



OFFICIAL REPORT
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Tuesday 5 June 2018

Session 5



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Tuesday 5 June 2018

CONTENTS

	Col.
TIME FOR REFLECTION	1
BUSINESS MOTION	3
<i>Motion moved—[Joe FitzPatrick]—and agreed to.</i>	
TOPICAL QUESTION TIME	4
Front-line Police Officers	4
Child Obesity	8
A FUTURE STRATEGY FOR SCOTTISH AGRICULTURE	11
<i>Statement—[Fergus Ewing].</i>	
The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing)	11
CELEBRATING SCOTLAND'S VOLUNTEERS	22
<i>Motion moved—[Angela Constance].</i>	
The Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities (Angela Constance)	22
Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con)	26
Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab)	29
Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green)	32
Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD)	35
David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)	37
Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con)	39
Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)	41
Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab)	43
Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)	45
Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con)	47
Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP)	48
Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab)	50
Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP)	52
Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con)	54
Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)	56
Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP)	58
Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab)	60
Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con)	62
Angela Constance	65
PARKING (CODE OF PRACTICE) BILL	68
<i>Motion moved—[Humza Yousaf].</i>	
DECISION TIME	69
ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER	70
<i>Motion debated—[Daniel Johnson].</i>	
Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)	70
Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP)	73
Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con)	74
Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab)	76
Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)	78
Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)	79
The Minister for Mental Health (Maureen Watt)	81

Scottish Parliament

Tuesday 5 June 2018

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

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): Good afternoon. Our first item of business today is time for reflection, for which our leader is the Right Rev Dr John Armes, who is the Bishop of Edinburgh.

The Right Rev Dr John A Armes (Bishop of Edinburgh): I am very grateful indeed for this opportunity to be with you today.

The diocese of Edinburgh has a much-valued link with Cape Coast in Ghana. As it was on many parts of Africa, the impact of the British empire on Ghana was—shall we say it?—ambiguous. Cape Coast castle was, after all, a centre of the transatlantic slave trade.

Yet, my Ghanaian friends point out that alongside that chilling legacy, there are examples of a more benign influence. One such example was told to me during a visit to a thriving neighbourhood called Adisadel. “Let me tell you,” said my companion, “the legend of how Adisadel got its name.”

He told me that many years ago there was a Scottish nurse called Alice. The people quickly learned to love her, and would travel long distances to seek her help for their various ailments. Alice worked long hours to help them, except during the afternoon, because—like many Europeans—that was when she insisted on having her afternoon nap. If you arrived in the afternoon to see the nurse, you would be met by her maid, who would pronounce the familiar message, “Alice is sleeping.” However, the maid could not say the name properly—she said “Adis” instead of “Alice”, and in the language of the place, the word for sleeping is “adda”. “Adis-adda”, or “Alice is sleeping”, became Adisadel—the name of the neighbourhood where Alice used to live.

I hope that the story is true. We all know places—towns, buildings and even rooms—that are rightly named after people who are famous and those who have achieved distinction. However, it is good to know that every so often the efforts of our unsung heroines and heroes are also immortalised—not by a committee decision, but by popular usage, because one faithful person so earned the love of her neighbours that it seemed to be completely natural to them to cherish her memory in that way.

Even if the story is only a pleasant folk tale, we probably know of someone like Alice: someone whose purpose in life is to serve, who earns so much admiration that even their little eccentricities, such as an afternoon nap, are found endearing, and who helps to make this often brutal world a kinder and more humane place to live.

I wish you well as you set about the same task—although whether, as politicians, you want a reputation for taking an afternoon nap is not for me to say.

Business Motion

14:03

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-12594, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, which sets out a revised business programme for today and Thursday 7 June.

Motion moved,

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

(a) Tuesday 5 June 2018—

after

2.00 pm Topical Questions

insert

followed by Ministerial Statement: Scottish Government response to a future strategy for Scottish agriculture

(b) Thursday 7 June 2018—

delete

2.30 pm Scottish Government Debate: Lord Bracadale's independent review of hate crime legislation

and insert

2.30 pm Ministerial Statement: Impact of Policing on Communities during the Miners' Strike—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

Motion agreed to.

Topical Question Time

14:04

Front-line Police Officers

1. **Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it will take to ensure the safety of all front-line police officers. (S5T-01123)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Michael Matheson): I am sure that everyone in the chamber was as sorry as I was to hear that police constable Laura Sayer and PC Kenny MacKenzie were seriously injured in an incident in Greenock on Friday. I am pleased to hear that they are both now recovering at home. That incident is a stark reminder of the risks that our police officers face, and of their bravery and dedication in serving our communities. The First Minister and I have written to PC Sayer and PC MacKenzie to express the Government's thanks to them for their service and dedication to their community. The people of Scotland are very fortunate to be served by them and officers like them who, day in and day out, put the needs of others first.

The equipment that is provided to police officers is an operational matter for the interim chief constable, who takes into account the latest risk and threat assessment. In line with current approved standard operating guidance, all front-line officers are equipped with handcuffs, PAVA spray, a baton and body armour.

Following consultation, Police Scotland announced that it will enhance its capability to respond to incidents that involve violence and bladed weapons by training another 520 police officers to use Taser guns. The specially trained officers will be based at divisional level and will have access to Tasers that are located at 27 police stations across Scotland.

Although it is not possible to eliminate all the risks in front-line policing, I will continue to support the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland to ensure that appropriate measures are being taken to keep our police officers safe.

Jamie Greene: I thank the cabinet secretary for his comments, and I pay tribute to PC Laura Sayer and PC Kenny MacKenzie, who were caught up in the events in Greenock last week. We wish them a speedy recovery from their injuries; our thoughts are with them and their families at this time.

It is worth pointing out the job that all our policemen and policewomen do on a daily basis. They often put the safety of the public before their own safety, and I am sure that everyone in the chamber can get behind that.

Given the events of last week, will the cabinet secretary consider looking at the protective kit and equipment that are available to all police officers, in order to ensure that it is 100 per cent truly fit for purpose? Will he commit to ensuring that every measure that is at his disposal will be used in order to ensure the on-going safety of front-line officers—especially those who respond to call-outs and those who deal with incidents in which there is a significant risk of harm to them?

Michael Matheson: Like all members, I take the safety of police officers very seriously. It is in the interests of all of us to ensure that they have the appropriate equipment that they require. That is why the interim chief constable, who has operational responsibility for the matter, keeps provision of protective measures for police officers under constant review. That is reflected in the recent decision to extend provision of Tasers and to deploy specially trained Taser officers at local policing divisional level, so that they can be deployed to incidents at which that is considered to be appropriate in order to provide enhanced and additional safety to officers in those areas. I wholly support that, and I believe that the majority of members in the chamber support it.

Jamie Greene may be aware that, in the past two years or so, Police Scotland has also increased its firearms capability in order to ensure that a greater level of firearms capability can be deployed at any given time across the country. I support that, because firearms officers can also be deployed to support other incidents in which officers are at greater risk. The specially trained officers and additional firearms capability alongside them provide a greater level of safety overall.

Decisions on how to deploy officers at local level, and in responding to call-outs in particular, are, of course, operational decisions. Police Scotland will no doubt want to look at particular incidents and identify whether other measures could be implemented in the future. However, as I mentioned, there are risks associated with response policing. It will never be possible to eliminate all those risks, but it is important that we always look at whether further measures could be implemented in order to enhance police officers' safety.

Jamie Greene: The cabinet secretary has made many comments to welcome and share. It is also worth pointing out that there are trends to look at. We must consider not just how we combat such incidents; we must also consider a wider strategy to deal with such crimes. We have seen rises in specific types of violent crime, including serious assaults and violent robberies, and an increase in crimes in which the handling of a bladed weapon is involved.

There has also specifically been a rise in use of weapons in violent crimes in west-central Scotland, including in Inverclyde, where the incident last week took place.

What analysis have the cabinet secretary and his department done of the causes of increases in such crimes, and what is the Government's strategy to address those crimes so that their numbers start to come down again, rather than being on the increase, as they are at the moment?

Michael Matheson: Jamie Greene will be aware that violent crime in Scotland overall has dropped significantly, which is something that we should all welcome. That has come about through the concerted efforts of the police and other public sector bodies, working in partnership with third sector organisations, to do much more to target the underlying causes that drive that type of offending behaviour.

Violent crime overall is down in Scotland—it is down by significant amounts. The recent increase in the number of weapons that Jamie Greene referred to is because of a change in recording practices. As was stated by Police Scotland at the time when the management information data was published, previously use of a weapon at an incident was recorded, but a weapon being found but not used at a location was not recorded. We have not seen a marked increase in violent crime, in the way that the member may consider is the case. There has been a change in recording practices.

However, in areas where there is an increase in any crimes involving the use of weapons or violence, Police Scotland takes a very clear approach to local policing and how it is managed, as do the partners that it works with collectively. The violence reduction unit in Police Scotland has an extensive programme to help to support communities and to target areas where violent crime is occurring through the mentors in violence prevention programme and the "No knives, better lives" campaign.

Just last week, I extended the navigator programme to the Queen Elizabeth university hospital and at Crosshouse university hospital. That programme is about helping to reduce the risk of violence in our communities.

There is still much more that we need to do, although we have made good progress. In areas where there has been a particular increase, for whatever reason, it is important that proactive action is being taken by the police at local level, and by the other agencies that can support them, including the violence reduction unit and third sector organisations, in a system that is addressing some of the underlying causes that perhaps drive that type of behaviour.

The Presiding Officer: Three members wish to ask supplementary questions. I urge members to ask a single supplementary rather than multiple questions. I appeal to the minister to keep his answers as concise as possible.

Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): I put on record my sincere gratitude to PC MacKenzie and PC Sayer. I have written to them to offer my good wishes for their speedy recovery. I thank Chief Inspector Louise Harvie for her regular updates over the weekend on the terrible incident that happened in my constituency.

Can the cabinet secretary guarantee that the level of support from Police Scotland to both police officers and their families will be absolute and that no stone will be left unturned to ensure that the officers have the best possible recovery of their health? We hope that they will be able to return to the line of duty at some point in the future.

Michael Matheson: I am aware that both Assistant Chief Constable Higgins and the chief superintendent for local policing in the Inverclyde area, Gordon Crossan, visited both the officers in hospital on Friday and have been in contact with them and their families on a regular basis.

Police Scotland is clear about the support that is available for their officers, particularly the support that is provided through TRiM—the trauma risk management process, which can provide support and assistance to those who have experienced trauma or traumatic events. It is a process that line managers highlight to staff and which staff can refer themselves to. Psychological debriefing and other therapies are also available to the service. As the service has made clear following the incident, it will provide all the support that is required by both officers and the additional support that may be required by their families to address any issues that come from this incident.

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): I, too, pay tribute to PCs Sayer and MacKenzie. The cabinet secretary should be aware that K division, covering Renfrewshire and Inverclyde, has seen a significant number of serious and violent assaults. The division has carried out a number of operations to tackle a culture of knife carrying that is not seen in other divisions, and it will continue to carry out such operations. What will the cabinet secretary do to ensure that the police in K division have the resources that they need to tackle violent crime in Renfrewshire and Inverclyde and keep themselves and the public safe?

Michael Matheson: The deployment of officers in different divisions is an operational policing issue and is a matter for the chief constable. We ensure that there is a range of support services that can assist the police in dealing with violent crime. As I said to Jamie Greene, support

mechanisms are available, through the violence reduction unit; the no knives, better lives programme; the mentors in violence prevention programme, which operates in schools; and the medics against violence programme, which educates young people about the risks that are associated with knife crime

There have been recent challenges in K division, but I expect those to be taken into account from an operational policing point of view in consideration of whether additional resources need to be deployed and whether to use the support services that we fund at a national level, which are there to assist local police divisions when that is appropriate.

The Presiding Officer: I am sorry, but we do not have much time this afternoon; we are a bit squeezed. We must move on to question 2.

Child Obesity

2. **Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what proposals it is considering to tackle child obesity. (S5T-01135)

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Aileen Campbell): Our guiding ambition is to halve child obesity in Scotland by 2030. I will publish a new diet and healthy weight delivery plan this summer, which will include a range of measures to encourage children to develop healthy food habits that will stay with them for the rest of their lives. Among such measures will be legislation to reduce junk food marketing.

Yesterday, the Deputy First Minister launched a consultation on proposed amendments to the Nutritional Requirements for Food and Drink in Schools (Scotland) Regulations 2008. Although we have high and internationally admired nutritional standards for our school meals, we want to go further. Our proposals are based on the latest scientific and expert advice as well as the views of local authorities, schools and catering staff. School food and drink policies and lunch menus should be developed in collaboration with pupils and parents to ensure that everyone is clear about the role that they can play in supporting healthy food habits.

Bob Doris: Buy-in from students, parents and staff will be essential. How will people be encouraged to feed into the consultation on healthier school food and how will the Scottish Government ensure that proportionate steps are taken to deliver beneficial outcomes?

Aileen Campbell: Everyone has a role to play in empowering children and young people to make positive health choices. That is one of the reasons why the consultation is so important: rather than seek the views and opinions of just one group of

people, it reaches out to parents, catering staff, local authorities and pupils and young people themselves. Everyone has the opportunity to contribute to the consultation, which will close at the end of August, to ensure that we can strengthen our already robust and internationally lauded regulations on school food and make them even better. Implementation will also involve input from the groups that Bob Doris mentioned.

Bob Doris: Sometimes what happens outside the school grounds is as significant as what goes on in the school canteen. How will the Scottish Government address the wider issue—this is something that I see in my constituency—of many students having easy access, close to their schools, to the fast food outlets that offer the most unhealthy food of all?

Aileen Campbell: We want to look at the food environment that encourages poor health choices, and we are committed to making it as easy as possible for everyone to make healthier choices.

One lever that is available to us is the planning system. We commissioned research on how best to use the planning system, alongside other measures, to create a healthier food environment, in particular around schools, given the issue that Bob Doris raised. The final report will be published soon and we will consider its implications when we review the national planning framework and Scottish planning policy. We also consulted on the issue in the context of our diet and healthy weight strategy, which we will publish in the summer.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): The Scottish Conservatives made a freedom of information request to health boards last year on the number of referrals to weight management classes. The eight boards that responded to us accounted for more than 5,000 referrals. What work has been undertaken to provide additional capacity to cope with referrals of children to weight management classes, given that some of the children who were referred were reported to be between the ages of two and four?

Aileen Campbell: The member's question underlines the need for a whole-system approach to tackling the challenge of diet and obesity, which is why it is important that the Deputy First Minister has launched a consultation on what we can do in the school environment. The expansion of early learning and childcare also presents opportunities to ensure that children are supported in the early years of their lives, and the forthcoming diet and obesity strategy will consider increasing capacity in relation to weight management solutions. There will be no single solution to the challenge of obesity; we must ensure that all systems are joined up, so that we can make the impact in Scotland that I think all members agree we need to make.

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): We know that, on top of diet, access to and participation in sport and physical activity play a vital role in tackling obesity. We must do everything that we can to support the uptake of physical activity, particularly by young people, yet, in the past few weeks, Scottish National Party councillors in Glasgow and Dundee have imposed charges on access to swimming, which impact most on those who can least afford to pay. This year, the active healthy lives budget—

The Presiding Officer: Can we have a question, please, Ms Fee?

Mary Fee: —has been cut in real terms by the Government. Because of cuts that the SNP has imposed on local authority budgets, revenue spending on sport—

The Presiding Officer: A question, please, Ms Fee.

Mary Fee: —on facilities and on parks and community spaces has been reducing every year since 2014. Given that, will the minister explain to the chamber how budget cuts and the introduction by SNP councillors of charges for children's swimming will help to lower obesity levels?

Aileen Campbell: Mary Fee has chosen to ignore all the fantastic work going on right across the country that is delivered by a range of partners, including in schools. The Government has ensured that two hours of physical education per week is delivered by 98 per cent of schools, which is a huge difference from what we inherited from Ms Fee's colleagues when they left government. She fails to acknowledge the active schools legacy, which ensures that every child—regardless of income or background—has the opportunity to participate in sport. She also fails to recognise the fact that we have ambitions to make Scotland the first daily mile nation. I am not sure whether Mary Fee knows about or does the daily mile, but the evidence behind it certainly shows that it has an impact on children's lives and life opportunities and embeds physical activity in their lives.

Therefore, although Mary Fee might want to paint a doom-and-gloom picture, there are huge reasons for feeling optimistic because, through the actions of the Government, children and young people across Scotland have access to opportunities to participate in sporting activity and are encouraged to do so. I point to the briefing that members had from sportscotland on the celebration of team Scotland's success on the Gold Coast, which showed that that work is paying dividends across many parts of the country.

A Future Strategy for Scottish Agriculture

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a statement by Fergus Ewing on the Scottish Government's response to "A Future Strategy for Scottish Agriculture". The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of his statement. I encourage all members who wish to ask a question to press their request-to-speak buttons as soon as possible.

14:23

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity (Fergus Ewing): My first Royal Highland Show as Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity, in June 2016, was somewhat surreal. On the Thursday, I presented key themes that were emerging in developing a new strategy for Scottish agriculture—themes that were upbeat, positive and, I hope, visionary. I believe that people left the session with springs in their steps. However, on the following Friday, we were all reeling from the outcome of the referendum on leaving the European Union, and few felt like springing anywhere.

When it became obvious that Brexit was more a slogan than a plan, it was clear that the strategy's outlook and work would be needed more than ever. Therefore, in January 2017, I appointed four champions to build on those themes and to make recommendations for a future strategy for Scottish agriculture: Archie Gibson on food and drink, Henry Graham on education and skills, John Kinnaird on sustainability and Marion MacCormick on public value. The champions established working groups with a broad range of contributors from across Scotland. Fifty-five individuals took part in those groups, and I express my gratitude to them all for generously giving of their time, knowledge and expertise.

In November 2017, the champions published an interim discussion document, to which 25 organisations responded. Using all the information, views and ideas received, they then developed their final report, which was published last Thursday with a full set of recommendations on each area.

I want to record my sincere thanks to all four champions, who have invested so much energy, personal time and resource in the task that I set them. Between them, they have lifetimes of experience and expertise, which they applied to their remits, but they also listened and took on board wider views from right across the farming and food and drink sectors. I welcome their report. In particular, I welcome the three statements of ambition for Scottish farming:

"Scotland's form of agriculture will be enviable for its alignment with our land and other assets, in all their biophysical diversity, supported by tailored policies that lead to real commercial results.

Scottish farming will take the actions that forearm it for difficult times and justify its support from the public purse.

Scottish farming's stewardship of the countryside will protect and enhance our natural assets and will be valued and supported by society."

I also welcome the report's 18 headline recommendations. I do not have time to go over them all, but key ones include the recommendation that

"The public must be better informed about Scottish farming and what it delivers, and policies must be guided by real evidence about what the public values."

I agree. According to another recommendation,

"a top priority starting immediately is mindset change, to help farmers and crofters to become more progressive, entrepreneurial and resilient".

We must address that proposition, and I am conscious that change is also at the heart of NFU Scotland's recommendations for the future. There is no doubt that achieving that ambition while taking people with us will be difficult, but today I commit to seeking to achieve that.

Stewardship of the countryside should be a key part of future policy. I have always maintained that farming has twin roles: farmers are producers of food and custodians of the countryside. Those roles are complementary. In the future, we must maintain those two roles and ensure not only that farmers and crofters play their part in that stewardship and in contributing to our climate change ambitions but, as the champions also recommend, that they are recognised for their positive actions.

A key recommendation is that

"farming must be more visible as a career option and must attract more young people".

We must ensure that our young people see and grasp the opportunity of working on the land and in related industries as a positive and rewarding one.

Another important recommendation is that

"Government, parliament, industry and others must cooperate on a 10-15 year strategy for Scottish farming ... All must work together to get the best outcomes, facing up to harsh realities."

I welcome the realism in the report. The champions and others are acutely aware that farming needs a strategy with a timescale that extends beyond one parliamentary session. I hope that we all agree on that and that we can work together to the benefit of Scottish farming in the future.

In addition, the champions recognise that we potentially face the most challenging of times. That

leads me to Brexit. If we leave the European Union and the common agricultural policy because of Brexit, it will take time to create a future policy framework for Scottish farming, so I welcome the champions' recommendation for a transition period. I have previously signalled my preference for such a phase. The champions set out related proposals and measures, which I will consider carefully.

Of course, the lack of certainty and clarity from the United Kingdom Government on what Scotland might expect in the event that we have to proceed with Brexit makes the whole process rather difficult. We were promised that all lost EU funding would be replaced. Despite continued pressure from me, my Cabinet colleagues in Scotland and, indeed, ministers in the other devolved Administrations, current guarantees and commitments fall short of honouring that promise. Despite my best efforts, we cannot even make progress on a convergence review, even though Mr Gove promised to set that up last year. In the absence of such a review and without agreement on a better payment rate, we have very little chance of getting a fair funding settlement that acknowledges and provides for Scotland's needs and interests.

That lack of information over funding matters. Any business plan with no numbers in it is simply not worth the paper that it is written on. There is no clarity, either, on future trade arrangements, which are so important for not just beef and lamb but dairy produce and our burgeoning fruit and vegetable sectors.

There is still a lack of detail about the position of EU nationals, who contribute so much to our farming and food businesses and, generally, to rural life in Scotland.

We do not even know yet whether we will be able to exercise devolved powers over farming and food production, which were devolved to Scotland in 1998 and which the UK Government is determined to grab for itself on spurious grounds. There might well be a need for frameworks in some areas where powers would be pooled for everyone's benefit on these islands, but the Conservative arguments come unstuck when we realise that there are currently no barriers to trading in the UK from within a CAP that allows each of the four nations to operate different support schemes, and that there is collaboration on animal health and welfare conducted through relationships of mutual trust and understanding among officials, particularly the chief veterinary officers, without resort to legislation or single systems.

People, including members of this Parliament, want to know what the future for farming and food production in Scotland will look like. However,

agriculture is part of the much wider rural economy, and future farm policy should reflect that reality. This Parliament asked me to establish an independent group involving relevant stakeholders to provide advice as to the principles and policies that should underpin options for appropriate rural support beyond 2020. I duly did so, and the national council of rural advisers has been working to deliver that. I expect to receive a further report from the council shortly and I want to consider its recommendations and proposals alongside those of the agriculture champions. Any change that we take forward must also, as the champions point out, be guided by real evidence about what the public values. We should therefore involve the wider public in determining future policy and seek their views and opinions, too.

I will consider the champions' report fully and carefully as I explore and plan for all eventualities in our future. Although the champions make clear that no change is not an option, I offer this reassurance: wherever Scotland's future lies and whatever our future holds, in the absence of stability and security from elsewhere, this Government is determined to provide as much certainty and clarity for rural Scotland as we can.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you. We will try to allow up to 20 minutes for questions, starting with one from Donald Cameron.

Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of his statement, and I refer my entry in the register of interests, which mentions farming and crofting.

It is absolutely clear to members on the Conservative benches that the cabinet secretary's words today and the report published last week do little to alleviate the concerns held by the agricultural sector across Scotland, which is becoming increasingly distressed at the lack of any concrete proposals for funding arrangements post-Brexit, despite the Scottish Government knowing the amount of CAP funding that Scotland is guaranteed to receive until 2022. The Scottish National Party Government's approach is weak and lightweight and it sits in stark contrast to the comprehensive approach of both the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Welsh Government, which have published detailed proposals with various options for post-Brexit support in England and Wales respectively.

The cabinet secretary's statement ends with a wish to provide certainty and clarity. With respect, Scotland's farming sector remains in complete limbo because of this Government's dereliction of duty when it comes to laying out the substance of future support. Almost two years after the Brexit vote, Scotland's farmers and crofters do not want talk about power grabs—they want detail. So, my

question is a simple one to ask and a simple one to answer: when will detailed proposals for Scotland's agricultural support system be produced?

Fergus Ewing: I think that it would behove any member of this Parliament to address the content of my statement on the agricultural champions' report. It would have displayed a bit of respect to four experienced individuals who are regarded as impartial and who have expertise in their fields to pay some regard to the content of the report, which is the content of my statement. I suggest that, if Mr Cameron has not applied himself to reading the report, he should do so. Unlike him, I want to listen to what people in Scotland have to say about the future of our policy. It is my desire not to dictate policy from top to bottom but to listen to experts and others, which is why I appointed the agricultural champions. It is also why, following a motion of this Parliament, I appointed the national council of rural advisers.

I can confirm to the member, in providing a response to his question, that following a full and careful study of the report that was published last week from the agriculture champions and following the publication in the coming months of the final report of the national council of rural advisers, we will, of course, respond to those recommendations and put forward our views as to the future.

However, I point out that the document from the UK that he referred to contains no figures at all as to the future post-Brexit. It was his party that promised that, post-Brexit, the totality of the funding for rural Scotland would be at least matched. On that key issue and that key pledge that was made by Mr Gove, Mr Eustice and many other Brexiteers, there has been total silence. Only once we receive confirmation about that information will it be possible to put forward any detailed proposal.

However, we are, of course, working hard to look at the best options for the future for Scottish agriculture despite the enormous uncertainties that are thrown up by the Brexit bungle that is being pursued by the UK Government.

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): I thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of his statement. I also place on record my appreciation to the four agriculture champions for their work and their report, much of which Labour can support.

I share the Scottish Government's concern about the lack of certainty not only on what the final negotiated Brexit settlement between the UK and the rest of the EU will be but, to be frank, on what the final negotiated settlement will be within the Conservative Party on the UK Government's position in those negotiations.

However, the Scottish Government cannot use that as a shield not to set out clearly what its vision is for post-Brexit support for agriculture and rural Scotland. I said in the chamber last week that there is frustration among Scotland's farmers about the lack of detail from the Scottish Government on the issue. Organisations such as NFU Scotland and Scottish Environment LINK are leading the way on exploring alternatives to the common agricultural policy and setting out clear principles behind what that support should look like.

Does the cabinet secretary agree that it is time for the Scottish Government to do the same and bring together all the key stakeholders to agree a shared vision of what Scotland wants that support to look like, and then to take that case to the UK Government, instead of waiting for it to tell us what to think? In other words, is it not time for the Scottish Government to stop waiting and start leading on the issue?

Fergus Ewing: I appreciate Mr Smyth's acknowledgement of the good work that the champions have done. That is respectful, and it stands in contrast with the approach of the Conservatives, sadly.

We constantly bring stakeholders together—both I and Roseanna Cunningham have done so on numerous occasions—in order to discuss the best way ahead. That led to the appointment of the agriculture champions, whose recommendations in chapter 3, I would have thought, merit careful consideration, rather than the political approach that the Conservatives have adopted.

In response to Mr Smyth's question, I note that three elements are fundamental for any business—costs, revenue and workforce. In relation to Brexit, it appears almost certain that, if we are dragged out of the single market, there will be tariffs and costs will go up. That was commented on by numerous spokespeople at the recent National Sheep Association event at Ballantrae, not least by Jim McLaren of Quality Meat Scotland. Costs are likely to go up.

Secondly, revenue is likely to go down. Thirdly, with regard to the workforce, the continuing availability of those people who give of their lives, their efforts and their family lives to work here in Scotland, where they are welcome, has been under a cloud of uncertainty since the Brexit referendum. The three fundamentals for every business are shrouded in uncertainty.

When the UK Government can get round to deciding something on Brexit and putting forward some sort of plan, it may perhaps be possible to address the realities in response to that. Until then, there are no figures, there is no clarity and

there is no capacity, therefore, to deliver any clear plan at all. That must be a statement of the blindingly obvious.

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): I draw members' attention to my ownership of a very small registered agricultural holding.

Can the cabinet secretary clarify whether the champions' vision and recommendations apply only after we have left the EU or whether there are some that we can start work on before then?

Fergus Ewing: I can confirm that the champions' recommendations apply to the future, whatever it may hold. That is why I am surprised that the Conservatives do not appear in the slightest bit interested in the work that has been done by those leading figures in Scottish rural life—it is very sad, really. The champions have a great deal to say about the future, on sustainability, productivity and skills. They have a lot to say about the need for new entrants, the need for increased productivity and the contribution that farmers already make to the stewardship of the environment, which is of course one of their twin main purposes. I commend to every member, as Mr Stevenson obviously would, that they read carefully the contents and recommendations of the report, which are extremely valuable in forming a pathway ahead for Scotland, whatever happens in relation to Brexit.

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for providing sight of his statement. I also point members to my entry in the register of members' interests.

We have had a statement from the cabinet secretary that says nothing about a plan or a policy. The agriculture champions' report says:

"Brexit amplifies and makes more urgent some fundamental challenges that farming was already facing".

The champions have also accepted that the EU will reduce CAP funding in future years, and we know that the UK Government has protected subsidies until 2022. Farmers need a plan for the next five years, which means, cabinet secretary, that you will have to stop dithering and start delivering, so where is the policy? Will you consult farmers before next year's crops are planned and planted and when will we see it?

The Presiding Officer: I encourage members to speak through the chair.

Fergus Ewing: Mr Mountain says that the UK Government has "protected subsidies until 2022", but that is simply not accurate. The fact is that the assurances that have been provided do not relate to the totality of rural funding; they relate primarily to pillar 1 and the phrase "farm support". I would not use the word "subsidy", because I think that

what farmers do is valuable and Mr Mountain's use of the term "subsidy" implies that he disagrees. The assurances simply do not apply to the totality of pillar 2 payments. Therefore, to say that all subsidies, as he puts it, are protected until 2022 is simply yet another false premise from the Conservatives.

I say again that it really would be more respectful if the Scottish Conservatives paid some attention to the substance of the reports that we have had rather than nit-picking and making party-political partisan points, which seems to be their only contribution to the debate.

The Presiding Officer: I encourage shorter questions and answers, as we have only until 10 to 3 for this session.

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): I welcome the champions' report.

Food banks are Scotland's shame. Can the cabinet secretary reassure members and the country that ending food poverty through the principles and structures of support and the development of local and affordable fresh food for our communities in a way that fuses the twin roles of food production and stewardship of the countryside will be at the heart of the Scottish Government's future policy, whatever happens with Brexit?

Fergus Ewing: Claudia Beamish raises a more sensible point than we have had from the Conservatives today, sadly. Of course food poverty is a blight on our country, and tackling it is a priority for us all. Farmers play a direct part in addressing that by contributing food for the nation. I am engaged in working with and encouraging public bodies, including schools, to ensure as far as possible that food is procured locally for school meals, for example. Some local authorities have had enormous success in that, and the proportion of food that is being procured locally has increased. That contributes to a sufficient healthy and nutritious diet for our children in particular and it addresses the topic that Claudia Beamish has raised in relation to the work of my colleagues across the Scottish Government.

Kate Forbes (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP): The cabinet secretary will be aware of the UK Government's white paper on the future of farm support. Are there areas in that report that the Scottish Government is likely to support or adopt?

Fergus Ewing: I want to study the report carefully, as I said, and I wish to do so in conjunction with study of the report from the National Council of Rural Advisers. The NCRA was set up at the behest of this Parliament, following the acceptance of an amendment from Mr Rumbles to a motion. Therefore, it is right that I

study the NCRA's report in order to implement the will of Parliament. As Parliament has asked me to do that, it is therefore correct, logically, that we allow time for the NCRA to deliver its final report and that we pay the NCRA the respect that it and Parliament deserve, by studying the report carefully before we announce conclusions. We will do precisely that.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): If I heard the cabinet secretary correctly, just 55 people have been feeding into the critical work on the future vision of Scotland's food and farming. That is disappointing given that more than 800 people—farmers and growers, food businesses and communities—have been meeting from the Scottish Borders to Shetland in kitchen-table talks to talk about their vision for food and farming, which has now been pulled together and published in a critical report. There seems to be something missing here. Why has the Scottish Government failed to meet its promise to consult on a good food nation bill in 2017? When will that now happen?

Fergus Ewing: If I may, I will correct the member. The first phase of consultation by the champions involved early work with a number of individuals. I referred to the fact that 55 individuals made specific contributions. I do not think that Mr Ruskell picked this up, but I said in my statement that, after the champions had published their initial work last year, they consulted on that work with, I think, around 25 organisations, including Ringlink, RSPB Scotland, the Scottish Crofting Federation and the Scottish Wildlife Trust. Those bodies—some of them are membership bodies and some are statutory bodies—reach out to a large number of people. It is perhaps slightly unfair to chide the champions for a lack of consultation. They were, and remain, very open in their work.

The second part of Mark Ruskell's question is not really the topic of today. However, we wish to progress all the matters that we have undertaken, and I am sure that we will come back to the specific topic that the member raises in due course.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): Does the cabinet secretary feel that the champions put enough emphasis on climate change in their recommendations?

Fergus Ewing: The champions have taken that vital matter into full account. Many of the recommendations can help to reduce greenhouse emissions. I commend careful reading of the report. The champions' approach is strongly consistent with the approach that is set out in the agriculture chapter of the climate change plan, which was published earlier this year. It says that improvements in efficiency, benchmarking and more integrated land use can each help to lower

the emissions intensity of Scottish produce. In their report, the champions said:

"Reducing waste will lead to lower greenhouse gas emissions per unit of output."

Help to improve farm profitability is important, too. That is why those two documents will complement each other in the future.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): The cabinet secretary said in his statement that people, including MSPs, want to know what the future of farming and food production in Scotland will look like. That is too true, but it is his job to tell us, not anybody else's. Why has he not involved relevant stakeholders as his advisers, as Parliament told him to do in January last year? He has the producers, but where are the consumers and the environmentalists? He has wasted nearly two years. When will he stop making excuses about not knowing the figures and start making the actual decisions that he is paid to make on our behalf?

Fergus Ewing: Mr Rumbles refers to a motion that Parliament agreed to. I believe and understand that I have obtempered to the letter the obligations that it was incumbent on us to carry out under that motion, as amended. I have said that before and I repeat it here.

As for the primary question, we do not know whether Brexit will take place and whether there will be a Brexit deal or whether there will be no deal—[*Interruption.*] Well, the UK took us on this course, which Scotland voted against. We do not know whether there will be tariffs or regulatory barriers for perishable goods. We do not know whether our Scotch lamb, for which European markets are essential, will have access to those markets. According to *The Scottish Farmer's* reporting, Jim McLaren and many others talked about that at Ballantrae in much more trenchant terms than I am using, to be frank. We do not know whether those who are in the workforce from countries throughout Europe, whom we in Scotland value, will continue to be welcome here.

In light of the complete lack of clarity about Brexit, as a result of the complete failure of the UK Cabinet and the Prime Minister to give any clarity, it is somewhat premature to expect me to have a clear plan for the outcome of all that.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I remind members that I am the parliamentary liaison officer to the cabinet secretary.

The cabinet secretary spoke about tariffs, increased costs, decreased revenue and the uncertainty of Brexit for farmers. What steps is the Scottish Government taking to prepare for the Tories' Armageddon Brexit, which newspaper reports have suggested could even result in

Scotland running out of food on the second day after exit day?

Fergus Ewing: The Armageddon option is not a product of the Scottish Government's spin doctors or officials; it was set out by advisers to the UK Government, who have said that Scotland and parts of England might run out of food within a couple of days of Brexit. That shows how serious the situation is, but all that we get from that lot in the Conservatives—incidentally, not one of them will say a word against how the UK Government is mishandling Brexit—is a political rant that the Scottish Government must produce a plan. However, we have no idea—and nor does anyone else in Scotland, which voted against Brexit—what exactly is happening down south, which is a complete and utter shambles.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes questions on the statement. I apologise to Mr Scott and Ms Martin, as we have no time left for their questions; in fact, we have used up all the time that was available for flexibility in the afternoon's debate.

Celebrating Scotland's Volunteers

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-12561, in the name of Angela Constance, on celebrating Scotland's volunteers. I give the warning that we are already short of time, so I appeal for brevity. I call Angela Constance, who has absolutely no more than 15 minutes.

14:54

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities (Angela Constance): Presiding Officer,

"Life's most persistent and urgent question is: 'What are you doing for others?'"

I have borrowed those words from Martin Luther King Jnr because they feel like an apt way to open this debate on volunteering, which is part of volunteers week 2018. I am delighted to have the opportunity in the chamber to thank all the people who freely give their time and energy to befriend the lonely, care for the sick and the dying, help their elderly neighbours and fight for causes that they believe in. I say thank you to them and to all Scotland's volunteers—they are an inspiration.

I am pleased to be wearing the T-shirt that I was gifted from Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian. The T-shirt says, quite simply, "Volunteers week—time to say thank you." I genuinely believe that that generosity of spirit and selfless giving of oneself will transform our communities and reflect the values that we hold true to others around the world who are fighting injustices every day. The theme of this year's volunteers week is "volunteering for all", which provides us with the opportunity to highlight that volunteering is for everyone and to celebrate the diversity of Scotland's volunteers.

Last week I had the pleasure of visiting the Cyrenians in Bathgate to learn more about how volunteers support the OPAL—older people active lives—programme and the pathway to recovery programme, which helps people to overcome addictions. I met volunteers of all ages and backgrounds who wanted to put their skills and experiences of life to good use. Some volunteers were rebuilding their lives, some after a bereavement and others after a battle with addiction, but they all wanted to give something back. All of them, from people in their 20s to women in their 80s, spoke of the importance of good support and training for volunteers. We should never forget that volunteers are often doing something that requires great knowledge and skill as well as great kindness.

Volunteering brings enormous benefits not only to beneficiaries but to communities and volunteers themselves. Among other things, volunteering increases social and civic participation, empowers communities and reduces loneliness and isolation. It can also improve mental and physical health, support the development of job and life skills and foster a greater sense of belonging. Volunteering is key to our achieving our ambition of creating a fairer and more prosperous country, with equality of opportunity for all—a country where everyone has the chance to participate and to make a difference.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): I absolutely agree with everything that the cabinet secretary has said so far about volunteering. Does she agree that volunteering is not inevitable—it is not a given—and that we in the Parliament have a duty to foster an environment that makes volunteering more accessible?

Angela Constance: Yes—I agree very much with that sentiment.

Creating a country that is fairer and more equal must be at the heart of everything that we do as a Government and, indeed, as a Parliament. Volunteering is truly the golden thread that runs through all our policies, from our draft strategy on social isolation and loneliness to our fairer Scotland for disabled people delivery plan and our fairer Scotland action plan. Every year, volunteers contribute an average of 136.5 million hours of help, and volunteering contributes £2 billion to our economy.

Despite our collective achievements, I am sure that all of us in the chamber want to do more when it comes to volunteering. I want us to create a society in which volunteering is the norm and where opportunity or expectation is not limited by upbringing or social circumstance. That is why volunteering is explicitly referred to in the programme for government and why we have committed to being bold in our vision for volunteering. We want to do more to support everyone who wants to participate.

We want to recognise the full spectrum of social action, from those who staff the helpline at the Samaritans every Sunday night to those random acts of everyday kindness. It is time to change the narrative of volunteering and to celebrate existing activity while finding new ways to engage with anyone who wants to participate.

It is also time to learn from our young people and build on the positive trends in youth volunteering. As a Government, we are committed to working with young people to better understand their aims and motivations for volunteering, and there is no better time to do that than during the year of young people.

Before I go on to say a bit more about our ambitions for volunteering and the role that our young people will play in shaping our approach, I take this opportunity to thank all the young people who have volunteered to play an active role in ensuring the success of the year of young people. There are now more than 500 ambassadors who will champion the year in their local communities. They are based in every local authority area, and I very much encourage members to find out what those young ambassadors are doing in their constituencies and regions and to engage with them around those activities, if they are not already doing so.

It is time to stop and listen to how young people perceive the world and how they are perceived by others. A better future for current and subsequent generations is what the real legacy from the year of young people should be. I am thrilled that our young people will play a crucial role in shaping the future of volunteering in Scotland. In partnership with ProjectScotland and Young Scot, young volunteers are being given the chance to lead work to engage young people and stakeholders from across Scotland in developing recommendations for the Scottish Government to help shape future strategic approaches to volunteering. I am excited about that work and the opportunity that it offers young people to shape a new approach to volunteering across the length and breadth of the country. Given the increase that we have seen in youth volunteering, from 33 per cent in 2009 to 52 per cent, who better to lead that work than our talented young people?

That activity will also support a wider programme of work with the sector to develop an outcomes-based framework for volunteering. The framework will set out clearly and in one place a coherent and compelling narrative for volunteering and will identify the key data and evidence that will inform, indicate and drive performance at the national and local levels. That work is already under way and during 2018 we will be working with our partners to take the conversation out to communities, to understand more about what volunteering means to them.

The outcomes framework will be developed in the context of the refreshed national performance framework, which has recently been scrutinised by the Parliament and will be published shortly. I am pleased to see much in that framework that helps to reinforce the importance of the volunteering agenda, particularly with reference to the need for us to live in an environment that is characterised by kindness, dignity, compassion and respect. I am particularly heartened to see the references to kindness, as that is a core value that is very much at the heart of why we volunteer and what we gain from the act of volunteering.

We continue to increase the diversity of the third sector's volunteering pool through the volunteering support fund, to include those who experience disadvantage or who traditionally experience barriers to volunteering. That fund is having a significant impact on individuals, organisations and communities, and I am excited to see what more will be achieved over the next three years. In the past year alone, the fund has supported 855 disadvantaged volunteers to participate. I take the opportunity to share an example of the difference that the fund is making to people's lives. East Lothian Aid for Refugees reports that its volunteer co-ordinator has visited foreign refugee camps on eight occasions, providing invaluable help and advice to the groups there. The same lady had previously not left her house for eight years because of her own problems. I know that that is just one example—there will be thousands more up and down the country.

I have no doubt that each and every member participating in today's debate will be able to share multiple examples of the positive power of volunteering from their own constituencies. As we debate volunteering today, I ask colleagues to reflect on and share those stories and testimonies. I ask that we use this time together to highlight and celebrate the contribution that volunteers make to our country each and every day for no fanfare or reward. I am sure that members will also reflect on the breadth of work that third sector organisations and community groups are delivering in their constituencies.

No doubt, we will all ask ourselves what more we can do collectively to mobilise for greater participation, and how we can engage people and take the conversation out of the chamber and policy rooms and into living rooms. In thanking our unsung heroes and heroines and celebrating the forces of good in our communities, let us also listen to those from whom we have not heard before.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the 34th annual Volunteers Week, which is being celebrated from 1 to 7 June 2018; recognises this as an important celebration of the fantastic contribution that over a million volunteers make every year across Scotland's communities, contributing around 130 million hours of help and £2 billion to the economy; believes that the week will inspire more people to join those already donating their time and energy to good causes; acknowledges the growing numbers of young people who participate in volunteering; commends volunteers for giving their time during the last year; notes the many ways in which the work of volunteers improves the quality of people's lives, and recognises that, by coming together through volunteering, Scotland builds stronger, fairer and more participative communities, as well as it being hugely rewarding for volunteers themselves.

15:05

Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con):

Volunteers week is a time to thank volunteers for the fantastic contribution that they make. This week, every day has a theme and, during the week, hundreds of events and celebrations will take place around the United Kingdom to thank volunteers and to recognise their invaluable and diverse contributions. This year, volunteers week is about volunteering for all, as the cabinet secretary said, and it celebrates the huge range of people who give their time in many ways.

I am delighted to open the debate for the Scottish Conservatives, because volunteering has always been and continues to be at the heart of my life. I grew up in a household with a mother who volunteered as a hospital visitor and with meals on wheels, local opera groups and sports teams, to name but a few examples.

I started volunteering when I was at primary school. I helped in the Sunday school and participated in village clean-ups. As I matured, so did my volunteering, which became skills-based. My husband says that I am not good at saying no when somebody approaches me to volunteer. However, as Winston Churchill said:

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

The Scottish Government defines volunteering as

"the giving of time and energy through a third party, which can bring measurable benefits to the volunteer, individual beneficiaries, groups and organisations, communities, the environment and society at large. It is a choice undertaken of one's own free will, and is not motivated primarily for financial gain or for a wage or salary."

That creates a distinction between formal volunteering through a third party, in which someone's efforts probably feature in the data that gives us a picture of the financial benefit that volunteering brings, and informal volunteering, such as the grass cutting that someone does for their elderly neighbour, or the lifts that they give to a friend who needs to get to hospital. That type of giving often goes unnoticed by everyone apart from those involved, and it is not recorded in data collections. It is the kindness to which the cabinet secretary referred.

Because of today's theme in volunteers week, the spotlight is on young volunteers. As such, I take great pleasure in noting that youth volunteering has been steadily increasing, and youth participation is now at about 52 per cent. Initiatives such as the John Muir award, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and the saltire award have given focus to young people's volunteering and have allowed them to build their confidence, skills and readiness for work or further

education. New friends are made and lifelong memories are created.

The challenge is in how we maintain young people's level of engagement with volunteering as they become adults, because adult participation hovers at just 27 per cent. Volunteer numbers in Scotland have not changed much in the past decade, and volunteer numbers in general have been in steady decline since 2010. If it were not for our young people, there might be a different figure for participation.

The most common reason that people cite for stopping volunteering is lack of time. As young people move into the workplace, or as their family commitments take over and any spare time is spent with family, they are likely to feel that they have less time to give to volunteering.

We must be whole-heartedly grateful to the people who continue to give up their time. They not only contribute to society and communities, but enhance the lives of many people in their communities by helping to bring people closer together. Their work creates a happier and healthier environment for us all.

In the Scottish Borders, 30 per cent of adults volunteer formally, and even more contribute their time informally. As was said earlier, the latest Scottish household survey showed that, in 2016, formal volunteers in Scotland contributed just under 137 million hours of help, which was worth in total £2 billion to their local economies. We cannot ignore that. Although that is perhaps a rather crude estimation of the value of volunteers because there is far more to their worth than pound signs, it is based on the time in hours that have been contributed, multiplied by the median wage.

What does that mean in one small town? In my home town of Selkirk, music is provided by a silver band, a flute band and a pipe band, which all teach the next generation of musicians. The common riding and agricultural show are organised and run by volunteers. The local war memorial and garden were built and are maintained by volunteers. The cricket, football, rugby, swimming, bowling and riding clubs are all delivered and run by volunteers. The two fantastic new play parks were created through fundraising by dedicated volunteers. Town centre buildings are being developed by the volunteers of the local development company. Cubs, scouts, brownies, guides and Army cadets are all run by volunteers. The local kayak club, the archery club, the local opera company and many of the town's music and entertainment events are organised and run by volunteers.

My personal shout out is for the beautiful estate of the Haining Charitable Trust, of which I am

proud to be a trustee, even if it does give me a few sleepless nights. It was left for the benefit of the people of Selkirkshire and is managed and run by a team of amazing volunteers who are engaged in renovating the estate and providing a wonderful place for local people to hold events and special days and to just enjoy, all year round.

The local community council, the chamber of trade and the casting organisations all provide massive inputs of voluntary work to Selkirk. Without them, we would have no Christmas lights, no farmers markets and no celebration events. I mention all those before I get to parent-teacher councils and all the individual volunteering that takes place.

The most important things that a volunteer brings to an organisation—in addition to the personal, social and community benefits—are perhaps their enthusiasm and experience. Those are, of course, more difficult to measure than monetary value, but are arguably more important because they create the society in which we live.

At present in Scotland, women and girls are more likely to volunteer than are men and boys. People from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to volunteer formally, whereas people from the lowest socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to volunteer informally by helping neighbours and being in community initiatives rather than by volunteering through established organisations. It can be argued that those who are not engaged could have most to gain from volunteering. There is continued evidence of underrepresentation of disadvantaged groups in volunteering.

Volunteering brings a sense of belonging and wellbeing, and it helps people to engage with their local community, giving them a sense of purpose. Community resilience can be created and generated by volunteering, because everyone comes together for the benefit of one another. Volunteering can improve youth engagement, address social exclusion, increase community engagement and help towards achieving a fair and equitable society.

In my 50 years of volunteering, I have seen a lot of changes, not least in the levels of paperwork and responsibility that have, in some cases, overridden many of the pleasures of volunteering. There is a danger that, as we professionalise volunteering, individuals will become more reluctant to take on lead responsibilities, for which the onus will be pushed on to the funding of paid co-ordinators.

When I researched how to evidence how much volunteering gives us, I looked into how it improves our wellbeing—not only for individuals, but for communities. It is interesting that the

Department for Work and Pensions and the Cabinet Office have, in work to establish the benefit to the wellbeing of volunteers, found that 1.9 per cent more life satisfaction can be accrued by those who give up their time, compared with non-volunteers. That may depend on the start point for life satisfaction, but I would challenge the figure, because I have often felt that the volunteering in my life has given me the most satisfaction and often made me happiest. An example is the strange nights when we have gone out in the middle of the night and planted up the town, so that in the morning, when people came out to the festival, it looked different from how it looked when they had gone home the night before. We all went home with quiet pleasure, chuckling to ourselves because we had made a real difference and would put smiles on people's faces in the morning.

Volunteering for all is a theme that provides the prospect of engaging people who would not normally partake of volunteering opportunities. We must learn how they can be better supported, where new opportunities should be developed and where to increase access to volunteering opportunities for the benefit of everyone living in Scotland.

Volunteers are not paid, not because they are worthless but because they are priceless. Today is a day to say thank you to everyone who has volunteered and to say to anybody who has not that they should join in and volunteer, because it will make a difference in their lives.

15:15

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): It is great to be taking part in this celebration of volunteering in Scotland, and I am grateful to the cabinet secretary for holding this important debate. This is a wonderful opportunity for all of us to congratulate Volunteer Scotland on raising awareness of the crucial work of Scotland's army of volunteers during volunteers week and to share what volunteering means to us and the communities that we represent.

We fully support the motion and, on behalf of Scottish Labour, I want to say a massive thank you to everyone who contributes to Scotland's vibrant culture of volunteering. Volunteering is an important part of life in Scotland today, with 1.2 million people in Scotland volunteering a staggering 136 million hours of their time collectively every year. As the cabinet secretary recognised, that contributes £2 billion to our economy, so it is an invaluable good for volunteers and beneficiaries alike.

The commitment that I made to a local befriending organisation when I was a student is

an experience that enriched my life, and I am still in touch with COVEY in South Lanarkshire today. At the time, I perhaps did not realise the wider impact of volunteer work or the influence that it would have on my own outlook and values.

Volunteers add something special to our communities, whether it is by having a cup of tea with young people who might be having a rough time or through reinforcing the work of our emergency services. However, the benefits do not flow in one direction. Being a volunteer can be really fulfilling; it can help people to feel part of something in addition to their own network of family and friends. For those who experience loneliness or who are feeling disconnected, volunteering can play a crucial role in alleviating feelings of social isolation or in achieving a clearer sense of purpose.

We know that loneliness has a significant impact on mental health and that it carries an increased risk for particular groups, such as disabled people and older people. Disabled people and older people are underrepresented in voluntary participation, and that strikes me as a lot of missed opportunities. The theme of this week is volunteering for all, and there is work to do to remove barriers to participation so that volunteering is experienced by people from all kinds of different backgrounds. Their skills and experiences can enrich our community and challenge stereotypes and stigma.

I was recently at two events where the special contribution of older people and disabled people to voluntary roles was clear. At an event organised by Disability Equality Scotland, I heard about the tireless work of access panels to improve social inclusion for disabled people. The contribution of access panels is crucial, particularly when policy makers are not always representative of service users, which is something that has become quite apparent to me during the scrutiny of the Planning (Scotland) Bill. I believe that there is a strong case for access panels to have statutory rights in the planning process, such as the right to be consulted on local planning applications, so that we can build truly inclusive places. At the latest Scottish older people's assembly, it was clear that older people have the life experience and often the professional experience to make them valuable volunteers.

Intergenerational interaction is one of the many benefits of volunteering, along with the culture of kindness and respect that it inspires. When I was a councillor in Whitehill, in Hamilton, we had an annual intergenerational lunch that young people came along to. They cooked the meal and joined older people to have lunch together. It was an event that everyone in the community looked forward to every year.

In the year of young people, it is fantastic to see that youth volunteering participation has now grown to 52 per cent. In my area of South Lanarkshire, Voluntary Action South Lanarkshire found that, of the volunteers it works with, 63 per cent are under the age of 25.

It is crucial that volunteering opportunities are accessible for everyone, and particularly underrepresented groups, who are often the ones who could benefit the most. More must be done to meet the complex needs of different groups. I am keen to hear more from the Scottish Government about the action that it is taking to work with stakeholders to identify and eliminate barriers to volunteering.

On Saturday 23 June, I am hosting a coffee morning as part of the great get together—a series of events in memory of the late Jo Cox MP. My colleague Ged Killen MP and I are hosting the coffee morning at the Gilmour and Whitehill parish church. It will be quite relaxed, and we are aiming to bring together people who would not normally spend time together on a Saturday. The invitation is open to everyone in the chamber and beyond. All that a person has to do is register in advance so that there are enough teas, coffees and cakes in.

In this debate, I am reminded of the words of Jo Cox, who said, as a result of going round her constituency:

“we are far more united and have far more in common than that which divides us.”—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 3 June 2015; Vol 596, c 675.]

That is the great spirit behind volunteering.

Voluntary Action South Lanarkshire has confirmed that over 16,000 hours of volunteering have been contributed in our area and that over 61 per cent of that time was in the field of health and social care. I found that interesting.

Volunteering is very diverse. Bothwell Road action group in Hamilton brings people together to get them outdoors and do some litter picking. People do not realise how much fun litter picking can be when the weather is good. It is quite therapeutic.

I congratulate Antonia Caithness from Hamilton. She was recently crowned Scottish parent of the year for her voluntary work supporting other parents. Speaking to the rewarding nature of volunteering, she said that, after experiencing adversity in her childhood, volunteering had helped to build her confidence.

The beneficiaries of voluntary work are often the most vulnerable in our society. The services are often aimed at those who are most in need, and they can help people not to slip through the net. At a time when local government funding is

squeezed, I appeal to the Scottish Government to ensure that charities are not allowed to slip through the net.

I was pleased to hear the cabinet secretary talk about the importance of recovery. Just a couple of hundred yards from the Scottish Parliament, Serenity community cafe, which was set up and is run by volunteers in alcohol and drug recovery, was recently at risk of closure. It has to move premises. There is some good news there, but it now has to raise funds to kit out the new premises. It has a GoFundMe page, which I checked before the debate. It has raised just under £2,000, and the cafe needs £25,000. It is also on Twitter: @SerenityCafe; the hashtag is #SOSEdinburgh. It does fantastic work, which is all led and run by volunteers, and it needs our support.

The spirit of volunteering is very special, but we have to be careful that volunteers are not brought in to take the role of skilled workers who used to do jobs. For example, last week we heard that, in the Scottish Borders, several school librarians are being replaced by pupils and volunteers as a cost-saving measure. I hope that none of us would wish that practice to be rolled out. I appeal to the Scottish Government to ensure that volunteers and the voluntary sector do not bear the cost of that.

Volunteering drives forward the principles of equality and opportunity, promotes intergenerational learning and understanding, and helps to foster a culture of respect and kindness. I hope that the message of volunteers week is heard by people across Scotland, that the priceless gift of giving time to help others is widely recognised, and that volunteers, who are often humble about the work that they do, take some time to recognise and celebrate their contribution to communities across Scotland.

15:23

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): I join others in commending everyone in Scotland who dedicates their time, talent and expertise to volunteering. Volunteers make an incredible contribution to an enormously wide range of activities.

It is fair to say that there are many people whom we all wish to thank, but I want to highlight the great fundraising work that volunteers do. One group alone—the capital sci fi con team—has raised over £74,000 for the Children’s Hospice Association Scotland and more than £180,000 over the past three years. The youngest member of that costume group is only eight years old. That is a clear indication of the impact that our volunteers make.

I turn to the role of volunteering in supporting and promoting sport in particular. There are at least 45,000 voluntary organisations in Scotland, and almost a third of them are sports clubs. Sixteen per cent of all those who volunteer give their time to sport in Scotland. It is worth noting that, in the year of young people, half of all young people who volunteer do so in sport. In our 2016 manifesto, the Scottish Greens were proud to highlight the crucial contribution that volunteers make to sport in Scotland. Across Scotland, there are more than 13,000 sports clubs and almost 200,000 people dedicated to volunteering in sport, bringing great benefits to society.

The support delivered to Scottish Athletics in volunteer hours amounts to £7.9 million, which is a remarkable contribution to athletics at all levels. I draw members' attention to my entry in the register of members' interests.

I am delighted to be co-sponsoring, with my colleague Liz Smith MSP, the Scottish Sports Association reception to celebrate volunteering in Scottish sport that is taking place next Tuesday in the Parliament building. We will celebrate Scottish sports and the almost 200,000 volunteers. MSPs will be able to meet volunteers from throughout Scottish sport, so I ask them to please come along.

Green MSPs wholeheartedly support expanding sports clubs in Scotland through support for volunteering. If clubs do not have the volunteers, they cannot deliver the sports. We would like to see facilities given priority and provided with more funding, so that they can be more accessible and enable more women, people from minority ethnic communities and people with disabilities to participate in all aspects of sport and volunteering.

Michelle Ballantyne and Monica Lennon have highlighted the barriers that specific groups face to volunteering as they might wish. A report from England by Women in Sport, "Good Sports: Why sports need to engage female volunteers", showed that although women make up the majority of volunteers across all activities, they are still less likely to volunteer in sport than men. In fact, figures from 2015 indicate that men are twice as likely to volunteer in sport as women. The research found that volunteers in sport are more likely to be white males from an affluent background. There are

"less visible volunteering roles for women in sport than in non-sport roles",

and women who want to progress in sport reported feeling

"isolated, disconnected and less valued as volunteers than men".

That research relates to England, but I would be interested in the picture in Scotland. I suspect that it might be similar.

Certainly, when the Health and Sport Committee looked at volunteering in sport, we found that time and costs were real barriers. We looked at many ways to make volunteering more accessible. It is crucial that we provide good development opportunities for women in volunteering, because women volunteers are such important role models for young women and girls.

Given our reliance on volunteer coaches to deliver sport, I would like to see more women coaching, and not only at levels 1 and 2—welcome though that is. We want more women and girls to stay involved, and having more women coaches is key. We should look at the success of Judy Murray's she rallies initiative. It is all about empowering and enabling young women and girls to take part in tennis, and it is something that could be looked at more broadly.

Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland told us that we have to do more to understand and build on the motivation for people to volunteer in the first place. Are people looking to gain new skills, or even qualifications? We have to find ways of making sure that volunteers can grow and adapt their roles within organisations, rather than expecting them to carry out the same responsibilities for a long time, because that can be a real barrier to retaining volunteers who have great experience.

We have all met people who volunteered in sport when their children took up or started competing in a sport and stayed as volunteers until their children left it. We lose real talent: people who have become invaluable to sports organisations. With a bit more support and recognition, we could hang onto volunteers for longer. If those people had more of a chance to represent the sports in their communities, at events and in the media, organisations could hold on to the expertise for longer.

We should do all that we can as a society to encourage volunteering, and employers have a key role. A basic income could help to deliver more volunteers. Clearly, the financial costs of being a volunteer can be prohibitive for too many people. Not everyone has the same opportunities to get involved in volunteering. Many would love to, but are restricted by long working hours, lack of assistance with core caring commitments and the hidden costs of volunteering, in terms of travel and expenses.

I look forward to the cabinet secretary's response to those points. Again, I thank all who volunteer in Scotland: we cannot thank you enough.

15:29

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): I am very proud to speak in the debate, not just as a Liberal Democrat but as the convener of the cross-party group on volunteering. I take the opportunity to thank the secretariat—Paul Okroj of Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland, and John Mullin and Margaret Starkie of Volunteer Scotland—who have helped the group to come alive. It is one of the best functioning CPGs in the Parliament.

This has been a delightful debate. We have heard about a myriad of examples of work in constituencies, and about MSPs who are engaged in the life of organisations at a very local level. What binds such groups is the social cohesion that they foster—a million seemingly tiny acts of public service, philanthropy and compassion on the part of our voluntary organisations forge the backbone of our communities.

The cabinet secretary was right to talk about the financial contribution that volunteering in Scotland makes. I think that £2 billion is a conservative estimate of the contribution of the formal volunteering that takes place. Some 1.2 million adults—or 27 per cent of the population—say that they are involved in formal volunteering at some level. However, that is the tip of the iceberg. When we consider all the quiet, selfless acts that take place every day, in every street and town in this country, we can see a far, far bigger picture. Without such volunteering, our society and our communities would simply grind to a halt.

As I said in my intervention during the cabinet secretary's speech, volunteering is not inevitable. We have a duty of care to volunteers. In the Parliament and in the halls of government, we need to foster an environment that can be quite fragile.

We are lucky in Scotland in that we have opportunities for volunteering from cradle to grave, so it is right that the theme of this year's volunteers week is volunteering for all. We foster active citizenship in our schools, and we get young people out from nursery age to volunteer in litter pick-ups and the like. Such activity carries on through school to college and university.

I was 19 years a youth worker in Scotland. We should be concerned about the decline in community learning and development activity. About 10 years ago, the CLD department at the University of Strathclyde closed and it has not really been replaced; we are not churning out trained youth workers who can lead volunteer armies of youth workers. We need to turn our attention to that.

We talk about corporate social responsibility, but in times of economic shock CSR is one of the first things that companies roll back on. We need to

move away from a model in which organisations or companies get staff to paint rooms in a local care home badly, when they could be using their skill set to build resilience and capacity in hard-to-reach groups of people.

We often talk about retirement as though it were something bad. Yes, our having an increasing ageing population is a strain, but that population is also a resource. Many retirees and older people engage in volunteering, making our communities intergenerational as they impart their skills and knowledge and forge relationships that they would never otherwise have had.

We rely on volunteering in this country. It backfills many state obligations, and we lean on it in the delivery of many of the services that we instruct and fund from the Parliament. I am an evangelist for volunteering because of that. It is incredibly scalable, from stuffing envelopes to taking part in a mountain rescue team. It is also utterly inclusive; the voluntary sector bends over backwards to make volunteering accessible to people of all abilities and from all backgrounds. The good will that volunteering creates is far greater than the sum of its parts.

When I came into this job, I enjoyed seeing a counterpoint of my interest in volunteering in the interests of many parliamentarians from all parties. People often do politicians down and say that we are just self-interested, but I have heard many examples of friends and colleagues in other parties volunteering in the public service. It is about expanding the lives of the communities around us.

I thank the Government for bringing the debate to the chamber and for its continuing interest in supporting volunteering, through the cross-party group and across the country—the cabinet secretary talked about a “golden thread” in that regard. Volunteering is an issue from which we should strip out party politics.

We talk a good game about community in the chamber, and we probably know more about our communities than previous generations did—we have a forensic understanding of the social problems that exist and the magnitude of the growth and healing that we need to foster in our communities. Volunteering is key to that.

Bobby Kennedy, who was killed in this week 50 years ago, said:

“It is not enough to understand, or to see clearly. The future will be shaped in the arena of human activity, by those willing to commit their minds and their bodies to the task.”

I finish by joining in the thanks that have been expressed today to the legions of people of all ages and abilities, in every part of Scotland, who

quietly put their shoulders to the wheel in serving the cause of the betterment of the nation.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I thank all the opening speakers. We are now back on track but are still quite tight for time, so we will have speeches of up to five minutes.

15:35

David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP): I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests, in that I am a long-standing member of the Scout Association and of several management committees in my constituency.

I welcome today's debate, in which we celebrate volunteers week, which runs from 1 to 7 June, and the opportunity to bring attention to the vital role that volunteers play across Scotland.

The Scottish third sector is made up of more than 1 million volunteers and 40,000 voluntary organisations. Our volunteers dedicate hundreds of hours a year to providing invaluable services through charities, community organisations and voluntary groups. They provide support and care in tackling a range of issues that ultimately impact individuals and communities on a massive scale. They offer fresh and innovative approaches on national and international levels, and tailor their services to local issues. Their selfless work and dedication cannot go unrecognised, and it is an honour to bring attention to the contribution of volunteers to our communities, economy, society and environment.

It is a pleasure to be able to highlight some of the great volunteer work that goes on in my constituency, with impacts stretching across the country. Since its establishment, CLEAR Buckhaven has made an immense contribution by planting vegetables and wild flowers, growing and selling produce and offering horticultural open days. Our local authority's capacity is often too constrained to be able to offer the services that CLEAR Buckhaven can offer, such as litter clearing, recycling, landscaping and repairs; it also organises activities for children. Kirkcaldy YMCA is another fantastic voluntary organisation that provides a wide range of programmes for children, young people and families, creating opportunities for them that were not available previously. It works in partnership with other voluntary organisations, charities and international groups to maximise their impact in Kirkcaldy and the surrounding area. Those are just two of the hundreds of voluntary groups in my constituency, but I thank them all for the invaluable and irreplaceable support that they give. They are an integral part of the social fabric of the constituency, which would be a lot worse off without their invaluable efforts. They bring our

community closer together by creating trusted relationships and have opened their doors to community members of all ages.

The economic impact that our volunteers make is often understated and difficult to measure. They often give up their paid working time to dedicate their time and efforts to volunteering. A survey by Volunteer Scotland estimated that volunteers contributed £2 billion to Scotland's economy in 2016. However, in addition to their financial contribution there are less quantifiable benefits, such as the personal, social, community and environmental benefits.

I would like to read to the chamber a poem posted by the Scout Association for volunteers week, which highlights the importance of its volunteers:

"Here's to our volunteers.
The extra-milers.
The dreamers and the doers.
Here's to our programme planners
And make-it-up-on-the-spotters"—

of which I am one.

"Here's to our minibus drivers
And trailer-towers.
Here's to our give-it-a-goers.
Here's to our skills for lifers
And never-give-uppers.
Here's to our 'here-when-you-need-us'.
Here's to our amazing leaders.
Here's to our volunteers."

Although that poem was written to thank the members of the Scout Association for their contributions, it applies to all of Scotland's 1.2 million volunteers, 11,946 of whom contribute to the scouts in Scotland, supporting a membership of 40,000 young people every week. The scouts has an enormous impact on our young people as a medium for tackling social isolation, building relationships, developing skills, having fun adventures and making friends. Our scout groups very much depend on volunteers to provide our services, and we cannot function without them.

We have an incredibly mutually beneficial relationship: volunteers reduce operating costs for charities and organisations such as the scouts, while organisations offer volunteers opportunities to develop life skills. Our volunteers also contribute to the quality of the services that the scouts provide by contributing their specialised and tailored skills and talents. While our volunteers are celebrated for their contribution to the community and young people, we must always recognise their contribution to the charities or organisations that they serve.

Volunteering for the scouts serves as a fantastic opportunity for adults to develop their skills. According to a survey by the Scout Association, more than 90 per cent of its volunteers felt that the

skills, abilities and experiences that they acquired through volunteering have been relevant to their working and personal lives. In fact, two thirds believed that they felt a direct correlation between their experience of volunteering with the scouts and gaining employment or developing and advancing career opportunities. Other research has revealed that volunteers believe that they are more satisfied with life, reporting an improvement in self-esteem and reduced feelings of loneliness and stress.

I reiterate why we are celebrating our volunteers this week. Volunteers provide us with new and innovative insights that enable us to develop approaches to tackle problems of mental and physical health, education, social isolation and discrimination, to name just a few. They give back to the community and create intimate connections with local residents, particularly young people, by bringing people together and celebrating diversity and inclusivity.

15:40

Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): I am glad to have the opportunity to speak in a debate that pays tribute to the contributions of the thousands of volunteers across the country who play such a big role in making our communities the great places that we live in.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of communities in Scotland. They organise groups for children so that they can learn new skills through the likes of the scouts and the girl guides, and they run events such as galas, fêtes and shows that bring together and bind our communities. They also run the thousands of charities that exist in Scotland, which do a great plethora of things to make Scotland a better country to live in.

I note that the Government's motion attaches a quantitative value to the impact that volunteers have on Scotland—it says that they contribute

“around 130 million hours of help and £2 billion to the economy”.

That is an impressive testament to the impact of their work, but such is the scale of that impact that I do not think that it can be measured solely by figures. Each of the places that we represent would be so much worse off if there were no volunteers.

I hope that the 34th annual volunteers week will encourage more people to volunteer. I read recently that volunteer numbers in Scotland have stayed at the same level for the past 10 years. According to the 2016 Scottish household survey, 27 per cent of adults reported having provided volunteering help to organisations and groups in the previous 12 months; 18 per cent of adults who volunteered did so several times a week, and a

quarter of volunteers who provided unpaid help did so once a week. Three out of four adults who volunteered did so for up to 10 hours a month.

What those statistics show is that, when people volunteer, they recognise the benefits of it and they enjoy it. That makes sense to me, because there are so many great things about volunteering. It enables the person who does it to meet new people, to acquire new skills, to develop their existing skills, to gain experience, to make a difference in their local community and, most important of all, to have fun. We must shout more about the benefits of volunteering and make it clear that volunteering is not just—as, I think, some people view it—a one-way street that involves people giving their time for nothing, because they get numerous intangible benefits in return while supporting their community.

In speaking about volunteering, it would be remiss of me not to take the opportunity to pay tribute to some of the volunteers and voluntary groups that are running in the West Scotland region that I represent. We must never forget the families behind those volunteers, who give them the support that enables them to volunteer. The Centre 81 community and youth centre in Garelochhead—I must declare that I am a member of its board—does great work in supporting young people in the area by providing opportunities and facilities for them, and the help of volunteers makes it possible to deliver that support.

Another group in my West Scotland region is the friends of Geilston house and garden, an organisation that was formed to promote, protect and preserve the presence of Geilston gardens, house and estate in Cardross, which were bequeathed to the local community for its benefit. They are all doing a great job.

In addition, in West Scotland, as my colleague Michelle Ballantyne mentioned, we are lucky enough to have a large number of cadet units. We have 18 Army cadet units, nine air cadet squadrons and five sea cadet units, all of which are run by volunteers. They provide children from all backgrounds with the opportunity to learn new skills and give them the chance to take part in some unbelievable experiences—in the air cadets, for example, it is possible to learn to fly a plane or a glider.

There are also a number of Royal National Lifeboat Institution voluntary lifeboat stations in my region. The role of the people who volunteer in those stations is to save those who get themselves into trouble at sea, risking their own lives in the process.

We are lucky enough, too, to have a great number of people who volunteer to support local

sports clubs and teams in the West Scotland region. They are the reason why many successful sportsmen and women have come from West Scotland in recent years.

I have given four examples of different kinds of volunteering. Whether they are to do with sport, with providing new opportunities, with protecting our culture and heritage or with looking after those in peril at sea, they all have one thing in common—they support and enhance our communities.

I will talk briefly about a different type of volunteer: the political volunteer. If it was not for them, none of us would be in the chamber right now, and I am sure that all colleagues in the chamber would agree that they are vital. It is important to pay tribute to them as volunteers, from whatever party or from none, because they ensure that we have a vibrant and participative democracy in Scotland through doing their bit and fighting for their beliefs. Whether by delivering leaflets, stuffing envelopes or knocking on doors at election time, they provide an invaluable service. Without them, we would not be able to do our job of taking our views and ideas to the electorate and of listening to the electorate. They help us give voters a real choice at elections.

15:45

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): I am delighted to take part in the debate. When I was elected as a councillor in 2007, one of the tasks that I was given was to serve on the international children's games board, which brought the children's games to Lanarkshire in 2011. That was my first experience of recruiting volunteers, and it was an interesting process. It was a joy to see the community step up to ensure that the games were a success, that the young people who were coming from all over the world to take part were looked after and entertained, and that everything went well. Alison Johnstone mentioned how important volunteers are to sports; whether it is the Commonwealth games or the homeless world cup, no such event could take place without volunteers coming together for them.

I was a volunteer. Monica Lennon said that volunteers are humble, but I did not even consider myself to be a volunteer. However, as a Dalziel Rugby Club Dragons den mum, I spent many a Saturday morning in the den cooking sausages for the junior rugby players while my husband coached the team. We never thought of ourselves as volunteers, but as involved parents. Many people are just being good citizens, neighbours, parents, carers and guardians and do not consider what they are doing to be volunteering or think about its benefit to our society. However, the debate is all about recognising that.

Michelle Ballantyne: On that note, will Clare Adamson join me in welcoming and congratulating the 15,000 people who volunteer for the Scottish Rugby Union to ensure that grass-roots rugby takes place? There are an awful lot of us.

Clare Adamson: I was just getting on to that very subject, because rugby is a huge passion of mine, as members know. I was very lucky to attend the Dalziel festival of youth rugby this year. It hosted teams from all over Scotland, including from the Borders, Edinburgh and Glasgow, who came together to take part in a spectacular day of rugby that involved primary 1 teams right through to senior secondary school teams. I was lucky enough to give out some of the medals, which was really good.

The other reason why am very interested in talking about rugby today is that I have recently been involved with a social inclusion charity called School of Hard Knocks, and I hosted an event for it in Parliament last year. The organisation runs courses involving mentoring and looking after people, and tackles issues around long-term unemployment, self-esteem and employability, and it teaches life skills. Many of the people who now do that work for the charity have come through its programme and have become volunteers because the programme was such a good experience for them. It is about life skills disguised as rugby.

One of my favourite charities is Reeltime Music. It is based in my area and describes itself as doing "Youth work dressed as rock'n'roll",

which I think is quite cool. I was very lucky to be with Reeltime Music for the fifth or sixth year in Motherwell town centre when it was participating in the Sound Minds mental health charity event just a few weeks ago. There was not only live music in the town centre that day, but taster sessions in music and skills for young people. Reeltime Music is very important in my community because it is one of the groups that we see everywhere and is involved in every initiative that happens. I should declare an interest in that my son volunteers with Reeltime Music.

I know that today is a day of celebration, but I will talk briefly about a very tragic experience in my constituency recently, where we have experienced the deaths through suicide of a number of very young people, some of them schoolchildren. It has been devastating, and people are looking for answers and help, so I want to talk about some of the charity organisations whose volunteers have come together to support my community through that process. Reeltime Music is one of them. We also have an initiative called "Getting better together", which is based in Shotts and also works in Wishaw. There is

FFAMS—Families and Friends Against Murder and Suicide—Chris’s House, which is a suicide prevention charity in Wishaw, and the Fool On mental health charity. They have all come together to have community meetings to try to support the community through the process.

On 16 June, they will all come together at the Craigneuk mountain biking pump track, and volunteers from Wishaw Mountain Biking Club will be there to support young people. Alongside the fun activities on that day, they will be looking to recruit people to take part in safeTALK training and applied suicide intervention skills training, and they will be working to support our community through what has been an absolutely devastating time. That is an example of what volunteers bring to our communities. They are such an important part of our communities, and that work is about all of us being safer and happier in Scotland. I thank our volunteers very much.

15:50

Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Lab): I draw attention to my entry in the register of members’ interests as a member of Unite the union.

National volunteers week gives us all an opportunity to reflect on the positive contribution that volunteering makes to the lives of our families and communities across Scotland. We have already heard some excellent examples, and I know that we will hear more throughout the debate. I particularly recognised Clare Adamson’s remarks, as I am a rugby mum and my husband is a past coach at Waysiders Drumpellier RFC in Coatbridge.

It is hard to select from the thousands of volunteer activities in my area, but I begin by commending the work that is done through the Lanarkshire Breastfeeding Initiative. As the author of the Breastfeeding etc (Scotland) Act 2005, and because I breastfed my son Vann, I have a particular interest in breastfeeding support. When Vann was born, I was living hundreds of miles from my family and was very dependent on the breastfeeding mothers group and the volunteers who were running it in conjunction with the NHS.

Having worked with local groups in drawing up my breastfeeding legislation and having kept in touch ever since, I know that volunteers, health workers and families all work together to promote the benefits of breastfeeding and the health of breastfeeding mothers. Through improving the care, support and facilities that are available for breastfeeding mums, we can ensure that the health of mums and their babies is vastly improved, with breastfeeding being supported and sustained. About 500 premises in Lanarkshire are now part of the breastfeeding welcome scheme,

and the community mums network is going from strength to strength. I am sure that Parliament will want to recognise and congratulate the people who are involved in that.

However, I want to sound a general note of caution, which is that volunteers should enhance public services and not replace them. It is also important to note that volunteers themselves require good support and training. I have direct experience of that, because a number of years ago I worked as a volunteer manager in a general practice, and I am aware that schemes such as the LBI are most effective when they are delivered in collaboration with core services.

The expanding role of food banks in many of our communities has highlighted people’s willingness to come forward as volunteers to provide such services, and there is no doubt that the public response to rising food poverty has been overwhelming. I commend that volunteer effort across Scotland, which is often provided through churches. However, as is highlighted so powerfully in Ken Loach’s film “I, Daniel Blake”, some of the causes of increased dependence on food banks lie in inhumane treatment of people by a punitive social security system which, combined with rising in-work poverty, means that there is unacceptable pressure on many households today.

We must recognise that the increase in food banks and the consequent growth in volunteer numbers in them is symptomatic of political choices and public spending decisions that need to be challenged and changed. As such, Scottish Labour is ensuring that we poverty proof our policies, because no one should be poor, cold and hungry in 21st century Scotland. Although today’s debate is about celebrating the massive contribution that volunteers make in so many ways, it must also be about addressing problems that are highlighted by an increase in the need for volunteers. In this instance, surely we do not wish to build a society for the future that depends on food banks as the solution to hunger.

The theme of this year’s volunteers week is volunteering for all, and it celebrates the huge range of people who give their time in so many ways. In drawing to a conclusion, I want to draw attention to an area in which volunteering often seems to go unnoticed. In workplaces up and down the country, lay members of trade unions give freely of their time to assist and support other colleagues, striving to create safe and healthy working environments for all. I am well aware of that, having spent nearly a decade as a National and Local Government Officers Association and then Unison branch secretary in the Highlands.

Effective campaigns for a living wage, equal pay and dignity and respect at work and against discrimination and injustice all depend on union

volunteers. Agreement on facility time and some statutory work-release time to deal with health and safety legislation provide for recognised trade union reps to do some of the work that is associated with their role, and those must be protected and strengthened and certainly not cut.

However, very many hours of volunteer time go into ensuring that there is an effective trade union and employee voice in workplaces and companies. Trade unionists are always at the end of the phone, ready to offer a helping hand to a colleague in an emergency, keeping up with changes in legislation, undergoing training in their own time on mental health awareness, for example, signposting union members to other services and advice and, sadly, sometimes supporting families through the consequences of accidents or fatalities at work. The voluntary role that trade unionists play in our society should be recognised and celebrated.

Volunteering takes many forms and people give their time in so many ways. I pay tribute to all those who are making a difference through their actions across all our communities.

15:55

Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP): On Friday last week, with my colleague Patrick Grady MP I had the privilege of opening the Maryhill “Drink wise, age well” support hub in Maryhill burgh halls. The hub strives to help older adults to reduce their alcohol consumption where it has the potential to cause harm. The Maryhill facility demonstrates that people who have come through recovery often emerge with a passion to help others, and that their experience of the impact of drinking on their lives makes them uniquely qualified to support their peers. It was decided to open the hub on 1 June because that fired the starting gun for volunteers week and because the Maryhill hub will be staffed predominantly by volunteers. As well as giving their time, passion and drive free of charge, they bring a significant amount of skills, experience and credibility, which we should rightly celebrate during volunteers week.

I want to explore the credibility of volunteers. Also based in my constituency is the fantastic Home-Start Glasgow North, which I have spoken about several times in the chamber. Volunteers from Home-Start often visit vulnerable or struggling families in their homes to offer support, friendship and practical assistance. The volunteers encourage parents to gain strength and emotional wellbeing, ultimately for the benefit of their children, as well as doing many other great and worthwhile things. The volunteers have credibility, because of their life experiences and because, as I have said before, it is not a statutory service.

They get buy-in and trust, which are vital aspects with many volunteers.

Talking about Home-Start Glasgow North allows me to make another point that it is important to make during volunteers week, which is that its volunteers are well trained. They take a course that runs for a day a week for seven weeks and which covers about a dozen themes. Because of time constraints, I will not run through the list, but suffice it to say that the volunteers are well trained. They have capacity, but they also get professional training, which is vital. There is also a volunteer peer support group, so that the volunteers can talk and interact with each other to further support them in their volunteering. That sort of approach is vital in supporting volunteers more generally.

Volunteers have a drive that can cut through red tape and inactivity to achieve results. In that regard, I would like to talk about the Friends of Springburn Park. On Saturday, I attended the opening of the Springburn park community village, which was followed by two wonderful days of events on Saturday and Sunday. The organisation was created in summer 2016, constituted in October 2016 and, in summer 2017, it saved the former depot site in Springburn park, which Glasgow City Council was going to demolish.

That site has now been turned into a community village. A Men’s Shed Association shed and the Balornock uniform bank will be based there. There is a community auditorium and performance space, and the organisation ultimately hopes to turn the boathouse into a community cafe. There was also the opening of an outdoor classroom, which is a new structure that was suggested by a local schoolgirl and that used funds that were won through participatory budgeting that was funded by the Scottish Government and supported by NG Homes.

Friends of Springburn Park has big plans. Had the work at Springburn park been led by an agency such as Glasgow City Council, there would not be a community village there—the depot site would have been demolished.

Another aspect in the make-up of volunteers is their drive. They sometimes see the bigger picture in a way that agencies simply cannot.

I scrubbed another part of my speech because, as I was preparing for my speech today, I thought of Eleanor Brown, who passed away at the age of 69 on 1 May. Eleanor Brown was a resident of Ruchill in my constituency. She was integral to the stock transfer of some frankly appalling houses in 1994, and she was involved in the Barnes Road action group, which is now part of Maryhill Housing Association. She kick-started the regeneration of Ruchill. If not for Eleanor Brown, it simply would not have happened. She went on to

become the chair of Ruchill community council, where she did an amazing job. She set up the then Ruchill Furniture Project, which not only helps people who cannot afford to furnish their own homes, but reskills people to help bring furniture back up to standard. She was on the board of North United Communities, which is a hugely popular and successful community group in the local area that works with young kids.

Eleanor Brown was much loved by those youngsters and is deeply missed. Among her contemporaries—she is not my contemporary; quite frankly, she is far more experienced and able than I have been so far in my constituency—she was admired and will be badly missed. We should celebrate not only current volunteers but volunteers of years gone by, who have transformed their communities.

16:01

Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con): As a member of the cross-party group on volunteering and a volunteer myself, I am delighted to take part in this afternoon's debate, especially during volunteers week, when we take the time to thank everyone who gives up their valuable time to make a positive difference to the lives of others.

As MSPs, we are privileged to be able to experience and appreciate the variety and volume of different volunteers and charities throughout Scotland. Although the rate of formal volunteering has remained stagnant over a decade, it is encouraging to note the rise in youth volunteering to more than 50 per cent in 2016. That can give us optimism for the future. After all, volunteering is valuable not just for those who benefit from it but for the volunteers themselves and their families. It is, of course, more blessed to give than to receive.

We can take the example of scouting and the report into it a decade ago. Ninety-one per cent of volunteers and 88 per cent of youth members stated that scouting had helped them to develop key skills, which often set them apart from some of their peers.

It is easy to see how volunteering contributes to our economy, too. Great volunteering work is done by the third sector, which helps to rehabilitate prisoners, for example; by readying them for release and a future outside prison, the sector can help prisoners to contribute positively to society and the economy.

However, is the modern economy within a globalised world appropriate, in which longer hours at paid work are simply expected? The modern families index, which was published by the charity Working Families, found in a recent report that 40 per cent of part-time and full-time workers were working extra hours regularly. Almost one

third were, in effect, working an additional day per week.

As competition for people's time increases, we need to recognise that sacrifices are made in order to volunteer. Again, I congratulate and thank all those who do so in spite of their busy working lives.

What else can be done to encourage volunteering, particularly among those who would not normally think of doing so? Some people have had the benefit of a role model who has encouraged them—in my case, it was my mother. What can be done for those who might not have had the good fortune of having a positive role model in their lives? Only last week, I visited Big Hearts Community Trust, the official charity of Heart of Midlothian Football Club, in Edinburgh. It provides a number of excellent programmes including kinship care and projects for lonely older people.

However, rather than duplicating good work, the charity also sends its volunteers to help existing programmes that are run by charities such as Fresh Start and Care and Repair Edinburgh. Some of those Hearts volunteers might not normally volunteer for those charities—indeed, some of them might not come from a background in which volunteering is a traditional way of spending spare time. The difference is that such an approach encourages people and brings them into volunteering. They wear a T-shirt with a football crest on it, which shows that they are representing their club in the work that they do. That gives people a sense of pride and can make all the difference. Other club charities appeal to similar people, who might not normally be reached for volunteering. That is one pragmatic way of encouraging volunteering.

Another useful tool is the volunteering indicator, which shows how cohesive and connected a community is. Painting a picture of volunteering in a locality can empower people to think about what they can do. The CPG on volunteering disagreed with the Scottish Government's decision not to include such an indicator in the national performance framework; the CPG and I hope that that will be looked at again.

Scotland is a proud volunteering nation, but we still have a long way to go to boost numbers and to ensure that we continue to be such a nation and prove the truth that it is more blessed to give than to receive and that unpaid voluntary work can be equally beneficial to society, the economy and the life of our nation as a whole.

16:06

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): Volunteers week provides an opportunity to

celebrate the important contribution that volunteers make to Scotland. This is the 34th annual volunteers week and it offers a good chance for us to thank all those who give their time, energy, skills and commitment to our communities.

In my part of Ayrshire last weekend, things got off to a great start with not one, but two fantastic events—the shaping North Ayrshire participatory budgeting event and V in the park. The participatory budgeting event, which took place in the Volunteer Rooms in Irvine, involved 33 local groups that provide a wide and worthwhile range of activities and services for our community.

The groups were: Irvine community art club, the golden girls, Ayrshire Community Trust, Irvine & Troon Cancer Care, Coastwatch Scotland, Bourtnehill and Broomlands tenants and residents association, Irvine Meadow community club, the Scottish Maritime Museum men's shed, Castlepark sewing group, rainbow of hope bereavement group, Touched by Suicide Scotland, Irvine neighbourhood youth forum, Irvine Beat FM, Police Scotland youth volunteers, Irvine Takeda karate, Irvine care and share, Showtime youth theatre, the Scottish Karate Alliance, Redburn youth management committee, Irvine seniors forum, Fullarton Community Association, Irvine & Dreghorn Brass Band, Kenshin Shukokai karate club, Irvine community council, Centrestage, Lawthorn parent council, Irvine special events forum, the new beginnings group, Springside summer club, North Ayrshire young persons epilepsy support group, Irvine lasses Burns club, St Mark's parent council and, last but by no means least, the wonderful 5th Dreghorn brownies—I was delighted to learn that they will be doing their citizen girl badge after the summer.

I listed all the wonderful groups that were at the event on Saturday not just because, as their MSP, I could not possibly pick favourites or leave anyone out, but because the folk who were in the hall in Irvine fit so well with the theme of this year's volunteers week, which is volunteering for all. There really was something for everyone. All ages were catered for, and there were many things to participate in. More than 500 local people attended the event and cast their votes on a sunny Saturday morning. That reflects the reach and impact of those groups and their volunteers. I applaud the volunteers and thank them again for all that they do for our community.

Of course, volunteering also benefits the individuals. It can help them to gain confidence by giving them the chance to try something new and build a sense of achievement. Volunteering is about making a difference and having a positive impact on people and communities. Volunteering is a great way to meet new people, be part of

something, learn new skills and take on a challenge. As we have heard, it is important that volunteers have fun—they have a great time.

I finish by quoting one of our wonderful local volunteers in Irvine, Billy Lamb from Coastwatch. In a post this week, Billy said:

“This is Volunteers week. As with many charities and voluntary organisations, Coastwatch Scotland Irvine Volunteers give their time to the community. Volunteers all see their voluntary roles differently. Some are retired or semi-retired and want to continue to carry on working, some feel they have time to give to the community, some see volunteering as a route to employment, some see volunteering as an interest away from normal working life.

It doesn't matter how you see volunteering or what you think a volunteer should be. Volunteers are welcome and respected in the community. You give as much of your time as you wish. You meet new friends; you can become skilled in new fields. You can feel great satisfaction in carrying out your voluntary role successfully.

Think about it? For a few hours a month, you can become a volunteer!”

Volunteering is for all, and I am grateful to all of those who do.

16:10

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in a debate celebrating the work of volunteers. An appreciation of and respect for volunteering has been a significant thread in the thinking of this Parliament since its establishment in 1999. I congratulate and thank volunteers wherever they are. What sport could survive without volunteers, out at all times of the day and in all weathers to support those who want to participate in sport, often with no public funding at all? I think of all those such as the St Andrew's First Aid volunteers—and the wonderful young Thistles, who were in the Parliament recently—who teach life skills and save lives and, often, allow community events to take place. I think of all those such as the volunteer ambassadors from Down's Syndrome Scotland who will be supporting the wonderful world Down syndrome congress, which, with their help, will happen in Glasgow this summer.

Our gratitude to volunteers is immense, but we need to be more than grateful. Volunteers are not just helping with stuff. Volunteers and voluntary organisations have often been created out of an understanding of need and the development of the solutions that will meet that need. In my lifetime, there have been many examples—in housing, tackling violence against women, supporting people with learning disabilities, creating community transport and many more—in which volunteers have created policies and practices that have transformed people's lives. That relationship and mutual respect is fundamental.

In the past, there were local voluntary sector compacts. At national level, there was a Scottish compact with the voluntary sector. I ask the cabinet secretary, when she sums up, to say whether she would consider reviving those compacts, because they allowed us a more equal relationship, even when voluntary organisations were in receipt of Scottish Government funding. The compacts were a way of bringing together the voices of volunteers, and it would be to the detriment of us all if those voices were managed and silenced.

It would be remiss of me if I did not make the case for proper, secure and stable funding for the structures within which volunteers and volunteering can flourish; many volunteers have highlighted that issue to me. Yesterday, I visited again Glasgow South West Foodbank—an inspiring place where fantastic volunteers quietly offer much-needed support with dignity, compassion and professionalism. I was told that between 12 and 2 o'clock yesterday alone those volunteers issued 100 food packs. That is a powerful illustration of the scale of the need that they are meeting. People are referred by charities and other groups working in our communities but, critically, they are also now being referred by statutory organisations such as social work. I was told that there have been instances in which staff who manage the Scottish welfare fund are redirecting people to the food bank. Worryingly, there is evidence that staff are calculating the estimated value of a food parcel and deducting the cost from the crisis loans that people are receiving. When the cabinet secretary sums up, I would welcome a commitment from her to explore what seems to be a worrying approach and establish how widespread that practice is.

No one wants there to be a long-term future for food banks, but in many communities they are now, in effect, an emergency service to which people are being directed. We support prevention—of course we do—but it is essential that we support that emergency help, too. We see volunteers here on the front line of social security providing a much-needed safety net. Volunteers in Glasgow South West Foodbank say that they need core funding to support a full-time member of staff to ensure the training, vetting and supporting of volunteers, to do the outreach work with agencies, to generate donations and interest in the work of the food bank, and to perform a key role in adding to the understanding of why people may be hungry and going without the basics of everyday life.

I would be grateful if the cabinet secretary would agree to meet me and representatives from Glasgow South West Foodbank to discuss how they can be supported in the work that they are doing, by the Scottish Government or by local

government, so that the charity can ensure that its volunteers are properly supported to do the thing that they really want to do.

In valuing volunteers, we need to listen to them, too. They desire mutual respect, certainty in funding and a space to plan and grow. We all hold volunteers in awe. We should ensure that we are doing all that we can to liberate those very best instincts of humanity, to make a difference across our communities. I look forward to the cabinet secretary's response to the specific points that have been raised, but I very much welcome the opportunity to play my small part in celebrating those who do so much for others.

16:16

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): Martin Luther King Jnr said:

“Life's most persistent and urgent question is: 'What are you doing for others?'"

We all have busy lives and it is hard to juggle work, home, family and other things in our throng and busy schedules to find time to volunteer, but the benefits of volunteering are enormous for the volunteers, families and our communities. Volunteering can help to promote health and wellbeing, and it can be a way to find friends, connect with people, reach out to the community and learn new skills. Volunteering can also benefit career progression and, of course, it can be fun and can bring huge fulfilment to the lives of the volunteers.

I add my thanks to all the volunteers of all ages across Scotland, in keeping with this week's volunteering for all theme. This week, 1 June to 7 June, provides us with an opportunity to celebrate the exceptional contribution that volunteers make across society and to many peoples lives. I remind the chamber that I am a registered nurse and, as such, am required to keep my registration active. One way in which I am seeking to do that is by becoming a volunteer at the new Dumfries and Galloway royal infirmary. It has been difficult for me so far, because I have managed the application process but I need to go through the prerequisite induction programme.

Members of the public are welcome to volunteer in a range of hospital departments and services at the acute care hospital just outside Dumfries in South Scotland, the region that I represent. This year is the brow year of young persons, and young persons are encouraged to participate in the hospital volunteer programme, too. There are many options across Galloway that could provide volunteering opportunities, such as Scottish Men's Sheds Association groups, which Bob Doris has mentioned—including the one in Dalbeattie, which Sir Billy Connolly visited last week for his

upcoming telly show. There are many Robert Burns associations and clubs that are run by volunteers with an appetite for championing the life, loves and works of oor bard an oor guid Scots language.

The Dumfries and Galloway integration joint board team, which is led by Penny Halliday, has been instrumental in the transforming Wigtownshire health and social care integration programme. Their goal is to focus on the future sustainability of health and social care in the south-west of the region, and the programme's goal is to bring together community councillors and health and social care professionals to develop opportunities for sustainability and to increase the number of volunteers both in hospitals and in the community.

The team held workshops last week that were a good platform from which to start the transforming Wigtownshire process. When I spoke to Julie Currie, who is one of the enthusiastic co-ordinators in the team, she told me that the project is open for young persons to get involved and that the team has involved members of the Scottish Youth Parliament. In fact, one of the MYSPs has already put in more than 500 hours of volunteering.

We can all find a few hours to volunteer, helping to keep oor Scotland bonnie, with beach cleans, nurdle clean-ups and other litter pick-ups. Recently, I joined a beach clean group at Monreith and another family-orientated litter pick-up at Glentroot, a park in Dumfries, with the folk from LIFT—Lochside is families together—an organisation of volunteers that is led by volunteers. LIFT brings the people of Lochside together in a strong show of community pride.

This week, the third sector in Dumfries and Galloway is holding its volunteer Oscars ceremony, called the Voscars, on Thursday evening in Dumfries. One young man from Stranraer, Innes Currie, has been nominated as young volunteer of the year. Innes has been a very active volunteer and will work with camp America this summer.

When Sir Harry Burns gave evidence to the Health and Sport Committee, he spoke about the people of Scotland flourishing. "Flourishing" is such a positive, objective word, as it means to grow or develop in a vigorous way. Achieving a flourishing population demands not just that we improve our physical health, but that all individuals and communities feel supported to grow their emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. If Scotland and her people are to flourish, we cannae dae it wi'oot us a' supporting oor volunteers and becoming volunteers oorsels.

[Interruption.]

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): Ah, Mr Stewart, no sooner have you come in than you are in trouble.

16:20

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I am already being heckled by a member of my own party.

I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests, as I am a board member of the NSPCC in Scotland and I am still an active coach.

Volunteers come in many forms, from those who give an hour or two of their time to pick up litter on the local beach to those who are prepared to be on call 24/7, such as volunteers for the RNLI. They are people living in local communities who give up their free time to learn how to save lives, then train every week and carry that instantly recognisable pager that can summon them at any time to any number of issues, from a boat in distress to a missing person or someone who is threatening to harm themselves.

Where would we be without important organisations such as Childline and the Samaritans? How many countless thousands of young people have they helped? The cabinet secretary, who has athletic prowess, will recognise the importance of the volunteer sector for parkruns and marathons. Every local parkrun relies on volunteers to organise and marshal runners.

Volunteers are also important to big organisations such as the Red Cross and the National Trust, as well as to the charity shops of the British Heart Foundation, Cancer Research and the Ayrshire hospice. There are smaller, local community groups who do everything from taking care of a piece of woodland to coaching a sports team, and there are groups that work to regenerate their local communities, such as the Newmilns Regeneration Association, which was formed in 2014. In 2018, it was awarded the Queen's award for voluntary service, which is the highest award that recognises excellence in voluntary activities that are carried out by groups in the community.

I recently visited Whiteleys Retreat, where local volunteers stepped in after the closure of Malcolm Sargent House in Prestwick and bought a farm outside Alloway. They have raised funds to transform it into a home away from home for young people who are dealing with cancer or other serious medical issues. Not only are the people behind the project volunteers; the work to repurpose and improve the buildings and landscape relies totally on volunteers. Local members of the public donate their time and effort, and local tradesmen put their skills to good use

and give up weekends and evenings to do the more specialised jobs. Projects such as that change the lives of not just the people who the project was created to help, but the volunteers. As Mahatma Gandhi said:

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

Volunteering can have physical and, crucially, mental health benefits. It can be a gateway into employment for people who have been out of work or have never worked before and do not have confidence in their abilities. It can be an escape from the day’s work. My time spent coaching after a week in the Parliament is good for my head, as the sense of self-worth and satisfaction that comes from helping others is invaluable.

Many times before in the chamber, I have mentioned the work of Sam Mullen at Doon valley boxing club, as the way that he has managed to change the environment of that community is quite incredible.

I thank my own coach, Hugh Muir, who I met when I was 11 and I joined the Troon tortoises. He coached me all the way to the end of my career, at 32. Not counting me, he coached more than 50 championship medallists. As I have said before, he inspired me to get into coaching. I coach on a Monday night, before coming through to the Parliament. When I leave here, I head straight to the track, and I go again at the weekend if time permits. There is definitely a therapeutic element to delivering a training session that leaves athletes lying on the track—it is how I de-stress, Deputy Presiding Officer.

I now also work with four-year-olds to nine and 10-year-olds, who include my youngest daughter, and it is my third time around. It is not so much coaching as herding cats—I am not quite as convinced of the therapeutic nature of dealing with them, but it is the same good fun. The coaching network that I am plugged into as a member of the European Athletics Coaches Association has interaction that is very removed from what we do in here—it is very real, for want of a better expression.

Volunteering opens up opportunities to give time to help others, as do mentors who help people to develop life skills and businesses that volunteer time and resources to give young people experience of the workplace and let them develop skills that can serve them in future careers. South Ayrshire Tigers is a powerchair football team for which I am currently raising sponsorship by running the “roon the toon” 10k—I hope that members will volunteer to sponsor me. The volunteer coaches provide support for carers above and beyond their normal role. The Tigers played against the Scottish team and, within 10

minutes, we were 6-0 down. Alexander Stewart, here, earned the nickname of Davros because of his ability in a powerchair.

I will close with a quotation:

“The best way to not feel hopeless is to get up and do something. Don’t wait for good things to happen to you. If you go out and make some good things happen, you will fill the world with hope, you will fill yourself with hope.”

That was said by Barack Obama.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I do not know whether free advertising for sponsorship is part of your role here, but I will let that pass.

16:26

Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): Like other members in the chamber, I have a number of extremely valuable voluntary organisations in my constituency. The challenge that faces me, as it faces many others, is which to mention today—I will try to rattle through them.

A challenge for volunteering is often how to ensure that new volunteers are attracted. Volunteering can be transient, particularly if a parent volunteers while their child is involved with a youth organisation. It tends to last for the period for which the child is involved, before they move on and the organisation then has to attract new volunteers from a new cohort of parents. There are some exceptions to that rule. Scouting has been mentioned by a number of members, including David Torrance, whose long-standing commitment to and involvement with scouting is well recorded. My constituent Moira Milligan is the club leader in the community of Dyce. She was the club leader when I was a cub and has remained that to this day, so she is now the cub leader to a generation of children to whose parents she was the cub leader. I am sure that there are others involved in the scouting movement across Scotland who can lay similar claims.

Michelle Ballantyne and Monica Lennon have highlighted the challenges that are faced by low-income communities in encouraging volunteering in their areas. With that in mind, I put on record my appreciation for the work of station house media unit—it is known as SHMU—in my constituency. The cabinet secretary will be familiar with it, as she has visited in the past. The unit offers significant volunteering opportunities, from presenting radio shows to producing community-focused magazines that are made by people in regeneration communities for people in those communities. It celebrates the diversity of those communities and shouts about the positive things that happen that often do not see the light of day unless they make noise about them.

Brian Whittle mentioned parkruns, which are free timed 5-kilometre runs every Saturday morning in communities across Scotland. They are run by volunteers, and there is often a core group who try to attract others who will volunteer occasionally. I have volunteered a number of times at my local parkrun. It is very rewarding to see hundreds of people turn up to run 5K, some of whom are seasoned athletes who can run 5K in 16 or 17 minutes while others walk the course simply to get 5 kilometres of activity a week that they might not get were that opportunity not provided for them.

I give a shout out to my constituent Katie Gregg, who established the junior parkrun in Aberdeen, which is run in Duthie Park. It is a 2-kilometre run that is aimed at four to 14-year-olds. The most recent junior parkrun had 152 participants. It is a fantastic opportunity for young people to get active and get involved. Who knows? In the future, we may read of them following in Brian Whittle's footsteps at the Commonwealth games as a result of their early introduction to running at parkrun.

At the end of April, the churches in Aberdeen organised an event and invited politicians along to see the work that faith groups are doing in the city's communities. I will highlight two projects from my constituency. The first is the living well project, which began as a charity that was established in the parish of Newhills, operating a befriending service in the north of the city to tackle social isolation. From there, it has expanded and there are now four dementia cafes being run in churches across the city. Three of those are in my constituency, at Newhills, Oldmachar and Hilton, and they provide opportunities for people to come into a social setting to reminisce and to tackle the isolation that can sometimes be felt by those who are elderly, vulnerable and have dementia.

I will also highlight the Fine Peace cafe, which is run in Sheddocksley Baptist church, in my constituency. Not only does it offer opportunities for individuals with learning disabilities to be part of the work of the cafe; at the end of every year, it distributes its profits to other voluntary organisations and charities in Aberdeen, giving back to the community.

I will end by highlighting the Triple A's—the Autism Awareness Association—in my constituency, which is a social support group for those on the autistic spectrum. It is primarily targeted at teenagers and young adults. All the staff and volunteers are on the autistic spectrum, and they are currently working as part of a group of organisations to re-establish a one-stop shop in the city, having previously lost the service that was being provided.

There is much that I could say, but I know that time is short. It is true that volunteers are the heart

of our communities, and it is truly correct that we should celebrate them both in volunteers week and all year round.

16:31

Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP): Across the length and breadth of Scotland, every single day, thousands of selfless people willingly give up their time in the service of their communities and for other people. Quite simply, volunteers make an incredible contribution to Scottish society, and I am very grateful for the opportunity to thank them in today's debate, as well as to be able to draw attention to a few of the great voluntary groups in my constituency.

I am delighted that my Rutherglen constituency is the home of thousands of dedicated volunteers, working across a range of different sectors, and it is because of their tireless work and commitment that our communities are better places in which to live and work. According to the Scottish household survey, in South Lanarkshire, an estimated 25 per cent of the population volunteer in a number of activities, including youth work for the scouts and guides and helping out at the Rutherglen and Cambuslang food bank. From those giving up their time at the r:evolve recycle project on Main Street, Rutherglen, to the coaches at Blantyre Soccer Academy at the other end of my constituency, volunteers are our communities' most important resource and our biggest assets.

Those are people from my constituency volunteering in my constituency, but we also owe a debt of gratitude to those who volunteer nationally—for example, those doing incredible work manning the telephones at charities such as Samaritans and Childline.

There is a particular group of volunteers who operate throughout the whole of Scotland that I wish to speak about today. I want to put on record my thanks and appreciation to them for what is often an unrecognised contribution to local democracy—our community councils. Community councils were created 45 years ago through the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, and our voluntary community councillors have been a mainstay in our communities ever since. According to the Scottish Government's website, more than 1,200 community councils are currently in existence, and five of them—Rutherglen, Burnside, Cambuslang, Halfway and Blantyre—proudly serve in my constituency. They act as a vital link between our communities and local authorities, and they play a crucial role in ensuring that public bodies are aware of the opinions and needs of the communities that they serve. They are arguably the foundation of our democracy.

Only last week, I attended the Cambuslang futures forum meeting, which was organised by Cambuslang community council to look at the regeneration of the town centre. It is an incredibly exciting project, and it is one that the new Scottish National Party administration at South Lanarkshire Council is supporting through various initiatives.

Another example of the great work done by community councils, which I raised three months ago in this chamber, is the campaigning by Blantyre and Halfway community councils against the proposed incinerator in Hamilton. Both community councils undertook a major campaign in opposition to the Whitehill incinerator and, over a couple of months, they knocked on the doors of almost every house in their council wards. In doing so, they amassed more than 4,000 objections to the proposal.

Whether in working to regenerate town centres, in campaigning against planning applications or even in arranging community clean-ups and hosting gala days, community councillors devote incredible time and effort to our communities.

This debate has allowed us to celebrate Scotland's volunteers, but it should also act as a call to get more people involved. Volunteering levels have remained stable over the past few years and there has been a growth in the number of young people volunteering, but many community councils across Scotland are shutting down, or their membership is getting smaller. Therefore, I strongly encourage anyone with an interest in politics or a desire to do more in their community to join their local community council.

Now is probably the best time to volunteer in community councils. In addition to the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, which gives people an even greater involvement in local decisions, the Scottish Government has set councils a target of having at least 1 per cent of their budget subject to participatory budgeting. Although the benefits are not exclusive to them, community councils are able to benefit from that, as Cambuslang community council will attest after being the recipient of more than £60,000 last year for its greening Cambuslang campaign. Community councils now have the opportunity to have a much more direct and substantive say in our local communities, so I say to people, "Please get involved."

I thank my constituents who volunteer in community councils and everyone else who devotes their time to other causes across the country. Our society is much better because of what they do.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am very disappointed that Mr Lindhurst is not gracing us with his presence for the closing speeches. I

expect a note from him to explain why he is not going to listen to them.

16:36

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): There have been three themes in our debate on celebrating volunteering: the volume of volunteering, the breadth of it and the depth of it.

The volume of volunteering is important. Volunteering is one of those things that people do not often know is there unless they become involved in it for some reason. I became aware of that when my wife and I became guide dog puppy walkers. We immediately discovered an extensive community of guide dog puppy walkers all around us that had been there all the time, volunteering in that line of work. Most people do not really notice that.

I am similarly disappointed that Mr Lindhurst is not here, because he had the cheek to mention the Big Hearts Community Trust. I feel obliged to mention Hibernian Community Foundation, which I chair, as my entry in the register of interests shows. When I took on that role, it was my first dabble in the world of community football and community football teams. I remain astonished by the thousands of people who give their time generously and freely so that community football clubs and courses can operate, and so that children and young people in particular can get that kind of sporting opportunity.

I guess that, in any week in the Parliament, enormous volunteering efforts are revealed to all of us that we probably knew nothing about previously. The volume of volunteering is enormous, as are the breadth and variety of volunteering. We have heard a lot about that. For example, we heard more about sport from Alison Johnstone and Brian Whittle. The Scottish Sports Association has told us that, each year, 23 million hours of volunteering are devoted to volunteering in sport. That is incredible.

Johann Lamont and Elaine Smith passionately described to us a completely different kind of volunteering. They talked about volunteering in the food banks, which are, unfortunately, necessary in communities throughout this country. Volunteering in the uniformed organisations, including the scouts, which Mr Torrance spoke to us about, has also been discussed.

I want to mention a group of volunteers in my constituency who came together and solved a problem the existence of which I had never even thought about. Beach Wheelchairs in North Berwick has worked hard to create the opportunity for wheelchair users to enjoy the beach with their friends and families. It has been so successful that

it has now spread up the coast to Port Seton and Portobello.

Elaine Smith mentioned volunteers who work in their trade unions to try to improve the lives and working conditions of their fellow workers.

I am disappointed that we have all been too embarrassed to talk about the many political party volunteers on the backs of whom we find ourselves in the Parliament, fulfilling the role as MSPs. We should not be embarrassed about that. Whatever party they work for, they work and give their time freely to make Scotland a better place. We may disagree on how we should do that, but all of us appreciate the importance of that level of engagement.

Volunteering is deep and profound. In what I thought was one of the most thoughtful speeches of the afternoon, Bob Doris talked about Home-Start, a tremendous organisation that is very active in my constituency of East Lothian. This week, it has been putting out on social media experiences and testimonies from its volunteers. One of them is from Elizabeth Butler, who volunteers in East Lothian for Home-Start. I will read a little of what she says:

“Just turning up and being there every week, it was just little but it made a massive impact. It is inspiring to see how much people can grow and change and become what they want to be with just that wee tiny bit of hope. We are just coming in as human beings and that is where the difference is made.”

That is powerful testimony to the profound influence that the volunteering of someone like Elizabeth through Home-Start can have on a family.

When I worked for Oxfam, I was privileged to visit all sorts of work that Oxfam did, such as landmine clearance in Cambodia, community dam building in Zimbabwe, and its work with the victims of conflict in far too many countries. I was always struck by the incredible power of an enterprise that could put together the voluntary work of so many volunteers in Oxfam shops in every high street in Scotland and make a genuine difference to those who were struggling with massive geopolitical issues.

The truth is—many have said this in different ways—that volunteering is not an extra but is fundamental to our society. Michelle Ballantyne listed all the ways in which one community is supported by volunteering. Monica Lennon talked about Jo Cox saying that there is more uniting us than dividing us, and she made it very clear that volunteering is exactly one of the fundamental ties that bind us together in such an important way. It makes people feel valued and part of something, and gives us the sense of belonging to something that is worth belonging to. Volunteering for all does

not just mean that everybody should volunteer; it means that we all benefit.

I close on a point that Johann Lamont made. It is not enough to celebrate and appreciate volunteering. We must go from the debate today resolved to respect it and support it properly.

16:43

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): This debate has been a positive way of marking volunteering week and highlighting the commitment of volunteers, from those in Scotland’s cities to those in our most remote and rural communities.

Many members have spoken about their own experiences of volunteering in their constituencies and regions. The debate has shown just some of the breadth of activities that volunteer activity can cover. We have heard about professionals with adapted skills and training taking on long-term commitments, and about people drawn together by circumstance to fix a problem or provide something in their community, as Iain Gray mentioned in relation to the group that helps with beach wheelchair access.

What unites volunteers in those circumstances is a mindset—whether we call it altruism, civic mindedness or something else. When I was a new candidate at the 2005 general election, my organising secretary had a poster on the wall of our office in Elgin that read:

“Nothing is stronger than the heart of a volunteer.”

It is a message that has resonated with me over the years.

I know that the motion mentions a figure of £2 billion, but I think that it is hard to put a true economic value on volunteering. Assessments always seem to fall short. As Clare Adamson said, in many cases the most committed volunteers do not even consider what they are doing as volunteer work. To them, it is nothing more than pitching in or playing their part.

Volunteering covers many sectors. In health, for example, the Royal Voluntary Service, which began life in 1938 as the Women’s Voluntary Services for Air Raid Precautions, is one of Britain’s largest volunteering charities. The RVS celebrates its 80th anniversary this year. Many people will be familiar with the RVS from its network of hospital shops and cafes, but its work is much broader than that. The charity supports older people to live independently, supports emergency services during major incidents and organises community transport, among other things.

There are people who help to staff the charity shops that raise money for vital medical research or support that, in many cases, changes or even saves lives. There are those who look after family and friends, or who keep an eye on a neighbour or someone in their community, providing crucial care support.

As members said, there are also volunteers in politics. Clare Haughey was right to mention community councils, and even people who campaign for political parties or take part in other political campaigns are important. People brave bad weather, bad tempers and the prospect of a Saturday spent leafleting, not for reward but because they believe in a candidate or a cause.

Members talked about volunteering in sport—they will be delighted to know that I will not try to tap anyone up for half-marathon sponsorship any time soon. Brian Whittle talked about the experience at the more elite end of sports coaching; my experience is a little lower down the ladder, perhaps, but the charity rugby club that I helped to found and run in 1998, godfathers rugby, has raised thousands of pounds over the past 20 years for CLIC Sargent Cancer Care for Children, and every committee member and player is a volunteer who gives up their time to support our work.

Such activity is happening across Scotland, as thousands of people turn out to ensure that other people can be involved in sports or other activities, such as riding for the disabled, that they would not otherwise be able to do.

It is often forgotten that there is volunteering in our emergency services, too. There are special constables and voluntary and auxiliary firefighters, for example. In the Highlands and Islands, many volunteer members of mountain rescue teams play a crucial role, and no one from an island community such as mine in Orkney can ignore the vital role of the volunteers of the RNLI, who give up their time—and, in the most tragic cases, their lives—to help those in distress.

It is not just here in the UK that volunteers make a difference. For many years, the UK has had a proud tradition of helping people abroad. One of the foremost organisations in that regard is Voluntary Service Overseas, which, in addition to its funding from the Department for International Development, receives support from the Scottish Government's climate justice fund. VSO is also celebrating a major milestone this year, as it marks 60 years since it was founded. Its influence has been global, not only in the work that it does but in inspiring similar organisations in other countries. I would like more to be done to provide opportunities for people from more diverse backgrounds to volunteer abroad. A gap year of

volunteering should not be just for people who can afford it.

In my region, today is the last day of the 18th Shetland classic motor show—an event that was founded by volunteers Maurice Mulla, Graham Johnston and others and which provides a major boost to the local economy. Only last week, the Queen's award for voluntary service was given to the Morayvia centre in Moray, Fochabers Heritage Committee, Moray Handyperson Services and Step by Step in Moray SCIO, in recognition of the fantastic work of those charities.

The men's shed movement goes from strength to strength across Scotland and the Orkney Men's Shed is particularly strong. I commend the work of Morgan Marcus and others, who recently built a shed for the local Blue Door charity shop, which itself received the Queen's award for voluntary service in 2017 and whose founder, Rita Jamieson, was awarded the British Empire medal earlier this year for services to the community in Orkney.

As Maurice Corry said, volunteering is not just a one-way street. It is not just about the volunteer giving up their valuable time for the good of their community; the volunteer can benefit hugely, too. The Orkney Men's Shed says that rather nicely on its website:

"If you become a member of the Shed you run the very real risk of becoming more interested in life and your surroundings, more healthy both physically and mentally and will almost certainly miss many televised repeats of Strictly come Baking on Ice".

Many members have had interesting things to say in the debate. Michelle Ballantyne talked about her experiences in her area, and she and Monica Lennon talked about barriers to volunteering. Alex Cole-Hamilton rightly said that volunteering is fragile and must be supported. Clare Adamson highlighted the importance of volunteering in mental health in her community. Elaine Smith talked about breastfeeding and other areas that are important but which are not often thought about. Brian Whittle talked about volunteering as a gateway into work, which was an interesting and correct point to make. Bob Doris talked about the importance of training, which is something on which probably all members agree.

Gordon Lindhurst spoke about the increase in volunteering among younger people, the relative stagnation in adult volunteering and some of the barriers to volunteering in general. Maurice Corry spoke about the benefits of volunteering; he also mentioned cadet organisations, which have come up a couple of times.

Such voluntary organisations, many of which are long-standing institutions in our public life, deserve our thanks and commendation. As

parliamentarians, one of our duties is to look at how we, along with the Government, can support them and where we can be a force to help enable communities and individuals. To those individuals, for all the work that they do—week in and week out—in volunteering in their communities or more widely, and in every single part of Scotland, I say a very big thank you.

16:50

Angela Constance: It is very clear that each and every one of us in the chamber recognises the value of volunteering. I start by thanking members for their speeches. I will even thank Brian Whittle, although I would also like to issue him with the challenge that perhaps he could coach Mr Halcro Johnston for his very first half marathon. The important point is that, in listening to their speeches, I have learned a lot about the passions and interests of colleagues from across the chamber—even those whom I have known for many years.

I reiterate my thanks to all the volunteers who give so much to so many—to all the people across Scotland who make absolutely vital contributions every day to their communities and to society as a whole, and who do what they believe in without fanfare or reward because they share our belief in a fairer society.

Michelle Ballantyne and others spoke very personally about what volunteering means to them in their own lives and backgrounds. I say to Ms Ballantyne that we recognise the full scale of volunteering, which is why this year, for the first time, we will put questions about informal volunteering into the Scottish household survey. In essence, that is about capturing the entire range of social action, which was encapsulated by Clare Adamson so beautifully when she very poignantly recognised that many consider themselves to be not volunteers but parents, grannies, carers and sports enthusiasts who are just getting on with things. The other point that Ms Adamson made was that we often see the very best of volunteers and volunteering at the very worst of times, when our communities are in crisis. That is why investment in and support for volunteers are absolutely crucial: such gold dust builds resilience in communities and enables them to be stronger and more cohesive in bad times as well as good.

Monica Lennon spoke about the power of intergenerational work, about which I am very enthusiastic. I will just say that she should watch this space, because, as a Government, we are continuing to look more closely at the value of such work and how it can be brought to life. It is also a feature of our draft social isolation and loneliness strategy. Ms Lennon and her colleague Iain Gray were right to pay tribute to the work of

the late Jo Cox in reducing social isolation and to speak about how such work will no doubt continue for many years to come.

Elaine Smith made the very important point that volunteers complement, but do not replace, paid staff—I agree with her fully on that. Alison Johnstone spoke about the gender divide in volunteering in sport. I hope that the 2019 Solheim cup event, which I understand is a biennial golf tournament for professional women golfers, will offer opportunities to increase the number of volunteers—and particularly women volunteers—in sport.

It feels absolutely right for us to have the opportunity to debate and celebrate volunteering. It is vital that volunteering stays high on the political agenda. As many members have reiterated, volunteering is not a nice-to-do; it is fundamental to creating a fairer, more participative and more prosperous nation. That has certainly been recognised in the debate.

I want to mention two specific points. The first is about breaking down barriers. Many members asked how we will break down the barriers to volunteering. I will give an example, which comes from the Scottish Government's disability action plan. It commits to making funding available to enable more disabled people to volunteer. The volunteering support fund will make more than £3 million available over the next three years to support more people to get involved in volunteering, including people with a disability. Through our funding to Volunteer Scotland, a partnership has been established with Glasgow Disability Alliance that is aimed at raising participation rates among disabled people.

Johann Lamont spoke powerfully about how volunteering is more than helping. She talked about how voluntary organisations have been created through an understanding of need and about how new policy and practice have been developed to transform communities and the country. I say to her that our fairer Scotland action plan recognises the need to eradicate and prevent poverty in all its forms, and that applies to food banks. At the end of last year, the Parliament united around the need for child poverty legislation to reintroduce the statutory income targets that are at the very heart of our endeavours to end child poverty in Scotland. On food poverty, we have a commitment to end the need for food banks, but we also want to create a community movement that is focused on food justice rather than food charity.

Johann Lamont: I recognise what the cabinet secretary says, but the Glasgow South West Foodbank has made the point that need is there now and that we must meet that need while we work on prevention. I urge the cabinet secretary to

consider meeting that organisation to hear directly from it about how the way in which it is currently funded inhibits volunteering.

Angela Constance: I would be more than happy to meet Ms Lamont to outline the funding that we already provide for community food projects and food banks, and how we are progressing the actions from a piece of work that was done by volunteers and people who lead the voluntary sector in challenging food poverty in this country. I would be happy to have a fuller discussion with her about that.

A number of members emphasised the importance of consistency of support and consistency of funding, and I am pleased to remind members that we have introduced three-year funding for things such as the equality budget and the volunteering support fund. In addition, we have remained committed to our third sector funding, which supports third sector interfaces, and the empowering communities fund, which does so much to support grass-roots organisations.

In the time that I have left, I want to take the opportunity to say thank you to everybody who serves on the cross-party group on volunteering, of which Alex Cole-Hamilton is the convener. I appreciate the contribution that the CPG is making to raising the profile of volunteering and the extent to which it is helping to drive forward the agenda. Our partnership with the cross-party group will be particularly important as we move forward with the outcomes framework for volunteering, which will be co-produced.

I thank members for their speeches. We have heard many great tributes to the fantastic work of our volunteers. We know that the biggest gift that we can give anyone is our time. I look forward to continuing to work with members and I again thank the many thousands of volunteers who are working very hard to make Scotland a better place for today and tomorrow.

Parking (Code of Practice) Bill

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of a legislative consent motion. I ask Humza Yousaf to move motion S5M-12556, on the Parking (Code of Practice) Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the relevant provisions of the Parking (Code of Practice) Bill, introduced in the House of Commons on 19 July 2017, relating to private parking, so far as these matters fall within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament, should be considered by the UK Parliament.—[*Humza Yousaf*]

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): There are two questions to be put as result of today's business. The first question is, that motion S5M-12561, in the name of Angela Constance, on celebrating Scotland's volunteers, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament welcomes the 34th annual Volunteers Week, which is being celebrated from 1 to 7 June 2018; recognises this as an important celebration of the fantastic contribution that over a million volunteers make every year across Scotland's communities, contributing around 130 million hours of help and £2 billion to the economy; believes that the week will inspire more people to join those already donating their time and energy to good causes; acknowledges the growing numbers of young people who participate in volunteering; commends volunteers for giving their time during the last year; notes the many ways in which the work of volunteers improves the quality of people's lives, and recognises that, by coming together through volunteering, Scotland builds stronger, fairer and more participative communities, as well as it being hugely rewarding for volunteers themselves.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-12556, on the Parking (Code of Practice) Bill, which is UK legislation, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the relevant provisions of the Parking (Code of Practice) Bill, introduced in the House of Commons on 19 July 2017, relating to private parking, so far as these matters fall within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament, should be considered by the UK Parliament.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-11127, in the name of Daniel Johnson, on the portrayal of ADHD treatment. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. I call Daniel Johnson to open the debate. You have around seven minutes, please, Mr Johnson.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes the documentary, *Take Your Pills*, which has been distributed by Netflix; expresses its strong concern about what it sees as the programme's unbalanced portrayal of ADHD and its treatment; notes the recent publication of updated NICE guidelines on the diagnosis and treatment of the condition and the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland's, *ADHD in adults: good practice guidelines*; acknowledges the calls for the Scottish Government to bring forward plans to update the SIGN guidance on ADHD, which, it understands, has remained the same since 2009, and notes the views that there is a need for a more informed understanding of the condition in Edinburgh and across the country and that taking prescribed medication to treat diagnosed neuro-developmental disorders and mental health conditions is as legitimate as taking prescribed medication to treat physical illness.

17:02

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): In the few months since I first confirmed to Parliament that I have ADHD, I have been touched and slightly overwhelmed by the number of people who have thanked me for speaking up, and who have commented on what they perceive as my courage and bravery in doing so. However, I feel slightly guilty, because I am not sure that I was brave at all. The thing about ADHD is that one has very poor impulse control, and I just got very angry about the press coverage of ADHD and felt that I had to speak up. I quite often find, when I see something that I think is unfair or unjust, that I speak before I have thought about whether it is sensible to do so. However, that is probably quite a good thing for an MSP. I will touch on that later.

I got angry again, though, because Netflix released a documentary called "Take Your Pills" a month or so ago, which is a sensationalist documentary that explores a trope around there being an explosion in diagnoses of ADHD, and suggests that the medication for ADHD is unnecessary and compares it to crystal meth. The documentary peddles and perpetuates myths that those of us with ADHD battle against almost daily: that ADHD is not real, that the meds do more harm than good and that doctors are handing out pills as though they were sweeties.

As part of speaking up, writing articles and speaking at events, which I have done since speaking out in Parliament, I have told my story about how the diagnosis of ADHD has been empowering, how it has transformed my life and how medication has been the vital first step in that.

However, I am not alone, because ADHD is not a rare condition: one in 20 people is like me. Everyone in here will know people—friends and others—with ADHD, and in each classroom there will be at least two or three children with ADHD.

That it is such a prevalent condition but there is so little understanding of it is just not right. People know more of the myths regarding ADHD than they now about the facts. The very fact that this is—I think—the first time that ADHD has been debated in the Scottish Parliament as a topic on its own is not right.

We are here today to bust the myths surrounding ADHD, and to build the understanding that I believe we need. Let us start with the facts. I have ADHD and I have been taking methylphenidate, which most people will know as Ritalin, every day for the past five years. Those are facts—now let us deal with the fiction. I am not a victim and I am not looking for special treatment; my brain is just wired up in a slightly different way. Things that most people find easy, mundane and routine are things that people like me find incredibly difficult.

I am not constantly running around and bouncing off the walls like a naughty child. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is just that—it is a composite of different traits. Part of it is about inattentiveness, so it is as much about the daydreaming child at the back of the classroom who is not concentrating at all as it is about the naughty child who is running around. I am much more on the inattentive end of the spectrum than I am on the hyperactive side.

I am not making it up. I feel pained that I have to say this, but ADHD is real. It is not an excuse for bad parenting and it is not something for which I am seeking special treatment. It is not a social phenomenon. If members were to see a scan of my brain, they would see that my prefrontal cortex is just not as active as most people's are. My brain also does not produce enough dopamine. There are genetic markers that are highly predictive of ADHD.

I take ADHD medication, but I am not a zombie. The idea that, by giving people ADHD medication, we somehow turn them into incommunicative zombies is false. ADHD medication is, for the most part, stimulant based. It is the complete opposite of a sedative. If that sounds strange, let me put it like this. How many members have a cup of coffee before they start work, or a cup of tea when they

sit down to write a speech? We take stimulants because it is a way of helping our brains to deal with mundane and slightly banal chores. It is about keeping our brains interested in what we have at hand. That is especially true of ADHD medication. It is also why medication is so important as a first step, in order that people can learn the skills and techniques that they need to deal with the condition on top of the pills, because without taking the pills, they cannot do that.

Many people ask me what it is like to have ADHD and what goes on in my head. The best way that I have of explaining it is to say that it is a bit like a record player on which the needle keeps jumping out of the groove. The person with ADHD knows which track they want to play, but the needle just will not stay in there. Medication is the first step that they need to take in order to keep the needle in the groove.

However, there is another way of looking at that record-player analogy, because people with ADHD do not just look at an individual track at a time: they like to look at the whole album. People with ADHD view the world in macro and not in micro. We like looking at the big picture; we see the connections. We are constantly finding tangents and different ways of looking at things, which allows us to see things that other people do not see. As I said at the beginning, being slightly uninhibited about speaking up is useful for an MSP, but I think that seeing that bigger picture and those connections is also vital for my work. It allows me to bring something else to the job. Five per cent of people have ADHD, so there will be other politicians who have it. I hope that this debate will give them the courage to get a diagnosis or, if they already have one, to speak up about it.

As I said, 5 per cent of the population have ADHD, but the percentage of the prison population who have the condition is four times higher, at 20 per cent. I want members to think about that. What is going on? At the very least, it points to a social failure—a failure of all our understanding—but it also points to a policy failure. For people to end up in that situation and for there to be such a high prevalence in prisons, something is not right.

There is one brutal and blunt fact. There is a myth that we overdiagnose ADHD, but nothing could be further from the truth. We underdiagnose the condition. Some 1 per cent of the adult population have an ADHD diagnosis, and the proportion is similar for the child population. That represents massive underdiagnosis and undermedication of the condition. The myths that are peddled prevent people from seeking help and taking the vital first step that medication represents, yet they need it to deal with their condition and its consequences.

In the words of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, medication is a “first-line therapy”. That needs to be borne in mind. We need to destigmatise medication and we need better access to mental health services. We need more than just medication—it is about pills and skills.

If there was one positive outcome from the very negative Netflix documentary, it was that people like me took to social media to speak up about the positive impact that pills have had on their lives, and what medication has enabled them to do. If members look up the hashtag #ITakeMyPillsBecause, they will see people’s testimonies and positive experiences. Indeed, that hashtag out-trended the one for the documentary. So I just say this: I take my pills because they enable me to function and because they free up my head to develop skills and to learn to cope with my condition but—which is most important—I take my pills because they have transformed my life and the life of my family.

17:11

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): I thank Daniel Johnson for bringing this important issue to the attention of the Parliament. I watched the “Take Your Pills” documentary and felt much the same way as others did. One reviewer called it “aggravatingly myopic” and “scaremongering”.

I refer members to my entry in the register of members’ interests, which shows that I am a nurse. I should also mention that I have had many years of first-hand experience of living with someone with ADHD. My husband has ADHD and he was diagnosed as an adult when he was 35 years old and living in Los Angeles. The diagnosis was life changing for him. When we met, he had been on the psychostimulant medication Adderall for his ADHD for almost two years, and I saw no symptoms of any kind and had no idea that he had ADHD until he told me.

Adderall worked for him. It helped him focus, it helped with project completion and it helped to promote positive relationships with everyone. My husband describes his ADHD like this:

“Imagine you are sitting in a room trying to read a book and there are three televisions on, all on different channels, and there are two stereos in the room playing different songs, and there are also three groups of people standing around you carrying on three different conversations.”

That is how he describes the way that it feels inside his head when reading a book. However, when he takes Adderall, there is only one television on and one stereo playing, so it is much easier for him to focus on what he is reading.

ADHD is caused by a variety of environmental and genetic factors and is usually a hereditary

condition. It usually becomes apparent before the age of 12, but many people, such as my husband, are not diagnosed until adulthood. It is estimated that, globally, around 5 per cent of school-aged children have ADHD and that about 4 per cent of the adult population have it. In Scotland, however, only 0.08 per cent of the adult population—eight out of 10,000—is receiving medication for ADHD. I suspect that there are a lot of adults out there like my husband who know that medication would help them and who would like to receive it but who are currently not receiving it. Thirteen years ago, after we returned to Scotland, my husband went to his general practitioner and was informed that ADHD in adults was not high on the agenda. That was in 2005. Now in 2018, I have encouraged him to go to his current GP and try again, and I hope that he will get a more satisfactory result.

The motion notes that the SIGN—Scottish intercollegiate guidelines network—guideline for the management of ADHD in children and young people, which is SIGN guideline 112, has not been updated since 2009. In fact, at the bottom of the SIGN 112 web page, it states:

“This guideline was issued in 2009 and will be considered for review in three years.”

It continues:

“Use with caution, declaration of interests governance may not be in line with current policy.”

The web page warns that the guideline is out of date. I urge the Scottish Government to encourage Healthcare Improvement Scotland to update SIGN guideline 112, on the management of ADHD in children and young people, as a matter of urgency.

I thank the Scottish ADHD Coalition for its work and excellent website, which is full of helpful factual information. I note that there are 15 ADHD support groups across Scotland and that only three of them are for adults with ADHD. I was perturbed to see that there are no groups south of the central belt in my South Scotland region. There is no group in Dumfries, none in Ayr and none in Stranraer, and I would like that to change. I also discovered a terrific YouTube channel called “How to ADHD”, which was created by Jessica McCabe in the USA. She has excellent information in her videos and I encourage everyone—professionals as well as folk with ADHD and their family members—to check it out.

17:15

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): I congratulate Daniel Johnson on securing today’s debate and pay tribute to him for his work speaking out about his experience of ADHD and raising awareness of these issues. It is important that we have such debates in Parliament and, when members bring

their personal interest and experience, it makes for excellent debates.

I completely agree with Daniel Johnson that we need to see the media, especially documentary programmes, provide a balanced and informed portrayal of ADHD and how it is treated. Today's debate is therefore timely and extremely important.

As Emma Harper has done, I thank the Scottish ADHD Coalition for its useful briefing ahead of the debate, and I commend the coalition for all that it does on behalf of children and families across Scotland. The coalition's establishment in 2017, which brought together all the voluntary organisations that provide support to families, was a very positive step forward.

ADHD is a significant health issue for our society. As has been said, it is estimated that 5 per cent of children have ADHD and that approximately 1.5 per cent have a severe ADHD disorder. As has been mentioned, a large number of adults have never received any diagnosis.

I know that Daniel Johnson was concerned about some of the comments that I made last year in relation to the sharp increase in drugs such as Ritalin being prescribed to children with ADHD. I want to make it very clear, as we have discussed in the past, that I recognise that such medication can make a huge difference to many children and, indeed, adults, and that that is a positive thing that we should all support.

Absolutely no one should feel in any way that there is anything wrong with taking such medication, any more than they would feel about taking medication for a physical illness. However, each individual is different and medication alone will often not be the answer for every single case. Among the many concerns that I wanted to highlight was the suggestion that, in many cases, medication was all that was being offered, and other treatments and support systems such as parental training, school interventions, counselling and psychological support were simply not being made available to families across Scotland. That continues to be the case.

SIGN makes it clear that for mild symptoms of ADHD, clinicians should consider behavioural approaches in the first instance. Concern about a medication-only approach is a key finding from the "Attending to Parents" report, which was published by the Scottish ADHD Coalition. The report also noted that parents who refuse medication for their children are often discharged from services in Scotland, which all of us, I think, will find unacceptable and has to change. We also need to ensure that, for each patient and individual, the continuing benefit from and need for medication is

assessed at least once a year, as SIGN recommends.

The coalition's report also highlights concern about excessively long child and adolescent mental health services waiting times, which all of us in the chamber have raised and expressed concern about. It is a continuing source of anguish for many people in my region of Lothian and across Scotland. The report also calls for teachers to receive much greater training on ADHD, and I support that because such training is vital.

I have recently received a copy of a letter from my Perth and Kinross Council colleague Chris Ahern, who has written to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport about ADHD. Councillor Ahern makes a number of important points and emphasises that, in Scotland, there is a lack of reliable datasets on ADHD and its impact in schools, the workplace and—as Daniel Johnson highlighted—in prisons. That was one part of the Health and Sport Committee's work that we did not really touch on but, when we looked at prisoner health, we highlighted the opportunities. We need to continue to look at prisoners' mental health, head trauma and prisoner populations not having access to any assessment of such aspects of their health, which were areas that were highlighted in the committee's work.

Councillor Ahern believes that the Scottish Government should address the issue and consider setting up a cross-party working group to look at the diagnosis and treatment of ADHD. Perhaps the minister can respond to those points in her closing speech. It might be something that members across the chamber want to take forward.

I again welcome the debate and the way in which Daniel Johnson brought it forward. In light of the new guidelines from NICE and those from the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland, I am sympathetic to the view that our SIGN guidelines should be updated, to ensure that people in Scotland of all ages who have ADHD, and their families, know what type and level of care they should receive.

17:20

Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab): Like other members, I congratulate Daniel Johnson on securing this important debate. In his opening speech, he was extremely modest in saying that there was no such thing as his bravery and courage in speaking out. I say as his friend that he does not often do modesty, and he should not do it on this subject. It is extremely brave and courageous of him to speak out, particularly about his circumstances.

I know Daniel Johnson as a friend and a colleague and I have seen him acting as a parent, and I think that he is a first-class human being in all three of those aspects. He is a fantastic and diligent member of the Parliament—not an ineffective or hyperactive one. He is a first-class parent and he is always a pleasure and a joy to be around.

Daniel Johnson has not only initiated this important debate but, by speaking about his circumstances, done so in a manner that will effect change. I hope that that will give the confidence to speak out to other people—not just parliamentarians and others who are involved in politics but the wider public, who I hope will have confidence to seek access to services and speak openly about their circumstances with their friends, families, loved ones and healthcare professionals. I hope that we will send a unified message against what the Netflix documentary portrayed and instead open a dialogue about positive treatment.

I will focus on a few areas, including the destigmatisation of ADHD, which is no different from any other physical or mental condition. We should be clear that there is no shame in having ADHD or in taking medication such as pills for ADHD or any other condition.

It is important to recognise that, although ADHD is a neurodevelopmental condition, people who have it access mental health services, so the pressures on our CAMHS and adult mental health services have an impact on patients and families who are affected by ADHD. It is extremely important to address how we have an effective CAMHS and adult mental health system.

In a survey, 80 per cent of parents said that it took too long for their child to be diagnosed with ADHD. That is not good enough and we must look into achieving quicker diagnosis.

We must recognise the huge variation in access to courses of treatment. Mr Johnson said that 5 per cent of the population have ADHD and that it affects 20 per cent of the prison population. The average treatment rate across the country is 1 per cent, but the figures vary so much and can be much higher—for example, 2 per cent of the population who are aged between five and 19 take ADHD medication in the Borders, in comparison with a rate of only 0.4 per cent in Lanarkshire. That shows the huge variation in how ADHD is diagnosed and treated in different parts of the country, which needs to be addressed more seriously and openly.

Mr Briggs and Mr Johnson mentioned pills, and it is important to end the stigma about using medication. I make it clear that it is important to have access to counselling and support services, particularly in our schools and in primary and

community care, so that we not only medicate individuals but empower them to make interventions in their lives that will help them to deal with ADHD better. That will have a positive impact not only on their life circumstances but on those of their colleagues, their friends, their families and their children.

I hope that, as a result of the debate, there is a more open and honest conversation about ADHD; a challenging of the stigma about ADHD and using pills for it; an improvement in the diagnosis of ADHD and in the referral pathway for it; and a look at a more holistic approach, so that ADHD is recognised as a genuine condition alongside other conditions and so that people feel that they have someone to turn to and that they will not be written off by society. I thank Daniel Johnson again for bringing forward this important debate.

17:24

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): Like others, I thank Daniel Johnson for the opportunity to have the debate. I congratulate him on his very individual and particular contribution and the courage that it takes to make it. Fortunately, I am not in a position where I have to exercise that kind of choice.

Members may have heard me talk previously about the first job that I had when I left school. For about eight months in 1964, I worked in a locked ward in a psychiatric hospital, just at the time when the very first medications were becoming available that would give people with quite a wide range of psychiatric and other conditions better treatment than simply being locked up in the old asylums. The asylum in which I worked had about 1,200 patients; today, the hospital that sits on that site has around 100 patients. My starting point, therefore, is that medication is an important part of dealing with a wide range of conditions, one of which is ADHD.

As others have done, I thank the Scottish ADHD Coalition for its briefing for the debate. The briefing talks about the coalition's survey of parents and refers to

“medication, parent training, school interventions and psychological support.”

I must confess that I have not watched the Netflix film—I take Daniel Johnson's word for what is in it, supplemented by what Emma Harper said. However, a few weeks ago I saw “The Doctor Who Gave Up Drugs”, which was on BBC Four on 23 May 2018. What was interesting was that the doctor used a mindfulness approach to support school students who had ADHD, the idea being not to get them off the drugs but to give them choice and space. I was quite impressed, although of course television programmes always short-

circuit complexities; we need to be very careful about that. I am not assuming that the magic bullet was contained in that one hour of television.

That leads me to an important general point, which is our use of the word, and concept of, “normal”. We increasingly view normal as a much narrower range than it is proper to consider. Normal is anything—behaviours, aptitudes, abilities and conditions—that does not harm the individual or cause the individual to harm anyone else. We should review normal as covering a much wider range and variety.

I have my own phobias. I cannot go to my office on the fourth floor of this building—I am generally in first—without straightening up all the rubbish bins. It is just something that I feel compelled to do. I rarely use the phone—I am virtually phobic about that—and I hate pills. There is a reason why I hate pills; I was in an experimental drug programme for a condition that I had when I was 12. The trial did not sort the condition and has left me with lifelong issues associated with it. I use self-hypnosis to deal with pain and asthma. I have not taken medication for my asthma for 35 years; I am fortunate in that I am able to do that, because my condition is probably not severe enough to require medication. Is that not at the heart of the issue? We have to treat people as individuals and find individual treatments that suit them. That might involve a mix of medications, psychological support, family support and educational system support. When we think about ADHD, we should perhaps consider the diversity and range of what is normal.

Daniel Johnson deserves our thanks for raising the issue in this context and showing us that there is more—or perhaps less—to the issue than we might otherwise have thought.

17:29

Alexander Burnett (Aberdeenshire West) (Con): I join members from across the chamber in congratulating Daniel Johnson on gaining cross-party support for his motion on the portrayal of ADHD treatment, and on his incredibly personal and compelling opening speech. Most, if not all, of us will have met someone who has ADHD. I am grateful to colleagues such as Emma Harper for sharing their experiences of that.

Those of us who think that we have not met someone with ADHD probably have done, but we just did not realise it at the time because, as with many health issues, the symptoms are not necessarily physical. In recent years, there has been a move towards treating mental health conditions differently from how physical health conditions are treated, but we must assess each

and every condition individually in order to effectively help those in need.

Those who know me know that I am an avid rugby fan and a former player, and I am sure that we are all well aware of the benefits of physical exercise, no matter which sport may be of our choosing. I have found it immensely rewarding to coach a couple of players who have ADHD and to see their progress and improved participation both on and off the field. Learning how to coach people with ADHD within a wider group has been a great lesson for me. Physical exercise has been proven time and again to have a massive benefit on our mental health. I am not saying that picking up a rugby ball will treat ADHD definitively, but many studies have shown that playing a sport can help children and adults to manage their ADHD.

Although SIGN and NICE guidelines recommend multimodal treatment for ADHD, including parent training, school interventions and psychological support, in many areas medication is all that is offered, and parents who refuse medication for their children are often discharged from services.

Despite unhelpful programmes such as “Take Your Pills”, medication is a valid option that helps many people with ADHD to manage their symptoms and to lead a better life. For some, it is the additional treatments, including psychological support, that are able to help, so we must listen to those with ADHD and to organisations such as the Scottish ADHD Coalition on which treatments make a real improvement to people’s lives.

It is not just the health service, schools and individuals who can help to improve the way in which we manage ADHD treatment. The business world needs to get involved, too. As stated in an article published in *The Guardian* in March 2018, those with ADHD can be a huge asset to the workplace if they are supported. There were many stories on individuals’ struggles in the workplace, but research has found that by utilising the symptoms of ADHD, such as hyperfocusing, businesses can benefit from hiring people with ADHD. Every manager and employer knows that they should use the different strengths of their employees, and it is no different for those with ADHD. I was therefore pleased to read that Scottish ADHD Coalition has published a guide for employers, which I look forward to sharing across my constituency and the wider business community.

We are here today because more action is needed from the Scottish Government to bring forward plans to update NICE and SIGN guidelines. I also encourage ministers to ensure that all Government departments are working to ensure that those with ADHD can enjoy all aspects of life, with the support of those around them.

17:33

The Minister for Mental Health (Maureen Watt): I, too, begin by commending Daniel Johnson for bringing the motion to the chamber. On a previous occasion, he bravely shared his experience of being diagnosed with ADHD, and I thank him for that.

Mental health is something that we all have, and by being open about our own experiences of mental health issues and neurodevelopmental disorders we can reduce stigma and promote understanding. It is important that we lead by example. I share the concerns expressed by Mr Johnson and other members about how ADHD was portrayed in the documentary "Take Your Pills", which was distributed in the United Kingdom by Netflix. I watched the programme, and I think that it is important to note that the film focuses on the United States and should be viewed in that context. However, I was disappointed to see the condition portrayed in such an unbalanced and stigmatising manner, which is not helpful for people who live with the condition and those who support them.

I welcome the recent publication of the NICE guidelines on the diagnosis and management of ADHD, and the guidance that was published last summer on the management of adult ADHD by the Scottish division of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. Accordingly, we are looking to update the SIGN guidance on ADHD at the earliest opportunity, which I hope will be welcomed by Emma Harper and the other members who mentioned it.

Members also mentioned the prescription of medication, which gets a lot of media attention with regard to not just ADHD but depression and other mental health conditions. I understand that people have concerns about the issue, which we must take the time to address. It is also important, as Daniel Johnson said, to acknowledge that the treatment of ADHD in adults and children can be, but is not only, about medication. It is also about making sure that the right support is in place at the right time. I will say more later about what we are doing to support children and young people with ADHD.

I make it clear that people who experience mental ill health and those who live with a neurodevelopmental disorder should expect the same standard of care as people who have a physical illness, and they should receive medication if they need it. Stewart Stevenson's historical analogy was important. In the 70th year of the national health service, we should reflect on just how far we have come in treating people with neurodevelopmental disorders and mental illness, who are no longer institutionalised as they were so unnecessarily in times past.

The prescription of any medication is a clinical decision that is made by health professionals in discussion with the patient, and there is good evidence that health professionals assess and treat these conditions appropriately.

Other treatments can be used to help people with such conditions, and it was interesting that Alexander Burnett mentioned the benefits of sport. Members might have attended the tennis aces project event that was held at the Parliament a few weeks ago, which showed that when children, young adults or older people with neurodevelopmental disorders concentrate, they get relief from what is going on in their heads. There is a similar project in the north-east of Scotland at a Moray golf course.

All those things are important and we must realise that medication is not the only treatment. We are committed to improving access to alternatives, such as psychological therapies, that increase choice and best accommodate patient preference. The Scottish Government supports services such as NHS 24's breathing space and living life phone lines, which help people who experience depression and low mood for whatever reason. That support is a key element of the wider work around Scotland to intervene early and prevent problems from becoming worse. It aligns well with our policy on improving prevention and early intervention, which is one of the areas of focus in our new 10-year mental health strategy.

We are absolutely committed to giving children and young people who are living with ADHD the opportunities to succeed in school. Pupils should get the support that they need to reach their full learning potential. It is up to education authorities to have in place appropriate policies and guidance to support all staff who work with children and young people with ADHD to ensure that they make the most of their learning opportunities. To support staff with that, we recently published the revised code of practice on supporting learners, which explains the duties on education authorities and other agencies. We have also worked closely with Education Scotland to roll out mental health first aid training, which is aimed at staff in secondary school communities. The training seeks to increase their confidence when they approach pupils who they think might be struggling with a mental health problem. All those measures are designed to ensure that children and young people with ADHD are supported to reach their full potential, free from stigma.

Miles Briggs mentioned the evidence session on ADHD and prisoner health. As a former prison visitor, I am well aware of the number of people in prisons who have not only ADHD but other behavioural issues and who should not be part of the prison population, to be frank.

I thank Daniel Johnson for bringing the motion to the chamber. He did not mention that he has written to me to suggest a round-table discussion, which I am absolutely up for. I look forward to our working together on that—we should have it earlier rather than later in the next parliamentary term. I think that it will contribute to the greater openness on the subject that Anas Sarwar asked for.

Meeting closed at 17:41.

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