thistle players offside for my liking. In that regard, not being involved in the same fashion in the fixture that Mr Ross will be officiating at on Saturday, I should like to utterly disagree with his remark that it will involve Glasgow’s two biggest football clubs.

The debate is an opportunity to highlight not only the cultural and economic contribution that Scottish football makes but the distinctive approach to fair work that the Scottish Government has adopted, which includes the living wage. The living wage is critical to us as an Administration. Through our pay policy, we ensure that everyone who works for us is paid at least the living wage. As I mentioned to Mr Leonard, we also provide funding to the Poverty Alliance for it to promote the living wage and, most recently, we have ensured that we are leveraging an additional resource to integration authorities to ensure that those who work in the social care sector can be paid the living wage.

The labour market strategy that we published last month says that we want Scotland to be a more successful and fairer country, with a strong economy and a vibrant, fair and inclusive labour market. A strong focus for the Government is on creating more jobs, better-quality jobs and jobs that work for everyone in terms of skills, pay, security and prospects, because we know that people who feel valued and empowered drive innovation and growth. I will return to that later, but that is why we believe that the living wage is so important and why paying it is the core

requirement in the Scottish business pledge that the Scottish Government has established. As well as Hearts being a living wage accredited employer, we should reflect on the fact that it is a signatory to the Scottish business pledge. Indeed, the First Minister launched the pledge at Tynecastle stadium.

As Douglas Ross said, football clubs across Scotland play an important role in the communities where they have roots, supporting a range of social and educational programmes. Given that being a health minister was my previous role, I need not labour the point that Mr Finnie should be eating rather fewer pies when he goes to the football. That is not my concern any more but, having been the minister with responsibility—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There is no need to be quite so personal, minister.

Jamie Hepburn: That general message is applicable to all members of the Scottish Parliament, Presiding Officer, and not necessarily just Mr Finnie. However, thank you for highlighting that.

As minister with responsibility for sport, I saw much of the good work that is done through the football clubs and their arm’s-length trusts. In that regard, I declare my interest as a member of the Jags Trust. Indeed, just recently, I was able to see that in my area when I met Clyde Football Club Community Foundation and saw the work that Cumbernauld Colts Football Club does.

In my current area of responsibility, we know that many football clubs, including Alloa Athletic, Raith Rovers, Celtic and Rangers, along with Greenock Morton Community Trust and Falkirk Football Community Foundation are engaged in the provision of employability support programmes. Indeed, Morton is now in the top two providers of such programmes in Inverclyde. It delivers programmes that see, on average, 59 per cent of participants moving into work.

A lot of good working is happening, but football’s social responsibility need not stop there. As the debate has highlighted, football clubs can also play their part in tackling in-work poverty. Clubs are often leaders in their communities and they can show leadership on pay as well. Hearts is to be applauded for becoming an accredited living wage employer and recognising the many benefits that that can bring. Only four football clubs in the United Kingdom are accredited living wage employers, Hearts being the only Scottish one. The others are Chelsea, Luton Town and, interestingly, Football Club United of Manchester, which is a semi-professional football team. That shows that there is significant space for growth in the number of football clubs in Scotland and beyond that could be accredited.

Other football clubs across Scotland are paying a living wage. I urge them to join Hearts in becoming accredited. Clearly, it would be positive for the clubs to be visible and to be recognised. Indeed, if clubs are paying the living wage, they should get that recognition.

I will not comment in detail on the exchange between Mr Ross and Mr Dornan about Scottish Athletics, but a clear benefit of accreditation—I think that this is the point that Mr Dornan was alluding to—is that it puts beyond doubt whether an organisation is paying the living wage. Of course, this Administration has enlightened self-interest in more football clubs taking part in the scheme and becoming accredited, as that will assist us in hitting an ambitious target to increase the number of accredited living wage employers to 1,000. I say in passing that the target is reasonable and ambitious, given that we started off—it was not so long ago—by having no accredited living wage employers. Of course, if we can go further, we would be delighted to.

We have made progress with the living wage in Scotland. We now have the highest proportion in the UK of employees who are paid the living wage or more, but we want to go further. Football can play a significant role in that. We know that paying the living wage is important, and not only for those who would be in receipt of it. Ruth Maguire was quite right to point out that supporting greater equality in our economy and economic growth are not mutually incompatible. Indeed, as our recent labour market strategy highlighted, those two aspects support one other. More equal societies are more productive societies, so we will continue to make every effort to promote living wage in football and beyond.

13:21

Meeting suspended.

14:30

On resuming—

Named Person Policy

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): Good afternoon. The next item of business is a statement by John Swinney, giving an update on the named person policy. The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills will take questions at the end of his statement, so there should—as is usual practice—be no interventions or interruptions.

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): Since the Scottish Parliament was reconvened in 1999, there have been a number of issues on which it has spoken with one voice. One example of such an issue is the importance of ensuring the best possible start in life for every child in our country.

Parliament has agreed on a number of occasions over a number of years and under different Administrations that the getting it right for every child policy—GIRFEC, as it is known—is the best way to promote the best interests of our children and young people. I take this opportunity to set out the principles that underpin the GIRFEC approach and why they are so crucial in driving Scottish Government policy on children.

GIRFEC is the national approach to improving outcomes and supporting the wellbeing of our children and young people, through offering the right help at the right time from the right people. It supports children and young people and their parents to work in partnership with the services that can help them. It puts the rights and wellbeing of children and young people at the heart of the services that support them—early years services, schools and the national health service—to ensure that everyone works together to improve outcomes for the child or young person. It is an agenda that enshrines the principle of early intervention that was championed by the Christie commission and embraced by the Parliament and several of its committees over many years of inquiry.

Those are fundamentally decent aims that Parliament has endorsed repeatedly on a cross-party basis—aims that have been welcomed by children's charities and by the teaching and nursing professions. It was against that backdrop of a shared commitment to children's wellbeing that the named person service was developed. That was done through the recognition, based on real life experiences and expert advice, that a timely and early offer of advice or help can prevent troubles from becoming crises and, in some cases, crises from becoming tragedies.

The GIRFEC approach works. It was taken forward in the Highland Council area, where the value of the named person as a central point of contact was first identified by parents, and it was rolled out across the authority between 2008 and 2010. Since then, more families have been receiving additional support, and more quickly. That means that there has been less need for compulsory measures and that the needs of many children have not escalated. Between 2007 and 2013, the number of referrals to the children's reporter in Highland dropped from 2,335 to 744—a drop of 68 per cent in what are complex, sensitive and costly processes.

The number of children on the child protection register and the number of looked-after children have been sustained at levels 15 to 20 per cent lower than they were prior to the GIRFEC approach being introduced. Moreover, social workers' case loads have been reduced by up to 50 per cent from previous levels, and now average about 15 cases at any one time. Accordingly, early intervention is getting more support to more children, and those who need higher levels of intervention are receiving it.

Those figures represent progress, but the arithmetic represents something far more valuable—it represents the opportunity for young lives to be improved at an earlier stage, and significantly so. Those are the benefits that we want to bring to the whole of Scotland.

Although I accept that political support has not been universal, there has been, and continues to be, broad political and stakeholder support for the policy. However, the named person service has been subjected to a legal challenge, which has cast uncertainty over its scope and legality.

Although both the outer and inner houses of the Court of Session upheld the provisions of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, on 28 July the Supreme Court determined that ministers needed to provide greater clarity about the basis on which health visitors, teachers and other professionals who support families will share and receive information in their named person role. It ruled that the information-sharing provisions of part 4 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 are incompatible with article 8 of the European convention on human rights, and that changes are needed to make those provisions compatible with article 8, to ensure respect for a person's

“private and family life, his home and his correspondence”.

In recognition of the changes that are required in the legislation, I laid the necessary orders to pause commencement of the relevant parts of the 2014 act, to ensure that all those provisions were

not commenced, as had been intended, on 31 August.

Since the Supreme Court judgment, I have provided Parliament, key stakeholders and practitioners with regular updates on procedural progress with regard to amending the legislation. I welcome this opportunity to bring Parliament up to date on the next steps.

Crucially, the Supreme Court ruled definitively that the principle of providing a named person for every child does not breach human rights and is compatible with European Union law. The Supreme Court described the intention of the policy as

“unquestionably legitimate and benign”,

and rejected the petitioners' argument that the legislation relates to reserved matters. Therefore, the attempt to scrap a service that can bring benefits to young people and their families in Scotland failed. This Parliament, which passed the necessary legislation on a cross-party basis, with no votes cast against it, was vindicated.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Government remains absolutely committed to the named person service. The Supreme Court judgment does not dilute our commitment, but it has required us to revise part of the legislation to ensure that it is compatible with the European convention on human rights. We want the legislation to achieve exactly what the Supreme Court says it needs to achieve: compatibility with article 8, along with greater clarity around the information-sharing provisions.

I am keen to commence the provisions of the 2014 act as early as possible. However, I am also keen to pursue an inclusive approach—one that takes Parliament, stakeholders and the wider public with it. We recognise that information sharing has been an important issue for practitioners and the public alike, and we want to ensure that there is a clear consensus across Scotland on how information sharing should operate. That must include the essential principle of consent, and the rare occasions when it is not appropriate to require or seek it.

The matter must be addressed through open dialogue. For that reason, the Scottish Government will undertake a three-month period of intense engagement. We will take input from practitioners as well as from parents, from charities as well as from young people, and from those who support the named person policy and those who have concerns about it. I intend to involve the offices of the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland and the Scottish Information Commissioner as we look to address the Supreme Court judgment effectively.

In order to address the concerns that the Supreme Court raised, we will discuss the principles that should underpin the legislation and the development of a code of practice to set out how information should be shared under the legislation. The Minister for Childcare and Early Years and I will take that work forward.

Once that engagement ends and we have agreed a way to proceed, I will return to Parliament and announce the next steps, in terms of legislation. However, it is my ambition to work towards a commencement date of August 2017 for the legislative provisions.

Let me address one final point: the judgment itself does not require current policy to change. The judgment relates only to the information-sharing provisions that were intended to come into force under the 2014 act; it does not relate to current practice under GIRFEC. Any sharing of personal information that takes place now or in the future must be done in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Human Rights Act 1998. A local authority or health board can nominate a person as the named person for a particular child, and can arrange for that person to be responsible, within the local authority or health board, for the provision of services to that child. Organisations can, within the framework of the existing law, continue to deliver or engage with existing or developing named person services.

My message to local authorities and health boards is clear: please continue to develop and deliver a named person service in your area in order to make the benefits of the service available to every child who needs it. I am all too aware of the debilitating impact that the peddling of misinformation has on practitioners and stakeholders, so I say to them today: thank you for your efforts in providing the best support network possible for every child in our country; ministers know that what drives you every day is doing the best you can for the children with whom you interact.

The commitment to the provision of a named person service has not wavered. The commitment to enshrining all aspects of the service in legislation at the earliest possible date following appropriate and inclusive consultation is absolutely resolute. As a Parliament, we have made significant progress on the GIRFEC agenda. That progress has been enabled and facilitated by cross-party consensus on what is important and on how improvements to the life chances of Scotland's children and young people can be achieved.

The Supreme Court judgment provides us with an opportunity to amend the information-sharing provisions in the 2014 act in a way that will improve the named person service and reassure

parents and practitioners and the wider public. It provides us with the opportunity to continue, in the spirit of shared purpose and consensus, getting it right for every child.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The Deputy First Minister will now take questions on the issues raised in his statement. I intend to allow 30 minutes for questions, after which we will move on to the next item of business.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I thank the Deputy First Minister for the prior sight of his statement.

Can the Deputy First Minister provide a categorical assurance that any local authority that was implementing the named person policy prior to what would have been statutory implementation on 31 August and which was acting under Scottish Government guidance was acting lawfully in terms of its data-sharing practices?

Secondly, notwithstanding the fact that the Scottish Government is not obliged to provide its legal advice, what evidence from the information commissioner and other advisers made the Scottish Government so sure at the time of the consideration of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill that the data-sharing aspect of the named person policy would be ruled compatible with article 8 of the ECHR, given that many legal experts, including the Faculty of Advocates, the Law Society of Scotland and Professor Norrie, and MSPs on the Education and Culture Committee raised serious concerns?

Thirdly, given that the Deputy First Minister is urging local authorities to proceed with developing the policy—which they cannot actually do because they do not know what it is—does he believe that the Scottish Government made a mistake by moving away from the term “welfare”, which is defined in statute, to the term “wellbeing”, which has no clear definition? As a result of that move, the possible threshold for intervention has been lowered from significant risk of harm to any minor concern about the child.

Finally, does the Deputy First Minister agree that the former convener of the Education and Culture Committee, when he was challenged by my colleague Alex Johnstone to define the term “wellbeing”, was entirely wrong when he said that that was “a ridiculous intervention” and that nobody knew what they were talking about?

John Swinney: On Liz Smith's first point, I set out in my statement the current legal position, which is that, if any local authority wishes to provide the service, it must ensure that it is compatible with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Human Rights Act 1998. That is the legal framework within which local authorities must act in designing their

schemes. In my statement, I made a distinction between that framework and the provisions in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, which the Supreme Court has clearly said require to be altered. That legal framework has not come into force and has not been enacted. It was to come into force, but the Supreme Court has said that it cannot unless it is revised. Local authorities must vest their schemes in the existing legal framework that precedes that, and I cited the basis on which that should be done.

On the second point that Liz Smith raised, I am glad that she put in the caveat that we do not reveal our legal advice, because we do not reveal it. I point out to her that the Parliament considered all those issues when it legislated in 2014 and came to its conclusions. The act was then tested in the outer house and the inner house of the Court of Session, and the legal challenges were dismissed in both those courts. Therefore I do not think that it is fair for her to say that somehow the Government has not taken due care or paid due attention in taking forward the legislation, because we have had it tested already in the two highest courts in Scotland and the legal challenges were dismissed.

The Supreme Court has taken a different view in relation only to the information-sharing provisions. The roots of the decision and judgment of the Supreme Court in July come from the thinking that has emerged, originating in the Supreme Court's handling in June 2014 of a case against the chief constable of Greater Manchester Police. At that point, the Supreme Court attached much greater significance to the vesting of provisions in relation to convention rights in accordance with law, to use its term. That judgment postdated the passage of the legislation by the Scottish Parliament earlier in 2014.

In answering the point about the legal strength of our arguments, I say to Liz Smith that the consideration of the bill and the dismissal of the challenges by the inner and outer houses of the Court of Session are a strong vindication of the legal position taken by the Parliament. I have cited the basis on which I think that there has been an emergence of thinking within the Supreme Court that opens up what I consider to be a new point of analysis on convention rights in accordance with law, which postdates the passage of the legislation in this Parliament.

The final point on wellbeing and welfare is a very substantial point because it relates very directly to one of the other terms that Liz Smith used, which was the question of threshold. The Supreme Court judgment raised the issue with us. I do not take the view that this should just be about welfare; I believe that it should be about wellbeing too, because that is at the heart of GIRFEC and it

is what provides for our early intervention activity to address difficulties that young people face to try to avert those and prevent them from becoming more serious. However, there has to be an appropriate threshold. That is the issue that now has to be examined as part of the analysis that I have undertaken.

I hope that that provides clarity on what will be in my mind and the mind of the Minister for Childcare and Early Years as we go about the process of ensuring that the legislation is given absolutely secure foundations and that it fulfils its purpose, which is to be of value as an asset to protect the wellbeing of children in Scotland and to make sure that we can deliver the best outcomes for every single one of them. In that respect, I am an unapologetic advocate of getting it right for every child, and that will drive everything that I do as the education secretary in this Parliament.

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): I also thank the Deputy First Minister for early sight of his statement.

The Deputy First Minister knows that Labour supports the principle of the named person policy. The measures that he is taking to resolve the issues over information sharing are therefore welcome. However, exactly because we want it to work, we have to face up to the fact that the policy has lost the confidence of many Scottish families. Fixing that is as important as fixing the information-sharing section of the 2014 act. Responding to the requirements of the Supreme Court judgment is a necessary but not sufficient response.

To that end, we have suggested that we use the opportunity of the pause to remove 16 and 17-year-olds from the scope of the policy. To include them was a mistake. To many people, it seems absurd, given that a 16-year-old can vote, marry, work and pay tax as an adult. To remove them would be a strong signal that, although the Government is not surrendering on named person policy, it is listening—and not only to the Supreme Court. Will the Deputy First Minister undertake to remove 16 and 17-year-olds from the scope of the legislation?

John Swinney: First of all, I thank Iain Gray for the welcome that he has given to the provisions that I have set out today. I agree with him that there is a need to gain confidence in the named person policy. The way in which I have set out the argument for the named person policy, and the policy's origin in the getting it right for every child framework, is an illustration of how I intend to build confidence in the application of the policy.

Mr Gray said that addressing the points made by the Supreme Court is necessary but not sufficient. I think that it is necessary and also

significant in boosting confidence in the policy. If we satisfactorily address the issue of threshold—on which I closed my response to Liz Smith—we might begin to address some of the issues that have been raised about the policy. That will allow us to respond adequately to what the Supreme Court have asked us to do on addressing the issue of proportionality in the application of the policy and the judgments that are made within the policy. We can go a long way in building confidence in the policy by properly and fully addressing the requirements of the Supreme Court.

When, over the summer, Mr Gray called for me to look again at the provision in relation to 16 and 17-year-olds, I indicated that I would be prepared to consider that issue, and I remain of that view. I make two specific points to Mr Gray on the issue. First, today's report from Childline revealed that 30 per cent of contact with Childline comes from 16 to 18-year-olds who are expressing their vulnerability to that particular medium. Although I understand and accept the points that Mr Gray makes about the fact that 16 and 17-year-olds are able to vote, join the armed forces and do many other things, there are also lots of 16 and 17-year-olds who remain vulnerable. We have to address that fact in our consideration.

My second point is that Parliament did not legislate on a whim for 16 and 17-year-olds to come within the scope of the named person provision. It did so because the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as a young person up to the age of 18. Mr Gray will know from his long experience that the Government and the Parliament come in for criticism from time to time for not fulfilling international standards and points of recognition that are important in the policy process.

I put those points on the record, but I will give consideration to the issue that Mr Gray has raised. I made it clear in my statement that my determination is to proceed with the objective of building consensus and broad agreement on the named person policy, and that will be the approach that I take.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before I call other speakers, I say that I have 11 members who wish to ask questions and I want to get them all in. That will depend on the length of the questions and, to some extent, the length of the answers, so do your best.

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): I could not agree more with the cabinet secretary's concern about the debilitating impact of the peddling of misinformation on the morale and confidence of practitioners who day in, day out do one of the hardest jobs there is: supporting vulnerable children and families. Does the cabinet

secretary agree that the Tories should tone down their hysterical rhetoric on the named person and accept the judgment of the Supreme Court, which stated that the intent of the legislation is "unquestionably legitimate and benign"?

John Swinney: The Supreme Court had an opportunity to look at all the relevant provisions and it came to its judgment. I am trying to take forward the approach that is required to ensure that the legislation can be implemented as quickly as possible, and to make sure that the public servants who are keen to provide the best possible connected services for the young people of Scotland and address their needs can proceed on that basis. Therefore, I will press on in the fashion that I have set out. I hope that we can have a political debate on the subject that is focused on addressing the issues of substance that emerged from the Supreme Court's judgment, and that we can work to resolve those as speedily as we can.

Adam Tomkins (Glasgow) (Con): I thank the Deputy First Minister for his statement and, indeed, for keeping Parliament appropriately informed during the recess.

The Deputy First Minister has identified that it was the information-sharing provisions of the named person scheme that the Supreme Court ruled unlawful in its judgment in July, and he has explained that he proposes to remedy those defects, even if he has said nothing about how he proposes to do that. I say to him that the issue is not just about thresholds; it is also about definition—in particular, the definition of "wellbeing". The Supreme Court ruled that the relevant provisions were not in accordance with law, because it found that they lacked clarity and certainty. That lack of clarity and certainty goes to the heart of the question of wellbeing.

The Supreme Court said a lot more in its judgment. It did not focus on information sharing alone. The court stated that, even after the information-sharing provisions are sorted out, the named person scheme is still in danger of constituting a disproportionate, and therefore unlawful, interference with family life in many cases. In paragraph 100 of the judgment, the court states that the operation of the scheme is

"likely often to be disproportionate"—

and that is even after the information-sharing provisions are rewritten so that they are in accordance with law. Why has the Deputy First Minister's statement failed to address that aspect of the court's ruling?

John Swinney: I think that I addressed that issue in my statement, because I acknowledged the importance of addressing the issue of thresholds and proportionality.

I am not sure that I take a different view from Mr Tomkins on the question of definition. I agree that the Supreme Court said that the provisions need to be set out in accordance with law. That is now a habitual requirement of Supreme Court judgments, which is something that postdates the passage of the legislation. The Government has defined “wellbeing” in the guidance documents that we have set out—the Supreme Court had that draft guidance in front of it—but I accept that guidance does not constitute law.

If I can do a dangerous thing and try to summarise what the Supreme Court judgment was saying, I would say that it was almost saying, “Get your guidance into law and that will be the issue addressed.” That is perhaps not Supreme Court language, but that is what I would take from its ruling. I accept that there is a job of work to be done in defining “wellbeing” in that way. That will make the provisions in accordance with law, which will address the issues that the Supreme Court has raised with us.

The issue of proportionality is important because it relates directly to the question that Mr Tomkins raises about the occasions on which and the circumstances in which the information-sharing provisions might be utilised.

There is a very important point to make, which I know is perhaps not part of the narrative that has been used in the debate to criticise the named person policy, and it is why I set out the policy position in the context of GIRFEC. There are plenty of families who want to go to a named person to get the support that they require. In general, people do not come to my surgeries to tell me how well connected public services have been; in general, they come to my surgeries to ask me to get public services better connected. Members of the public will have an opportunity to use the service to get the support that they require to assist young people, and I think that that is a good thing.

Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP): I welcome the cabinet secretary’s announcement of an intensive engagement programme. Can he provide more detail on how he intends to involve health visitors, teachers, parents, carers and, crucially, children and young people themselves in that activity?

John Swinney: Over the next few months, the Minister for Childcare and Early Years and I will spend a considerable time in direct engagement with a variety of professionals but also with parents and young people and with people who have been critical of the policy to find ways in which we might be able to address the substantive issues.

There will be some people whom I cannot reach, who are just implacably opposed to the policy; even with the persuasion skills that I would like to think I have, there will be some people whom I will not manage to reach. However, I hope that we can have a fair climate to address the issues that have been raised in the Supreme Court, and the minister and I will engage in that substantively to ensure that that is the case, before coming back to the Parliament with further detail on how we will take the legislation forward.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): Following on from my colleague Iain Gray’s question, I would welcome an acknowledgement from the Deputy First Minister that addressing the point about the confidence and faith that people have in the policy is as important as addressing the legal point. Teachers and health visitors have raised all along their concerns about the impact of the named person policy on the time that they have to do their main jobs. Now that we have a pause, will Mr Swinney use it to find the resource and implement it so that those crucial professionals have the time and resource available to do their main job of caring for and educating our children?

John Swinney: In the last few words of Mr Johnson’s question, he talked about teachers having the opportunity to care for and educate our children. That is exactly what I want our teachers to be able to do, which is why I am investing so much of my time in ensuring that they are liberated from bureaucracy so that they can do that.

When I go round Scotland’s schools and talk to teachers, their conversations with me are not just about educational attainment. They are also about their judgment about children when they walk through the door in the morning and the support and nurture that they need before they can even think about any learning. In some schools that I have gone into, I have been overwhelmed by the empathy and, frankly, the love of teachers for children, with their first port of call being to put the toaster on as opposed to getting a book out.

We should not compartmentalise this as if, somehow, the named person is an added burden for teachers. Teachers look at the children for whom they are responsible every minute of the day trying to establish what support they require, what difficulties they are facing and how they can be assisted in fulfilling their potential, and we should congratulate our teaching profession on doing exactly that.

I do not want us to have a debate that suggests that being a named person does not come naturally to the role of the teaching profession in assessing the wellbeing of the young people in their care and taking every step that they can to

enhance that as a consequence of their productive intervention.

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): What reassurance can the cabinet secretary give parents and families about their interests in the process? What will happen if they are unhappy with the named person service? Conversely, what might happen should a family refuse to engage with the service?

As convener of the Education and Skills Committee, I also ask what role the cabinet secretary sees that committee playing as this progresses through Parliament.

John Swinney: I am sure that it is not for me to specify the agenda of the Education and Skills Committee. I am sure that it will tell me what it wants—I suspect that that is how it will work, and I am very happy to engage with the committee in any way on these matters.

Mr Dornan also asked about the role of parents. The provisions of law in that respect have not been challenged by the court with the exception that it suggests that we can better specify the opportunities that exist for parents to, essentially, opt out of the named person provisions. I will reflect on that issue as part of the conversations that we take forward, and I will have adequate opportunities to discuss the issues with parent groups and representatives around the country.

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): I welcome the fact that the Supreme Court judgment has moved the debate on. Does the cabinet secretary agree that those opposing the principle of the named person are on the wrong side of the judgment and that we must now all focus on addressing the shortcomings regarding information sharing?

John Swinney: I agree with that point. The Supreme Court did not strike down the legislation; it described its aims as “unquestionably legitimate and benign”.

There are issues—I have confronted them openly with Parliament today—with the information-sharing provisions. Within minutes of the judgment, I acknowledged that the Government would have to resolve those issues. We must now concentrate on doing that, and I have set out a process to Parliament that will enable us to do exactly that. I look forward to dialogue with members of all parties about how we can most effectively progress the provisions.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Will the Government confirm that it is essential that every child and family should be able to get help, advice and support if they need it and, therefore, that it is absolutely essential that a named person is available for every child and

family, just as an ambulance is available for every child and family?

John Swinney: That is a very fair and realistic way of bringing the policy to life—seeing the named person as a resource that is available for families to call on if they require that assistance.

To repeat one of my earlier comments, I generally do not meet people who are coming to see me because they feel that public services have been well connected; rather, people often come to see me because they need me to try to weave together those services for them. The resource is there to be utilised by families to ensure that the wellbeing of their children is most effectively supported by the public sector in any way that we can.

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD): I thank the Deputy First Minister for advance sight of his statement. I am sure that he is familiar with paragraph 95 of the Supreme Court’s judgment:

“parents will be given the impression that they must accept the advice or services which they are offered ... their failure to co-operate with such a plan will be taken to be evidence of a risk of harm.”

As both a minister and a father, does he find that as concerning as I do? Does that not show the need for the scope of the examination of the policy that he will undertake in the coming three months—the policy will be delayed by a year—to recognise exactly that point and the concerns of teachers and health visitors, given the 200 risk indicators that he talked about in the debate earlier in the summer? Does that not also show that the scope of the inquiry must recognise all those points and address them fully?

John Swinney: Mr Scott will understand the importance that I attach to Parliament’s democratic decisions. The Parliament has legislated for and put in place the provisions. Those provisions have been tested by two courts in Scotland and by a third court in the United Kingdom. The two courts in Scotland have said that the legal challenges to the legislation are not substantiated, and the Supreme Court has raised particular issues with us about information-sharing provisions. Mr Scott will understand my democratic point, because I want to operate within the rule of law and the scope of acting on behalf of promised democratic decisions, why it is important that I focus on addressing the issues raised by the Supreme Court in its judgment.

Mr Scott’s point about parents is illustrated by the Supreme Court’s view that the sense that individuals can opt out of the provisions is not perhaps as well understood or as well expressed as it could be. I will certainly consider issues of that nature. However, I stress that we must be respectful of Parliament’s democratic decisions. In

2014, the Parliament decided the shape of the legislation, and the Supreme Court has identified the areas where we specifically need to address that point.

Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): As a long-standing MSP who remembers well supporting the policy as an Opposition MSP when it was introduced by the Labour-Liberal Democrat Administration, I welcome the focus of much of the cabinet secretary's statement on the wider GIRFEC policy. One of the most important aspects of the legislation is in part 3 of the 2014 act, which requires local authorities to plan children's services effectively. When will that come into effect?

John Swinney: I welcome the point that Gil Paterson made, because it illustrates the fact that many of us have supported the policy and approach for many years. As a long-standing Opposition member I enthusiastically supported our predecessors in bringing forward this policy framework. It is important that the named person policy is set within the long-term policy of getting it right for every child.

To answer Mr Paterson's specific question, part 3 will come into effect on 7 October and requires local authorities and relevant health boards to have in place their first children's services plans from 1 April 2017. Those plans will cover a three-year period from that date.

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): It is vitally important that the Scottish Government seeks to build the confidence and trust of parents and young people across the country, as well as of staff on the front line. I am pleased that the Deputy First Minister recognises that.

How does the Scottish Government intend to engage with young people during the consultation, and will that engagement include 16 and 17-year-olds specifically?

John Swinney: It certainly will. We will take steps through a number of channels of discussion and communication. We are very lucky to have a range of organisations that are well connected with young people in Scotland. Various forums exist in which that engagement can happen, and ministers and officials will engage substantively on this point. Monica Lennon mentioned 16 and 17-year-olds, and it is a material issue for us to consult that group specifically.

I can understand the perspective that Iain Gray put forward on the issue. Equally, Monica Lennon will understand the perspective that I have from the data about the degree of vulnerability that exists among 16 and 17-year-olds. I assure her that we will complete that exercise.

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): It is important to go back to basics and remember why the legislation matters. Will the cabinet secretary outline what difference the policy will make to the wellbeing of children, and particularly to Scotland's most vulnerable children?

John Swinney: It is important that we go back to the roots of the policy. This morning, I was at a school in Glasgow that is a splendid example of how we need to identify, at the earliest possible opportunity, weaknesses and deficiencies that young people may face and intervene and address them as quickly as possible. I met a wonderful young man who went to the school when he faced acute difficulties. The early intervention and the support that he received have had a transformative impact on him. That has been achieved because of good early intervention and a tremendous amount of care and nurture in the intervening years.

Fulton MacGregor makes a substantive point. We need to take early steps to support young people as effectively as we can and ensure that they are able to overcome obstacles and difficulties that they may face. That is at the heart of the thinking behind getting it right for every child and will underpin the development of the policy as we take it forward.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: John Scott, I can just squeeze you in.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): Thank you, Presiding Officer.

The cabinet secretary acknowledges the judgement of the Supreme Court, which is to be welcomed. However, if I heard him correctly, in response to Liz Smith's question he failed to make clear the position of local authorities that, when acting in good faith in piloting the scheme, may have breached ECHR regulations as a result of following Scottish Government advice and guidelines. Where do piloting local authorities stand in terms of liability if they are pursued on the Supreme Court ruling, having followed Scottish Government advice and guidance?

John Swinney: I do not agree that I did not answer Liz Smith's question, because I answered it very fully. In my answer and in my statement I said that what has been identified as being deficient are provisions in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 that have not yet come into effect.

Any local authority that is providing a service, up until the passage of that legislation or up until today, must be acting in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Human Rights Act 1998, and any legal advice to local authorities in relation to the design of their schemes must be

compatible with those two provisions. That was the answer that I gave to Liz Smith in response to her first question; it is the position that I outlined in my statement; and it is the answer that I give to Mr Scott. It is the only answer that I can give because that is the legal framework within which local authorities are required to operate.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes questions to the Deputy First Minister.

Refugees

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-01322, in the name of Angela Constance, entitled “Scotland welcomes 1,000 refugees”.

Time is really tight in this debate, so I would appreciate brevity from members, including opening speakers. Cabinet secretary—you have up to 13 minutes.

15:16

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities (Angela Constance): Scotland has long been a country that welcomes refugees, from Europe in the first and second wars, and later from Vietnam, Bosnia, Kosovo and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Since 2001, we have also received many thousands of asylum seekers who have made their homes here as refugees. We welcome them all and the contribution that they have made to our national life, our society, our culture, our economy and even, of course, our food.

The past 12 months have been a time of unprecedented change for refugee resettlement in Scotland. The reasons for that do not need to be rehearsed here again in detail. The tragedy of Syria is there for us all to see on our television screens. Some 8.7 million people are believed to be displaced within Syria, and more than 4.8 million Syrians—close to the population of Scotland—are now registered as refugees outside the country. Half of those refugees are children.

The scale of the suffering is barely comprehensible. Often, however, it is not the numbers that make a difference and make people sit up and take notice, but the personal stories in which we can see ourselves and our families. As we look back, we should remember that it took a photograph of a drowned three-year-old boy, Alan Kurdi, washed up on a beach in Turkey, to galvanise the world into action.

Last Sunday was the anniversary of the First Minister’s refugee summit on 4 September 2015. It was a momentous occasion on which Scottish politicians from national Government and local government, Opposition party leaders and representatives of aid agencies, humanitarian organisations and churches, as well as refugees, gathered together to show a united front and to express a commitment that Scotland would do what it could to help. That unity was vital in ensuring that Scotland was ready to act when, three days later, David Cameron announced the establishment of the Syrian resettlement

programme and committed the United Kingdom to receiving up to 20,000 Syrian refugees by 2020.

Just two months later, on a dark and dreich day last November, the first charter flight of Syrian refugees arrived in Glasgow airport. I know that those who witnessed that event and the arrival of two further charter flights soon after felt that those were among the most moving and emotional experiences of their lives because, despite the terrible traumas that the refugees had suffered, people were smiling, children were playing and there were tears of joy at having finally reached a place of safety.

Fast forward a year and, for the first time, refugee resettlement in Scotland is truly national in scope. More than 1,050 people have now been resettled across Scotland. I will take some time to reflect on how that progress has been made.

The arrival of 1,000 refugees in one year would not have been possible without the work of the refugee task force, the Scottish Government, local government, the third sector—particularly the Scottish Refugee Council—refugees themselves and the United Kingdom Government. We all worked together with the clear objective of ensuring that practical measures were in place to ensure the smooth arrival and the first steps of Syrians into our communities.

The task force also considered the longer-term issue of integration, and highlighted the importance of English language learning, employability and mental health support. Those are now priorities for allocation of the £1 million that was announced by the First Minister at the conference to support the integration of Syrian refugees in Scotland. I am pleased to announce that, as part of that continuing integration, the Scottish Government will provide a further £86,000 to pilot a new peer educational approach to English language learning, to complement formal English language learning and support the development of social networks.

The arrival of 1,000 refugees would also not have been possible without the tremendous commitment of local authorities and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, which have throughout provided magnificent support and co-ordination. Scottish local authorities were quick to reflect the mood of the Scottish people by stating their willingness and desire to help, even though many had no previous experience of working with refugees. I also thank the many third sector and community organisations, volunteers and members of the public who have welcomed and supported refugees as they begin to rebuild their lives. It has been fantastic to see people extending the hand of friendship to their new neighbours.

I recently had the great privilege of meeting some of the Syrian refugees who have settled in Edinburgh and central Scotland. I heard from them at first hand, and I can say only that it was a deeply humbling experience. I was able to see for myself the work of the Welcoming Association, which is working in partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council to provide English language classes for Syrian refugees who are living in Edinburgh.

The people who have joined our communities are a diverse group; some had their own businesses in Syria, some were teachers and some were farmers. What they have in common now is that they all want to get on with their lives: they want to work and to rebuild a future for their families, and their children want to get back to school.

However, we cannot pretend that everything has been plain sailing. Adjusting to a new and very different country takes time, so we must recognise the difficulties that some people face. We need to learn from those. As politicians, we must take every opportunity to talk positively about refugees. We must be clear about why refugees are here and we must welcome them. We are talking about people who are fleeing war and persecution.

One issue that is raised regularly by the refugees whom we have welcomed to Scotland is family reunion. Many of them have had to leave members of their families in Syria or other neighbouring countries, and are extremely anxious about their safety. I have made it one of my first priorities to seek improvements to the family reunion process for all refugees in Scotland. I have written to the Minister of State for Immigration to highlight problems with the issuing of 30-day visas, and I am pleased to report that the Home Office is considering options to extend the validity of those visas. In addition, I want to simplify access to crisis funds for those who need initial support when they arrive through the family reunion programme. Those are important matters that I will, I assure Parliament, continue to pursue.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Does the cabinet secretary see the need to underpin statutorily some of the support services and rights that refugees have? What consideration is she giving to possible legal changes?

Angela Constance: I am conscious and respectful of the amendment that the Labour Party has lodged, which reflects that party's position, as stated in its manifesto, that it would like a statutory underpinning for integration. Although that is not the Government's position just now, we will have an opportunity, in the months ahead, to have an open discussion as we review and renew the "new Scots" strategy, which will expire in March 2017.

There are a number of issues that I am happy to explore. Although I cannot support the Labour amendment, that does not mean that there is not an open door to a discussion about the merits or otherwise of a statutory underpinning. I hope that that is somewhat reassuring to the Labour Party and the Green Party.

I want to focus on the plight of unaccompanied child refugees in Europe, some of whom have family members living in the UK. Although they have reached Europe, many have still not found safety and are at serious risk from trafficking and other exploitation. The Scottish Government welcomed Lord Dubs's amendment to the Immigration Act 2016 and the announcement of a new scheme to help unaccompanied child refugees who have reached Europe. Progress has been slow, however, and those children need help urgently. This Parliament and this country will always prioritise the rights of the child. Most children in Scotland have the love and protection of a family; I am sure that we all find it unimaginable and unacceptable that there are lone and lonely child refugees who have lost their families and homes and have no emotional or practical support.

I am working with the British Red Cross and others to find out how many unaccompanied children have family members living in Scotland who would be willing to provide a safe and secure home for those children. In addition, I have written to the Minister of State for Immigration to make it clear that Scotland will play its part in supporting unaccompanied child refugees. In Scotland, we are well suited to help. We already have the architecture of child-centred practice, policy and legislation fit to receive, integrate and facilitate the flourishing and nurturing of unaccompanied and at-risk children. I very much urge the UK to listen to this Parliament, to the people of Scotland and to people around the world who have stated time and again that we must prioritise those children, particularly the children in Calais.

To find the solution to the problems of Calais, EU leaders need to work together to address the humanitarian issues and not build a wall that will only exacerbate problems and cause division. The money to fund that project would be far better spent on practical measures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and families who are seeking to reunite with relatives in the UK—relatives who can provide them with safe and warm homes. I will write to the minister to express my disbelief that that could possibly be a priority, given the inhumane conditions that are currently faced by families in the camp in Calais. Any available money should be used to ease their suffering and to get them back with their relatives as soon as possible.

I am delighted that 1,000 refugees from Syria have now settled in Scotland, but I am well aware that that is a small number in comparison with global need. People across Scotland have contributed superbly, but it is only the beginning, and the Scottish Government's commitment to refugees continues. We will take a fair and proportionate share of the total number of refugees who come to the UK. We must all continue to show a warm welcome and to stand in solidarity with refugees.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the 1,000 Syrian refugees who have been received by local authorities across Scotland under the UK Government's Syrian Resettlement Programme since October 2015; commends the work of Scottish Government partners, including the Scottish Refugee Council, COSLA and particularly local authorities that have responded quickly to this humanitarian crisis; thanks the volunteers, third sector organisations and local communities that are welcoming and supporting refugees as they settle and begin to rebuild their lives; acknowledges the strong cross-party support shown at and since the First Minister's Refugee Summit on 4 September 2015 for Scotland's commitment to welcome refugees and play its part by taking a fair and proportionate share of the total number of refugees received by the UK; continues to urge the UK Government to do more, particularly to progress the transfer of unaccompanied child refugees under the Immigration Act 2016, and to coordinate with international partners, including Scotland's EU neighbours, to improve the situation of refugees in Europe, and celebrates and encourages the warmth of welcome and strong solidarity with refugees that has been demonstrated across Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I should have said earlier that all those who would like to speak in the debate are invited to press their request-to-speak buttons now.

15:28

Jackson Carlaw (Eastwood) (Con): I speak in support of the amendment in my name. In substance, it is intended to remove any suggestion of conceit on the part of Scotland that the UK Government alone could do more, by challenging the Scottish and UK Governments to constantly do more. It seeks also to demonstrate that all that Scotland is doing in the face of the current crisis has its roots in a precedent that has been set by Scotland over many generations of being an open and welcoming country to those whose lives are in turmoil and who face violence and persecution.

It is there that I will start, in my Eastwood constituency if I may, for there resides Scotland's largest Jewish community—a community that arrived in numbers in Glasgow at the turn of the previous century, fleeing persecution and settling into Scottish life. It has, over generations, made a significant and permanent business and cultural contribution to Scotland. Jews were, for example, instrumental in establishing the Edinburgh festival,

the latest celebration of which has just ended to record-breaking success.

Some 100,000 Jews came to Britain in the 1930s as the Nazis rose. Celebrated among them are those who escaped thanks to the Kindertransport, many of whom members of Parliament have met. As the second world war began and ended, some 250,000 Polish refugees arrived in the UK. I well remember the UK and Scotland also becoming home to some 28,000—one third—of the Ugandan Asians who were expelled by Idi Amin when I was a teenager.

Throughout my lifetime, Scotland has been home to many cultures—some migrating here on the wind, some by choice and some in the face of great terror. Angela Constance made reference to others, as well. Whether it has been as a duty of responsibilities arising from our former empire, from war or from famine, Scotland has always proudly and gladly shared its load and made a success of it, and always will do so.

That brings me to the substance of the present Syria crisis and our welcoming of the 1,000 refugees who have now settled here. I endorse the thanks that are expressed in the motion to Scottish Government partners, including the Scottish Refugee Council, COSLA and many local authorities—including my local authority, East Renfrewshire Council—that have responded quickly to the humanitarian crisis. We also add our thanks to, in the words of the motion,

“the volunteers, third sector organisations and local communities that are welcoming and supporting refugees as they settle and begin to rebuild their lives”.

Let us set aside the cynicism of some media reporting, which suggests that some refugees who have settled here have been disappointed with their lot. For any of us, some communities will better represent our tastes, hopes and experience of life. So, too, will that be true for people who settle here. Grateful as they are for the new life that is offered to them, some may still hope to shift about a bit until they find a community that more obviously suits. That is entirely natural and is not some expression of ingratitude.

The motion makes reference to the actions of the UK Government. I will set out what it has done. The 1,000 refugees whom we celebrate today are part of the 20,000 for whom suitable accommodation has now been sourced, as Amber Rudd, the Home Secretary, announced at the weekend. The plan that the refugees will come from camps in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon is underpinned by a conviction that our actions should, when possible, frustrate the schemes of ruthless people traffickers. In addition, earlier this year, David Cameron announced that the UK would accept an unspecified number of Syrian child refugees already resident in Europe who

have links to the UK. Syrians permitted to enter the UK will be given asylum for at least five years. The UK is also providing £2.3 billion of finance for the Syrian crisis, which is the largest-ever British contribution to any humanitarian crisis.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): Does Mr Carlaw believe that the 20,000 refugees is adequate in a situation in which more than 11 million Syrians have fled their homes, and the United Kingdom—which is one of the wealthiest and largest nations on earth—is able to accommodate far more?

Jackson Carlaw: I know what the gentleman says, but the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees—its refugee agency—told the UK Government that it is pleased with the total number of refugees that the UK has agreed to accept, and with the complementary British contribution to Syria. Indeed, the financial pledge that the UK has made is 15 times greater than that of our immediate neighbour, France. Together with Germany, Norway, Kuwait and the UN, the UK co-hosted a conference in London in February, which managed to raise some \$12 billion of aid in a single day, half of which is pledged this year.

Only this weekend, the Home Secretary announced an additional £10 million to help with language skills, which all of us understand to be crucial in any successful resettlement and integration. That funding is designed to provide a further 12 hours of language education for up to six months. In addition, the UK has afforded 1.6 million refugees access to clean water, and has delivered some 21.5 million food rations, 4.5 million medical consultations, 500,000 shelter interventions and nearly 6 million relief packages.

Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): Will Mr Carlaw join me in asking the UK Government to expedite the applications of hundreds of unaccompanied children who are stuck at Calais, who have a right to enter the UK and who already have family here?

Jackson Carlaw: I thank Gillian Martin for that intervention and turn to the point about which she asks.

The motion rightly mentions the humanitarian issue of unaccompanied children. Graham Simpson will speak to that point later in the debate, but I will write into the record the UK Government action to date.

By legislating through the Immigration Act 2016, the UK has made crystal clear its commitment to bringing vulnerable children from Europe to the UK. Since royal assent, more than 30 children have been accepted and the majority have now arrived. The Home Office remains in discussions with the UNHCR, Save the Children and the Italian, Greek and French Governments to develop

a scheme so that it can identify and resettle all such children as quickly as possible. It is not a simple task, and if the purpose of the motion is to urge it on with all endeavour, that is all well and good.

However, we should also note that that commitment is in addition to supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who arrive from Europe—over 3,000 last year—and in addition to those family members, including children, who are given visas to join refugees who have been granted asylum in the UK, of which there have been some 22,000 over the past five years.

In addition, there is a commitment for a further 3,000 vulnerable children and family members to be resettled direct from the middle east and north Africa, and the Department for International Development has created a £10 million refugee children fund to support the needs of vulnerable refugee and migrant children specifically in Europe. I do not think that it is enough simply to use the lazy language of criticism. Both the UK and Scottish Governments understand the scale of the task and are committed to doing all that we can—and to taking a fair share of the task, at that.

All that is complex, extensive and necessary, but so too is on-going engagement with the crisis at source in Syria. Working with a 67-member global coalition, the UK continues to play a leading role—our foreign and defence secretaries attended the summit in Washington in July to set the direction for progress through to 2017. In Iraq and Syria, Daesh is losing territory, its finances have been targeted and depleted, and its leadership is being killed. Desertions have increased and that all-too-depressing flow of foreign fighters and misguided followers, some far too close to us here at home, has fallen by 90 per cent. Thousands have been liberated from Daesh rule and many have now been able to return to their homes. It is a long haul, but we have to join our partners in keeping at it.

I commend the work of the Scottish Government and ministers. As I said earlier, Scotland has a long tradition of accepting refugees. The challenge, more so than ever before, is to ensure that the “new Scots” integration succeeds. I will listen with care to the arguments that have been made by Scottish Labour to put that on a statutory footing, but I am not persuaded that that is the best way forward or, indeed, urgent enough, given that the need is immediate.

One day, many years from now, a successful Scot—many perhaps—will emerge into full public view whose story will have started as one of the children who are arriving now, just as has been the case with those who arrived in all the examples, and many more besides, that I

highlighted at the start of my speech. We are a welcoming people; those who arrive here feel that welcome, they prosper and they become Scottish role models themselves. Our duty is to make that possible. It is a challenge to which Scotland, the UK and others across Europe must rise and constantly strive to exceed.

I move amendment S5M-01322.1, to leave out from “UK Government” to end and insert:

“Scottish and UK Governments to do more, particularly to progress the transfer of unaccompanied child refugees under the Immigration Act 2016, and to coordinate with international partners, including Scotland’s EU neighbours, to improve the situation of refugees in Europe, and celebrates and encourages the warmth of welcome and strong solidarity with refugees that has been demonstrated across Scotland as has been the case in many conflicts over many generations, with refugees seeking safety and security in the face of violence and persecution.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call on Pauline McNeill to speak to and move amendment SM5-01322.2, in the name of Alex Rowley. Up to seven minutes, please, Ms McNeill.

15:37

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow) (Lab): This is a subject close to my heart and, as Jackson Carlaw has done, I commend the Scottish Government for choosing it for debate in this first week after the parliamentary summer recess. I acknowledge that the First Minister has taken the lead on the refugee task force.

All the amendments before us have something important to say. The Labour amendment, which I will move, seeks to put forward a commitment to put support for refugees on a statutory footing. That is well within the competence of the Scottish Parliament and would allow a national approach to be taken.

The Parliament welcomes the 1,000 refugees who have been received by Scottish local authorities across Scotland, although that figure is nothing in comparison to the 10 million or 11 million Syrians who, as Ross Greer said, have been displaced since the civil war began. The figure of 1,000 refugees is significant, however, in terms of Scotland setting an example for the rest of the UK. Scottish local authorities have risen to the challenge of addressing the plight of Syrians: North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire have taken 100 refugees, and Dundee, Renfrewshire, Moray and many other local authorities have risen to the challenge too.

When I was preparing for the debate, I detected a bit of nervousness around publishing the exact figures. Perhaps, as Jackson Carlaw said, there is a bit of nervousness about the subject—that can always be the case. I want to set out why I think

that it is important that Scotland does its bit, particularly when it comes to Syrian refugees.

This year, the number of people displaced by conflict and persecution is at a historical high of 60 million, 20 million of whom are classed as refugees. We are witnessing probably one of the worst human disasters of all time, and the scale of suffering is still pretty impossible to assess. The crisis has challenged every aspect of public policy, our humanitarian response and our delivery of services to vulnerable people. A staggering 86 per cent of refugees are hosted by developing countries—that is surprising—and one in four people who live in the small country of Lebanon is a refugee.

The Syrian civil war is the most dangerous and destructive crisis on the planet. Since early 2011, hundreds of thousands have died and, as I said, 10 million have been displaced. Europe has been convulsed by Islamic State terror and the political fallout of the refugee situation. The United States and its NATO allies have more than once come perilously close to direct confrontation with Russia. Foreign interventions that were intended to end the war have, in fact, entrenched it, with severe and indiscriminate attacks on civilians.

Unfortunately for Syrians, Syria is a battleground for an enormous regional power struggle, with a Government that has not spared its own people. Innocent civilians are left helpless. Syria as a country may not even survive the conflict, as the cities are ravaged with no safe places.

Unfortunately, this is not a short-term crisis. I believe that history will show that it has probably been the worst humanitarian disaster of our lifetime.

As the minister has said, we have seen many disturbing images, including those of Alan Kurdi and Omran Dagneesh from Aleppo. They were little boys who died, but we know that many other children have died in similar circumstances.

In 2010, prior to the civil war in Syria, I visited Yarmouk camp in Damascus, which was the largest Palestinian refugee camp. I met refugees from the 1948 and 1967 displacements. Men and women longed to return to their homeland. Many of them are displaced for a third time. Members will have seen the footage of Yarmouk camp being besieged by the fighting, almost two years after I was there. There were desperate pleas from humanitarian groups, but they could not even get into the camp to deliver vital aid and stood outside.

In the past 10 years or so, I have visited many refugee camps, including in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and the West Bank. However, the jungle in Calais is among the worst that I have been to. I add Labour's voice to what the minister has already

said about the need to invest in a 13m wall in Calais. That is the wrong answer to a human problem.

In the Bekaa valley towards the Syrian border, I met men and women who told of what they left behind. They were not necessarily poor—indeed, many of them were wealthy—but they had to leave their homes. Most refugees I talked to will tell people that they long for the day when they will be able to go home.

In Calais this year, I met Najim, who was an unaccompanied eight-year-old boy. I knew that his parents were in the United Kingdom, and I set out to search for them. As I campaigned, I had absolutely no idea that thousands of children were unaccompanied and without their parents. I was very disappointed that the Dubs amendment in the House of Lords, which tried to specify the number of children whom we would accept and was supported by Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Scottish National Party, was defeated.

I feel quite strongly about the issue. UNICEF says that there are thousands of unaccompanied children in Greece and all over. Like Stella Creasy MP, who has raised the issue in the House of Commons, I do not want to see children in refugee camps—I do not suppose that any of us does. Unfortunately, since the Dubs amendment was considered, only 40 children have been allowed into the UK to be reunited with their families. I think that we all agree that it is imperative that we continue to campaign for unaccompanied children.

As I said, the Labour amendment is about progressing a statutory framework, because we believe that that is within the Parliament's competence and would benefit local authorities and local service provision. If the Government cannot support the amendment, I hope that it can at least give us an assurance that we can make further progress on ensuring that there is comprehensive access to services and a plan for the integration of the many refugees who have chosen to make Scotland their home, at least for the time being.

I move amendment S5M-01322.2, to insert after "lives;":

"recognises the need to set out refugees' rights to access services and enshrine national standards for integration in law, putting a 'New Scots' integration strategy on a statutory footing; agrees that clear rights to language and interpretation services and simplification of many provisions in Scots law can aid that integration;"

15:44

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): We welcome the opportunity to debate the Government's motion, which quite rightly commends the efforts of everyone who has

welcomed the first thousand Syrian refugees to Scotland. We have taken a leading role within these islands in responding to the humanitarian catastrophe that has resulted from the Syrian conflict. The conflict's primary causes are known to all of us, but the United Kingdom's history in the region cannot be ignored. It played a role and therefore we must accept a level of responsibility above and beyond the duty that the world has to the victims of any conflict.

So far, and in so many ways, Scotland's actions have been exemplary. Many of our local authorities are at the top of the rankings across the UK for the number of Syrians seeking refuge that they have taken in. As has already been mentioned, Renfrewshire Council, in my region, has taken in the third highest number of refugees of any local authority through the Syrian vulnerable person resettlement scheme. However, aside from considering the matter as a numbers game, the problem is that, to come third, Renfrewshire took in just 68 people. As the Government's motion highlights, overall Scotland has welcomed just 1,000 refugees through the resettlement programme from a total of less than 3,000 across the UK. That is a drop in the ocean of misery and desperation that has come from the Syrian conflict and the wider refugee crisis. Scotland can and would take in many thousands more if only we had the ability to do so.

The barrier, of course, is a Westminster Government that would struggle to have taken a more hostile response both to this specific refugee crisis and to the rights and needs of all refugees, regardless of where they are or what they are fleeing. I am sure that many members of this Parliament will recognise not just the frustration but the heartbreak when we are contacted by refugees who have made it here but who find their claims rejected and are faced with the threat of deportation—heartbreak from hearing their individual stories of horror, and frustration with how little we can do to help them. That is why the Green amendment calls for the devolution of asylum support, accommodation and advice services to this Parliament—a proposal that received cross-party agreement during the Smith commission process but which seems to have been cast aside since then.

Given the horror stories that we hear all too regularly about the current providers, such as Serco, it is clear that a new approach is needed—one that treats those who need the most with basic respect and dignity.

It is a moral failure of immense proportions that the few refugees accepted by the Home Office are often forced to live in shocking conditions across the UK. I am sick of hearing the same stories: a mother and baby forced to live in a cockroach-

infested flat in Glasgow; staff from the service provider humiliating asylum seekers, spraying them with air freshener and laughing at them; doors painted a certain colour resulting in everyone in the area knowing which houses the asylum seekers are staying in; and refugees forced to wear coloured wristbands to collect food. Those are not isolated incidents; they are a direct result of UK Government policies—policies that cast aside our common humanity and give in to the worst voices among us.

With a new leader in Downing Street, there is nothing to be positive about. It is the former Home Secretary who sent the infamous, shameful “Go home” vans into our communities who is now Prime Minister. Her words of support for our minority communities, whether refugee or not, matter little when her actions are so much to blame for the culture of fear, hatred and division.

There is one form of solidarity that the Prime Minister seems to have no issue with. After more than a year of the clown-car fascism of Donald Trump's campaign in the US, the Westminster Government has been inspired. As has been mentioned, it is going to build a wall—the great wall of Calais. It is going to keep out those who are most desperate—those whom we can afford to help. Not once does an ounce of humanity seem to come into the equation with the Westminster Government.

We all hear the same stories. There is that of Beverley, the mother from Namibia, and her 13-year-old son. Abused and in danger due to her sexuality, they fled to the UK in 2013. Just a few months ago, they were the victims of a dawn raid, with Beverley injured. They were both imprisoned to await deportation back to the dangers that they had fled. It was only following immense pressure that was brought by the Unity centre in Glasgow, which included the blockading of the Home Office facility where they were held, that they were allowed to stay. However, there are far too many stories where that has not been the case. For every member of our communities we can save from deportation, many more will find themselves back on the plane to whatever terrible situation they were forced to flee.

Therefore, it was with some disgust that I read the Conservative amendment. The Tories opposite have done much to detoxify their party in Scotland, but to come to the Parliament today with an amendment so fundamentally at odds with the ethos that their own party takes in government at Westminster requires more than a brass neck. Every Tory MSP is a card-carrying member of a party whose policies in government have resulted in suffering and death for far too many of the world's most vulnerable people. We will not let

them forget it. We will vote against the Tory amendment.

The crisis in the Mediterranean has made the situation impossible to ignore in Europe—although, by God, have some people tried to ignore it. Last year, more than 3,700 people died making the crossing. This year, the number has already reached 3,200. The numbers do not tell the story or do it justice; it is the individual stories that bring home the horror that too many people on this continent seem content to allow to unfold. The story of Alan Kurdi has been mentioned. There is also the story of the 10-year-old about whom I read in the diary of a volunteer on the Greek islands. We will never know the child's name. He died, along with most of his family, not long after being pulled from the freezing water. The volunteer was unable to let him go, even as she accepted that she could not save him.

This is not someone else's crisis; it is our crisis, yet few European leaders have shown any leadership at all. Recently there has been profuse praise for the European Union in this Parliament, including from me, but the EU's refugee deal with Turkey is nothing short of a shameful reminder of how far we have to go before the idea of a people's Europe comes close to being the truth. The European Union that many of us talk about and campaign for is one that builds homes for refugees, not walls to keep them out.

Scotland's role in Europe's response to the crisis is critical, regardless of the fallout from the Brexit vote. The minister rightly praised all that we have done so far with the powers available to us, but there is so much more that we can do. The scale of the crisis is immense, and history will judge us on how we responded to it. I hope that it will judge that we faced up to the challenge to our common humanity and that, in the proudest traditions of solidarity and compassion, we did not just say but showed that refugees are welcome here.

I move amendment S5M-01322.3, to insert at end:

"supports the 'New Scots' approach of providing access to public services for all people seeking or granted refugee protection regardless of status; believes that the delivery and management of asylum support, accommodation and advice should be devolved to Scotland, and calls on the UK Government to support the creation of safe and legal routes for refugees to reach the EU and seek asylum without embarking on a dangerous and costly journey."

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate. I again make a plea for brevity, as we are very short of time and I do not want to have to cut out any speakers. Speeches of up to six minutes, please.

15:52

Ivan McKee (Glasgow Provan) (SNP): The current refugee crisis in Europe is the result of one of the most significant movements of people that we have seen in recent decades. Such movement, sadly, is not uncommon. According to the Scottish Refugee Council, more than 65 million people worldwide have been forcibly displaced from their homes, and 21 million refugees are seeking sanctuary outside their home countries, as a consequence of conflict, political upheaval and, increasingly, climate change.

The vast majority of refugees are in the countries that are closest to their country of origin. Those are usually the poorest countries and the least able to cope with the crisis. A total of 4.5 million people have fled the conflict in Syria, and the vast majority of those people are now living in neighbouring countries. Only a fraction have come to Europe, and of those only a small fraction have come to our shores.

The big picture can tell us a story, but at its heart a refugee crisis is the accumulation of countless human stories of individual struggles, too many failures and some successes. I want to illustrate the human aspect by telling the stories of three refugees from different parts of the world with whom I have come into contact.

The first of the three has been a friend of mine for around 20 years. He is a successful businessman who has created countless jobs for others over the years, but when he arrived in this country as a small boy in 1972, my friend was a statistic: one of tens of thousands of Asians who were expelled from east Africa for racially motivated political reasons. His contribution to our society has been immense. East Africa's loss has been our gain, by any measure.

The second human story has a far-from-happy conclusion. In 1995, I travelled to Bosnia as part of an aid convey. One of the Bosnians whom I met on the trip had a simple request. They wanted me to bring back some family photographs to deliver, along with best wishes, to a family member who resided on the outskirts of Edinburgh. On my return some weeks later, I found the address and attempted to deliver the photos. When I arrived at the door I was met by a friend of the woman. I explained my reason for the visit, only to be informed that the woman had ended her own life some days earlier—the culmination, no doubt, of the stress of being uprooted from her home country and separated from family who were still in the war zone, and the perceived hopelessness of her situation. The case is a reminder that effective support for recent refugees is often more than simple material support.

The final case that I want to convey is much more recent. Last year, I was contacted by a couple I know who, like so many others in recent months, spurred by the images on their television night after night, decided to do something and volunteered to help with a refugee charity. They had befriended a recent arrival from Eritrea—a young man who was going through the process of seeking to remain in the UK. To progress his claim, the young man required his documents, which had been separated from him during his arduous journey. The documents were with a friend of his who had ended up in Norway.

I met the young man to find out what help he required and I arranged to have his documents couriered from Norway. That is a simple process for anyone with an understanding of how to arrange such a transfer and the means to pay for it, but it is an insurmountable obstacle for a recently arrived refugee. The documents arrived and I handed them over to the young man, who subsequently secured the right to stay in this country. The young man is a maths graduate and is keen to learn and contribute. I have no doubt that, in future years, he will make a significant contribution to this country, perhaps through teaching and helping us to deliver the science, technology, engineering and mathematics students we need for future economic growth, or in other significant ways.

As we focus on doing what we can to help the individuals who are caught up in a refugee crisis, we should not forget the value that they add to our society and economy. They enrich our experience, broaden our world view and help to drive forward our society and economy.

Turning to the most recent crisis, we should celebrate the arrival of 1,000 refugees in Scotland and the way in which all those who are involved in the process have worked to ensure their settlement, including the Scottish Government, local authorities, third sector organisations and individual Scots who, through small acts of support, have made the transition easier. However, we should not forget that that represents the tip of an iceberg. We should continue to work for the resettlement of those who are still suffering the hell of being uprooted from their homes, with all the uncertainty and risk that that entails.

The number of deaths in transit has increased in the past year, with the figure already almost at 6,000. Atrocious conditions prevail in the refugee camps in Calais, particularly for those unaccompanied children who are desperate to be united with family members in the UK. We should not forget the impact of trigger-happy foreign policy on the crisis. People bandy about phrases such as “regime change” without thinking through, or wanting to face up to, the consequences for the

individuals who are forced to become refugees as a result of the ensuing conflicts.

Scotland has more than played its part in the resettlement of refugees coming to the UK, but there is much more to be done. We look forward to Scotland continuing to take the lead in the UK on providing secure and safe places for those fleeing persecution and conflict.

15:57

Rachael Hamilton (South Scotland) (Con): It is with pleasure that we take this opportunity in Parliament to welcome the 1,000 migrants, so that we can make our new friends feel at home, from the Highlands in the north of Scotland to the south of Scotland and everywhere in between. East Lothian Council has committed to welcoming seven Syrian refugee families over the next five years.

We must acknowledge the incredible efforts of those who are involved in giving aid to people who have been displaced. The crisis has sent shock waves round the world, and I am proud that the UK has maintained its tradition of being at the forefront of the response. To help in a very small way, in January this year I orchestrated a coat collection in Haddington, amassing hundreds of warm coats to send to Syria during its bitterly cold winter.

Since 2012, the UK has committed £2.3 billion to the Syrian crisis, making us the second largest bilateral donor after the USA. Already, 3,349 Syrians have resettled in the UK. It is right that we welcome 1,000 Syrian refugees here in Scotland. It is our responsibility to help those who are in need, and the UK Government has shown its commitment to doing just that. It is working hard on behalf of the interests of 20,000 Syrian refugees under its Syrian vulnerable person resettlement scheme. The UK Government has also agreed to provide resettlement for up to 3,000 vulnerable children and their family members from conflict areas in the middle east and north Africa regions. Only yesterday, the UK Government created a £10 million refugee children fund to support the needs of vulnerable refugee and migrant children.

Indeed, it is the UK Government's implementation of the Syrian resettlement programme that has allowed thousands of those people to resettle. The complexity of the crisis requires that type of forward thinking on resettling and integrating refugees into our local communities. Close working with non-governmental organisations and local government allows local authorities to plan ahead.

As such, the Department for Work and Pensions is funding accessible community English language

courses to enable refugees to meet the requirement of their jobseekers agreement, and ultimately, of course, to find work. In fact, only yesterday, Amber Rudd announced a further £10 million package to boost English language tuition.

Furthermore, the Refugee Council and the DWP are doing great work to promote refugees into work. That involves ensuring that there is an understanding of the skills and qualifications that are held by the refugees and then finding the most suitable employment for them. Indeed, the Scottish Government has worked to knock down barriers to employment and give access to employability services. In this instance, we see both the UK Government and the Scottish Government working together to help to address those needs.

It is not only in resettlement that we continue our help. Funding has helped to deliver over 21 million food rations, over 4 million medical consultations and almost 6 million relief packages, saving lives in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt. That involves working with 30 partners in a united effort to give support to as many people as possible. Working with those different organisations, and consulting with experts, enables funding to go to the most vulnerable groups, which improves the effectiveness of the overall international response to the crisis.

In Scotland, we welcome 1,000 migrants and we will welcome more over the next five years. When the UK Government promised to resettle 20,000 migrants, the First Minister said that Scotland would take a minimum of 10 per cent. The Migration Scotland website reports that all of Scotland's 32 councils have committed to supporting resettlement in one form or another, with many local authorities having already resettled refugees.

It is important to highlight that those who are selected for resettlement are the most vulnerable—women and children, survivors of torture, people in need of medical care or with severe disabilities, persons at risk due to their sexual orientation and those with family links in resettlement countries.

Furthermore, it is important to note that individuals entering the UK under the resettlement programme have been granted five years of humanitarian protection. Under the humanitarian protection visa, people are entitled to access public funds and the labour market and to explore the possibility of family reunion. The programme therefore addresses concerns that many raise—it helps children, it helps those in medical need and it offers those people not just protection in the UK but a new life free of violence and a chance to reconnect those families who have been torn apart by conflicts.

Earlier this year, we saw London hold the supporting Syria and the region conference, which was co-hosted by the UK, Germany, Kuwait, Norway and the United Nations. The conference raised \$12 billion for 2016 and \$6.7 billion moving through to 2020. Its remit was to come up with the best strategy to deal with the crisis. The conference embodies the approach of working together with 60 other countries to offer support to Syria and the region.

Since the conference, the UK Government has done more to offer support. It has worked with Jordan and Lebanon to promote job creation in the area, it has expanded UK support to those places in most need, and it has furthered education by committing up to £40 million a year for the next four years—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must close now, please.

Rachael Hamilton: —to deliver high-quality education for Lebanese and refugee children. To conclude—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No, please conclude now, Ms Hamilton.

Rachael Hamilton: I would like to conclude by saying that we have a proud tradition of working with—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No, please conclude now, Ms Hamilton. Thank you very much.

16:03

Maree Todd (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I welcome the opportunity to celebrate the news that Scotland has welcomed over 1,000 refugees since last year. Let me be explicit: today in the chamber, we are talking about refugees—not migrants, which the preceding speaker mentioned.

The determination that everyone involved has shown to ensure the successful settlement of those families has been exemplary and it has made me really proud of my fellow country folk. I hope that that work continues and that our success to date will ensure that more refugee families can be given the same welcoming start to the rest of their lives, safe here in Scotland.

The scale of the current crisis has been well described, as have the challenges. Like Ivan McKee, I want to focus on a small local success story. I want to take the opportunity to welcome the four Syrian families who have settled in Alness in Easter Ross. Fàilte gu Alba. In May this year, they became the first refugees to be settled in the Highlands. Four families equals 23 people, who—if you have heard me speak before—we badly need in the Highlands. We are all bursting with

pride to see the wonderful work that the people of Alness did to give them a warm Highland welcome. I congratulate all of the partners who were involved. The families' settlement was coordinated by the Highland Third Sector Interface, and numerous organisations made vital contributions.

Everything was taken care of—from language practice to shopping. New Start Highland's staff not only furnished the refugees' houses, but made sure that they felt at home in them. The organisation Highlands Support Refugees put together clothing parcels, toys, cleaning kits and extra bedding to ensure that the refugees could turn their houses into homes. Rosskeen free church provided training and meeting space for everyone to use, along with their minibus. Inverness mosque provided food parcels for each of the incoming families, as well as financing a day out to Landmark forest adventure park. A day out at Landmark has been enjoyed by nearly every family in the Highlands so it is great that our new Highland families were also able to enjoy that experience—I know that that means a great deal to them. In the public sector, Highland Council and Police Scotland have been phenomenal. Those organisations and similar organisations around Scotland have been crucial to the success of the resettlement programme.

In Scotland, we are definitely taking our responsibility seriously, and we have welcomed more than a third of the UK's Syrian refugees. We must continue to press the UK Government to accept more refugees faster and to improve the asylum system so that the whole of the UK can help. It is absolutely appalling that so many people have died when we could have saved lives. While the Scottish Government has been working hard to ensure that we welcome refugees to our country and help them settle into their new lives, it seems that the UK Government has been more concerned with planning a Trump-inspired wall in Calais to keep the refugees out.

People and communities all over Scotland can be proud of our achievement. We are showing real leadership as an outward-looking and compassionate country. It is great to live in the kind of country that cares for all of the world's citizens—we are all Jock Tamson's bairns.

One thousand refugees settled in Scotland is 1,000 lives made safe and 1,000 people freed from the perils and burdens experienced by refugees every day. I praise the excellent work that has led to Scotland reaching that important milestone, but it has to be seen as only that—a milestone, not the finish line. There are still thousands of people who have been forced to become refugees through no fault of their own,

and more refugees are created every day because of the civil war in Syria.

No one takes the decision to leave their home and become a refugee unless they see no other option. No one decides to live in a refugee camp, with limited food and medical resources, unless they see no other option. No one boards an overcrowded boat, risking death by drowning for themselves and their families, unless they see no other option.

In the space of one week at the end of May this year, it was estimated that 1,000 refugees died attempting the perilous crossing of the Mediterranean. Our birthright here in Scotland means that our people do not have to make that type of life-or-death decision. We are in the lucky position of being able to help those who do. That is why we cannot afford to rest on our laurels.

We have a responsibility not only to continue to take in and resettle refugees, but to encourage other countries and other parts of the UK to do the same. Scotland is doing what it can to address the refugee crisis. It is now time for the UK to step up and do the same.

16:10

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): It is a year since Alan Kurdi and his mother and brother drowned in the Aegean Sea. As has been said, their tragic deaths quickly came to symbolise the human cost of the refugee crisis that is gripping the middle east and north Africa, and sparked a humanitarian response across Europe.

Alan's father, Abdullah, now lives in Erbil, in Iraqi Kurdistan. He remains, of course, utterly bereft. Abdullah's sister, Tima, told *The Independent* the other day that the family would never recover from the deaths, but she feared that the rest of the world had already forgotten. For her, the world had not sufficiently embraced those fleeing from danger or done enough to end the civil war in Syria to allow Kurdish families and other refugees to return to their homes. She said:

"We need a bigger table, not higher fences."

That perspective should inform debate on refugees, and not just in this Parliament.

Later this month, world leaders and experts will gather under the auspices of the United Nations to consider the scale of displacement of refugees and mass migration in general. The choice between bigger tables and higher fences is one not just for Scotland or the UK; it is a choice that faces the wider world.

Here in Scotland, though, we have a clear part to play. As has just been said, the fact that 1,050

Syrian refugees have been welcomed here in the past 12 months means that 1,050 people have hope for the future and are a symbol of what might be achieved for others.

I am most aware of the successful settlement of 63 Syrian refugees, in nine families, in and around Aberdeen, and of the way in which different agencies and faith groups have worked together to make their experience as positive as possible. Refugees who have found homes in Aberdeenshire have been able to access classes organised by North East Scotland College, not only to learn English but to find out how things work in a new and unfamiliar country.

Aberdeen FC Community Trust has been running football sessions for newly settled refugees at local centres. In doing so, it has provided both coaching in football skills and a way to access local services. With translation provided courtesy of Aberdeen mosque, those enthusiastic Syrian footballers have also enjoyed hospitality on match day at Pittodrie, which is an essential visit for anyone who wants to get to know about life in Aberdeen.

The voluntary organisation Aberdeen Solidarity with Refugees has mobilised a great deal of good will in local communities. After starting with a mission to help refugees in camps in Calais and elsewhere, it has swiftly evolved into one of the key partner agencies supporting Syrian refugees in the north-east.

Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council have, of course, played a central role by co-ordinating the efforts of others and ensuring ready access to housing, schools and other essential services, as well as engaging neighbours in local communities as part of the process of making new citizens feel welcome.

The experience in the north-east is a good indicator of the welcome and integration process across the country. Good will is there in plenty. Signposting to services has been successful and third parties have engaged in the process. However, as the cabinet secretary said, that does not mean that the experience of welcoming and integrating refugees from Syria and elsewhere has been problem free. Restrictions around access to employment have been a continuing issue, even for those who have been here for more than just the past few months.

A report, published by Queen Margaret University in June, found that only 9 per cent of those with refugee status were in work 12 months after their asylum claim was granted, and that as many as 12 per cent ended up presenting as homeless to their local council. Loss of jobs and a lack of social rented housing are a challenge for many other people too, but refugees and people

seeking asylum are particularly vulnerable, not least because of difficulties with language and interpretation.

The approach that we propose in our amendment is intended to help to address those difficult issues. We highlight the case for a refugee integration bill to put the rights of refugees on a statutory basis, in line with the 1951 refugee convention and international human rights law. Those rights, which would include a right to access services and specific rights in relation to language and interpretation services, would require to be backed up with the resources that are necessary to provide such services.

Issues around the reunification of refugee families also need to be considered by government at every level. I have recently taken up the case of a Syrian family whose elderly parents remain stuck in a war zone, in part because they cannot obtain permission to join their family in this country.

Children who travel alone or are separated from their families in transit are particularly vulnerable. A year on from the death of Alan Kurdi, the needs of child refugees should have a prominent place and, as Alf Dubs argued in the House of Lords, that is best achieved by specific commitments on the part of Government.

Back in the 1930s, 30 unaccompanied children arrived in the north-east from the Basque Country as refugees from the Spanish civil war. The Luftwaffe had just destroyed Guernica, and those children, fleeing for their lives, found refuge in Montrose. Like them, the children who are fleeing Syria today face an uncertain future. We should applaud efforts to bring the civil war in Syria to an end and make it safe for people to go home, but we can also make them welcome in this country, and that is what we should unite to support today.

16:15

Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP): I start by agreeing with my colleague Maree Todd that we need to be careful about conflating migrants and refugees. They have two different statuses and the words mean very different things in our collective psyche.

I welcome this debate. I have been taking part in the wider debate on refugees since long before I was an elected member. It is great that Scotland has welcomed 1,000 refugees. Although that represents only 0.02 per cent of our population, it is definitely a start.

Last week, the Italian coastguard reported that it had saved more than 10,000 refugees who were taking the dangerous sea passage to enter Europe via Libya. Desperate people take to the sea to

escape war, discrimination, fear and intimidation, and many of them do not make it to the end of the journey. I ask members to imagine that it was a member of their family.

On Sunday, my friend Lord Alf Dubs, who carried off the political coup that forced David Cameron to accept some unaccompanied children from the Calais jungle, was there on a visit. He is furious that nothing has happened. As a former child refugee who was brought to Britain from Czechoslovakia on one of the Kindertransport trains in 1939, when he was six, he is burning with frustration at the political inaction, and I know that many of us in the Parliament share that feeling.

We also have protests by French hauliers around Calais who find themselves facing violent attacks from desperate migrants or refugees who are trying to survive in flimsy tents and squalid conditions. They have become the victims of the international failure to act. Better care and not higher walls is what these people—our fellow human beings—need.

This is a global crisis and it needs co-ordinated international action. Every safe and democratic nation should be willing and able to offer homes to some of the refugees who are fleeing the violence and chaos of Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, but it seems that all that Westminster—including Theresa May—is prepared to do is to talk and to make vague commitments about helping refugees in camps. I see no willingness to bring the promised 20,000 Syrian refugees from the camps by 2020. I just hear words; I see no actions. Let us be honest: the UK is a country of about 60 million people; we have room and there is plenty of opportunity to take more people.

Some would say that the campaign for a Brexit succeeded only because of the ability of its leaders to stoke up fears about immigrants and refugees. Now, Nicolas Sarkozy, the former conservative president of France, has demanded that Britain opens a detention centre for migrants on its own territory. I do not think that bigger walls and more detention centres are what we need. I was surprised but happy to hear that Dungavel is to close at last, but I am filled with horror about what is proposed as a short-term detention scheme, with no recourse to justice, no community support and no family support for people who would be huddled to Yarl's Wood—where, I am afraid, we do not have the same standards that we have at Dungavel.

A year ago, the First Minister's humanitarian summit established a task force. We have heard about the funding of £1 million and the co-ordinated response not just from this Government but across parties, communities and local authorities. Vigils were held across Scotland and, indeed, across the world.

Gary Christie, the head of policy and communications at the Scottish Refugee Council said:

"Scotland can be proud of the support it has shown and continues to show. It has offered a heartfelt welcome to those in need."

Yet, in 2014, the UK made 14,000 positive asylum decisions compared with 48,000 in Germany, 33,000 in Sweden and 21,000 in both France and Italy.

Our local authorities are working with the Syrian vulnerable person resettlement scheme to rehome people who have lost everything—in some cases, family members—and to help them to build new and productive lives for themselves and their children. That is what they crave: the chance to live without the crashing of bombs; somewhere where they can build a decent life for themselves. Imagine if that were one of us. Would we be denying ourselves that sanctuary or opportunity?

I am very proud to say that South Lanarkshire Council's executive committee had a meeting yesterday to update it on the vulnerable person resettlement scheme. The council has already provided accommodation to 44 families and expects to have reached its target of 60 within the year. I have not heard the details yet, but it is recommended that the council commit to settling another 60 refugees under the scheme during 2017. I give them my whole-hearted support in that, and I hope—we all do—that we can create somewhere for people to live, grow and be safe.

As long as right-wing extremists exist to stoke up the fires of resentment, there will be opposition to human beings seeking safety from war, political violence and oppression. Scots are outward looking, have a more global perspective and genuinely want to extend the hand of friendship and support. No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark; it is time for us to be the sanctuary.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): Thank you very much. I call Graham Simpson, to be followed by Rhona Mackay. Both of you now have five minutes.

16:21

Graham Simpson (Central Scotland) (Con): Yesterday was the first anniversary of the UK Government's commitment to resettle 20,000 of the most vulnerable victims of the Syrian conflict by 2020. Through working with the devolved Administrations and councils, those 20,000 places under the vulnerable person resettlement scheme have been secured four years early. Around half of them are children.

This week, £10 million has also been pledged for language tuition to help refugees integrate, as Rachael Hamilton said. I am pleased about today's announcement from Angela Constance of £86,000 for Scotland.

That is all a cause for celebration and should unite this chamber. After all, the 1,000 refugees in or on the way to Scotland under the programme have been warmly welcomed, and it is entirely right to praise all those who have been involved in making the resettlement programme such a success, as Angela Constance has rightly done. It is incumbent on us all to ensure that that continues and that we work together to that end. Angela Constance's motion started off in a positive vein, but it was wrong to single out the UK Government to do more—we should all be doing more. Her speech was consensual, and I commend her for it.

To provide the most effective aid to the greatest number of people, we need to ensure that the majority of refugees are safe and secure in their home regions. The debate is often focused on the refugees who are coming to Europe, but the vast majority—almost 5 million Syrians—are displaced across the middle east. I commend the UK Government for doubling aid to £2.3 billion to support the people living in Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Egypt and Lebanon, as Jackson Carlaw said.

Commitments made at the supporting Syria and the region conference, co-hosted by the UK, will also see, by the end of 2016-17 school year, 1.7 million refugees and vulnerable children in quality education, with equal access for girls and boys. That should be commended.

We have lodged an amendment to the motion because singling out the UK Government to do more is wrong. Scottish councils have expressed concerns about the high level of hotel-type accommodation that is being used as housing for asylum seekers. It is costly and also denies asylum seekers a sense of permanence. We should be helping to integrate them into communities, not putting them up in bed and breakfasts.

The UK Government hopes to extend the asylum seeker dispersal programme to more councils. At the moment, Glasgow is the only Scottish council taking part, which is a shame. We should be looking to extend that. The Home Office has also asked councils in Scotland to take part voluntarily in the national transfer scheme of unaccompanied asylum seeker children. The Home Office wants to accelerate that scheme.

I am sure that the Scottish Government would agree that it has an obligation to work with councils to ease any sticking points that exist, and I get the impression that Angela Constance is

doing that. Our amendment calls on all Governments to do more.

We should not politicise the issue. We should be mature enough not to point score—a point that was seemingly lost on Ross Greer.

The UK Government has taken unprecedented action over the crisis and given record-breaking levels of financial aid, some of which has been administered by the Department for International Development, in my home town of East Kilbride. It is too easy to say that this or that Government should do more, but creating division is not the way to act.

Ross Greer: Will the member give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is in his last minute.

Graham Simpson: Pulling together in a spirit of solidarity is the way ahead. All Governments can do more. I believe that Angela Constance agrees with that and I hope that, even at this late stage, she can find a way to back our amendment.

16:26

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): I will focus my speech on the plight of children—the innocent victims of war.

Night after night on our TV screens we see boatloads of desperate people gambling with their and their children's lives as they pile on to dinghies that are more suited to a boating pond than the Mediterranean. They are some of the most distressing scenes that I can remember seeing during my adult life, and I know that I am not alone in that.

There seems to be no end to the misery that those desperate people from all backgrounds have endured when fleeing from war and persecution in the land of their birth. In Syria, children are being gassed by a monster who is devoid of humanity, so what have their parents got to lose? Should they make a life-or-death journey to safety, or stay home and live every day wondering whether it will be their last? How can any of us imagine being faced with that choice?

A shocking 13.5 million people in Syria need help. Half of them are children who risk becoming ill, malnourished, abused or exploited. Thousands of them are orphans and around 3 million of them have been forced to quit school. The UN children's agency says that the war has reversed 10 years of progress in education for Syrian children. Refugee children are susceptible to malnutrition and diseases that are brought on by poor sanitation, such as cholera. Cold weather increases the risk of pneumonia and other respiratory infections. The children are more vulnerable to sexual abuse and

exploitation in unfamiliar and overcrowded conditions and they are exposed to unimaginable danger. Apart from the obvious suffering, all that is clearly an abuse of children's human rights. The charity World Vision said:

"The children of Syria have experienced more hardship, devastation, and violence than any child should have to in a thousand lifetimes."

During the recess, I was fortunate enough to spend a few days on the Italian riviera, which was packed with luxury pleasure cruisers lining the marina. To walk past and see tables set for a champagne dinner struck me as being quite obscene when in the same country, in the town of Lampedusa, children were being washed up on the shore after trying to flee persecution in a tiny flimsy dinghy. Yet the leaders of wealthy countries view those desperate families as a problem, as they argue over how many they can take, afford or feel comfortable with. How can they sleep at night?

The Conservative Government at Westminster agrees to take 20,000 refugees and thinks that that is acceptable. In my view that is shameful. It beggars belief that the former Prime Minister's initial refusal to take 3,000 unaccompanied children from the Calais refugee camp was qualified by the excuse that nothing must be done to "encourage" refugees to make the dangerous journey. What a pathetic excuse. If it was not so serious, it would be laughable.

In Scotland we do not have the "keep them out" border mentality. We have welcomed more than 1,000 Syrians to our country in one year, which was punching way above our weight and is another of the many reasons why I am proud to be Scottish. That number is shared between 29 of our 32 local authorities, and that 29 should be applauded for the arrangements that they have made and for giving the refugees a true Scottish welcome.

I have to say that my local authority, East Dunbartonshire Council, is one of the three that welcomed absolutely no refugees, citing lack of housing as the reason. That is the same Labour-Tory-led coalition that takes 81 days to rehouse people into vacant social housing, despite an enormous waiting list. Surely it is not beyond the wit of man or woman to find a way to accommodate refugee families in a predominantly affluent area such as Dunbartonshire. Many people I know have said that they would happily open their doors and take in a family.

We are talking about a humanitarian crisis of biblical proportions—one that it is hard to believe is happening in 2016. The wealthy nations of the world can put a man on the moon, host lavish Olympic games and, of course, pay for obscene weapons of mass destruction. Is it not time that

world leaders put as much effort into preventing children from drowning in the Mediterranean? They must stop paying lip service to the plight of these families and implement an action plan to get them to safety without any further delay.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We now move to closing speeches.

16:30

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): I welcome the speeches from across the chamber this afternoon. I was particularly moved by stories from Rona Mackay, Maree Todd, Pauline McNeil, Ross Greer and Ivan McKee.

It is absolutely clear that we have a different political consensus in Scotland. As Maree Todd eloquently outlined, that should be a source of great pride to us. Of course, as Jackson Carlaw said, we must recognise that the Scottish Government and the Westminster Government can and should go further in their response to this crisis, but how different is this debate from the one in Westminster? Several members have raised the ridiculousness of the Trump-esque walls that are going to be built around Calais—walls that are only going to deliver more control to illegal gangs and result in more missing children. The track record of walls in solving cultural and political problems in the past 100 years is not a good one. As Angela Constance said, we should be using that money to try to reunite families because, as Christina McKelvie said, we need better care, not higher walls, for these desperate and vulnerable people.

There are a number of areas in which the Westminster Government can and should go forward. The right to reunion is a central one, as has been reflected in this debate. We need there to be a much broader definition of the family. It is intolerable that vulnerable young women are languishing in camps separate from the support of their wider family simply because of the date of their birth. We need a wider definition so that those women can get the support that they deserve. Even under the Syrian vulnerable person relocation scheme, the ability of refugees to visit sick relatives is being curtailed because the documentation is expensive and time consuming to gather, and there is no guarantee that permission will be granted at the end of that process. Therefore, I particularly welcome the concession that Angela Constance has got in relation to 30-day visas.

As many members have said, we need to accelerate the action to resettle more refugees in this country. We could do that by accelerating the gateway protection programme, but the numbers that are coming through the Syrian vulnerable

person relocation scheme are still pitifully low. I know that, in the Stirling area, we have had a handful of families and that only one refugee has been relocated to Liverpool since the scheme was set up.

We also need to focus on how we can effectively deliver routes of safe passage to ensure that there is a route to the safety and support that vulnerable refugees can get in this country.

Scotland is well placed to be at the heart of a compassionate overall UK response to the refugee crisis. We have many advantages in that we are a small nation with a relatively small number of local authorities, a national Parliament with growing responsibilities and a growing community and non-governmental organisations sector. That should enable us to be fleet of foot and to quickly be able to trial new approaches and spread good practice as we roll out new schemes. I particularly welcome Angela Constance's announcement today of £86,000 for peer education for local authorities. That builds on the success that we have had already in Scotland.

Various schemes are in operation, and we have heard about some good examples. The Syrian vulnerable person relocation scheme is at the heart of this debate, and 29 councils are involved in that. It is quite clear that that has worked particularly successfully where there have been strong local partnerships. That point was described well by Lewis Macdonald in relation to Aberdeen, and I have seen the same level of community engagement in partnerships in Stirling as well. Although the councils provide the basic services under those schemes—they provide school education, specialist educational support, health and social care, language classes and basic accommodation—it is the community that can then come in and provide that additional level of support, as Rachael Hamilton and Lewis Macdonald discussed. That enables the refugees, when they are being resettled, to thrive, not just to survive.

Such community groups are providing a wonderful range of services such as informal opportunities for the refugees to improve their English. That relates to their employability and their ability to settle successfully in this country in the long term rather than just for the short term. The groups provide sheets, towels, books, toys, outings and cultural and faith events, and they help with internet access, which is important when people are separated from their families. It is also important for their employability that they get lessons in English and gain other skills that they need to live here successfully.

I pay particular tribute to a group in my region, Stirling Citizens for Sanctuary, which has operated

incredibly well in Stirling and Clackmannanshire. Very early in 2015, it called for a community partnership. That was met with some caution initially but, following a successful refugee summit in Stirling, there is now a solid partnership between the council, other agencies and the community in the local area. Such community groups need support, and I say to Angela Constance that we need to look at how we can train and support those organisations in the same way as we train and support councils to play their part.

There is clearly a need for national standards for refugee integration, which could build in the work of community groups to ensure a consistency of approach across the 32 local authorities in Scotland that are operating the schemes. We also need to root out bad practice. The role of private contractors in the asylum dispersal scheme has been disgusting, as Ross Greer outlined. If Graham Simpson wants other local authorities to take on such schemes, I say to him that we should let the councils deliver them, not a private contractor such as Serco.

I hear Labour's call for a statutory underpinning for some refugee services and rights. That is worth consideration, and I welcome Angela Constance's assurance that she will open up dialogue on that when we refresh the new Scots strategy.

Listening to the speeches that have been made here this afternoon, I have sensed a growing interest in the plight of refugees. There is possibly even scope for reforming the cross-party group on refugees, but that can be discussed at another time.

16:37

Pauline McNeill: This afternoon, we have all agreed that what Scottish local authorities have done has been a credit to them and that we have lived up to our humanitarian responsibilities. However, as Christina McKelvie said, we are still talking about a tiny percentage of the population. It is important to clarify that the motion talks about Syrian refugees and that we are talking about refugees mainly. There is a legal definition of the term, but we know that it essentially means those who are fleeing persecution and conflict, who, out of necessity, seek safety to save their lives and the lives of their families.

It is important that many members have touched on the background to why we are welcoming 1,000 refugees to Scotland—the pain of the five-year conflict in Syria to which we see no end. It is important to understand that specific background. There are many other conflicts from which there are refugees. Just over the past couple of nights, if members have been watching "Newsnight", they

will have seen the plight of the people of Yemen—a subject that I hope we will get an opportunity to discuss in the future. Those people are being bombed to death by Saudi Arabia.

We know that there are 10 million refugees but that we have accepted only 1,000 in Scotland and 20,000 in the United Kingdom as a whole. Most of the refugees are in the surrounding regions—in Lebanon, where one in four of the population is a refugee; in Turkey, where there are refugee camps; and in Jordan and the surrounding countries. However, it is sad to see that the Gulf countries have failed to live up to their humanitarian responsibilities. Many of those countries have camps for refugees from other conflicts, and they are trying to develop international public policy to prevent themselves from becoming just large refugee camps. The camps tend to become permanent, which is why having a strategic approach to refugees is important.

It is encouraging that quite a number of charities and individuals have felt a responsibility to do something about the humanitarian crisis. Many Scottish groups have sprung up—such as Wishaw to Calais, CalAid and the caring Scotland group—and have simply collected clothes and food and taken them to Calais. People want to take responsibility. Like others, I know many people who have opened their homes to take in people whom they know to be refugees.

There have been some excellent contributions. Maree Todd talked about using the word “refugees” rather than “migrants” and about improving the asylum system generally. Rachael Hamilton was right to address the issue of the UK Government’s investment in tackling the refugee crisis—£2.3 billion is not an insignificant amount. I am glad that Lewis Macdonald talked in depth about the father of Alan Kurdi, because it is important, when we read stories and are shocked by the pictures, that we understand the family tragedies behind them. We know, of course, that those stories and pictures symbolise many other children who unfortunately have lost their lives in the conflict.

I whole-heartedly agree with Ross Greer, who talked about how history will judge us. This has probably been the most extraordinary crisis in my lifetime and I believe that history will judge us all on what we did individually, not just as countries but as human beings.

Ivan McKee talked about the personal journeys that he has made and said that people are fleeing not just conflict but, increasingly, climate change. There is almost a modern definition of refugee. Mark Ruskell talked about how we need to look in detail at the rights of refugees and how we deliver those rights. I hope that the Green Party might

consider supporting the Labour amendment tonight, which says that there should be rights enshrined in law and that there should be a national approach to the question of how we deliver services.

It is important to recognise that the UK Government has made a significant investment. However, I have followed the issue for many years and I have a slight difficulty with the Conservative position. I agree with those who have said that David Cameron, who I appreciate is no longer the Prime Minister, was extremely slow in coming to the conclusion that we should take 20,000 refugees—a figure that is far too low. I am sad that the Dubs amendment was not supported by the Tories in the House of Commons. A commitment on a specific number of unaccompanied children would have been an important step to ensure the safety of many of those children.

We will not support the Tory amendment this evening, but we will support that of the Greens. I do not believe that the Government will support the Labour amendment, but I hope that, on the basis of what I have said, others will do so.

16:43

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): More than 1,000 refugees have come to Scotland. As other members have done, I acknowledge all the efforts throughout Scotland to achieve that goal. Many members have made passionate speeches, and it should be acknowledged that all of us welcome the fact that 1,000 refugees have come to our country and have been given new homes here. We want to lead by example and by working in partnership, and we want to support those individuals and ensure that they get a better life. That is why they are here.

I commend many members for speaking with passion, knowledge and understanding. All of us are touched by what we see on our television screens and by the images that we have seen in recent months and years. It is obvious from the way in which Parliament has come together in the debate that many people see that all of us have a part to play. There is a lot that we can work on together to ensure that we make progress on the agenda. I am happy to do that.

It is entirely right that we in Scotland and the United Kingdom play our part in resettling refugees who have been displaced from their own countries through conflict, war or persecution. Much has been said about the UK Government, but former Prime Minister David Cameron made it clear that he would commit to providing refuge to 20,000 refugees by 2020 and that that

commitment would focus specifically on individuals who require support and are more vulnerable.

We need to match the principle of accepting refugees with meaningful integration into our society. I note that there has, across many council areas and sectors in Scotland, been an opportunity for refugees to integrate. However, we must also acknowledge that some alarm bells have been rung about things that have not worked especially well.

The Department for International Development's Syrian crisis report said that integration has not been entirely successful in Scotland and it considered two specific areas that need to be talked about. It indicated that employment rates for new refugees in Scotland are particularly low. Refugees have been through real trauma, so when we get them here we need to get them engaging within our communities. That has happened, but if we are not able to take the next step and ensure that they get the necessary opportunities, we need to consider that. The report also said that from time to time refugees struggle to access higher education. That also needs to be examined, because we all want to support them to ensure that they get a better life when they come to Scotland.

Those inequalities and the failure to facilitate the integration of refugees and their families must be addressed. The Scottish Government and the UK Government have to take that on board. We cannot ignore those problems. When we take in refugees, that action must be backed up with adequate support in the communities that accept them. Refugees need help to integrate. In particular, they need language lessons. The impact for local services and communities should be closely monitored. That has taken place in Perth and Kinross Council, where I am still a serving councillor.

It is also encouraging to hear, from the examples that we have heard, that local authorities, communities, voluntary groups and families throughout the country have invested their time and talents in helping refugees. That has been a great opportunity, because the refugees have arrived here to escape violence, war and persecution and it is vital that they get support. Many individuals have been absolutely superb; they have been ambassadors. Charities have expended time and effort to ensure that the refugees are catered for. There are, in our communities, many unsung heroes who must be recognised.

In Perth and Kinross, we have used our good relationships with landlords in the private rented sector and with letting agents to ensure that refugees are given houses. Moreover, we have sought to bring together a wide range of council

services and departments to ensure that they are ready to provide the necessary practical and emotional support that those vulnerable individuals require. However, refugee settlement must not be considered in isolation: it is extremely important that we tackle the root cause of the crisis.

The United Kingdom Government has invested heavily in humanitarian aid in the middle east. Since 2012, the UK has committed £2.3 billion to help to meet the pressing needs of vulnerable refugees in that region. Already, millions of pounds have been pumped into food rations, medical consultations, relief packages and providing 500,000 people with shelter. All those measures are important, as is the commitment to a target of 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product being for international development funding. Those funds have been a lifeline to many refugees.

We must do all that we can to support and welcome the refugees who have settled in Scotland, but we should also commend the UK Government for doing all that it can to support them.

We heard some very passionate speeches. Maree Todd put across very passionately what she really feels. Rachael Hamilton and Graham Simpson from my party put their cases. I do not necessarily agree with everything that Ross Greer and Mark Ruskell from the Greens said, but they put their cases successfully and that needs to be acknowledged.

To celebrate what we have achieved is good, but we need to do more; everyone in this chamber is of that opinion and believes that we need to look forward to what can be achieved to manage the crisis. The UK and Scotland are a global force for good in dealing with the crisis, so it is very important that we show on the world stage that we are doing all that we can. Much has been done to date, and much is being done now, but we all understand that much more needs to be done to ensure that we all play our part in supporting individuals who have had traumatic experiences and in ensuring that they receive the warm welcome for which Scotland is so well known.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Angela Constance to close the debate for the Government. Cabinet secretary—you have until 5 o'clock, please.

16:50

Angela Constance: I am grateful to all members across the political divide who have contributed to the debate and have made some very thoughtful contributions. As was mentioned earlier, it is apt that in the first week back after the summer recess the Scottish Parliament debates

the plight and needs of refugees, as we are an outward-looking and welcoming nation.

It will not come as a surprise to members to hear that the Government will support the Green amendment. We have long believed that, in the spirit of the Smith commission, responsibility for asylum support, accommodation and advice should be devolved to the Scottish Parliament. We have long-standing concerns about the role of the private sector as a provider of asylum accommodation, and we would like to see an independent review of the contract that is in place to provide accommodation to asylum seekers and refugees in Glasgow.

Ross Greer was of course right to argue for the creation of safe and legal routes for refugees, because more people are dying now than last year among those who are seeking a place of safety to start a new life and raise a family.

It will not come as a surprise to members to hear that I have some issues with the Tory amendment, but what I have absolutely no issue with and what I feel is entirely appropriate and fitting is for MSPs, the Scottish Parliament and civic Scotland to call on the Scottish Government to do more. There is no place for complacency or conceit and there is never a monopoly on wisdom.

We are doing, and will do, everything that we can in terms of providing more support for refugees and addressing the plight of unaccompanied children. We are well placed to support unaccompanied children, given our progressive legislation that recognises such children as looked-after children who need, and will be legally afforded, the protection of the state. Our guardianship service was established in 2010 and has supported over 200 children who have arrived in Scotland since that date.

We have also made an additional investment in English as a second language services, and an additional £1.4 million has gone to community planning partnerships. We have invested £820,000 in organisations that work to support refugees and asylum seekers. We have given £300,000 to various humanitarian organisations on the ground in Europe, and £1 million was attached to the refugee summit, which was focused on mental health needs, employability and English as a second language. In addition, we are all very proud that 29 out of 32 Scottish local authorities are playing their part in supporting new Scots to make their home in our communities in every area of Scotland.

What I cannot get away from is the fact that immigration legislation remains reserved to the UK Parliament and that working with our European neighbours remains largely, if not exclusively, reserved. I know that I can continue to write letters

to the UK Government to outline our concerns about the poor standard of accommodation that some refugees and asylum seekers have in Glasgow, about the narrow criteria for the family reunion programme and about unaccompanied children in Europe—and, of course, it is welcome that children are now being welcomed in Europe and not just in their home countries. However, believe me: I want to be doing much more than writing letters to the UK Government.

The Scottish Government stands ready to do more for refugees and, in particular, unaccompanied children. It is especially frustrating to watch the UK Government invest valuable resources in building a wall when that resource could be used to support around 250 refugees to come to Scotland or, indeed, the UK. Lewis Macdonald is entirely right. We should be building a bigger table, not higher walls.

I say to our Labour colleagues and the Greens that we entirely accept from listening to the experiences of refugees who have made their lives in Scotland that not everything has been perfect. We have much to learn in ensuring continuity of care and case workers. There are issues in and around employment, and I reassure members that we agree that there needs to be comprehensive access to services. We believe in integration based on equality and human rights that is sensitive to gender and the needs of children.

We remain to be convinced about the merits of legislation in respect of what it would achieve at a practical level, but our door is open to further discussion. Earlier, I said to other colleagues that the new Scots strategy will expire in 2017. We will have to discuss and debate the issues in and around national standards, and we have to recognise that integration is a long-term process. There is a job of work to be done for the integration forum if we are to realise our ambition of integration starting from day 1.

It is also vital that, when we talk of integration, we recognise that its benefits are not just one way. Diversity has brought this country new languages, experiences, cultures and skills, all of which we benefit from. By making their home here, refugees have expanded the world view of children from all communities and helped us to see ourselves as a globally connected nation. Jackson Carlaw was right to reflect on the role of the Jewish community in establishing the Edinburgh festival. Make no mistake: Syrian families are already contributing and engaging in their new communities.

We know that everyone in the chamber has a role to play in clearly communicating the reasons why refugees need our help and why it is important to respond to the humanitarian crisis. When I speak to folk who have had to flee

persecution, torture and horrors in their country, I am always inspired by their good humour, spirit and resilience. However, absolutely no one would choose to become a refugee. By definition, refugees have had to leave their home to seek safety elsewhere. They have had to leave their work—for some, that is their own business. Others have had to leave school, college or university. Many have had to leave family behind, and all will have left friends behind. They are ordinary people who have been faced with extraordinary challenges.

Last September, the First Minister said that, first and foremost,

“we must respond as human beings.”—[*Official Report*, 3 September 2015; c 20.]

Scotland has responded magnificently to the challenge and will continue to do so. Our response to the crisis has shown us at our best as a nation, and I am sure that members across the chamber share that pride.

I assure members that I am not just calling on the UK Government to do more; I want the Scottish Government to be empowered and to be in a position to do more, because there is much more to do. The suffering has not gone away. As we speak, there are between 150 and 400 unaccompanied children in Calais, and a conservative estimate is that there are 26,000 unaccompanied Syrian children in Europe. According to Interpol, 10,000 unaccompanied children have gone missing in the past two years. Where are they? What has happened to them? God only knows. Unaccompanied children are at risk of trafficking and all sorts of other absolutely unimaginable horrors.

What we all have to face up to—whether it is this Government or the UK Government—is that some of that suffering is avoidable. We know that, if we pull together and do more, we can achieve success. The Syrian resettlement programme is one example of that. We should celebrate and be thankful for what has been achieved over the past year, with more than 1,000 new Scots settled in our communities, but we all know that there is much more to do.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of two Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Joe FitzPatrick to move motions S5M-01341 and S5M-01342 en bloc.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that Pauline McNeill be appointed to replace Monica Lennon as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that Monica Lennon be appointed to replace Elaine Smith as a member of the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee.—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

The Presiding Officer: The questions on the motions will come at decision time.

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): There are six questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S5M-01322.1, in the name of Jackson Carlaw, which seeks to amend motion S5M-01322, in the name of Angela Constance, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (South Scotland) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Thomson, Ross (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)

Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Evans, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 31, Against 86, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-01322.2, in the name of Alex Rowley, which seeks to amend motion S5M-01322, in the name of Angela Constance, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Evans, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)

Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Abstentions

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Hamilton, Rachael (South Scotland) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, John (Etrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Thomson, Ross (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 21, Against 59, Abstentions 36.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-01322.3, in the name of Ross Greer, which seeks to amend motion S5M-01322, in the name of Angela Constance, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Evans, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)

Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (South Scotland) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Thomson, Ross (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 84, Against 33, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-01322, in the name of Angela Constance, on Scotland welcomes 1,000 refugees, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinrossshire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Evans, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)

Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McKee, Ivan (Glasgow Provan) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Cameron, Donald (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Carson, Finlay (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (South Scotland) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Lockhart, Dean (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Mundell, Oliver (Dumfriesshire) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (North East Fife) (LD)
 Ross, Douglas (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Thomson, Ross (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Wells, Annie (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 84, Against 33, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament welcomes the 1,000 Syrian refugees who have been received by local authorities across Scotland under the UK Government's Syrian Resettlement Programme since October 2015; commends the work of

Scottish Government partners, including the Scottish Refugee Council, COSLA and particularly local authorities that have responded quickly to this humanitarian crisis; thanks the volunteers, third sector organisations and local communities that are welcoming and supporting refugees as they settle and begin to rebuild their lives; acknowledges the strong cross-party support shown at and since the First Minister's Refugee Summit on 4 September 2015 for Scotland's commitment to welcome refugees and play its part by taking a fair and proportionate share of the total number of refugees received by the UK; continues to urge the UK Government to do more, particularly to progress the transfer of unaccompanied child refugees under the Immigration Act 2016, and to coordinate with international partners, including Scotland's EU neighbours, to improve the situation of refugees in Europe; celebrates and encourages the warmth of welcome and strong solidarity with refugees that has been demonstrated across Scotland; supports the 'New Scots' approach of providing access to public services for all people seeking or granted refugee protection regardless of status; believes that the delivery and management of asylum support, accommodation and advice should be devolved to Scotland, and calls on the UK Government to support the creation of safe and legal routes for refugees to reach the EU and seek asylum without embarking on a dangerous and costly journey.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-01341, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on substitution on a committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that Pauline McNeill be appointed to replace Monica Lennon as the Scottish Labour Party substitute on the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-01342, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on committee membership, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that Monica Lennon be appointed to replace Elaine Smith as a member of the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee.

Meeting closed at 17:05.

This is the final edition of the *Official Report* for this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

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

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