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Wednesday 20 November 2019

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CONTENTS

	Col.
UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD	1
<i>Statement—[John Swinney].</i>	
The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney)	1
QUEEN ELIZABETH UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL	12
<i>Statement—[Jeane Freeman].</i>	
The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman)	12
PORTFOLIO QUESTION TIME	25
CULTURE, TOURISM AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS	25
Pakistan Development Programme	25
Immigration Policy (Independent Scotland)	25
Tourism (Orkney)	26
Tourism (Cowdenbeath)	28
Heritage Sites (Highlands and Islands)	28
International Engagement (Human Rights)	29
National Galleries of Scotland (BP Sponsorship)	30
EDUCATION AND SKILLS	32
Open University (Scottish Public Services Ombudsman)	32
Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Courses (Consultation with Employers)	32
University (Widening Access)	34
Young People (Preparation for Work)	35
Early Years Learning and Childcare (Jobs in North Ayrshire)	36
School and School-related Activities (Cost to Families)	37
Secondary Schools (Multilevel Teaching)	39
Investment in School Estate (Highlands and Islands)	40
UNIVERSAL CREDIT	42
<i>Motion moved—[Richard Leonard].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Shirley—Anne Somerville].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Michelle Ballantyne].</i>	
Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab)	42
The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People (Shirley-Anne Somerville)	44
Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con)	46
Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green)	48
Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD)	50
Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab)	52
Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)	53
Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con)	55
Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)	57
Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)	59
Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)	60
Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con)	62
Shirley-Anne Somerville	63
Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab)	65
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE (INVESTMENT)	68
<i>Motion moved—[Monica Lennon].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Joe FitzPatrick].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Miles Briggs].</i>	
Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab)	68
The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing (Joe FitzPatrick)	70
Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con)	72
Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green)	75
Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD)	76
Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab)	78
James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)	79
Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con)	81

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP).....	82
Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab)	84
Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP).....	86
Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con)	87
The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman)	90
David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab).....	91
BUSINESS MOTIONS	94
<i>Motions moved—[Graeme Dey]—and agreed to.</i>	
PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU MOTION	97
<i>Motion moved—[Graeme Dey].</i>	
DECISION TIME	98
INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE PERIODIC TABLE	110
<i>Motion debated—[Iain Gray].</i>	
Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab)	110
Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)	112
Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con)	114
Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD).....	116
Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab)	117
The Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science (Richard Lochhead)	119

Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 20 November 2019

[The Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 13:30]

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The first item of business is a statement by John Swinney on the 30th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of his statement, so I encourage members who wish to ask a question to press their request-to-speak buttons.

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): Today is the 30th anniversary of the UN General Assembly's adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in the world. Across the world, events are taking place to celebrate the progress that has been made in furthering the rights of children and young people. I am pleased that this Government stands among those nations that are pledging to go further, and I believe that that commitment is shared across this chamber.

The convention was a landmark treaty, recognising the importance of childhood and the unique needs of children across the globe. It sets out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all children, everywhere, are entitled to and it remains, to this day, truly world leading. It is unique in setting out how adults and Governments must work together to make sure that all children can enjoy all their rights. For many children across the globe, realisation of even their most basic rights is still blighted by war, famine or political instability. That that is so in the 21st century is truly shameful.

Our starting point is that of the United Nations itself, as set out in the preamble to the convention:

"the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world".

From that starting point flows a commitment that we must each shoulder to promote, secure and respect children's rights in Scotland and across the world. The Government is committed to doing all that we can to meet the UN's gold standard on children's rights.

I can, therefore, reaffirm today that, with Parliament's agreement, we will incorporate the

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into Scots law by the end of this parliamentary session. That commitment builds on a proud tradition of respecting children's rights in Scotland that predates even the creation of the UNCRC in 1989, such as our pioneering and unique children's hearings system, which became operational in 1971.

As a Government, we have made respect for children's rights a priority. We have set out in statute our ambition to eradicate child poverty in Scotland and published our first child poverty delivery plan and first-year progress report; through the attainment Scotland fund, we are investing £750 million during this parliamentary session to tackle the poverty related attainment gap; we are almost doubling the funded early learning and childcare provision from 600 to 1,140 hours per year from August 2020, meaning that children and parents will benefit from 30 hours a week of high quality early learning; and we are the first national Government in the world to introduce access to free period products for up to 395,000 students attending schools, colleges and universities in Scotland.

Those are transformational changes that this Government is delivering for children and young people and their families today, and we continue to do more. This year will also see progress towards the implementation of changes to the age of criminal responsibility, raising that from eight to 12 years, and the Children (Equal Protection from Assault) (Scotland) Act 2019 will remove the defence of reasonable chastisement, making it an offence for anyone to smack a child in Scotland.

In Government, we have sought to put our ideals and values into practice. The Government will always speak up without fear or favour for democracy, human rights and the rule of law. We have placed human rights and the sustainable development goals at the centre of the Government's purpose and our refreshed national performance framework. Indeed, our national outcome for children and young people to

"grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential"

is aligned with the preamble to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We have established a national task force for human rights leadership, which, coincidentally, is holding its second plenary meeting today. Our vision is for a new statutory human rights framework for Scotland that ensures that the rights of every member of Scottish society are respected, protected and fulfilled and that we can all live with fundamental human dignity.

Incorporation of the convention, and ensuring that children's rights are fully embedded in

domestic law, is a first step in achieving that larger ambition. Doing so is a necessary process, and practical action is overdue. Although we live in a country that ratified the convention in 1991, international treaties such as this are not automatically part of the law in Scotland. The rights that are set out in the convention would become part of the law that is enforceable in the Scottish courts only if they were implemented by legislation.

Over the summer, we held a consultation to ask what the people of Scotland thought was the best way to incorporate the convention into domestic law. In the consultation, we set out two approaches to incorporation. We said that we planned to either directly incorporate those rights as closely as is achievable in the Scottish context or transpose them by enacting a suite of Scottish children's rights. Today, I have published the analysis of the consultation responses. I am delighted that more than 160 individuals and organisations responded to the consultation, including through seven events that were attended by more than 180 children and young people.

To complement the public consultation, we convened a short-life working group that was made up of stakeholders from public authorities, the third sector, the Scottish Youth Parliament, academia and the legal profession. Its work has assisted policy considerations to date and will continue to do so. I look forward to receiving its report in due course.

It is clear from the consultation that there is wide recognition that incorporating the convention will significantly advance the protection and realisation of children's rights in Scotland. Let me be clear: our children deserve no less. Through the responses to the consultation, it is evident that there is wide support for directly and fully incorporating all the rights that are set out in the convention. Children here in Scotland have said that they want the same rights that children have all around the world.

Although there was some limited support for the approach of having a suite of Scottish rights, we have heard that such an approach would carry a risk of diluting or changing rights, even if that were unintended. We will, therefore, not take that path.

The bill that I will introduce next year will instead take a maximalist approach. In every case possible, we will seek to incorporate the convention's articles in full and directly, using the language of the convention. Our only limitation will be the limit of the powers of this Parliament, to which many of us obviously object. As a result, sadly, some parts of the convention—for example the provision on military recruitment—are reserved issues and cannot be incorporated by this Parliament.

The Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland and Together—the Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights—have proposed a model that would see the whole convention included in the bill, subject to a restriction that the bill operates only within our devolved powers. Although we support the ambition, it is clear to the Government that that approach would not reflect the inability of the Scottish Parliament to make provision in relation to reserved matters. Nevertheless, my expectation is that a vast majority of the convention's provisions can be incorporated by this Parliament. That will ensure that the rights that are contained in the convention are afforded the highest protection and respect possible within our constitutional settlement.

For those areas that are currently beyond our powers, I offer two points. First, I hope that the example of Scotland incorporating the convention will spur the United Kingdom and other states to follow suit. Secondly, in the expectation that we are on a clear journey to independence, the bill will make provision to allow incorporation of the articles of the convention that are currently beyond our powers into Scotland's domestic law if and when the powers of the Scottish Parliament change in the future. That approach will, for the first time, mean that the convention will be directly built into Scots law. That represents a huge step forward for the protection of child rights in Scotland. Every devolved body, health board and council, as well as the Scottish Government itself, will be legally obliged to respect children's rights; if they do not, children and young people will be able to use the courts to enforce their rights.

The bill will aim to ensure that there is a proactive culture of everyday accountability for children's rights across public services in Scotland. In turn, that will mean that children, young people and their families will experience public bodies consistently acting to uphold the rights of all children in Scotland.

That is not all that we are doing. Today, I am also publishing an annual update on the progress that the Scottish Government has made in taking forward our "Progressing the Human Rights of Children in Scotland: An Action Plan 2018-2021", which was published in December 2018. The plan sets out our aims for taking forward children's rights until 2021.

We know that, in addition to making children's rights enforceable through the forthcoming bill, we need to do more to support children's participation in policy making and in the decisions that affect them. We need to raise awareness and understanding of children's rights, including in relation to how authorities can make children's rights real in practice. That is why we are

developing a strategic approach to participation and progressing, through co-production, a three-year programme to raise awareness of children's rights across all sectors of Scottish society, including among children and young people themselves.

Children and young people are our future. They are Scotland's future and the future of the world. On the 30th anniversary of the convention, we can all be proud of the progress that Scotland has made in furthering child rights. The Government will continue to do everything within its powers to promote, secure and respect those rights, now and for the future.

Alison Harris (Central Scotland) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of his statement. As the Parliament will know, the Scottish Conservatives had reservations in the past about the incorporation of the UNCRC into domestic law, not least because of issues to do with its compatibility with various other pieces of legislation. The cabinet secretary should be aware that concerns were raised at the meeting of the Education and Skills Committee this morning about the consistency of different aspects of legislation in the Parliament. What research has been done to ensure that, should the convention be incorporated into Scots law, it will be fully compatible with other aspects of legislation from the Parliament?

John Swinney: The key point to observe is that the purpose of incorporating the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into Scots law is to provide the highest level of protection for the rights of children in our society. If that requires Parliament to amend the existing legislation of Scotland to ensure that it is compatible with the UNCRC, that is precisely what Parliament has to do.

We examine all those issues to ensure that we are observing the highest possible standards for protecting children's rights. That is the purpose of the proposed legislation that we have consulted on and which I am announcing today, that is the basis of its development, and that is the basis of what we will present to Parliament when we introduce the bill, which will obviously be scrutinised by members as the Parliament considers it.

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): I, too, start by thanking the cabinet secretary for early sight of his statement. Labour members certainly wish to be associated with his remarks on the importance of the convention and with his desire for a gold-standard approach to children's rights. Like Mr Swinney, I believe that that commitment is broadly shared across the chamber, and Labour certainly supports the full incorporation of the convention into Scots law and welcomes the outcome of the consultation. What is not shared across the

chamber is the expectation that we are on a "clear journey to independence", so I ask Mr Swinney why on earth he should choose to use such an important, consensual piece of proposed legislation to make such a narrow party-political point.

Secondly, we have previously legislated to confer rights on national health service patients, for example, only to find that there is no redress or sanction when those rights are abrogated. Can the cabinet secretary explain exactly how children's rights will be enforceable in our courts following the incorporation of the convention?

John Swinney: My reference to Scotland's journey to independence was to reflect what I think is a reality, but it also illustrates the point that the bill will build in a mechanism that will enable Parliament, as its powers are expanded in the future, which I hope they are, to keep its approach compatible with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as the agenda takes its course. Mr Gray and I both served on the Smith commission, which expanded the powers of the Parliament, and various other steps have also expanded its powers. That creates circumstances in which we need to ensure that there is a mechanism to update the Parliament's powers.

The second point that Mr Gray raised was about the implementation and application of children's rights and any challenge that flows from them. There are two elements to that. The first, which I laboured in my statement, is that I expect public authorities to take a proactive approach to ensure that their actions and approaches are compatible with the UNCRC. Secondly, in a reactive way, there is the opportunity for individuals to challenge in the courts any aspects of legislation that they judge not to be compatible with the UNCRC and the legislation that the Parliament will enact. The opportunity is available to challenge any legislation should it not be compatible.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): I thank the cabinet secretary for early sight of the statement. I very warmly welcome the content of the statement and the progress that has been made. He talked about reserved issues. What consideration has been given to securing a section 30 order so that the fullest incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law will be possible?

John Swinney: That is obviously an option that could be taken forward. My judgment is that, in trying to make early progress on the bill that we are committed to enact, we will take the steps that are necessary within the current powers of the Parliament to enable us to legislate in this respect. As I said in my statement, we will take a maximalist approach to ensure that we incorporate the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to the greatest degree possible, but also to insert the

mechanism that I referred to in answer to Iain Gray, which will enable us to develop other powers when the powers of the Parliament grow in the future. That is the mechanism that we have adopted to create a practical and tangible way to make progress on this. It will ensure that we put in place the maximum protection we can at this stage and have a mechanism that will enable us to fulfil our obligations as our powers change.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): The Scottish Government has stated that it wants to achieve the gold standard on children's rights and I entirely share that aim. However, earlier this year it failed to meet even the bare minimum expectations of the international community. The Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Dunja Mijatović, said that an age of criminal responsibility of 12 would leave us behind the majority of Council of Europe members. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child intervened during our consideration of the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Bill, telling us to move the age to 14 immediately, and our own Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland said that any age below 14 cannot be justified in human rights terms. Does the Deputy First Minister recognise that any attempt to incorporate the UNCRC will fail in the eyes of the international community as long as we have an age of criminal responsibility that is among the lowest in the world?

John Swinney: No, I do not accept that analysis. The Government has undertaken the reforms to the age of criminal responsibility working with a very broad range of stakeholders to ensure that we can make a very significant change in the legislative basis of Scotland and do so in a sustainable way. That has enabled us to bring many stakeholders with us and to address the issues involved in changing the legislation on the age of criminal responsibility. Mr Cole-Hamilton will be aware that, during the passage of the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Bill, there was extensive discussion and debate on these questions and Parliament was persuaded by the evidence that the Government presented on the course of action that we took. We also inserted a mechanism into the bill to enable us to consider the issues that arise from the changes that we have already made and any arguments for going further. That mechanism was also supported by Parliament.

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): I welcome the announcement that the Government will not take a "suite of Scottish rights" approach but will seek to incorporate in full and directly, using the language of the convention. Will the Deputy First Minister confirm that the bill that he will introduce will include a strong proactive element to ensure that the rights of all children are

considered at the front end of all law, policy making and delivery?

John Swinney: I give Ruth Maguire that assurance. We will put into the bill an approach that expects public authorities to act within the terms of the legislation. We will also be taking steps proactively to encourage awareness of and participation in children's rights assessments, to ensure that all the issues of proactivity that Ruth Maguire has raised can be taken into account. We will build an expectation that public authorities will look proactively to ensure that the perspective on children's rights is fully and comprehensively embedded in the working approach of public bodies and authorities. That will be our expectation of their conduct in the period ahead.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): The cabinet secretary has made clear his view that all local authorities, all public bodies and all of the Scottish Government will have to be fully accountable for their actions with regard to children's rights. What estimates of cost has the Scottish Government undertaken to ensure that that happens?

John Swinney: Those issues will be the subject of consideration when the financial memorandum is put in place. The Government believes that we have an obligation to ensure that we have the highest standard of rights; the financial implications of that will, of course, be subject to scrutiny when the bill is introduced in and considered by the Parliament. There will be opportunities for committees of the Parliament and the Parliament itself to scrutinise the detail of the assumptions that the Government makes at that stage.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): The Deputy First Minister rightly pointed to the fact that our only limitation is the limit of this Parliament's powers. Will he ensure that, when Scotland finally takes its place in the world as a normal independent nation, all legislation will allow for the incorporation into our domestic law of provisions of the convention in relation to which incorporation is currently beyond our powers?

John Swinney: That mechanism will be built into the bill that I introduce, to enable the Parliament to take account of any changes in the powers of the Parliament and to ensure that any of the issues on which we are, regrettably, unable to legislate to protect children's rights, as a consequence of the limitations of our powers, can be addressed as the Parliament's powers change in the years to come.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): The full adoption of the UNCRC brings with it the possibility of unforeseen incompatibilities with pre-existing legislation, as has been mentioned. Has

the Government identified examples of such incompatibilities and is it undertaking proactive work to identify possible conflicts with existing law?

John Swinney: The Government is undertaking work to identify areas in relation to which issues might have to be addressed. That will be a subject of consideration as the bill takes its course. We will also look carefully at the content and parameters of our responsibilities, to ensure that we act in a maximalist fashion to put in place the highest level of protection of the rights of children in areas of devolved responsibility.

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): The Deputy First Minister said that the convention refers to

“the equal and inalienable rights”

that we should all enjoy. However, it seems that under successive UK Tory Governments some children are more equal than others: Trades Union Congress figures this week showed that the number of children who are growing up in poverty in working households is up by 800,000 since 2010. Will the Government confirm that it will work to ensure equality for all children, even when it seems that the UK Government has given up on doing so?

John Swinney: The issue that Mr MacGregor raises is integral to decisions that the Government has taken in a number of respects. First, the Scottish child payment will directly address that issue, as does our work on the child poverty plan and our determination to eradicate child poverty. These issues are central to the Government's policy agenda and we will use every opportunity that we can to address them.

Mr MacGregor made a fair point; as this Government is taking those steps, we are trying to operate to reduce and eliminate child poverty in challenging circumstances and conditions in which welfare reform and other measures in the United Kingdom continue to perpetuate austerity.

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): The cabinet secretary indicated in his statement that the Scottish Government is keen to do more to support children's participation in policy making. Will he give us some details on how that will happen?

John Swinney: The Government has taken a number of steps to support the inclusion of children and young people in the formulation of policy. We engage extensively with the Children's Parliament and the Scottish Youth Parliament. We realised during the year of young people that our mechanisms for gathering input have not been as strong as they should have been. Through collaboration with organisations such as Young

Scot and YouthLink Scotland, we have created better opportunities for young people to influence Government policy. The cabinet meets on an annual basis representatives of the Children's Parliament and the youth parliament, which give us—invariably—a pretty challenging conversation on many questions. We are very open to that dialogue.

I assure Mr Stewart of the Government's determination to hear the views of children and young people. Indeed, our consultation exercise in preparation for this bill has been strengthened by a mechanism that specifically involves listening to the views of children and young people.

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): I am delighted that the Scottish Government has listened to the voices of our nation's children throughout this process. Will the Deputy First Minister expand on how we will raise awareness of children's rights across the whole of society, as well as among children themselves?

John Swinney: We have made a specific commitment by entering into an agreement with Young Scot and Children in Scotland to engage children and young people to advise on and inform greater awareness of children's rights. That is an essential part of the awareness-raising dialogue that I referred to in my answer to Mr Stewart. That programme enables children and young people to express their contribution to the formulation of policy and, specifically, to raise awareness of the important issues of children's rights that are at the heart of my statement.

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): I heard the cabinet secretary's response to Mr Cole-Hamilton's question. The recommendation from the United Nations is clear; the age of criminal responsibility should be 14. Incorporation of the UNCRC would require us to comply with that. I press the cabinet secretary to tell the chamber when the age of criminal responsibility will be raised to 14.

John Swinney: Mary Fee took a close interest in the passage of the legislation on the age of criminal responsibility, and she is familiar with what Parliament agreed on the contents of the bill, when it set the age of criminal responsibility at 12 and then inserted a mechanism that enables us to go through a process of dialogue and discussion to address any issues that arise. That is exactly what the Government will do as a consequence of Parliament passing that legislation in recent months.

Gail Ross (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): I warmly welcome the Deputy First Minister's statement. Will he outline what material changes and positive outcome he envisages from the incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law?

John Swinney: First, we will have a legal framework in place that will take the most ambitious approach that we can take to the protection of children's rights. That will be converted into legislation that will set out and codify those rights. Incorporation will also create an expectation that, in everyday practice, our public bodies should act to respect the rights of children in an active and planned fashion. I hope and expect that a change of culture will come out of that, so that we further entrench the rights of children in our society and ensure that they are respected by all public bodies.

Queen Elizabeth University Hospital

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is a ministerial statement by Jeane Freeman on Queen Elizabeth university hospital ward closures.

14:00

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman): I am grateful for the opportunity to provide members with an update on the position of the paediatric haemato-oncology wards at the Queen Elizabeth university hospital.

I start by offering my deepest sympathies to the families that are affected. To lose a loved one in any circumstances is hard, but I cannot begin to imagine the pain of losing a child in those circumstances, or the suffering and grief that will stay with the families for the rest of their lives. I also apologise to them for the fact that they feel they have not had their questions answered. They are absolutely right to ask and pursue their questions, and they are entitled to have them answered and to receive the support they need.

I take very seriously the concerns that have been highlighted to me about the deeply concerning issues that have been raised by a whistleblower. Our national health service—indeed, all our public services—can flourish and improve only when everyone working in it feels that they can confidently speak up. There is no room in our health service for anyone to criticise whistleblowers, publicly or otherwise, or to put them in fear for the safety of their jobs. Whistleblowing is not something that people who have dedicated their lives to healthcare do lightly. It takes courage and they should be thanked.

Much of our health service exemplifies that approach. It is right to thank all NHS Scotland staff who work every day to give the best quality of care to their patients. They deserve significant credit for helping to make our health service one of the safest in the world. Even so, however, things can go wrong and, when they do, I expect boards to respond professionally, transparently and speedily.

The whistleblower who came forward last week stated that an internal clinician-led review within NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde had identified additional cases of infection among paediatric cancer patients, including a child who died in 2017. My officials are urgently seeking details of that review so that we can fully understand the findings and what action the board took in response.

Following my announcement on 17 September this year of a statutory public inquiry to examine issues at the Queen Elizabeth campus in Glasgow and the Royal hospital for children and young people in Edinburgh, I received correspondence from a bereaved parent concerning the death of their child in 2017. This was the first notification that I had received about that tragic death. I replied expressing my concern for them and my condolences for their sad loss. I advised them that a representative from the board would make personal contact with them to ensure that any questions and concerns were fully addressed. I understand that contact has now been made with the family and I am clear that I expect the board to do all that it can to support them and provide clear answers to their questions.

Over the course of last weekend, other families made contact with me. It would not be right for me to discuss the details of each case publicly and it would be entirely inappropriate for me to comment further on any case that is subject to an on-going Crown Office investigation. However, I want there to be no doubt that I am fully committed to ensuring that every family receives the answers that they are entitled to.

It is not a requirement for the Scottish Government to be notified of every patient death, and nor would that be appropriate. However, my clear expectation is that our NHS must support families by providing them with the accurate information that they need to understand what has happened and what is being done, and to do that in a clear, transparent and timely way.

I expect all NHS boards to ensure that communication and engagement with patients and families is centred on the needs of the patient and the family. I also expect boards to have considered whether the national adverse events framework or the organisational duty of candour procedure should be applied and to ensure that patients and families are genuinely involved in discussions about such decisions.

The issues over the past few days have concerned children who received treatment on the paediatric haemato-oncology ward—wards 2A and 2B—at the Royal hospital for children. Despite the correct mitigation measures being undertaken by the board in those wards, on-going surveillance did not give the board the confidence that it needed that all the organisms that had been identified had been eliminated. As such, in September 2018, those wards were closed for further work and upgrading. With the closure of wards 2A and 2B, the patient cohort has been temporarily moved to ward 6A at the Queen Elizabeth university hospital.

On 4 October, in response to a Government-initiated question, I updated members on the

meetings that I had held with a number of families of paediatric cancer patients, and with some young patients themselves, who are currently being treated at the Queen Elizabeth university hospital, following concerns that they had raised with me around the safety of the ward, following reports of bloodstream infections among the paediatric haemato-oncology patients. I met them on 28 September and 1 October, and it seemed clear to me that the information sharing and communication from the board to those families had simply not been good enough.

As a result, I appointed Professor Craig White, reporting to me, to lead and direct the work that is required to make sure that the questions that the families have are clearly answered and, going forward, that their voices and views are clearly heard and paid attention to. Since appointment, Professor White has been in contact with the families, and remains so.

Recognising that they needed to significantly improve their relationships with the families involved, the chair and chief executive of the board wrote to all families who are in contact with the service, and they continue to meet personally every parent who has requested a meeting.

Clinical leads of the haemato-oncology service, and the infection control doctor on the incident management team, have been actively involved in investigations and decision making on actions that are being taken to ensure patient safety.

On the on-going safety of the environment in ward 6A, Health Protection Scotland has confirmed that it is content with the actions that are being taken by the board's incident management team to investigate individual cases; that it has reviewed evidence of effective implementation of the actions that HPS recommended; and that it is assured that appropriate arrangements are in place for the on-going monitoring of infections, including the triggers that were agreed for detailed scrutiny of any further actions that are needed. In addition, I have asked that external clinical experts from the national managed service network for children and young people with cancer is invited to join the clinical management group that has been established to carry out on-going review of infections.

Over the weekend, calls were made for the board to be escalated. In NHS Scotland, we have a clear process that is consistent across all boards, and which is led by the NHS Scotland chief executive, to review levels of escalation for all boards. I have asked that the process of escalation be taken forward as quickly as possible. I will update Parliament on the outcome of that process as soon as it is concluded.

As members know, I announced a statutory public inquiry to examine these issues. I hope to be in a position to confirm the inquiry chair before the end of the year. I have a statutory obligation to consult the chair on the terms of reference, which I hope to be able to set out to the chamber early in the new year. In the meantime, the independent review that is being led by Dr Andrew Fraser and Dr Brian Montgomery is gathering evidence, with a view to publishing its findings in spring 2020.

I have outlined the steps that I have taken regarding the paediatric haemato-oncology ward at the Queen Elizabeth university hospital. However, I am acutely aware that the families of children who have received, and who are receiving, care need to have complete confidence that the care that is provided is of a high quality and in a safe environment. They, and the staff who deliver the care, also need to have confidence in the openness and transparency of information.

Families must have the right support and information to give them confidence that risks are monitored, that triggers for action are appropriate, that steps are taken both to prevent and limit infection spread, and that they are engaged and fully informed and treated with compassion and respect. The healthcare environment will never be risk free, but, given how devastating the impact of an infection can be for those who are most vulnerable, we must do all that we can to reduce that risk and support families. That is what I have been doing, and that is what I am committed to doing.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of her statement. I am sorry to say that, for the families, the statement will do very little to reassure or to answer the many and increasing questions about patients' safety at the Queen Elizabeth university hospital campus. They believe that there has been a cover-up, and we need to get answers for the families.

I ask the cabinet secretary two simple questions. First, have all families been contacted and provided with the care and support that they might need? Secondly, Health Protection Scotland revealed in 2016 that a patient in ward 2A was identified as having a bloodstream infection. A further case was identified in 2017, and 23 additional cases were identified between 29 January and 26 September 2018. All of them were potentially linked to water contamination. Given the heightened concern about the risk of water infection to vulnerable, immunosuppressed patients during that period, what guidance and protocols were put in place and what sight of that did ministers have?

Jeane Freeman: I am grateful to Mr Briggs for his questions. All families who have been in

contact with me or with Professor White have been contacted, and Professor White is working directly with them. That includes the families whom I met in September and October.

The chair and the chief executive of the board have written to all the families who have had children treated over a period in either ward 2A or ward 2B or ward 6A to offer to meet them and to answer any questions that they might have. If families have responded, individual meetings have been held with patients, as I have said.

Professor White's job is to ensure that, if families require additional support, that is made available to them. He continues to review and undertake that work and, as I have said, he reports directly to me.

I think that I partly covered HPS's work on water infection in my statement. The board undertook a number of mitigation measures in wards 2A and 2B to identify the source of the infection and to prevent spread. However, its surveillance between January and September 2018 did not give it confidence that it had done everything to identify exactly the source of the organisms and that that environment was safe, and it closed the ward so that it could undertake further work. It has undertaken additional upgrading of wards 2A and 2B and has decanted patients to ward 6A, which is where current in-patients are.

If there are additional questions that need to be asked about that particular inquiry by HPS and the specific measures, I have all the information in front of me, and I would be very happy to ensure that Mr Briggs has the absolute details.

On the whistleblower's revelation about the 2017 clinician-led inquiry, I have not seen that review. We have asked for that, and my officials are urgently seeking the detail of that so that we can consider what happened, what the board did in response, and whether that was sufficient.

In some ways, my statement was not intended to answer the specific questions that families have. That is why I met them, and that is why we have those contacts. Each family has different questions about their own child—about their current treatment and the environment that they are in, or about previous cases—and we need to treat them with respect and deal with them individually. No statement could cover that, and nor should it.

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): I thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of her statement. However, heartbroken parents still need answers. The truth about water contamination and the multitude of scandals at the hospital must come out. That is why Scottish Labour fought for a public inquiry.

Milly Main's mum deserves the truth about her daughter's death, just as Victoria Freeman deserves the truth about her son, Mason, who also died unexpectedly at the hospital in 2017. Many other families fear a cover-up.

I am afraid to say that the cabinet secretary's statement is underwhelming and that families deserve much, much better. A passing mention of possible escalation measures against the health board is weak and not good enough. It is not clear what exactly the Government is prepared to do. Does the cabinet secretary have complete confidence in the current leadership of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde? I cannot stress strongly enough that parents feel completely failed and the wider public is losing confidence. Where is the empathy and compassion for those families? Why should they place their trust in the health board and the cabinet secretary?

Jeane Freeman: I think that they should place their trust in me because I am compassionate and I have empathy, and that is precisely why I met those families and have undertaken the work that I have done. Whether it is Ms Lennon or anyone else who says that I am careless or irresponsible on these matters, I refute that absolutely—it could not be further from the truth. It might suit Ms Lennon to make those points for other reasons, but they are not true and I refute them absolutely.

On Ms Lennon's question—*[Interruption]*. Please do not shout at me; it does not help.

Families absolutely deserve answers. That is why I met them and appointed Professor White, and why he gave detailed answers to 71 questions that families asked. I checked with them that we had taken a clear and careful note of the 71 questions so that they were sure that we had not missed anything. Professor White provided detailed answers for them to every one of those questions, and he will continue to answer questions.

The public inquiry is, in part, how we get to the bottom of how these situations have arisen. That is why I initiated the inquiry that, as Ms Lennon said, she asked for.

I do not accept that my reference to escalation is weak. There is a proper process and Ms Lennon should understand that if we expect staff at whatever level in any organisation to treat those whom they serve with respect, we must treat them with respect in the first place. There is a proper process for escalation that is undertaken by the chief executive of NHS Scotland. That process is under way with respect to NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, and it needs to be fair and equitable across all boards. A decision will be taken and I will advise the chamber of that decision. That is the right way to do things. I will not be rushed into

making wrong decisions simply to satisfy members in the chamber.

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): The whistleblower coming forward has enabled families to come forward too, to seek answers to questions that have long gone unanswered. However, lessons cannot be learned if staff feel unable to report issues confidently and in confidence. I want to understand what immediate action the cabinet secretary will take to ensure that there is the culture of openness and transparency that we all seek. It is essential that that replaces one in which lessons cannot be learned.

Jeane Freeman: Ms Johnstone is quite right about the culture of an organisation and the importance of staff feeling not only confident and safe in raising issues but that they will not experience any adverse effects from having done so. In a private visit, I spent some time with a range of staff—clinical, domestic and estate—currently working in ward 6A in order to hear from them their concerns and what they needed in order to feel confident that the right actions were being taken to ensure that the environment in that ward is safe. That is why I mentioned the clinicians' active engagement in the incident management team's work. That is with respect to what we are doing in ward 6A, and Professor White reports to me that he continues to have that engagement with all those staff to ensure that they continue to feel that they can raise issues and are heard and that what they raise is then acted on.

On the wider question, as I am sure Ms Johnstone and others know, we are undertaking a range of actions. The Health and Sport Committee yesterday recommended that the Parliament approve the draft order to establish the independent national whistleblowing officer in the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The selection of the whistleblowing champions, who will report direct to me, is under way, and we will have appointed them by the end of this parliamentary term—that is, by Christmas. Of course, we also have the short-life group that I have convened with a range of royal colleges, trade unions, staff representative and others to look collectively at all the steps that we need to take to provide staff with wellbeing and mental health support and to promote that positive culture. I described that yesterday in the committee as a jigsaw of work that we need to piece together. Although there is no single thing that will resolve matters, I believe that to date, we have the right pieces in place, and we will take that work forward.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): I am grateful to the cabinet secretary for early sight of her statement. Despite the public interest around the Queen Elizabeth university

hospital and the high-profile scrutiny that it has received, an internal clinician-led review has taken place that even the cabinet secretary was not aware of. Does she now understand why the information gathered by that review was subsequently withheld?

Jeane Freeman: I do not understand that. As I said, the Scottish Government was not advised of the clinician-led review. We undertake to obtain that information from the board and to look at the review that was undertaken by those clinicians in 2017, so that we can see what actions the board took. If we are unhappy or dissatisfied with any of that, we will take action in that regard.

At some point, if it is appropriate for the individuals involved, I also hope to be able to speak to the clinicians who led that review in order to understand personally from them what their experience was and what more we need to do to understand what obstacles and difficulties they came up against in carrying out that work. That is the situation as it stands.

As Mr Cole-Hamilton knows, there was HPS work in 2018. There are a number of matters that we need to get to the bottom of, and in the period since just under a week ago, when this was all revealed, we have been working actively and consistently to try to do that. As information is received, reviewed and compared with other information that we have, and as things become clear, I will continue to update members.

The Presiding Officer: The front benchers for each of the parties have had a chance to ask expanded questions and the cabinet secretary has similarly addressed those. I would welcome it if the remaining nine members would not preface their questions with mini-speeches, but just ask a question. I hope that we will have concise questions and answers.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): Alison Johnstone raised the issue of culture. At the Health and Sport Committee yesterday, we took evidence on the handling of whistleblower complaints. Will the cabinet secretary say how it is expected that that will help to change the culture within the NHS?

Jeane Freeman: As I and other members have said, the important thing is that individuals who work in our health service feel confident and safe in raising issues of concern. The independent national whistleblowing officer is one of the measures that we are putting in place, with the Parliament's approval, in order to provide that route for whistleblowers, and the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman helpfully said yesterday that, where she considers it to be appropriate, she will work alongside individuals to ensure that they

have that confidence and feel safe in raising such issues. That is one step that it is important to take.

The non-executive whistleblowing champions, who will be appointed before Christmas and will report directly to me, will also have an active role, not just in checking whether policies are followed, although they will do that, but in engaging directly with staff and others where there are concerns and helping them to feel confident in raising those concerns, both within the board and, if the whistleblowing champion feels that they have not been addressed properly, directly with Government.

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): The tragic case of Milly Main in 2017 should have triggered an adverse event review. Adverse event reviews are designed to highlight major systemic issues such as those that, in this case, have only come to light two years later. What is the cabinet secretary doing to ensure that the adverse event review process is consistently applied across all health boards so that we can avoid such tragedies in future?

Jeane Freeman: That is a really important issue. Mr Whittle will know that work was done not long ago that identified variation in the triggering of serious adverse event reviews across our health boards. We now have Healthcare Improvement Scotland actively working to identify the core triggers and, through its follow-up work, it will ensure that all boards work to the same process and triggers for an adverse event review. As that work is completed, I am happy to ensure that Mr Whittle receives an update. HIS will continue to monitor to ensure that the process is delivered; in addition, we have other means of monitoring to ensure that all boards apply the process in a consistent fashion.

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): The cabinet secretary mentioned that the process of special measures is not a feature of the NHS in Scotland. Will the cabinet secretary set out the process by which boards are moved up and down the escalation levels for support from and directive oversight by the Scottish Government?

Jeane Freeman: The NHS board performance escalation framework has five stages. The designation of boards at stages 1 or 2 is managed by Scottish Government policy leads, while decisions to escalate boards to stages 3 or 4 are made by the Scottish Government's health and social care management board, which is our most senior level of managers. Decisions to escalate boards to stage 5 are taken by the cabinet secretary in accordance with ministerial powers of intervention.

The escalation levels are consistently reviewed against board performance, and decisions can be

made for boards to come down the escalation ladder. At each stage, there are various levels of Government support or direct intervention.

Anas Sarwar (Glasgow) (Lab): A child has died and there have been two years of cover-ups, bullying and intimidation by the health board. Milly Main's parents and family have lost confidence in the health board, so we look to the cabinet secretary for support. Will she make a personal commitment today to notify all families of the 26 children affected of what happened in 2017? Will she make a personal commitment to ensure that the bullying and intimidation stops, and will she give a public guarantee that the jobs of the NHS staff who have bravely come forward will be protected and that they will not experience further intimidation?

Jeane Freeman: I am grateful to Mr Sarwar for his reply to my letter, in which he offered to share information with me, as appropriate.

I make the commitment now—I did so in my statement, but I will repeat it—that I am determined that all the affected families receive answers to their questions. There is no more for me to say—I am committed to ensuring that. My personal commitment is to ensure that, for all the families that were affected by the review that the clinicians led—once we have seen and understood that work—or by subsequent events, we take steps to ensure that all their questions are answered fully, that they understand what happened that led to the death of their child and what has happened since, and that we do not have another round of families feeling that their questions have not been answered.

As I said in my statement, it is my commitment that any whistleblower who comes forward should have their role protected and should not experience adverse effects on their job as a consequence of raising issues that are of concern to them. Such people dedicate their lives to working for the health service and they do not come forward lightly. I take the issues that they raise very seriously. Mr Sarwar has that commitment from me.

On my commitment to end the bullying culture, I am sure that Mr Sarwar appreciates that no one individual can end a culture of bullying and intimidation. However, he has my commitment, as cabinet secretary, to lead our work to end that culture, which I will do in every possible way by working with boards, unions, staff representatives and all other relevant individuals.

It is my absolute commitment to bring an end to the culture of bullying and intimidation that we see in some of our health boards some of the time. It is important that we have some perspective—not all our health boards have such a culture all the time.

However, Mr Sarwar has my commitment that, in this case, I will lead the work to ensure that we get to that point.

David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP): A new body to strengthen infection prevention and control, including in the built environment, was announced in the programme for government. How can it be used to ensure that we have the required wide range of skills and expertise—not least in ventilation engineering and construction of those particularly complex ventilation structures?

Jeane Freeman: David Torrance is referring to our programme for government commitment to establishing a national centre of expertise to cover major infrastructure projects in the built environment. We are in the process of finalising the exact scope of that body. It will have a compliance function, among other things.

The intention is to bring together in one central place the expertise that is needed to design buildings, to negotiate contracts, to monitor delivery against contracts, to ensure that effective infection prevention and control measures are built into building designs, to look at on-going maintenance, and so on. We are currently considering the digital infrastructure, as part of that work. In the coming weeks, I hope that we will be able to set out the scope of that body to the chamber as well as the timeline towards its establishment.

Maurice Corry (West Scotland) (Con): Throughout the investigations, the NHS staff in the Queen Elizabeth university hospital have been on the front line, fully facing the issues resulting from the tragic circumstances. What is the cabinet secretary doing to ensure that staff receive the fullest support possible?

Jeane Freeman: I am grateful to Mr Corry for his very important question. Staff are, of course, affected by what has happened. As I said in my statement, they need to have confidence that their working environment is safe and, therefore, to have full information on and involvement in it. The death of any patient also deeply affects staff who are involved. All such matters need to be addressed and thought about.

When I visited the staff in ward 6A, I talked to them about what they needed to help them to cope with what is a stressful job in any circumstances, and which is additionally stressful in the current circumstances. They advised me about some help that they could use, and about work that is already under way following discussions with them, including breakout times and additional support for their physical and mental wellbeing. I will continue to ensure not only that that support is delivered to the staff in ward

6A, but that the board looks to ensure that it is available across the whole estate.

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): Although the traditionally led public inquiry will be independent of the Scottish Government, can the cabinet secretary outline how individuals and families will be invited to feed into it once it is under way?

Jeane Freeman: Of course the public inquiry is independent, and it has a statutory role, responsibilities, and powers. As I said earlier, under that process, I am required to consult, with the chair of the inquiry, on its remit. The chair will be in charge of how he or she wants to receive evidence, how to undertake the inquiry, and how to manage additional workstreams on other areas that might feed into the inquiry.

My expectation is that the inquiry will be able to create a space for families and others to put their views and to be heard. At the end of the day, however, it will be for the inquiry chair to make that decision.

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): The cabinet secretary told BBC Scotland on 18 November, and she implied it again today, that she did not know about the tragic death of three-year-old Mason until last weekend, when his mum wrote to her, and she took immediate action to get answers as a result of that correspondence.

However, I wrote to the cabinet secretary on 21 November 2018 about the circumstances of Mason's tragic death and the fact that his mum had not received answers to a letter that she had sent to the Government. The cabinet secretary replied to my letter on 24 December 2018 and confirmed that correspondence had been received from Mason's mum on 21 September 2018.

Why, therefore, did the cabinet secretary claim not to know about Mason's death? Why did she fail to take action when she was informed about concerns more than a year ago?

Jeane Freeman: I am glad that Mr Smyth has raised the issue. What I was asked on "Good Morning Scotland" was whether I knew about the death of Mason and the inquiry into that death. When I said no, I was answering the part of the question about the inquiry.

I did know about Mason's death. As Mr Smyth has said, there was correspondence over a period of time, initially about medical negligence, and those issues were dealt with. There was also correspondence from Mason's mum, who said that she had not had replies: we checked that, and replies had been sent.

I received correspondence from Mason's mum over the weekend—specifically about her concern about whether infection had played a part in her

son's death. Those are the most recent steps that I have taken on that matter.

Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP): Can the cabinet secretary give an assurance that to ensure that lessons are learned across Scotland's NHS, the Scottish Government will consider fully the findings of the report on Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust, material relating to which emerged yesterday?

Jeane Freeman: I am grateful to Tom Arthur for that question. The situation to which he refers is tragic, and the sympathy of everyone in the chamber goes to all those who have been affected.

This morning, I asked officials to check the recommendations of that investigation against our current work in the services, and to ensure that all the recommendations are already covered by what we are doing.

I expect to receive advice on that from officials in the coming days. Again, I am happy to ensure that Tom Arthur and other members understand our response to the recommendations on delivery of maternity and children's services.

The Presiding Officer: I thank the cabinet secretary and members for their contributions.

Portfolio Question Time

Culture, Tourism and External Affairs

14:36

Pakistan Development Programme

1. John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how minority groups within Pakistan are being helped as part of Scotland's Pakistan development programme. (S5O-03773)

The Minister for Europe, Migration and International Development (Ben Macpherson): Since 2013, through the British Council, the Scottish Government's international development programme has provided scholarships in Pakistan to more than 500 women from disadvantaged backgrounds to study in higher education and to more than 4,000 children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Of those scholarships, 1,200 were provided to children from minority backgrounds and 35 to women from minority backgrounds.

John Mason: I seek assurance from the minister that, as he and other members of the Government have contact with the authorities in Pakistan, they will continue to argue for the case of minorities there. We hear about Christians being accused of blasphemy and Ahmadis not being able to get identity cards.

Ben Macpherson: The Scottish Government strongly condemns the persecution of all minorities—including the targeting of innocent people based on their beliefs—and the misuse of blasphemy laws in Pakistan. The Scottish Government has repeatedly raised directly with the United Kingdom Government and officials from the Government of Pakistan concerns about the issues that John Mason mentioned, and we will continue to do so. We have been in contact with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which assured us that the British high commission in Islamabad will continue to support civil society and non-governmental organisations in lobbying the Government of Pakistan to honour, in practice, its international commitments, including those relating to freedom of belief.

Immigration Policy (Independent Scotland)

2. Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether an independent Scotland could allow people whose immigration status is being challenged through a tribunal or court to continue to work, study or volunteer. (S5O-03774)

The Minister for Europe, Migration and International Development (Ben Macpherson):

Individuals and families who come from all over the world to work, study and settle in Scotland make vital contributions to Scotland's economy and the delivery of public services. Inward migration enriches our society and communities.

The Scottish Government is sympathetic to all those who have difficulties navigating the complex and increasingly restrictive UK immigration rules. The immigration system should treat all individuals with dignity, fairness and respect; where appropriate, they should be allowed to work and support themselves during the immigration process.

In the event of independence, decisions relating to the shaping of migration policy would be for the Government of the day to make. However, this Scottish Government has long argued that, in the case of asylum seekers, the right to work should be granted to help support their integration and enable them to contribute to their new communities where they can do so.

Emma Harper: The Home Office currently prevents people from working, studying or claiming welfare support while their immigration status is being challenged. I have supported constituents who have been left with no choice other than to rely on charities for food, clothing and housing. Will the minister join me in condemning that inhumane approach from the United Kingdom Home Office, and will he give assurances we will do things differently in an independent Scotland, with a person-centred and fair approach to immigration policy?

Ben Macpherson: The Scottish Government has long expressed concern about the current UK Government's immigration policies, including those on asylum seekers, and about the UK Government position that asylum seekers can have no recourse to public funds. That is an area in which we could, of course, have different policies as an independent country.

Outwith the constitutional question of independence, if this Parliament had powers to set the rules and criteria for a Scottish visa, we could think about how to make immigration policy differently here in Scotland, but within a UK framework.

Tourism (Orkney)

3. Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with Destination Orkney and Orkney Islands Council about the future needs of the tourism sector. (S5O-03775)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): I discussed tourism with the leader of Orkney Islands Council on my recent visit to Orkney to launch the Scottish

Government's Arctic policy framework, which contains proposals for greater knowledge and policy exchange between Scotland and Arctic countries in relation to sustainable tourism in rural and island areas.

The Scottish Government's engagement with Destination Orkney and Orkney Islands Council takes place regularly, through our agencies. Highlands and Islands Enterprise, VisitScotland, Historic Environment Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage are all principal partners in the new tourism partnership group with Destination Orkney and Orkney Islands Council. I offer Destination Orkney my congratulations on winning the working together for tourism award at the Highlands and Islands tourism awards earlier this month.

Liam McArthur: I very much welcome both the Arctic initiative to which the cabinet secretary referred and the support that the Scottish Government is giving it.

Although the tourism sector in Orkney has enjoyed strong growth in recent years, Destination Orkney, which will hold its annual summit in Kirkwall tomorrow, has highlighted the challenge that local tourism businesses face as a result of the Orkney Islands' continued lack of access to the cheaper ferry fares that are available to communities on the west coast. Will the cabinet secretary reinforce with her Cabinet colleagues the need for road equivalent tariff to be introduced on Orkney's ferry routes as soon as possible?

Fiona Hyslop: The principle that tourism is everyone's business also applies to my Cabinet colleagues who cover other areas of the economy. On access, I regularly and consistently make the case for improved ferry operations for not just Orkney but the rest of Scotland.

Liam McArthur is correct to say that it is important for Destination Orkney to face up to the challenge. The matter will be addressed this week through the five-year strategy that is in the vision for tourism that Destination Orkney will launch.

I regularly raise with my Cabinet colleagues all aspects of such matters, including ferry operations. Only this week, I had the opportunity of discussing with the cabinet secretaries who cover other aspects of the economy the importance of tourism to all their portfolios, and I will reiterate that when I discuss the matter with the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): Question 4 has been withdrawn.

Tourism (Cowdenbeath)

5. Annabelle Ewing (Cowdenbeath) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how it promotes tourism in the Cowdenbeath constituency. (S5O-03777)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): Through Historic Environment Scotland, we are developing a new augmented reality app, which is entitled "In the Footsteps of Kings". The first phase of that work was launched this summer. The app will feature Aberdour castle and nearby Ravenscraig castle, and will provide an enjoyable and informative experience for visitors to those sites, especially families.

VisitScotland continues to promote Cowdenbeath's rapidly growing collection of public art through its consumer social media channels. Further, our agencies continue to work with local sectoral organisations, including the Fife Tourism Partnership and the Heartlands of Fife local tourist association, and provide advice on projects such as the Fife pilgrim way.

Annabelle Ewing: I welcome the excellent initiatives that the cabinet secretary has mentioned in her answer. From questions that I have raised previously, she will be aware of the save the cage campaign, the aim of which is to bring mining artefacts to Lochore Meadows country park, which is in my constituency. Will the cabinet secretary undertake to engage with the National Mining Museum of Scotland on that campaign?

Fiona Hyslop: I am fully aware of the save the cage campaign, not least because the constituency MSP has raised it a number of times. I understand that discussions have already taken place between the Scottish Mining Museum Collection Trust and the Fife Coast & Countryside Trust to look at the feasibility project to which Annabelle Ewing refers.

Heritage Sites (Highlands and Islands)

6. Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to protect heritage sites in the Highlands and Islands. (S5O-03778)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): Protecting heritage sites across Scotland is a core purpose of Historic Environment Scotland, the Scottish Government's lead public body for the historic environment. It is responsible for the direct care of more than 300 heritage sites of national importance, of which 122 are in the Highlands and Islands. It further protects heritage sites through designation and consent processes and provides millions of pounds of grant funding each year to sites across Scotland. Last year, it provided more

than £2.9 million to organisations and projects in the Highlands and Islands.

Rhoda Grant: The cabinet secretary will be aware that the Western Isles are home to fantastic archaeology, much of which has not been excavated or protected in any way. However, many of those sites and structures are currently suffering badly from coastal erosion. Does the Government plan to produce a strategy to protect vitally important sites from climate change?

Fiona Hyslop: I have a number of points to make. A number of projects are looking at the archaeology of coastal sites and mapping it. I will make sure that additional information is sent to the member. Yesterday, I was in Paris at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's first meeting of culture ministers for 20 years. At that meeting, I raised the issue of climate change in relation to heritage. Rhoda Grant may not be aware of this but, only two weeks ago, a new global organisation called Climate Heritage Network was established, led by Historic Environment Scotland and our partners in California, precisely to make sure that the issues of archaeological sites, particularly those that are in danger from coastal erosion, are addressed. The climate threat index that has been produced by Historic Environment Scotland was adopted by UNESCO at its meeting in Baku earlier this year.

Scotland is well aware of the challenges and we also have the expertise that is demanded and needed, not just here in Scotland but around the world. We have to be realistic about the long-term implications of climate change for our sites, in particular our historic sites in coastal areas. One of the messages from the Climate Heritage Network is that heritage and culture should not just be seen as the victims of climate change; they can be part of the solution. That is a message that we can get behind. I hope that everybody will support Historic Environment Scotland in leading the world in looking at some of these issues.

International Engagement (Human Rights)

7. Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how it uses international engagement to help increase understanding of human rights worldwide. (S5O-03779)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): As a good global citizen, the Scottish Government is committed to protecting democracy, the rule of law and human rights around the world. Indeed, Scotland was one of the first countries in the world to endorse the United Nations sustainable development goals, which are fully embedded in our national performance framework. International engagement allows us to share our experiences

across a wide range of policy areas and to demonstrate the link between social and economic inequalities and human rights.

For example, our climate justice fund recognises that the adverse impacts of climate change often fall most severely on people whose rights are already under threat from existing inequalities; our contribution to the women in conflict 1325 fellowship enables training for women from countries of conflict, so that they can play an integral role in the peace process; since 2017, we have provided scholarships to more than 4,000 children in Pakistan to enable them to exercise their right to education; and applicants for our international development funding in Malawi, Zambia and Rwanda are required to show how their project is taking a human rights-based approach to development.

Ruth Maguire: Spain's conviction of the Catalan leaders Jordi Sánchez and Jordi Cuixart for sedition has been labelled by Amnesty International as being in violation of human rights. Amnesty argues that an overly broad interpretation by Spain of the crime of sedition has resulted in the criminalisation of legitimate acts of protest and the violation of rights of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. I agree. In the current climate, in which people's rights are under threat around the globe, does the cabinet secretary agree that it is more important than ever that Scotland uses its influence wherever possible and acts as an example of best practice when it comes to protecting and enhancing human rights, here and globally?

Fiona Hyslop: Yes, I do. The Scottish Government will always seek to raise human rights with foreign Governments, including the Spanish Government, when opportunities arise. We advocate the benefits of a rights-based approach, and have placed respect for human rights at the heart of our national performance framework. We can of course learn from others; we regularly seek to engage with human rights defenders overseas and to share our knowledge and learn from their experience. In a turbulent world in which many people's rights in many countries are under threat, we in Scotland must stand in solidarity with those who seek freedom and justice through dialogue and democracy.

National Galleries of Scotland (BP Sponsorship)

8. Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to National Galleries Scotland's decision to end sponsorship from BP. (S5O-03780)

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): The

decision by the National Galleries of Scotland relates to one annual exhibition, the BP portrait award, which it hosts in Edinburgh but which is organised by the National Portrait Gallery in London. The BP sponsorship relationship is primarily with the National Portrait Gallery. The decision that this will be the last time the exhibition will be held in its present form in Edinburgh rightly lies with the National Galleries of Scotland's board of trustees, which has given the question of sponsorship careful consideration.

Rachael Hamilton: Corporate sponsorship and donors play a huge role financially in supporting the arts and cultural sector. Fundraising is likely to be difficult for arts institutions, because the unintended consequences of this decision will disproportionately hurt the young, poor and disadvantaged by leaving them with fewer cultural and educational opportunities available. Moreover, the negativity that surrounds arts funding could deter companies from entering the arts arena. Will the Scottish Government come good and increase financial support to arts institutions to prevent a cultural deficit in Scotland as a result?

Fiona Hyslop: I think that Rachael Hamilton's contribution contained a number of broad-brush and sweeping generalisations and statements and reflects a very negative approach by the Conservatives; they are not supporting our institutions and their work by assuming that the state will always step in. That is counter to what we understand is the general approach of the Conservatives to funding, which is that the state should not necessarily always step in as the final resort.

Our galleries and other institutions have a healthy relationship with corporate decision making about donorship, and our job is to get behind them and support them in that. Individual decisions about the organisations from which they accept donations are for them to make. There will be a transition—that is the right word to use with regard to climate change—in which people, organisations and institutions make individual decisions as we go along. The world is shifting and, as it does so, how we fund arts or any other areas may shift with it. There are great opportunities for people to get behind our cultural institutions, including the National Galleries of Scotland, and I would like to see all of us, in our constituency capacities as well as our portfolio responsibilities, encouraging business to help to support our arts and cultural institutions, rather than take the very negative and narrow-minded approach of the Conservatives.

Education and Skills

Open University (Scottish Public Services Ombudsman)

1. **Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government for what reason complaints regarding the Open University, which is registered as both a charity and a university, cannot be referred to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. (S5O-03781)

The Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science (Richard Lochhead): The Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005 includes provisions to extend the remit of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman to include further and higher educational establishments. The Open University is not included, however, because, as a United Kingdom institution with its main base in England, it falls under UK-wide procedures. Complaints regarding the Open University can be referred to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.

Angus MacDonald: It seems to be an unfortunate anomaly that students who are based in Scotland and studying with the OU, which is a university that is registered in Scotland, do not have the same route for complaints as students at other Scottish universities. Will the minister undertake to explore bringing the OU into line with all the other universities that are registered in Scotland?

Richard Lochhead: Anyone who has a complaint against the Open University, or any other institution for that matter, should exhaust the internal procedures for that institution. I note my colleague's concern about the Open University's position and I understand where he is coming from. However, the Open University is unique and its membership of the scheme that is run by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education provides students with a consistent experience and helps to avoid a situation in which students could be treated differently simply due to where they live. We have to take that issue into account, but I note the member's concerns.

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Courses (Consultation with Employers)

2. **Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what consultation it undertakes with major employers to ensure that science, technology, engineering and mathematics courses are relevant and appropriate to the needs of commerce and industry. (S5O-03782)

The Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science (Richard Lochhead):

Employers can engage with and input into the curriculum in schools through the school-employer partnerships that are supported by the developing the young workforce regional groups. As part of our STEM education and training strategy, materials on STEM skills needs and careers are being developed for use by teachers.

Employers are actively engaged in consultation on and the development of Scottish Qualifications Authority qualifications and awards through their representation on qualifications development teams. For example, practising data scientists were involved in the new national progression awards in data science.

Stewart Stevenson: Particular concerns have been expressed to me about shortcomings in numeracy. Are those concerns also being heard by the Government? In any event, what plans does the Government have to improve school leavers' skills in that particular area?

Richard Lochhead: Numeracy is at the heart of the curriculum in Scotland, and 95.8 per cent of school leavers attained numeracy at SCQF level 3 or better under the Scottish credit and qualifications framework in 2017-18. Through our STEM education and training strategy, we are equipping young people with STEM skills that they will need in life. The £1.3 million STEM grants programme is increasing STEM support for practitioners, including for mathematics.

With regard to Stewart Stevenson's local area, under the northern alliance regional improvement collaborative, local lead officers have met employers to hear their concerns and are working collaboratively with Education Scotland and numeracy experts to support practitioners and improve pupil attainment.

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): The Scottish Government had an opportunity to take a new approach with foundation apprenticeships by introducing a new generation to the sort of practical, accessible STEM learning that will be vital for the future. However, since their introduction, STEM foundation apprenticeships have fallen into the trap of huge gender divides. In the third cohort, 86.9 per cent of those taking engineering are male; for software development, the rate is 86.7 per cent, and for civil engineering it is 84 per cent.

Why has that happened with an entirely new qualification that is aimed at young people? What action is being taken to address the gender divide in STEM?

Richard Lochhead: I welcome the member's positive words about foundation apprenticeships, which are playing an increasingly important role. The gender balance, in that particular STEM route or in other STEM routes, is a significant issue and

we are taking a number of steps to tackle the gender divide. The recently published report on the first year of the five-year STEM strategy—we have debated some of the issues in the chamber—contains a number of measures to tackle the gender divide and attract more females into STEM qualifications, career paths and, hopefully, careers thereafter.

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): Relevant and appropriate courses are no good if we do not have teachers to teach them. We know that we have a particular problem in recruiting computer science teachers. What is the Scottish Government doing, in working with the information technology industry, to address that problem?

Richard Lochhead: The member highlights an important point. As he is aware, STEM bursaries are available for career changers, and they have so far been very successful in attracting teachers who were previously in careers elsewhere into the STEM subjects. I have met a number of teachers who have successfully applied for those bursaries, which have made a big difference to their decision to follow a STEM career in teaching.

We will continue to reflect on what other measures can be taken. Those measures that we are taking are making a difference, but we accept that there is still some way to go.

University (Widening Access)

3. **Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government to what extent its attempts to widen access to university have been effective. (S5O-03783)

The Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science (Richard Lochhead): Scotland is widening access to university, with data from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service on acceptances showing record high numbers from the most deprived areas of Scotland year after year.

We have a record number of entrants to university with a declared disability, we have improved retention rates for those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with care experience, and we have improved outcomes, with more students from deprived backgrounds going on to qualify from university. As the commissioner for fair access, Sir Peter Scott, said in his annual report in June,

"significant and welcome progress has been made"

with that agenda.

Jackie Baillie: The minister will of course be aware that senior academics from the University of Edinburgh have cautioned that the policy of widening access to university for those from Scotland's most deprived communities based on

the Scottish index of multiple deprivation areas is seriously flawed and disproportionately benefits the better-off. Will he review the implementation of the policy? It may currently be too blunt an instrument to effectively target the most disadvantaged.

Richard Lochhead: As I indicated in my previous answer, the commissioner for fair access, Sir Peter Scott, has said that we are making good progress on this agenda. Indeed, he said that Scotland is setting the pace in comparison with the rest of the United Kingdom. Notwithstanding his comments, the member raises a genuine point: the recent report highlights some issues that the Scottish Government is very keen to take on board.

I take issue, of course, with the comment that our current strategy is seriously flawed—it certainly is not. However, we know that there is a clear relationship between SIMD areas and school attainment and access to university, and we think that it is right to focus on learners from those disadvantaged areas. We appreciate that not everyone who faces multiple social and economic disadvantage lives in those 20 per cent of areas in Scotland; that is why we have established a data working group to examine how we can support learners who do not live in those areas but who face similar social and economic barriers to accessing university.

We recognise that although the system is not absolutely perfect, it is making fantastic progress and people from disadvantaged backgrounds are getting into university in greater numbers than ever before. We are already very close to achieving our 2021 target, and we are being hailed for that by external observers, but there is more to do.

Young People (Preparation for Work)

4. Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how it is preparing young people for entering the workforce. (S5O-03784)

The Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills (Jamie Hepburn): We ensure that young people are prepared for the world of work through the implementation of our youth employment strategy, developing the young workforce. Through that strategy, we are creating an enhanced curriculum offer to equip young people in schools and colleges with the skills to succeed in current and future labour markets. That has included the creation of new work-based learning options; enabling young people to learn in a range of settings in their senior phase of school; building employer engagement in education; providing careers advice at an earlier point in school; and

introducing new standards for career education and work placements.

Stuart McMillan: The minister will be aware of the Inverclyde project in my constituency, which the cabinet secretary visited earlier this year. In the project, a team of students from Inverclyde Academy learned engineering skills and built a racing car as part of the green power initiative between West College Scotland and developing the young workforce. Does the minister agree that such initiatives are part of an innovative approach to education and an opportunity to offer educational engagement to some pupils for whom daily teaching might not be working? Will he recommend that that approach be expanded and considered as a route to some STEM modern apprenticeships?

Jamie Hepburn: Yes; I am aware of the Inverclyde initiative and I agree that it is a very appropriate example of the type of initiative that we want to see in our schools. I am aware of such projects happening in other parts of the country, too. It is incumbent on all educational environments to learn from good practice. That applies to other schools in the Inverclyde area and more widely in Scotland.

We want to see an increased passion for STEM in young people, which we hope will inspire them to want to study either academically or through an increased uptake of STEM apprenticeships. Of course, we are increasing the number of apprenticeship opportunities across the country and I encourage young people in the Inverclyde area and elsewhere to take advantage of them.

Early Years Learning and Childcare (Jobs in North Ayrshire)

5. Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how many jobs will be created in North Ayrshire through the expansion of early years learning and childcare. (S5O-03785)

The Minister for Children and Young People (Maree Todd): Our ambitious programme to expand early learning and childcare will bring a wide range of benefits for Scotland. As well as playing a vital role in helping to improve children's outcomes and closing the poverty-related attainment gap, it will provide greater opportunities for parents to enter work or training. It will also create around 8,500 additional full-time equivalent jobs across Scotland, including in North Ayrshire.

North Ayrshire Council will receive £14.5 million of additional annual revenue funding to deliver 1,140 hours entitlement, which will support the expansion of the workforce. We are also providing the council with more than £11 million in capital

funding, which will support jobs in extending, refurbishing and building nurseries in the area.

Kenneth Gibson: I thank the minister for that answer, but there was no mention of the number of jobs specifically in North Ayrshire, which I understand could be between 70 and 100. Can the minister further advise how many children in North Ayrshire are expected to benefit, and how much each family will save per child in childcare costs through the implementation of the policy?

Maree Todd: From August 2020, all three and four-year-olds, and around a quarter of two-year-olds, will be entitled to 1,140 hours of funded early learning and childcare. That is nearly double the figure that applies in the current environment. The most recent Improvement Service data shows that, nationally, more than 46,000 children already benefit from more than 600 hours, ahead of full roll-out from August 2020. In addition, North Ayrshire Council is phasing in early the extra hours: as of June 2019, nine settings were involved in piloting, ahead of full roll-out from August 2020 onwards.

The 2018 early learning and childcare census data showed 2,323 registrations for funded early learning and childcare for two, three and four-year-olds in North Ayrshire. The council is working extremely hard with its partners to ensure that places will be available for all children who wish to take up the expanded offer from August 2020.

School and School-related Activities (Cost to Families)

6. Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what analysis it has undertaken of the cost to families of children attending school and participating in school-related activities. (S5O-03786)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): As I said in my response to the Education and Skills Committee in February, policies that govern charges for in-school activities are delegated to school level; therefore, analysis of charges would necessitate inclusion of all schools in Scotland. An analysis on such a scale would be bureaucratic and the likelihood of it producing robust, operational data is questionable, due to the variation in approach between and within schools.

In June this year, along with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the Government published revised guidelines for devolved school management, including advice on the matter that Claire Baker raised. The advice makes clear that headteachers are expected to ensure that any costs on families are minimised to ensure equality of access. Where charges are deemed

unavoidable, schools should publish details of anticipated pupil charges for curricular or extra-curricular activities that require funding contributions from families at the start of the academic session, alongside information about the potential availability to pupils of financial assistance, discounts and exemptions.

Claire Baker: The guidance is welcome, but the response to a recent freedom of information request shows huge variations in the amounts that schools charge for home economics, art and technology subjects and in the provision of exemptions for families. A school in my region is charging more than £100 a year for a national 5 qualification in hospitality.

The Scottish Government will say that that is not its responsibility. However, given that local authority budgets are under so much pressure, how can the Scottish Government be confident that funding constraints are not the driver for such increases? Will the Government continue to work with local authorities to end charges for school subjects?

John Swinney: I am happy to commit to work with local authorities on such questions. However, local government has statutory responsibility for the delivery of education at local level and it is entirely appropriate for individual schools to establish their policy positions on the matter, in line with the Government's clear guidance—which is supported by COSLA—that charges should be minimised and that if charges are necessary, they should be set out alongside a variety of exemptions and other provisions to maximise equality of access.

That is the responsibility of individual schools and local authorities to take forward. The Government sets the framework and local decisions must be applied, but I look to them to be applied on a basis that minimises charges for pupils.

Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): What steps is the cabinet secretary taking to ensure that high school students of home economics and art do not face a postcode lottery in relation to charges for materials?

John Swinney: I think that I answered that question in my response to Claire Baker.

I point out to Mr Stewart that he and the Conservatives regularly press me to ensure that schools have more discretion over the delivery of education. His question is an example of the contradiction that is at the heart of what the Conservatives say in the Parliament. They argue for us to deliver more autonomy to individual schools and then they come here and demand that I lay down the law from Edinburgh. That is a total contradiction in policy. I invite the

Conservatives to sort it all out so that they do not come here with incoherent questions.

Secondary Schools (Multilevel Teaching)

7. Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what analysis has been carried out regarding the impact of multilevel teaching in secondary schools. (S5O-03787)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): Running bi-level or multilevel course classes is an approach that many schools have used for many years to increase the amount of choice available to their pupils.

There will be varying levels of prior attainment in any class, and Education Scotland has yet to see any firm evidence from inspections of educational disadvantage due to multilevel teaching.

In line with the unanimous decision of the Parliament on 1 May, we will be conducting an independent review of the senior phase of curriculum for excellence. The review will provide an opportunity to look at the impact of different approaches to learning and teaching, including bi-level and multilevel teaching.

Jenny Marra: On the cabinet secretary's watch, multilevel teaching has increased exponentially, and there is no guarantee that it is not having a detrimental impact on attainment.

Recently released figures show that in Dundee nearly 60 per cent of teaching is done in multilevel classes. One hundred of those classes are teaching three levels of qualifications and two are teaching four. That touches every part of the curriculum—English, science, history, geography and modern languages. Can the cabinet secretary confirm that his announced review will include a study of the extent of multilevel teaching, a review of the pupil and teacher experience in such classes and an attempt to understand what is driving his increase—is it a lack of money or a shortage of staff?

John Swinney: There is a lot of material that I have to respond to in that question. The first point is that the remit of the review of the senior phase of curriculum for excellence is currently being developed. I have invited contributions from the Education and Skills Committee. I will look in the *Official Report* at the issues that Jenny Marra has raised, in order to consider the appropriateness of reflecting on them.

The second point is on the motivation for multilevel teaching. As I said in my original answer, many schools adopt that approach to maximise the choice available to pupils, which is a crucial part of ensuring that young people have

broad subject choice in schools. I believe that they do.

The third point is that there is an increased number of teachers in our schools, which is really welcome. That has come about because of the investment that the Government has made in initial teacher education.

Jenny Marra: Rubbish!

John Swinney: The fourth point is that the vacancy rate in secondary education has reduced again, as Ms Marra might have noted if she had read the statistics from last week.

Ms Marra is raising those issues and muttering at me from the sidelines; she might want to look at the analysis by Professor Mark Priestly and others at the University of Stirling, which indicated that, while all that is going on, attainment levels in Scottish education have risen under curriculum for excellence.

Investment in School Estate (Highlands and Islands)

8. Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government how many schools in the Highlands and Islands are being considered as part of the next phase of its learning estate investment programme. (S5O-03788)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney): I am pleased that a new Tain three-to-18 campus and a new Castlebay campus in the Highlands and Islands were two of the projects to benefit from the first phase of the learning estate investment programme.

The Scottish Government looks forward to continuing discussions with all local authorities in the coming months regarding which of their projects may be suitable for support through the second phase of the programme, which will be announced in September 2020.

Edward Mountain: I, too, welcome the funding for the Tain campus. I know that the pupils do, too.

I recently visited Culloden academy, Charleston academy and Nairn academy—all secondary schools that I go to are not fit for purpose. Will the cabinet secretary confirm that he will seriously consider those schools for investment, because some of them are close to falling down?

John Swinney: On my visit to Tain academy, the pupils made a very compelling argument for the refurbishment of their school, including by handing me an umbrella as we moved into the school library, in case it was raining inside it. I thought that that was a very suitable prop—I am delighted that we have taken that decision on Tain academy.

As Mr Mountain knows, I am sympathetic to this, because I want to see the school estate strengthened. I take issue with him on his point that—I think he used these words—

“all secondary schools that I go to are not fit for purpose”.

I encourage him to get out a bit more, because he will find some fantastic buildings in the school estate around the Highlands and Islands. I have visited Nairn academy and I appreciate the issues and challenges in the estate there.

As I said in my first answer, I will consider representations from local authorities in the run-up to September 2020. I point out to the chamber that we have seen a magnificent increase in the quality of the school estate. The proportion of schools that are in a good or satisfactory condition has increased from 61 per cent, when this Government came to office, to 88 per cent in 2019. That is remarkable progress and we look forward to doing more in the years to come.

Universal Credit

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The next item of business is a Labour Party debate on motion S5M-19939, in the name of Richard Leonard, on universal credit.

15:16

Richard Leonard (Central Scotland) (Lab): Later this afternoon, the Parliament has an opportunity to unite in calling for the scrapping of the universal credit system, which has delivered so much misery and hardship, and even destitution, to so many people across Scotland and the United Kingdom—so much so that it has been described as

“a digital and sanitized version of the nineteenth century workhouse”.

That is the damning indictment by the United Nations special rapporteur on extreme poverty, Philip Alston. I hope that, this afternoon, the Parliament will seize the opportunity to unite to call for the system’s immediate termination, although I fear that it will not do so.

My appeal to members on all sides in the Parliament is: do not wilfully ignore the evidence that is in front of us. That evidence is found in community after community across Scotland, from the welfare advisers who I listened to in Wick, who said that

“universal credit was an unmitigated disaster”,

to the people of Barmulloch in Glasgow, who told me of the impact on the human spirit of grinding poverty and the most extreme material deprivation caused by universal credit.

Those people know, and members of the Parliament ought to know, that universal credit has been a central part of the failed austerity experiment. It is an experiment in which someone who is on jobseekers allowance can be sanctioned for attending job interviews and in which someone who is looking for work can be sanctioned if they do not check for vacancies on Christmas day.

We need look no further than the case of a chronically anxious and depressed person who has been repeatedly sanctioned for not updating their online journal. That case was brought to our attention for the debate by Citizens Advice Scotland, which states:

“He has no computer skills or access to the Internet at home. He has no money at all and is reliant on Crisis Grants and food parcels. The distress is exacerbating his poor mental health and his overall quality of life is deteriorating, hindering his ability to find work.”

It is a vicious downward spiral that should shame us all.

Our social security system, which was conceived to provide a helping hand to people when they need it, from the cradle to the grave, has become so disfigured in the hands of the Tory Government—and let us not forget the role of the Liberal Democrats—that, instead of being a means of driving down poverty, it has become a vehicle for driving it up. Instead of being part of the solution, the system has become part of the problem. What is worse, with the two-child cap, the families and children who are in deepest poverty are penalised the most. Today, as many as 12,000 of Scotland's poorest families are hurt by that measure alone. We then come to the moral outrage of the rape clause that accompanies it, which violates the privacy, dignity and, I would argue, human rights of women who are expected to complete form NCC1 06/19.

Then there is the benefits cap regime, which has had the effect of increased evictions and a rise in the use of foodbanks, and which has had a deleterious effect on health, both physical and mental. We know that the universal credit system quite deliberately pushes people into debt by legislating for a minimum five-week delay in payment. That is not by accident—it is by design.

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): There is very little with which I would disagree in what Richard Leonard has said. However, regardless of our views on independence, does he agree with the Scottish National Party that we should demand that powers over all those things be placed in this Parliament's hands?

Richard Leonard: The problem with Mr MacGregor's argument is that SNP ministers asked the Department for Work and Pensions to delay the devolution of benefits twice, in 2016 and 2018. In February 2019, Scottish ministers revealed that the full devolution of benefits would be completed only in 2024. In June, they changed the date to one even further away—2025. They cannot be trusted to take on the powers when they are given them.

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People (Shirley-Anne Somerville): Will the member take an intervention?

Richard Leonard: No.

It is no wonder that housing associations report that 73 per cent of tenants who are on universal credit are in arrears, which is why Jeremy Corbyn and I backed Living Rent's no-evictions campaign in Edinburgh last week.

There will be those who will say in this debate, "Give us our separate Scottish state and we will do it better". However, they must read their own growth commission report, which talks about the billions that will need to be taken out of the system

in order to pay for the creation of a separate Scottish currency, make up for the "Government Expenditure and Revenue in Scotland"—GERS—gap and offset the loss of the Barnett formula.

The Labour Party is clear: we recognise that universal credit is cruel, punitive and immoral, so we will end the benefit cap and the two-child limit, and we will do so with immediate effect. We will kick out, once and for all, private firms such as Atos, because, in the end, this debate is about choices: do we act or do we walk on by, and do we start now—immediately—to right a wrong, or do we wait another decade or even longer?

In Labour, we believe that the time has come to act decisively. Let us scrap universal credit and put in its place a helping hand that is based on the dignity of all and our shared sense of humanity.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that universal credit, the two-child limit and the benefits cap should be scrapped in Scotland and across the UK.

15:23

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People (Shirley-Anne Somerville): Universal credit is failing the people of Scotland and the people of the United Kingdom. It causes hardship, debt and a need for emergency aid, the evidence of which is indisputable. We have repeatedly called on the UK Government to halt the roll-out of, and the migration of people on to, universal credit, and to get those problems fixed.

The original aims of universal credit—to simplify the system and create a single source of support that adapts as circumstances change—were right and reasonable. However, the flaws in both the design and the delivery, coupled with the benefit cuts that were imposed by the UK Government, have made universal credit utterly unworkable. It is those many flaws that we need to scrap, and it is the Tories' determination to use the excuse of austerity to punish the poorest in our society that needs to end.

Although I understand Labour's call to scrap universal credit, at this point, I am still unsure what Labour members propose to replace it with, and I have not heard any more detail on that today. Are they planning a new benefit and, if so, would it be introduced after universal credit has been fully rolled out? Will the fixes to universal credit be made at the same time that a new system is being introduced? How long would it take for that new benefit to be designed, introduced and fully rolled out? We simply do not know.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Will the cabinet secretary tell us whether she wants to keep

universal credit, given that it is completely and utterly discredited?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I will be very pleased tonight to support the Labour motion, which calls for the scrapping of universal credit, but first I will go through some of the details of the changes that would be made under the radically different benefit that I would like to see. With the greatest respect, I am still not sure what Labour members want. Do they want a new benefit? Do they want adaptations, or not?

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has warned against the dangers of scrapping universal credit wholesale, saying that it leaves two systems, both with problems, uncertainty and increased complexity, and that it would be better to put all efforts into improving it.

Does universal credit in its current form need to be scrapped? For the benefit of Neil Findlay, I say absolutely yes. It can be replaced by a version that works to support people and provides the safety net that should be provided.

An uncaring, callous UK Government, with a revolving door of DWP ministers, has had its head in the sand when it comes to the clear flaws of universal credit. The ridiculous five-week wait for the first payment needs to be drastically reduced. Payments—not loans—must be provided at the beginning of a claim; there should no longer be a wait for getting much-needed financial support. The UK Government should also follow our lead and give people throughout the UK the choices of twice-monthly payments and direct payments to landlords, as we do through Scottish choices. The success of that approach is clear, as almost 50 per cent of people who are offered those choices take up one or both.

A step that could be taken immediately—it should be taken, as Richard Leonard quite rightly pointed out—is the scrapping of the two-child limit, which has already affected more than 9,000 families in Scotland. As he also pointed out, the abhorrent rape clause should be scrapped, too. That policy is still defended by the Tories in this Parliament; I wonder whether they will have the courage of their convictions today and admit to that support. Just like lifting the benefit cap, reversing the benefit freeze and scrapping the bedroom tax, those steps should be taken immediately to support people who have been hurt by years of UK welfare cuts. We have years of evidence about what needs to be fixed. We must prioritise making those changes in order to deliver a radically different benefit.

The Scottish Government is using its limited powers to make the lives of people in Scotland better. Unlike the UK Government's system, our system does not, and will never, have a cap on the

number of eligible children in a family who can receive support through our new benefits.

We have introduced a raft of new benefits and announced the new Scottish child payment. I am not entirely sure that Richard Leonard agrees with the timetable for that, given that he has just criticised the changes that we have made for our devolution set-up to ensure that we can allow that to happen by Christmas next year. It is deeply concerning that we cannot get support on that from the Labour Party.

This is a matter of political choice. The UK Government chose to introduce universal credit, with a myriad of complexities, and its cuts. The Scottish Government has chosen to introduce child poverty targets in legislation and to implement a £10-a-week game-changing new benefit to tackle child poverty head on.

That shows why social security should be in Scotland's hands. I am talking about not just a partial devolution of powers but all powers. Only independence can ensure that we do not have policies imposed on us. We can choose our own path and bring fairness, dignity and respect to all social security and deliver a system that works for everyone.

I move amendment S5M-19939.3, to insert at end:

“, alongside the abhorrent ‘rape clause’, the benefit sanctions regime and the ‘bedroom tax’; notes estimates that UK Government social security spending will reduce by £3.7 billion by next year, and believes that an independent Scotland with full powers over social security can ensure that Scotland has a social security system that is built with the people of Scotland to meet their needs.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Michelle Ballantyne, who has four minutes. There is a little time in hand for interventions, which is why members will be given a little extra time if they take an intervention.

15:28

Michelle Ballantyne (South Scotland) (Con): In 2010, when universal credit was first announced, it received a cross-party welcome. Indeed, the Scottish National Party's Westminster social justice spokesperson at the time, Dr Eilidh Whiteford, said:

“some of the measures set out today—particularly the Universal Credit—are very welcome”.

The Labour Party expressed cautious support for the principles of universal credit and an easier and more efficient social security system that offered one single payment and incentivised and rewarded paid employment opportunities.

Every political party recognised that the erstwhile system of legacy benefits was not

working and that the system was in desperate need of fundamental reform. To pretend otherwise is fallacious.

During its time in power, Labour had ample opportunity to reform welfare in the United Kingdom, but it chose not to. Instead, it left a system that was in chaos; a system that was far too complex for its own good, in which each benefit had its own rules and methods; a system that paid out without due diligence, which resulted in fraudulent claims; and, worst of all, a system that acted as a barrier to people who wanted to get into work.

Labour's motion makes no reference to how it would change the welfare system. There is no reference to what would replace universal credit and no reference to how Labour would improve people's lives by encouraging them back into work and increasing their employment and earning opportunities.

Labour has never offered any practicable options; instead, it continues to dangle the possibility of a discredited universal basic income policy, which is a policy that proved to be unsustainable when trialled in Canada and Finland.

I believe that this debate is a perfect opportunity to set some of the record straight and recognise that, yes, universal credit has had its issues but it is the best way forward for welfare in this country. It is right that the roll-out of universal credit is done sensitively, as that allows any issues to be explored and addressed. That is why time is being taken to roll it out to those who are not new claimants.

The evidence is clear that universal credit is working for the vast majority of claimants. The 2018 claimant experience survey, which was published in January, revealed a satisfaction rate of 84 per cent in relation to the DWP and its services; it also revealed that 94 per cent of all claims and 84 per cent of new claims were paid on time.

Although universal credit works for the majority, it is important that we recognise and support those who have not had a satisfactory experience. We will never ignore the 16 per cent of claimants who say they that have not had a good experience. We can see in the design of universal credit that that is exactly what has happened. Universal credit has the flexibility to learn and change, and many adaptations and changes have been made following the feedback that has been given by people who have not had good experiences. The parties opposite, however, seem to keep ignoring some of the positives.

There is £2.4 billion of benefits unclaimed, and the Social Security Committee is currently looking

at why people do not claim the benefits to which they are entitled. There are a number of reasons for that, including stigma and fear, but the commentary of many political parties does nothing to help that situation. It is estimated that around 700,000 more people will be paid their full entitlement because of the systems under universal credit. That is a positive improvement. It would behove the parties opposite to acknowledge some of those things.

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is just concluding and is almost finished.

Michelle Ballantyne: The fact is that there is an increase in employment under universal credit. We have the lowest unemployment levels for 45 years and the lowest number of people in low-paid jobs. This year, we are welcoming a number of changes that I think will move towards helping people and addressing some of the issues.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must move your amendment, please. I am sorry—you did not take interventions, so I cannot give you extra time.

Michelle Ballantyne: I move amendment S5M-19939.2, to leave out from "agrees" to end and insert:

"supports the principles of universal credit and is committed to the programme and all universal credit claimants; welcomes the announcement that the benefit freeze will be lifted in April 2020, and recognises that the UK Government has been positively reforming universal credit to further support claimants, and notes the removal of the extension of the two-child limit on universal credit for children born before April 2017, the increased work allowances and the reduction to the taper rate, which have helped families and individuals to keep more of the money they earn."

15:32

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): In the three and a half years since members were elected for this session of Parliament, we have debated motions on universal credit five times, with today's debate being the sixth. Universal credit was mooted by the Centre for Social Justice 10 years ago and legislated for more than seven years ago, yet we are still debating a system that is causing untold misery to tens of thousands of our constituents. That says something about how little has changed. In my short time today, I will focus on the impact of the benefit freeze on universal credit and the losses that people experience when moving into the new system.

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): Does Alison Johnstone agree that none of us is saying that the principle of simplifying benefits is wrong, and that we simply recognise, because we

step out of our offices and speak to people who live in our constituencies, the real pain and suffering that universal credit causes for the people who have to navigate that ridiculous system?

Alison Johnstone: I agree whole-heartedly with Ruth Maguire.

The benefit freeze is scheduled to end in April next year, but the damage has already been done. The 1.7 per cent increase that has been announced will do nothing to replace the income that people have lost over the past four years, which amounts to around 6 per cent of their income. According to the House of Commons library, universal credit is between £888 and £1,845 lower in real terms than it would have been without the freeze.

A comparison of benefits incomes with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation minimum income standard reveals how inadequate the benefits system has become. The minimum income standard is based on surveys that ask people what they think the minimum acceptable standard of living should be—not a life of luxury, but just a basic standard. In 2018, an unemployed couple would have received income sufficient only to get them to 32 per cent of that minimum income standard. For a lone parent with two children, the figure would have been just 60 per cent. These figures have been falling for years, but they have fallen even faster since the start of the benefit freeze. It is not surprising, given that, that the Joseph Rowntree Foundation argues that the freeze will

“increase poverty more than any other policy.”

The motion rightly mentions the benefit cap, which is one of the most insidious of the recent reforms. It perverts the needs-based nature of the social security system by assessing people as requiring a certain amount of support, and then reduces that support by an entirely arbitrary amount. That laser-targets women and children, because it impacts mainly on single parent households.

As part of the Social Security Committee's investigation into housing support, I met women from Leith in Edinburgh who had been made homeless by the benefit cap. They were no longer able to afford their rent and were trying to bring up their children in hotel and bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Anyone who thinks that that is a good use of cash is misguided.

On top of the benefits freeze and the benefit cap, universal credit entitlement means for some people simply less money than they got under the previous system. The respected Institute for Fiscal Studies has shown that, under universal credit, about 1.9 million people's entitlements are lower

by at least £1,000 a year than they were under the old system. For many people, universal credit has been a cover for cuts, with reductions being masked in the move to the new system.

The motion and the Government's amendment, both of which the Greens will support, are right to call for a number of the changes to be scrapped. However, we are still not addressing the fact that the social security system no longer provides an adequate standard of living for many people. The system has been chipped away at so consistently and for so long that, even before the two-child limit, the freeze, the benefit cap and universal credit, the system was not always adequately supporting the people who need it. For it to do that, we need a national conversation about what kind of society we want to live in and what level of support we should be offering. If we are to call ourselves a compassionate country, reserved and devolved social security should both reflect that.

I will close by reflecting on an exchange that I had in committee with former Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Esther McVey, regarding the rape clause. I asked her whether she was comfortable with asking women to prove, in order that they can get support for their child, that they had been raped. All that she had to say to that was that the woman concerned would get “double support”. I fail to see how asking women, who have been through one of the most awful experiences that anyone could imagine, to prove that they have been raped, is anything like support.

Any member who votes against the motion today is saying that they are comfortable with that. I invite members to reflect on that when we reach decision time.

15:37

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): Universal credit is not working: evidence demands acceptance of that across the political spectrum. When food parcels are being distributed in their thousands, the system is not working. When people are being forced into a cycle of arrears, the system is not working. When hundreds of thousands of people need help to complete applications online, the system is not working, and when food bank usage has increased by 23 per cent, the system is not working.

The benefit system should be a safety net for use when it is needed, and it should be a catalyst to help people into work, where appropriate. In order to achieve those aims, reform of the previous system was necessary. Liberal Democrats supported the premise of universal credit: we believe that a streamlined system that is joined up and accessible is in the interests of the

people who rely on it. Many anti-poverty campaigners agreed with the underlying principles. However, as universal credit stands, it is detached from the individuals whom it exists to help. A sensible premise has been thoroughly undermined, so reform is urgently needed. The two-child limit and the benefit cap must be removed.

Neil Findlay: Mr McArthur might have been coming to this, but will he take this opportunity to apologise for his party's behaviour when it was in coalition with the Tories? They cut benefits for disabled people and housing benefit for young people. They made people poorer and gave tax cuts to the richest. Will he apologise for his party's behaviour?

Liam McArthur: What I will do is remind Neil Findlay that his party also supported the introduction of universal credit. The tax changes that were made as a result of the Liberal Democrats being in Government lessened the tax implications on some of the poorest people in our community.

It is officially recognised that almost 240,000 Scottish children are now living in poverty. The arbitrary limiting of support that is available to vulnerable families means that that number is likely only to increase.

The benefit cap is equally counterproductive. It is expected that only 17 per cent of the people who are affected by the benefit cap are looking for work, but that is one of the stated aims of the policy. However, millions of people have moved to the new system, so scrapping it altogether and starting again is impractical, and would mean that more money would be spent on yet more administration, rather than on supporting people.

Labour is proposing to invest £2 billion less than the Liberal Democrats. Using the basic concept of streamlining multiple benefits into one, we need to fix the existing serious problems and construct a new system that provides dignity and respect. On that basis, Labour's motion is flawed. Demanding that a system be scrapped, without a hint of what would be put in its place, is irresponsible.

To make such calls in the context of the wholesale failure to address the economic catastrophe that is Brexit is more irresponsible still. Above all, our social security system needs urgent investment, but that will be so much harder with any form of Brexit. Brexit undermines every part of our economy and threatens public services, including the NHS, yet Jeremy Corbyn still wants to "get Brexit done".

The same applies to the argument that the chaos of universal credit, like Brexit, can be avoided by simply breaking up the UK.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): Will Liam McArthur give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): Mr McArthur is just closing.

Liam McArthur: The First Minister's growth commission accepts that separation would lead to a decade of unprecedented austerity. The £50 billion remain bonus is available only if we keep Scotland in the UK, and the UK in the European Union.

We need to get back to debating seriously policies that have a genuine chance of making people's lives better. Instead, the Labour Party's proposal to scrap universal credit is nothing more than a Corbynite soundbite. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has made it clear that the proposal would lead to uncertainty, increased complexity and wasted resources. On that basis, we will not support the motion.

15:41

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): My constituency, East Lothian, was the first local authority area in Scotland to implement universal credit fully, in March 2016. Because of that, people in East Lothian have borne the full brunt of the shambolic roll-out of the UC system. The harsh reality of universal credit for many constituents has been a spiral of debt and cuts to their benefits. Many have been plunged into poverty and are having to rely on family and friends, as well as on organisations such as Citizens Advice Scotland and local food banks.

That is the reality of universal credit for the 5,500 people in East Lothian who are struggling on that iniquitous system. Last year, East Lothian Foodbank handed out 2,331 emergency food parcels, which helped to feed almost 5,000 people, of whom more than 1,800 were children. They were all referred to the food bank because of poverty.

What is more, within just one year of the introduction of universal credit, East Lothian Council saw a significant rise in rent arrears, as did the local housing association. That caused financial problems for the council and the association and, which was even worse, it threatened constituents with homelessness. The situation continues to worsen.

It is clear that universal credit must be scrapped.

Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con): If that is the case, why has the Trussell Trust said that

"scrapping Universal Credit may only result in further upheaval"?

Why has that organisation said that we must not get rid of universal credit?

Iain Gray: I think that the Trussell Trust was talking about the capacity for change, which I will come to a little later on, in my remarks.

What kind of social security system no longer provides a safety net for the people who need it, but instead drives people further and further into poverty? A Tory social security system—that is what kind. The system is wrong in principle and in practice, which is why we must scrap universal credit and the Government that created it.

It is true that a new system would take time—the cabinet secretary made that point—but it is not true that Labour has not said how it would deal with that. Labour has committed to, on its election, an emergency package to mitigate universal credit, to getting rid of the five-week wait, to scrapping the two-child limit and the benefit cap, to suspending sanctions and to ending the digital-only approach. That is what a Labour Government would do with universal credit.

The SNP claims that the solution is devolution of universal credit. The truth is that, in the Smith commission, Labour argued for much of universal credit to be devolved. The Tories refused and the Lib Dems supported them—they were, of course, in coalition at the time. The SNP was lukewarm and preferred stand-alone benefits, which have been devolved since.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Will the member take an intervention?

Iain Gray: No.

Labour did, however, win the argument that we should have the power to supplement reserved benefits. That is a critical power that the Scottish Government could use to end the rape clause in Scotland, just as we forced the SNP to act on the bedroom tax. The truth is that the SNP record on devolved benefits is one of dither, delay, lack of competence and failure of compassion.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Will the member take an intervention?

Iain Gray: No.

Right now, we have an opportunity to return a Labour Government that will scrap universal credit in East Lothian and across the UK—right away, and once and for all. That is what my constituents need; they need it quickly, so we must take this chance.

15:45

Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): Members who were present during general question time last Thursday might recall that I asked a question that was answered by Christina McKelvie, on the Government's response to reports of women in Aberdeen,

including single mothers, resorting to so-called survival sex because their universal credit payments do not cover the basic needs of daily living. The minister said that the very thought of it made her “blood run cold”, and that she was horrified by that, as I am. I hope that all members in the chamber are horrified—although I am not so sure of that, because last week one of the Tory members seemed to find it funny.

It is important to note that it was the local police who highlighted the issue to Community Food Initiatives North East, which is the biggest and most proactive food bank in the north-east. By the way, I note that the Government asked CFINE to carry out the pilot on period poverty. The police had recognised the problem of local women resorting to survival sex and wanted them to get help that would provide them with food, as well as allow them to get the benefit checks and other help that we know food banks provide.

It is well known that poverty and social security are heavily gendered, as Close the Gap and the other organisations that have sent us helpful briefings today fully recognise. They point out that women are twice as dependent on social security as men, so they have been disproportionately affected by social security change and Westminster welfare reform, including the benefit cap and the two-child cap.

That disproportionate effect is heaped upon the pre-existing inequalities of the gender pay gap, which is 13 per cent in Scotland, and of women accounting for two-thirds of workers who earn less than the living wage. That is most likely because they have more caring responsibilities than men, so they have to find work that allows them to balance caring responsibilities with work.

We also know that women who have disabilities are among the hardest hit by welfare reform. The latest figures show that 55 per cent of people on the personal independence payment are women, and that 65 per cent of those who are in receipt of attendance allowance are women.

Shockingly, the Women's Budget Group found that Asian families in the poorest fifth of UK households will see their living standards fall by more than £11,600 per year on average through cuts to benefits and services. For black families, the real-terms annual average loss will be more than £8,400. Those are staggering reductions in income that is already low. Perhaps Conservative members who contribute today will tell us how folk are supposed to survive on that.

In addition, I point out that 48 per cent of single-parent households are living in poverty, and that 92 per cent of lone parents are women. Changes to child benefit, child tax credit, income support,

maternity benefit and the benefit cap all have significant impacts on women who have children.

It is no wonder that some women feel that they have to take desperate measures, including engaging in survival sex. I am not sure how people who work in the field will welcome the prospect of another wholesale review of the social security system, because we know how adversely affected people are when they are transferred from one system to another. It might be good to hear from Labour members about what they want to put in place.

It is important to highlight how the Scottish Government is using the powers that it has over social security in bold and positive ways, including introduction, by the end of 2022, of the game-changing Scottish child payment for all eligible children under the age of 16. That will benefit up to 410,000 children. The Scottish Government has invested £1.4 billion in the past year to support low-income households, including £1 million to mitigate the most damaging aspects of universal credit.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Come to a close, please, Ms Watt.

Maureen Watt: However, as the UN rapporteur said, that mitigation is unsustainable. The answer to the problem is that full powers be devolved to this Parliament.

15:50

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Today, we are expected to debate one of the most significant and complex reforms of our country's social security system in little more than an hour.

Universal credit has a long background. It was designed to simplify the welfare system, to make work pay and to address the problems that stopped people getting into work or taking on more hours. With record numbers of people in work and wage levels rising, it is contributing to real change.

Today's Labour Party motion specifically mentions three areas: the general roll-out of universal credit, the benefits cap and the two-child limit. The UK Labour Party promises to scrap universal credit, to replace it and to transition to a new system of income-assessed benefits. The response to those proposals has been damning.

The Trussell Trust pointed to further problems, saying that

"scrapping Universal Credit may only result in further upheaval".

The Institute for Fiscal Studies was clearer, saying that "the upheaval" will be "huge". The Resolution Foundation said:

"Now isn't the time for"

a

"huge overhaul of our social security system."

Perhaps Labour should reflect on how we got here. Despite similar proposals crossing their desks, Labour ministers before 2010 did not have the confidence to propose significant reform to the benefits system or to address the perverse disincentives that stopped people from moving into work.

When many of the proposals that are being condemned today were brought before Parliament in 2015, the Labour Party's response was not to oppose them but to accept the two-child limit on tax credits, as it had accepted the benefit cap.

The then interim Labour leader, Harriet Harman, called for a reasonable approach. She said that opposition for opposition's sake would not fly. She had seen the consequences from inside Government of Labour's tax credit system paying out billions more than it had expected. The party acknowledged the consequences of the state simply subsidising low pay.

That was responsible, but today, Labour's proposals on welfare are not serious. If Jeremy Corbyn was ever to get into Downing Street, he would face two choices: to disappoint his supporters or to deliver a reformed social security system, which would socially and financially ruin us.

Neil Findlay: Will Mr Halcro Johnston take an intervention?

Jamie Halcro Johnston: I am afraid that I do not have time.

The SNP is not immune to the same criticisms. In its independence white paper, it called for

"more streamlined systems for paying welfare that will keep costs down and which are easy to understand".

Later, it proposed a single payment system, which sounded awfully like universal credit.

In 2013, the then First Minister, Alex Salmond, had already acknowledged the potential of a benefit cap. He told the *Sunday Post*:

"if you have the right cap, deployed in the right way, then that is a reasonable thing to have".

Despite the SNP's attacks on sanctions, it backed the conclusions of its own expert working group on welfare, which said that

"there is a general acceptance that receiving benefits will inevitably imply some form of conditionality".

When people claim benefits as a jobseeker, as a condition of that benefit, the public expects them to do everything reasonable to find work.

Labour members had the opportunity to oppose many of the measures that they criticise today. They did not. Under Jeremy Corbyn, their only plan seems to be for yet more upheaval and to push unfunded spending commitments.

As usual, we have heard a great deal about what the SNP Government is against but, when pressed on what it is for, its ideas dry up. It now has wide-ranging social security powers, but not the willingness to use them fully.

Both parties are sending the signal that they will continue to support uncoded spending on social security. However, when practical measures are proposed—as in last year's budget, which injected hundreds of millions extra into universal credit and set an end point for the freeze on benefit uprating—they oppose them. Neither Labour nor the SNP is prepared to build positive change into the welfare system, tackle costs, or support people into good-quality, well-paying work.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: All parties have had a little extra time. Can members tighten up and speak for four minutes, please?

15:55

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP): I thank the Labour Party for bringing forward a very important issue, which greatly affects people in my constituency and across Scotland. Let us be in no doubt: universal credit is a policy developed in London that is failing Scotland. There are far too many children already growing up in poverty.

The roll-out of universal credit, as well as other horrendous policies, has had a damaging effect on people in my constituency, with huge increases in rent arrears and food parcel deliveries for those who cannot make ends meet. Indeed, the Coatbridge food bank has often had its supplies depleted to zero and has appealed to the public for help. That is why I get annoyed when Tory members bury their heads in the sand when it comes to the challenges of poverty.

Just today, North Lanarkshire Council's communities and housing committee passed a proposal to implement and administer a universal credit assistance fund for council tenants who are falling into arrears due to the built-in waiting time for universal credit. I welcome that policy and applaud the officers, as well as the councillors of all parties, particularly Labour and the SNP, who made it happen. However, that a council should be forking out £1 million to mitigate the horrendous policy of universal credit, on top of what the Scottish Government is already doing, is a scandal.

The Scottish Government has certainly been mitigating that policy. In the last year alone, it has invested almost £1.5 billion to support low-income households. A sizeable proportion of that money is being used to reverse the abhorrent Tory policies that are being dictated to us from Westminster. As has been quoted in the chamber many times before, a UN expert on poverty has stated:

"It is outrageous that devolved administrations need to spend resources to shield people from Government policies."

The main thing about Labour's motion that I cannot understand is why it is not taking the opportunity to call for the full devolution of welfare powers. As I said in my intervention on Richard Leonard's speech, if we could put aside our differences on independence, surely we could agree that we do not want any chance that such crucial powers could be in the hands of the Tories and not the Scottish people.

Daniel Johnson: That is why you should vote Labour.

Fulton MacGregor: From his sedentary position, Daniel Johnson is shouting that we should vote Labour. However, it does not matter whether the forthcoming general election brings a Labour or a coalition Government to Westminster: while there is still a chance that it might bring a Tory Government, we should seek to have all powers on welfare in Scotland devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

I turn to more local matters. This Friday, I will host the first of three networking events that will bring local people and organisations together to discuss how we can tackle inequality and poverty in Coatbridge and Chryston. Since being elected in 2016, I have been in awe of the work that is done across my constituency by individuals and volunteers from local charity and voluntary organisations. They work day in, day out to help to improve the lives of others, but they do so in the hope that, one day, they will not have to. They also work in conjunction with fantastic local government initiatives, such as club 365, and in tandem with Scottish Government policies such as the pupil equity fund, which aims to reduce the education attainment gap by putting funding straight into the hands of headteachers.

I have supported some of those local organisations, such as cool school uniforms, Baby Loss Retreat and shining stars, since their inception. They join many other individuals and organisations, all of which are supporting our most vulnerable friends and neighbours. There are far too many to name them all, but good examples are Coatbridge food bank, Coatbridge citizens advice bureau, the soup kitchen, the safety zone, and local churches and their affiliated organisations.

As a member of the Scottish Parliament, I care passionately about my area and I want to do whatever small bit I can to reduce the inequality that exists there. I hope that Friday's event will allow the local organisations that I have mentioned—and many more—to come together with national charities and local authority services. We want them to share what works and to discuss how they can all work together to challenge inequality and shape our local response to the plight of poverty that has been forced upon us.

It is time to take welfare powers into our own hands. I will support the Government's amendment, and I urge other members to do likewise.

15:59

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I remember the days when we had a welfare state into which people paid through their taxes and from which they rightly received the benefit of a safety net when things went wrong. When they were ill or out of work, the state stepped in to help them to get back on their feet.

Claiming benefits has never been pleasant—people have always had to prove their entitlement and to face questions at a time when they are least able to face them—but that is how the system works.

One of my first jobs involved working with unemployed people and administering schemes to get people into work. I saw at first hand how those people turned up on day one. They were downtrodden with no spark of life and deeply depressed. The health impact of unemployment on its own is the equivalent of smoking 200 cigarettes a day and that figure comes from a time before universal credit. How much worse is it now?

When they found work, those same people were unrecognisable. A number of them came back after they had found work, perhaps to hand something back or simply to speak to their project worker, and on many occasions, I did not recognise them. They were alive again—they had a spark, and a spring in their step. Getting a job was transformational.

That was some decades back, when we had a safety net. I can only imagine the impact on people now. I wonder how they can ever pick themselves up under this draconian system. That experience was formative and shaped my politics.

Women bear the brunt of the effects of universal credit because of their caring responsibilities and the inherent disadvantage that they face through the gender pay gap. They are twice as likely as men to depend on social security, and the current

system doubles down on that by targeting women with things such as the two-child cap and the rape clause. Women make up 74 per cent of the people who claim carers allowance. Almost half of lone parents are living in poverty and they are predominantly women.

We all know that a child's life chances, education and wealth are directly related to their mother's wealth and education. We are failing those children, as well as their mothers, with this Dickensian system. Those children are all our futures; they are the scientists, doctors and nurses of the future. We fail ourselves if we fail them.

As a young person, I never saw food banks. There was poverty but not on the scale that we see today. We are beginning to see poverty impact on health with the return of diseases such as rickets, which we thought would never be seen again in a rich country. We have huge wealth, but far too many of our population have livelihoods that have more in common with those that are seen in developing countries, and that is totally wrong.

People are caught between two Governments that do not care: the heartless Tories who only care about accruing more wealth to themselves at the expense of the most vulnerable in society, and the Scottish National Party, which pretends to be socialist but stands aside and does nothing to help, because that would let the Tories off the hook.

The SNP also sees the injustice as one of the biggest recruiting sergeants for its only goal—that of independence. What they do not tell the people is that independence would make the situation a whole lot worse.

Dr Allan: Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Ms Grant is just closing.

Rhoda Grant: The SNP's growth commission report says that there would be 10 more years of brutal austerity in an independent Scotland, and you can bet that that is the best gloss that they could put on it. There would be 10 more years of hunger, poverty and failing services, and there are people in our communities who would not survive that.

The Scottish Labour Party puts people above self-interest and fairness above amassing riches, and it will bring about real change.

16:03

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): There are many things in Labour's motion today with which, despite some of the previous speech, most people in Parliament—except the

Tories, no doubt—are likely to agree. As other members have said, the Tories' implementation of universal credit has had a disastrous human impact on many families in Scotland, as most MSPs will know from their own inboxes.

Parliament's Social Security Committee has heard enough evidence on that over the past year to convince all but the most hardened of hearts. A system that in some cases sanctions people for not being in highly enough paid jobs must have something wrong with it and, although we want to move people to digital solutions wherever possible, the committee has heard repeated evidence from communities around the country that universal credit's digital first approach is leaving behind many vulnerable people who feel wholly unprepared for the task of explaining the multiple problems in their lives to a website, however sophisticated it may be.

From the five-week wait, to numerous administrative difficulties, to the appalling rape clause, universal credit has adversely affected families with children and many of our other most vulnerable citizens. But members should not just take my word for it. As others have alluded to, following his visit the UK, Professor Philip Alston, the United Nations special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, memorably and shockingly said:

"through it all, one actor has stubbornly resisted seeing the situation for what it is."

The UK Government

"has remained determinedly in a state of denial. Even while devolved authorities in Scotland and Northern Ireland are frantically trying to devise ways to 'mitigate', or in other words counteract, at least the worst features of the Government's benefits policy, Ministers"—

UK ministers—

"insisted to me that all is well and running according to plan."

It is clear that all is not well or running according to plan, unless the plan was to increase emergency food parcel handouts by 23 per cent in the past 12 months or to cause substantial increases in rent arrears, which, according to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, is what has happened.

Although the Scottish Government has made major efforts to mitigate all that, Professor Alston points out that it is neither acceptable nor, ultimately, feasible for Holyrood to use its resources to clean up an ever-wider oil slick of UK policy failure in reserved areas.

As I have said, there is much that I agree on with my Labour colleagues, even if their motion offers little by way of solution. The motion suggests that their plan is for Westminster to roll out an unspecified new system before universal

credit is itself fully rolled out. As other members have mentioned, that could create a two-tier system and create more confusion and anxiety for recipients.

We should instead be fixing here in Scotland the things that are wrong, but that of course means mentioning a subject that Labour does not want to be mentioned in polite company: the powers of this Parliament. Labour knows fine well that the Scottish Government does not have the powers to change the abhorrent two-child limit policy or anything else about universal credit or child tax credits while the relevant powers remain reserved to Westminster.

As ever, the tragedy of Scottish Labour is its misplaced faith in Westminster to put all that right at some unspecified point in the future. It is time for Labour finally to join the widening consensus that all aspects of the benefits system should be in Scotland's hands—not in Boris Johnson's.

16:07

Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Con): I have found this afternoon's short debate slightly disappointing. I was surprised initially that this subject was brought forward; it shows a lack of imagination by the Labour Party that our devolved Parliament is debating something that is reserved to Westminster. That maybe sums up where the Labour Party is with regard to policies in Scotland—it has none. The second disappointing factor is that the debate has ignored the facts and information that have been gathered by the Social Security Committee and others. As Michelle Ballantyne pointed out, those figures show that between 80 and 85 per cent of people who are on universal credit today are satisfied with the service that they get. If we are going to have a debate, let us have one about how we can improve universal credit for the 16 per cent, but let us not bring down the others who have benefited from it.

I will give an example that I do not think that anyone in the chamber has given so far. There is one big advantage that universal credit has for those who have disabilities, in particular. Under the old system, people had to make six applications to six different departments and had to fill out six different forms. For many parents of disabled children, that bureaucracy was a minefield. The advantage of universal credit is that people can make one application rather than six and can have such an application dealt with in one way. That point should not be missed in the debate.

I laugh slightly at Fulton MacGregor—I am not laughing at him as an individual but at the comments that he made about wanting powers to come to the Scottish Parliament completely. Every

time we get a power, we just give it back to the DWP. If we had the power devolved, it would probably be 2040, 2050 or—

Fulton MacGregor: Will the member give way?

Jeremy Balfour: I am sorry—I do not have time. Some members say, “Let’s have all the powers.” We have powers at the moment regarding PIP, but we are simply asking the DWP to continue to do it all for us.

The UK Government has listened to those for whom universal credit has not worked, and it has amended the system in such a way that it has brought more people in. To simply rip it up and start again would be a disaster. As Jamie Halcro Johnston pointed out, it is not us who think that that would be a disaster; many people in the third sector have commented on that. We have heard that the Trussell Trust and other organisations do not want universal credit to go away.

Would the Labour Party do what it has suggested? I accept that Mr Gray gave an outline of what Labour would do. How much would that cost on day 1, and how much would it cost the UK in the first financial year? Can Labour give us a figure, or is that simply an uncostered pipe dream?

We have to be careful about the language that we use. Alasdair Allan spoke about sanctions. If we examine the figures for the percentage of people who have been sanctioned in the United Kingdom, we see that it is roughly the same number of people—in fact, it is exactly the same number—who were sanctioned under the legacy benefits.

When he was a minister, Keith Brown—that well-known supporter of the Conservative Party—said that universal credit had merits, and it does have merits. It is working for the overwhelming majority of people here in Scotland and in the United Kingdom. Yes, it needs tweaking and changing, and that is what the UK Government has done. I suggest that we get behind and support universal credit, rather than talking down people who are benefiting from it.

16:12

Shirley-Anne Somerville: It is clear that the vast majority of members at least agree that universal credit is a failure. Many people have given specific examples of how it has brought people further into poverty and have talked about the anxiety and rent arrears that often go with that.

The Scottish Government has been at the forefront of highlighting where the UK Government welfare policies are hurting people—particularly those that are disproportionately affecting women, children and disabled people—just as we have been at the forefront of pointing out the flaws in

universal credit and calling for it to be halted while those clear flaws are fixed.

Against the backdrop of social security spending in Scotland being cut by £3.7 billion by 2021, the Scottish Government has invested more than £1.4 billion to support low-income households, including £100 million to mitigate the worst impacts of the UK Government’s welfare reforms.

However, as the UN rapporteur, Professor Philip Alston, who has been quoted regularly this afternoon, said:

“mitigation comes at a price”,

and it is “not sustainable” for devolved Administrations to spend resources to fix the UK Government’s policies.

Iain Gray: Surely if a benefit is devolved and is then improved and made more generous, those resources would have to be found within the Scottish Government’s resources. That would always be the case, would it not?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: We will endeavour to ensure, in every single budget, that we are doing our best within the block grant that we have. What I cannot remember—because it has not happened—is the Scottish Labour Party coming forward in any budget with any specific proposals to improve welfare. It is all about the headlines, with very little—indeed, nothing—about the substance that goes behind that.

Iain Gray: Will the cabinet secretary give way on that?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I think we have heard enough from Mr Gray. What we heard from Mr Gray was details of what Labour might like to change around universal credit, but we have not heard anything about the new benefit that Labour would like to replace it with—or, in particular, about how long it would take for it to be designed, introduced and fully implemented.

We can talk about the role of the Scottish Government and what we can do, but there is a responsibility on the Opposition parties to demonstrate what they would like to do differently and how that should be paid for. We have set out a safe and secure transition for the benefits that we will be taking, and we are working with stakeholders to ensure that the timetable is relevant to what they are doing.

I was exceptionally disappointed when Richard Leonard opened this debate by criticising the alterations that we made in June that will allow us to bring in the Scottish child payment. It is desperately disappointing that the Scottish Labour Party has actually criticised this Government for using the powers that we have to ensure that we are delivering on our ambition to tackle child

poverty. I thought that that was something that we could and should have come together on.

We have heard a lot today, and quite rightly, about the UK Government making some changes to address the flaws in universal credit. It is only fair to point out that, frankly, they are absolutely inadequate. Reducing the waiting period for a first payment from six weeks to five is not helping the people I see in my surgeries or, I am sure, those who other members across the chamber see in their surgeries. The fact that people have to pay back their advance payments from universal credit, thus running into further debt, is not helping the people we are here to serve. That is why it is time for the UK Government to take responsibility, but the best solution—the real and only solution—is for the UK Government to devolve all social security powers to this Government so that we can put dignity, fairness and respect right at the heart of the system here in Scotland.

16:16

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): Today's debate about scrapping, once and for all, the cruel benefit cap, the hated two-child limit and universal credit—a set of welfare reforms that are having a catastrophic impact on women, children and the communities we represent—has been a vital one to have ahead of next month's election. Across Scotland, families have the daily agony of having to keep on top of a universal credit claim or of having to figure out how to pay the rent. It has been decided that they are not allowed what they need; a family cap or a benefit cap has been imposed for no reason other than cruel Tory austerity.

Members have spoken about the devastating five-week wait. I whole-heartedly agree with what was said and I am proud that Labour will commit in our manifesto this week to an interim payment before universal credit is scrapped. The abolition of the two-child limit, the rape clause, the benefit sanctions regime and the bedroom tax will also be in our fully costed manifesto this week, along with the other immediate changes that Iain Gray set out.

Everyone has spoken about the very real challenges that their constituents face every day to get by and raise their children—everyone, that is, except the Tories, who blindly ignore the people facing poverty, rent arrears and destitution because of this despicable system. We have all heard about the problems reported, as well as the more complex and obscure, even vindictive, changes that universal credit has brought in: tax rebates from previous years swallowed up; students amassing huge arrears because the DWP does not process the information; and the proliferation of debts to the DWP, which amounts

to more than £15 million in my region alone. These welfare reforms are affecting people who are just trying to live their lives.

Many in this chamber will have heard me reflect on my family circumstances amid the damaging Tory welfare reforms. I was one of four children. My parents worked hard—my dad as a welder and my mum as a bank clerk—to support the family they chose to have. When my dad was diagnosed with a serious heart condition at the age of 37, he was unable to carry on doing the job he had done for 20 years. My parents did not plan for that situation—who does plan for such a situation when they start a family?

What today's debate has shown is what each party will do to help. We do not need reminding of what the Tories offer. The proclamations from the Conservatives in previous, similar debates—that poor people should not be allowed to have too many children and that the rich should not have to make a contribution to those in need—have told the chamber enough. The devastation is already eating away at our communities, but the Conservatives say that we should be thankful that 200,000 more children in poverty across the UK because of the benefits freeze will see a paltry 1.7 per cent increase in their parents' benefits, and that we should be thankful that the extension of the two-child limit on universal credit for children born before April 2017 will not be rolled out. Amazingly, just days after Willie Rennie offered a half-hearted apology for the bedroom tax, the Lib Dems' amendment proposes holding on to the system that they, hand in hand with the Tories, helped to usher in.

In the face of the catastrophic poverty that it has caused, and of heartbreaking testimony, they continue to support it, save for a few tweaks.

However, the SNP's position is the strangest—it is confusion, confusion, confusion. Today the cabinet secretary says that she is happy to scrap the system, but MSPs on the back benches say that change is too difficult. Last night, the SNP group was briefed that we should stick with it and tinker with it until it worked, in a helpful briefing that was issued to all MSPs' researchers.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Mark Griffin is just making that up.

Mark Griffin: I will forward to the cabinet secretary the briefing that the SNP researcher sent to the whole Parliament. I am sure that SNP members have relied heavily on it.

Richard Leonard: We have read it.

Mark Griffin: Yes, we have all read it.

Let us not forget that, last week, the First Minister outlined a different choice: another independence referendum, or more of the same

from another Tory Government. That choice leaves 9,000 families stuck with the two-child limit, and 200,000 households languishing on universal credit, as little more than collateral damage.

Given that it will take the SNP a decade to deliver all the benefits that have already been devolved, how can SNP members expect families to wait for independence and for an amended version of universal credit perhaps another 10, 15 or 20 years down the line?

Shirley-Anne Somerville: Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Griffin is closing.

Mark Griffin: The families that we are talking about need real change, right now. That is what a Labour Government will deliver.

Health and Social Care (Investment)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a debate on motion S5M-19940, in the name of Monica Lennon, on investing in Scotland.

16:22

Monica Lennon (Central Scotland) (Lab): Last week, it was my pleasure to attend the Scottish health awards, which celebrate some of the most inspiring people who work in our precious national health service. I am so grateful for the work that all our NHS staff do and I want to take this opportunity—I hope on behalf of all members—to say thank you to them.

For the sake of all patients and the workforce, the NHS must have the right resources, at the right place and the right time, so that people get the care that they need and deserve. Scottish National Party ministers introduced a legal right to treatment within 12 weeks. That was a good thing to do, but the treatment time guarantee has been breached more than 230,000 times. Despite coming into effect seven years ago, the duty to ensure that everyone is seen within 12 weeks has never been met. It is disappointing that the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport's amendment to the motion in my name deletes that fact. Any attempt to downplay the extent of the widespread challenges that our NHS faces is an insult to patients who are in pain and to staff who are stressed and who are worked to the bone.

Audit Scotland has warned that the NHS in Scotland is "running hot". SNP ministers have failed to do the long-term planning around workforce. A sticking-plaster approach to running the NHS has put the future of our health service at risk. NHS staff must be properly resourced to do their jobs. Instead, they face increasing pressure and the expectation that they will do more and more with less.

The Government published a waiting times improvement plan last year, but things continue to get worse instead of better. Targets have been consistently missed and life on the list is causing misery for too many patients. Last year, more than 5,000 children and young people waited more than 18 weeks to access mental health services. Over a third of chronic pain patients waited longer than four months for their first appointment—patients like my mum, a cancer survivor who waited 42 weeks for a bowel operation.

We must not lose sight of the other challenges, including the tragic drug deaths emergency, the high number of alcohol-related hospital

admissions, and the growing mental health crisis. My heart goes out to people like my constituent Alison Larkin, whose teenage son Kyle completed suicide days after being told by his general practitioner about long waits for child and adolescent mental health services.

On cancer, which is Scotland's leading cause of death, too many patients are waiting longer than six weeks for key diagnostic tests. Shockingly, overall cancer waiting time targets have not been met since 2012.

Miles Briggs is right to note in his amendment the report from the cross-party group on cancer, which was published this week. Macmillan Cancer Support warns that the current system cannot fully support the needs of people with cancer, so will the Scottish Government publish the national health and social care workforce plan that Macmillan and others have called for?

On wider workforce pressures, there are more than 4,000 vacant nursing and midwifery posts, and more than 500 consultant vacancies—the highest vacancy rate since the Government came to power. That is putting enormous strain on staff. Scottish Labour research revealed that, in the past year alone, 3.5 million NHS staff hours were lost due to stress, anxiety and mental health causes. Overall, nearly a quarter of NHS staff sickness absence hours—an increase of almost 17 per cent in the past few years—were for mental health reasons. Those are some of the challenges that the Government must address.

Audit Scotland's latest annual report on the NHS confirms that its slow progress on the integration of health and social care means that the Government will not meet its 2020 ambitions. The failure to end delayed discharge is another broken promise. The Royal College of Emergency Medicine is concerned that accident and emergency departments will struggle to cope this winter. They are already struggling. It warns that at least an additional 320 beds are needed to avoid patients experiencing the indignity of corridor care.

Scottish Labour wants to see an end to delayed discharge through an ambitious reform of social care, with proper times for care visits and good working conditions for our workforce. Barnett consequentials from a United Kingdom Labour Government could support that by delivering an additional £600 million pounds for social care.

Audit Scotland says that, without significant reform, the NHS in Scotland faces a financial black hole of almost £2 billion in five years. Earlier today, we touched on the fact that, instead of being a cause for celebration, not one but two flagship hospitals are mired in scandal and subject to public inquiries.

Our NHS is in urgent need of more investment to tackle the growing health inequalities in Scotland, to improve the overall health of Scots, to fix the workforce crisis and to create social care that is fit for the future. A UK Labour Government will unlock the opportunity for more investment, not only in acute health care, but across our public services. We have had enough despair and scandal. We need dignity and safety, and Scottish Labour will always put the NHS first. We would end the complacency, strengthen the NHS and deliver transformation in health and social care.

I move,

That the Parliament believes that the Scottish Government is not fulfilling its promise to the people of Scotland on the legal right to treatment within 12 weeks; considers that current NHS waiting times are too long and that the impact on patients is unacceptable; thanks NHS staff for their dedication and hard work and is concerned about the increasing pressures on the workforce due to a lack of adequate workforce planning and investment; agrees that there has been a lack of focus on reducing health inequalities, and believes that the future sustainability of the NHS is reliant on more investment, better long-term planning and a transformational delivery of health and social care that is fit for the 21st century.

16:28

The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing (Joe FitzPatrick): This Government is absolutely committed to a publicly owned, operated and commissioned NHS in Scotland. That is why we are determined, and why we demand, that the next Westminster Parliament passes an NHS protection bill to protect our health service from any future trade deals and to give this Parliament an explicit veto over any deal.

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

Joe FitzPatrick: I have a lot to get through, so I will continue. If there is time, I will come back to the member and he can tell us that he supports giving this Parliament an explicit veto to deal with those matters. Any party that refuses to protect our NHS in law leaves it open to the threat of being used as a bargaining chip in future deals, with the Trump Administration or anyone else.

Delivering improvement and reform in our health and care services takes investment. In 2019-20, we are investing record funding—more than £14 billion for health—with funding for front-line NHS boards increasing by £430 million. Statistics that were published yesterday show that front-line health spending per head in Scotland is 6.3 per cent—that is £136 per head—higher than in England. That is more than £740 million more spending on health in Scotland compared with the levels in England.

Our increased health investment comes despite Westminster reducing Scotland's fiscal resource budget by £1.5 billion, or 5 per cent in real terms, between 2010-11 and 2019-20. Our medium-term financial framework, which was published last year, enables longer-term planning and shifting the balance of care. It allows boards to focus their attention on delivering reform in a safe and appropriate way. Audit Scotland recently recognised that the framework is

"an important step towards supporting improvements to achieve financial sustainability of the NHS."

We recognise that too many patients are still waiting too long for treatment. That is why, last year, the cabinet secretary launched our £850 million waiting times improvement plan. We are already seeing the first fruits of that plan. In the past two years, there has been an overall reduction, by 14 per cent, in the number of those who are waiting longer than 12 weeks for an out-patient operation, with more than 13,500 fewer patients waiting longer than 12 weeks. In spite of what some members have said, our A and E departments have been the best performing in the UK for more than four years.

Although that is welcome, we are determined to go further. To support that, we have published workforce plans covering the NHS, primary care and social care. Our integrated national workforce plan, when published in the very near future, will be the first of its kind in the United Kingdom. It will build on the progress that has been made in recent years on training and recruitment. For example, compared with 2015, the number of doctors in training in 2019 is up by 19 per cent; the number of doctors appointed to GP training programmes is up by 36 per cent; and the overall trainee doctors recruitment position is at 92 per cent, which is up from 86 per cent last year and is equivalent to 64 new posts. I am particularly pleased to note that 100 per cent of radiology training posts are filled in 2019.

Hanging over all this is Brexit, which poses one of the greatest challenges to our health service. We believe that continued European Union membership best protects Scotland's interests and those of the rest of the UK. Since the 2016 referendum, we have worked tirelessly to prevent EU exit and specifically to prevent a no-deal Brexit. Our NHS has benefited from staff from the EU and other countries. Their contribution is vital and we must protect their rights. The cabinet secretary has written to staff on three occasions, including earlier this month, to assure them that we value them and want them to stay. I hope that all members back that sentiment.

I would have liked to have more time to talk further about the importance of addressing health inequalities, supporting mental wellbeing and

acting to prevent ill-health, although I am sure that we will have opportunities to do so in future. However, as the debating time has been split, time is far too short, so I close by observing that our NHS faces significant challenges and that, to protect it long into the future, we must invest, reform and absolutely exempt it from any future trade deals.

I move amendment S5M-19940.2, to leave out from first "believes" to end and insert:

"thanks NHS staff for their dedication and hard work as they care for the people of Scotland; welcomes the work being taken forward by the Ministerial working group to further promote and encourage a positive and caring workplace culture; believes that sustained investment through plans for waiting times improvements can support boards to better deliver for their patients; further believes that such investment, reform and planning is necessary as too many patients are waiting too long for treatment; understands that, in 2019-20, NHS Scotland will be £758 million better off because it has received better than real-terms increases since the beginning of the current parliamentary session; calls for the incoming UK Government to pass, as a matter of urgency, NHS protection legislation to absolutely exempt the NHS from any future trade deals, and to provide a veto over such deals to the devolved legislatures; notes that any form of Brexit could have a potentially devastating impact on health and care services; considers that Brexit will damage the economy and the ability to attract specialist staff for years to come, undermining the sustainability of the health service; notes that a focus on addressing health inequalities and prevention of ill health is essential for the long-term wellbeing of the people of Scotland, and believes that the future sustainability of the NHS is reliant on more investment, including in communities, better long-term planning and working with partners in local government for a greater pace of transformational delivery of health and social care that is fit for the 21st century."

The Deputy Presiding Officer: All members can be assured that I will ensure fairness in time allocation.

16:34

Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con): We have families demanding answers to what happened to their children, patients being given blankets to keep warm in hospital, cancer survival rates being put at risk due to staff shortages and operating theatres being closed and handed over to private operators. That is all on the cabinet secretary's and ministers' watch. Yet again, we are having to hold an Opposition debate on the issue. The ministers have failed our health service. Despite all that we have just heard from the minister, he should have summarised it in one word by saying sorry to patients across Scotland.

I welcome the opportunity that the Labour Party has given us to talk about our health service, because we never get that from this Government in its time. The empty rhetoric that we have heard from the Government needs to be put to one side.

I begin where Monica Lennon, too, started by thanking our NHS staff in Scotland for all that they do. Winter is often when most pressure are seen, and we owe those staff a huge debt of gratitude.

The Labour Party motion rightly highlights that this Government's 12-week treatment time guarantee, which was introduced by the First Minister when she was the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, has never been met—not once—since it was introduced in 2011. It is not so much a guarantee as a false hope for too many of our fellow Scots. SNP ministers are further away than ever from meeting that target, with the last quarter's statistics being the worst on record.

The target is being missed across numerous health boards, and it is a complete and on-going failure of this Government. The 18-week referral time has also been missed, patients are waiting too long for crucial diagnostic tests and more than one fifth of patients are waiting too long for mental health services and treatment, with almost one third of vulnerable children now waiting too long for mental health services. In addition, almost one fifth of patients with urgent cancer referrals are now waiting more than two months for treatment; that issue was flagged this week in a report by the Parliament's cross-party group on cancer. Furthermore, the SNP's A and E target has not been met for two years. The SNP's failure to plan for the future and to put in place a long-term and comprehensive NHS workforce plan is leading directly to our health service not being able to meet the targets that ministers have set it.

Sadly, it is not just on targets and the NHS workforce that the SNP is failing, but on physical infrastructure and new hospital projects. The deaths of children at the Queen Elizabeth university hospital in Glasgow have been utterly heartbreaking for the families and all involved, and those families, quite rightly, demand and deserve the truth.

The Scottish Government must ensure that parents get the answers that they need, and that both transparency, and parents and families, are at the heart of what the cabinet secretary and the health board take forward. In my region of Lothian, the new Royal hospital for sick children fiasco sums up everything that is wrong with this Government's oversight of these vital NHS projects and infrastructure, which we all want to see and invest in, but which have been failed on these ministers' watch.

The new hospital, which was due to be opened years ago, lies empty, yet NHS Lothian is paying £1.4 million per month to the developer for a facility that we cannot use and which is not open to Lothian families. I do not believe that SNP ministers realise just how angry Lothian voters are about that; those families are being failed by this

Government as a result of the mismanagement of our health service. Families in West Lothian are also extremely angry and unhappy about ministers' on-going inability to reopen the children's ward at St John's hospital on a full-time basis after promises that were made to them by the cabinet secretary, which have also been broken.

Angela Constance (Almond Valley) (SNP): Will Mr Briggs give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Briggs is just closing.

Miles Briggs: No. I do not have time.

Information that I obtained recently under freedom of information legislation indicated that the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health is telling NHS Lothian that it could now take up to five years for a full reopening. Ministers have deliberately kept that from the public.

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman): Will the member take an intervention on accuracy?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Briggs is closing.

Miles Briggs: I welcome the UK Government's recent announcement of extra funding for general practice, which will see an extra £200 million for Scotland in Barnett consequential. That comes on top of the more than £2 billion in actual Barnett consequential that our health service has received since 2010.

Scottish Conservatives have campaigned consistently to save our surgeries and to see the family doctor put back at the heart of our Scottish NHS. Again, I call for 11 per cent of that funding to go to general practice.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Come to a close, please.

Miles Briggs: We need to see a long-term strategic plan for our NHS, not only in workforce planning but in actually taking forward these serious problems. Our Scottish NHS is crying out for real leadership—all that it is getting from SNP ministers is crisis management.

I move amendment S5M-19940.1, to insert at end:

“; recognises the workforce crisis within NHS Scotland; notes the recent report from the Cross-Party Group on Cancer, which highlighted staff shortages as a reason for progress on treating cancer stalling; believes that Scotland's GPs are at the forefront of the NHS; calls on general practice to receive 11% of the overall Scottish NHS budget, and further calls for a long-term workforce plan to be developed for the health service in Scotland.”

16:39

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): I, too, thank all those who work in the NHS. It is important that we express our thanks to those who work in social care, who are so often underpaid and underappreciated.

I welcome the chance to debate the future of our health service. Given the challenges that are faced by all those who work in the NHS and all who rely on it, I do not think that it would be possible to give it too much of our focus and attention.

Monica Lennon's motion makes some extremely important points, and I thank her for lodging it. Too many patients are waiting too long for treatment, and that is unacceptable. We are still waiting for an integrated workforce plan, and we need to invest more in our NHS workforce.

The Government's amendment reflects that and accepts the just criticism that too many patients are waiting too long for treatment and that more investment and better long-term planning are needed. I welcome the acknowledgment of the need for a renewed focus on prevention and health inequalities, which the Scottish Greens believe must be priorities for a truly sustainable health service.

The amendment also recognises a fundamental threat to the sustainability of the national health service: the catastrophe that a hard Brexit would be and the possibility that a Boris Johnson Government would desperately pursue a trade deal with the United States. I will, therefore, support the Government amendment.

The hard Brexit that the Tories are pursuing represents one of the greatest threats to our health and social care system in recent memory. The health service has always relied on workers from the EU and beyond. The British Medical Association has warned that Scotland will need to continue to recruit from the European Economic Area and overseas to sustain staffing levels across the NHS in years to come. We simply cannot afford to put up barriers to medical or other healthcare staff, or to deter staff from coming to work in our health service at a time when they are needed most.

It is also the case that around three quarters of the medicines and more than half of the clinical consumables that we use come from, or via, the EU. The Royal Pharmaceutical Society has explicitly said that health organisations are unable to guarantee patients that their health and care will not be negatively impacted by the UK's exit from the EU.

Given those challenges, it is essential that we include Brexit in every debate about the future of Scotland's health service. The current UK

Government has already made clear its intention to prioritise negotiating a trade deal with the US if a hard Brexit happens, and Donald Trump has said that the NHS is "on the table". Although Boris Johnson denies that, I am afraid that we all know that he cannot be trusted. Indeed, senior civil servants have met big pharma representatives from the US to discuss trade negotiations. The impact of that on the NHS and patients throughout Scotland as a result of rocketing drugs bills could be devastating.

That is why it is essential that the Parliament sends the clear message that our NHS must be exempted from any future trade deals. Given the impact that trade deals will have on the constituents whom we all represent, it is critical that the Parliament and other devolved legislatures are given a say.

I welcome the fact that Miles Briggs's amendment

"calls on general practice to receive 11% of the overall Scottish NHS budget".

I support that whole-heartedly. Parliament backed that call when it voted to support my motion on GP recruitment and retention in April, and I am happy to support that amendment. If we are serious about integrating health and social care, it is essential that we have the support and the facilities in our communities that people need and rely on. The majority of patient contacts take place in our local GP surgeries, but those surgeries are simply not getting the level of investment that is essential.

16:43

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (LD): Like other members, I have recent cause to give thanks to our hard-working NHS staff, so I am delighted to join others in thanking them.

The topic is very important, and I am grateful to Monica Lennon and the Labour Party for making time to discuss it. It visits each of us in our constituency surgeries every single week. Usually, the people who come to see us are in abject pain and a certain degree of distress. More often than not, they are clutching a letter telling them when they would be seen but it is now weeks and weeks beyond the time when they were told to expect treatment.

That is precisely why the Liberal Democrats led a debate in the chamber on the matter in May. At that time, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport admitted that performance "must improve", and Parliament agreed. I will not repeat what I said that day; instead, I will look at what has happened in the intervening months. The headline performance figure has not budged. The treatment guarantee was not being fulfilled for 27 per cent of

patients then; the latest figures show that it is not being met for 27.5 per cent of patients. We saw the guarantee being missed by a larger margin than ever before. The number of times that the First Minister's treatment time law has now been officially breached has surpassed 200,000. That is an uncomfortable milestone for any minister.

Research by the Scottish Liberal Democrats found more patients waiting staggeringly long times—in breach of the law—in dentistry. A patient waited 38 weeks for oral surgery in NHS Borders, 39 weeks in NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and 40 weeks in both NHS Fife and NHS Forth Valley. Incredibly, a patient waited 126 weeks for oral and maxillofacial treatment in NHS Grampian. Those patients included patients who needed to restore functionality and appearance after serious injuries and cancer. David McColl, who is the chair of the British Dental Association's Scottish dental practice committee, did not mince his words as he said that that situation was the result of years of underinvestment and that patients

"shouldn't be waiting eons for life-changing surgery."

We have heard how ministers have set out a plan to stop breaking their own law by 2021, which is a full decade after it was passed on the signature of Nicola Sturgeon. However, my confidence in the Government even on that has faded because now, a full year into the new waiting times improvement plan, we have seen many measures take a turn for the worse. The recovery plan has not had the desired effect in year 1, which calls into serious question where it will be at the end of year 2 and year 3. That recovery plan hinges on there being enough staff, which is what the integrated workforce plan was always meant to secure.

Overstretched staff were promised that they would see the integrated workforce plan a year ago—their good will has been relied on for much too long and it is running out—but December became January, that became February and then that became "this year" and now it has become "the very near future". We are now at the end of November and the plan is still nowhere to be seen. That delay and deflection will hinder progress towards meeting that guarantee in 2021. More immediately, it means that the staff will not get the respite that they need and it means more long waits for treatment and, with those, more pain, disruption and anxiety.

On the amendments, Miles Briggs made some important points and I will be glad again to support the call for more investment in primary care. I agree with the cabinet secretary that our NHS must not be a bargaining chip in future trade deals. The Liberal Democrats believe that the best way to keep the NHS out of the grubby hands of Donald Trump and to build a brighter future is to

stop Brexit entirely. The Scottish Government's amendment is, as a whole, complacent. I stand by Monica Lennon's motion, which makes the same points that the Liberal Democrats did in May. The Scottish Government is breaching the law on an unprecedented scale and, as a first step towards fixing that, we urgently need to see that workforce plan.

16:47

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): The national health service is our most beloved and essential public service. It looks after us regardless of race, gender, social status or wealth. In the 71 years since its creation, it has faced an array of challenges and obstacles, but it strives to care for and treat all of us. Personally, I have a lot to thank our NHS for and I will never apologise for standing up for it and for people like me, who rely on that care and support on a daily basis. Investing in healthcare is one of the most important functions of Government, no matter the party in control. Investing in healthcare is crucial to the nation as a whole, but it is also crucial to the NHS staff, who work with tireless dedication in often the most difficult and challenging circumstances. That is why we lodged our motion for debate today: to highlight that investing in the NHS is investing in both patients and staff.

Today is transgender day of remembrance, which is a day to honour, commemorate and memorialise trans people who have died as a result of transphobia. On this day and during this debate, it would be remiss of me not to highlight some of the health inequalities of transgender people. Statistics show that 25 per cent of trans people have been subjected to domestic abuse, 30 per cent of trans people have attempted suicide and, worldwide, 331 transgender and gender-diverse people have been killed in the past year.

As a trans ally, I will always work to tackle the health inequalities that this much maligned and denigrated community faces every single day. Investing in our NHS means that we can provide better support for transgender people, especially when it is investing in mental health services and supporting the many fantastic third sector and charity organisations that support transgender and gender-diverse people.

As a representative of West Scotland, I see the causes of health inequalities all too often. Poverty is at the heart of those causes. The life expectancy of men in West Scotland is among the lowest in Europe. The difference between the life expectancies of men living in neighbouring West Dunbartonshire and East Dunbartonshire is around five years. Ending austerity would go a long way to ending that shocking statistic. By investing in public services such as the NHS and

investing to better support our communities, we can tackle the health inequalities for men in West Scotland and across Scotland.

Cuts to local government and cuts that have been forced on health boards are causing suffering for far too many people. The children's ward at Paisley's Royal Alexandra hospital has been moved to the Queen Elizabeth university hospital, which is facing serious problems of its own. Social care is in crisis, resulting in more people staying in hospital for longer than they need to. There are shocking figures for drug-related deaths. Child and adolescent mental health services are under extreme pressure, and there are high numbers of rejected referrals. Those are a few examples that show that, under this SNP Government, the NHS is unsustainable and investment is crucial.

I urge members to support our motion on investing in the NHS and to support its hard-working staff.

16:51

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP):

Last year, the NHS celebrated its 70th birthday. Over the decades, every one of us will have used it in one way or another, whether through being born in the NHS, seeing a GP, having an operation in a hospital or simply visiting an optician for a free NHS eye examination. Despite what we have heard from the likes of Monica Lennon and Miles Briggs, our healthcare system is undoubtedly the best in the world, and that is primarily because of the incredible people who work in it.

The current time of year is often difficult for the staff, so I put on the record my appreciation for the work that they do, often in challenging circumstances. Unlike our opponents, I will not go on to criticise what has been happening in the hospitals. Despite the pressures, it is down to the staff that, according to the recent Audit Scotland report, the NHS is seeing and treating more patients than ever before. We all rely on our NHS, and that is why we in the SNP want to make sure that it is fit for the future.

Since the NHS was created in 1948, it has seen many changes, but none greater than the transformational integration of our health and social care sectors. That is the biggest reform in that period and it is changing for the better the way in which key services are being delivered. The necessary reform and investment will ensure that our NHS is fit for the changing needs of 21st century Scotland.

Of course there are aspects of our health service that are not performing to the standards that are expected of them. I have a constituent

whose daughter is facing an excessive and unacceptable wait for paediatric ear, nose and throat services at the Royal hospital for children in Glasgow. My local health board admits that my constituent's daughter's wait is too long, and the Scottish Government accepts that such waits are unacceptable. However, that is why we are taking vital steps to address waiting times through the waiting times improvement plan, which is backed by more than £850 million of funding.

I hope to sit in the chamber one day and hear a member from one of the Opposition parties being honest with the public about their plans—or lack of plans—to help with the running of our NHS. Unfortunately, today is not that day. As I said, I accept that we must do more, but neither Labour nor the Tories have ever come up with the plans or the answers. The Scottish branch of Labour demands everything all the time, yet not once in 12 years has it come to the finance secretary with costed proposals during the budget process.

On the other hand, health spending under the SNP is at a record high. We have committed to increasing the NHS revenue budget by half a billion pounds over inflation in the current session of Parliament. Under the SNP, NHS staffing is at a record high. Scotland has the highest number of GPs per head of population in the UK, and we have increased staffing levels in the NHS by 10 per cent. Under the SNP, 86 per cent of NHS Scotland patients rate their care and treatment positively, which is a record high since 2014, and A and E performance in Scotland's hospitals has been the best in the UK for over four and a half years.

To be fair—that is my way, as you know, Presiding Officer—at the UK level, Labour has come up with a couple of positive plans to improve the health service in England. The plans are for free prescriptions, which have already been introduced by the SNP in Scotland, and free personal care for the elderly, which was also introduced by the SNP—

Alex Cole-Hamilton rose—

James Dornan: Sorry, sorry—my apologies. Sit down, Alex—I do not want to give you a heart attack.

Free personal care for the elderly has been extended by the SNP to anyone who needs it, regardless of their age, condition, capital or income.

Opposition parties need to be honest with the public and remind them of the fact—*[Interruption.]* We can all make mistakes—such as mine just then—but the Opposition parties do dishonesty. They need to remind the public that, under Tory tax giveaways, the Scottish Government's budget would have been reduced by £650 million in 2019-

20, and that, if Labour had been elected in 2016 and implemented its manifesto, our NHS would be £758 million worse off this financial year than it is now. Clearly, that could only mean cuts to our health service. Would Labour and the Tories slash the number of nurses by up to 19,000, or would they scrap the waiting time improvement funding, which would mean that people who are on the paediatric ENT waiting list, such as my young constituent, would wait much longer?

Scotland is not immune to the challenges that the NHS faces, but it is only the SNP Scottish Government that has a credible plan to improve it. As the Opposition plays cheap and, sometimes, nasty politics with the NHS, we will continue making the necessary reforms and investment to improve the NHS for all patients.

16:56

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Presiding Officer, now we come back to the real world.

I thank the Labour Party for bringing the debate to the chamber.

It was only last week that I raised in the chamber the Scottish Government's poor healthcare performance in the Highlands. It is of little surprise that I am back today to do the same thing. Last week, I raised with the First Minister the long waiting times in NHS Highland after it was revealed that some patients wait 78 weeks for orthopaedic treatment. That is simply unacceptable and means that some patients are suffering excruciating pain and putting their lives on hold for a long time.

However, that is not an isolated incident; it is the tip of an iceberg. The Auditor General pointed out that only 54 per cent of patients in the Highlands are getting operations within the 12-week treatment time guarantee period. I challenged the First Minister on what her Government was doing to resolve that situation, but her answer will have brought little comfort to those in the Highlands who are waiting for treatment. I welcome the £850 million initiative to cut waiting times, but the First Minister failed to mention that only £7 million of that money has been spent in the Highlands so far, which gives me the distinct impression that this Government is again ignoring the Highlands.

I agree with what has been said by other members: we owe a huge debt of gratitude to our hard-working doctors and nurses. I believe that this Government is letting them down. Right now, NHS Highland and many other health boards in Scotland are overstretched and understaffed. Health staff are under more and more pressure to deliver on waiting times, and they feel the burden of responsibility. In the Highlands, staff have also

had to deal with the bullying that has been going on in that service. They should not be in that position, and the blame lies with this Government. It must improve recruitment levels to reach a point at which staff have a realistic chance of achieving the waiting time targets that we all very much want them to achieve.

I regularly speak with consultants who are based in the Highlands, and they tell me that highlanders are resilient. However, at times, that strength becomes a weakness, because people decide not to make a fuss about their ill health. The result is that GPs and consultants in the Highlands are alerted to health problems much later than they should be, and symptoms are often more advanced when patients are diagnosed. That is why the waiting times issue is so critical in the Highlands.

Across Scotland, the shortcomings in our NHS emanate from the top—from this Government. That is why I despair at the thought of NHS Highland being escalated to level 5 and the Scottish Government centralising control of what should be local healthcare and decisions that are made locally.

This Government does not have a good record—a record that inspires confidence. It has let down the workforce through poor workforce planning and through not ensuring that its workplace is one that we should all be proud of.

There has been a decade of failure that has caused waiting times to grow longer and longer and pressures on our hospitals to grow bigger and bigger. Something must change—and that change must start at the top.

I totally support Monica Lennon's motion.

17:00

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): I am pleased to speak in today's debate.

We should recognise that we have a world-class health service. People want to work in it and people want to be treated by it. It is the envy of most other countries and compares very favourably with health services in neighbouring countries, such as England. For example, A and E patients are seen within four hours—7 per cent ahead of patients in England. Cancer patients are treated within 62 days of referral—also 7 per cent ahead of those in England. That is not to say that there is no room for improvement, but we should be proud when we do things well.

Alex Cole-Hamilton: Will the member take an intervention?

John Mason: I am afraid that there is no time for interventions.

Labour's motion mentions investment a couple of times. It mentions

"a lack of adequate ... investment."

and says that

"The future sustainability of the NHS is reliant on more investment".

I assume that Labour means financial investment.

The NHS has had better than real-terms increases since 2016, and has therefore been better protected than other sectors. In fact, there has been criticism from people in the business world and elsewhere that the NHS has been treated too generously in comparison with training or job creation, for example.

If Labour members or anyone else want more finance for the NHS, they have to tell us where it will come from. Would they cut funding for local government or colleges? Monica Lennon suggested that £600 million would come from the UK. That would be welcome, but I fear that that means that Labour will just borrow and borrow and borrow, and the UK, which is not in a good financial state, will continue to go from boom to bust.

On workforce planning, we are fairly close to full employment, and we have a pretty stable, and ageing, population. If the suggestion is therefore that we should have more staff in the NHS, they would presumably need to come either through immigration or through cuts to the workforce in some other sector.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): Will the member take an intervention?

John Mason: No, I will not take interventions. The member should have listened the first time.

We are arguing strongly for control over immigration because that would give us that extra and necessary workforce. We are not arguing for more people for the sake of it; we need more people to grow our economy and to provide the services we all expect. If Labour members will not support us in achieving more immigration into Scotland, where do they think the extra nurses and doctors will come from? Do they want to take young people out of agriculture, engineering or hospitality? Is that what they are saying?

There is a link to the cross-party group report on cancer that has been commented on this week. The CPG also wants workforce planning to "address long-standing vacancies". Is it saying that too many staff are in maternity or elderly care and can be transferred to cancer care? If not, where are those extra people to come from?

With regard to financial and human resources, I accept that we can increase efficiency and

improve the way we do things; I also accept that technology can help us, too. However, I suggest that those things are likely to give us only marginal improvements in the short term. Some Opposition members need a reality check. They need to remember that, when he was First Minister, Jack McConnell said, that the population was

"the single biggest challenge facing Scotland".

Scotland faces a huge challenge: we just do not have enough people for what we want to do. If immigration is not to be allowed, we will need to start curtailing our ambitions, be that in business, universities, the NHS or wherever.

On preventative spending, the Conservative amendment has some merit in stressing GPs, but we should be realistic about what the amendment really means. Out of every £100 of NHS spending, around £8 is spent on GPs. If the GPs' share went up to £11, the share for the rest would have to fall from £92 to £89. There is merit in that argument, but the Conservatives need to be realistic and accept that hospital spending would fall and that—at least in the short term—A and E waiting times might go up.

The NHS is not perfect but I urge the Opposition to acknowledge what a world-class health service we have.

17:05

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): I declare an interest: my wife and daughter work in the NHS.

The NHS is our greatest public service. It is staffed by skilled, caring, compassionate people who, every day, go above and beyond the call of duty. They care for the young, the old, the newborn and those who are about to leave this world.

However, the NHS is a tough and mentally and physically exhausting service to work in. Week in, week out, staff and patients come to my office—and, I bet, the offices of almost every other member of this Parliament—for help and support on a number of important issues.

What is happening in England, Wales or Northern Ireland—or Timbuktu, for that matter—means nothing to those constituents. What is happening to them, their families and their colleagues matters. If people cannot get a doctor's appointment in Livingston, it does not make their illness any better to know that their brother or sister in Birmingham cannot get one either. If staff are rushed off their feet, walking 11 miles a day on a ward in Edinburgh, it does not make it any better that a nurse in London, Belfast or Cardiff is doing the same. What people want is action on a number of fronts, which I will set out. They are all issues that I have been approached about in

recent weeks and months by constituents. None is made up; they are genuine cases.

Seven years on from when the problem was first exposed, parents from Whitburn with sick children have to travel to Edinburgh at weekends because the children's ward at St John's is still not open on a 24/7 basis. For the first time since the creation of the NHS, patients from Stoneyburn no longer have a GP service in their village. Orthopaedics patients from Blackburn have been told that their waiting time for a procedure is 54 weeks. Mental health patients from East Calder wait 10 months for a first consultation with a psychologist. If people are in mental health crisis today, having to wait 10 months is no good.

Nurses at St John's, the Edinburgh royal infirmary and the Western general hospital are drowning under pressure because of staffing shortages and patients being inappropriately boarded out to their ward. Elderly patients from across the Lothians are stuck in hospital and cannot get out because there is no care home place or care at home for them.

Home carers, who are on zero-hours contracts, want to provide a good service but, because of the contracts that they work under, they cannot. In more than 50 GP practices in the Lothians, lists are closed to new patients, because they cannot recruit doctors. Neurological patients and children are waiting for treatment but cannot get access to the new sick kids hospital, which costs £1.4 million a month but still has no patients in it. NHS managers are forced to turn to private staffing agencies, which charge £1,700 a shift for a nurse; nurses who are employed by the NHS get less than £150.

Hundreds of staff at St John's have no credible public transport option to get to work but have had their staff parking passes removed, which has resulted in tensions between the staff, the hospital and the surrounding communities.

All those people—who work in or use our NHS—believe in it. They all support it and they all want it to have a better future. The Government should address those issues.

In 2012, I said that we needed a fundamental review of the NHS to ensure that it was fit for the 21st century. Alex Neil, then the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, dismissed that call, saying that it was a waste of time and money. However, last week, at the Public Audit and Post-legislative Scrutiny Committee, the same Alex Neil called for such a review to take place. If he had listened to Richard Simpson and me in 2012, the review would be finished by now, we would be implementing its findings and the NHS would be in much better shape. When she considers the in-

tray that she has at the moment, the cabinet secretary ought to reflect on that.

17:10

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): If there is one message that should come out of today's short debate, it must be that money is not the real issue. We are seeing real-terms increases in what is being spent on the NHS year on year, with that spending now accounting for more than 40 per cent of the whole Scottish budget. In Scotland, we have more staff, nurses, midwives and GPs per head than anywhere else in the UK. We also have better pay and the highest public satisfaction ratings.

So, what is the real issue that we face? It is a combination of a number of factors. We are making progress against the big three—heart disease, stroke and cancer—so people are living longer. The numbers of people who present with respiratory issues and diabetes continue to climb, and the number who present with multiple conditions later in life is on the up. Demand just keeps growing.

Our previous Auditor General for Scotland, Robert Black, told the Public Audit Committee during one of his last contributions, in 2011, that we faced that challenge then, and that it was significant. However, he also said that the NHS cannot solve it alone, and that we would need help from our partners in local government to bring about the kind of service redesign that would be required to cope with those demands.

This is where we are in 2019—working to reshape the NHS so that it can continue to deliver to the people of Scotland a high-quality service that is free at the point of need. No one has said that it will be quick or easy, but the transformation process is under way.

Integration of healthcare and social care is probably the greatest challenge of all. However, as the previous and current Auditors General have reminded us, it offers the scale of transformational change that we need in areas in which we rely heavily on our local authority partners. More than half of our adult social care budget now sits with our integration joint boards. People wanted to see resources being shifted to community-based services, so it is to be hoped that that will deliver the necessary changes.

In respect of a recent section 23 report, the current Auditor General has told the Public Audit and Post-legislative Scrutiny Committee that the Scottish Ambulance Service is helping to reduce demand for GP appointments in areas where its paramedics are trained to assess and treat patients, who then do not need GP visits. Patient feedback on that approach has been very positive.

The pharmacy first service is also making an impact. We know that, in Forth Valley NHS, people can access their local community pharmacies for some conditions that do not need a GP visit. Many such pharmacies stay open in the evenings and at weekends, which makes the service even more valuable. In the service, 83 per cent of patients' consultations are successfully completed by pharmacists, only 10 per cent had to go to GPs, and the remaining 7 per cent required only advice.

NHS 24's triaging of people who are looking for urgent appointments with GPs also has very high levels of patient satisfaction. It is clear that it is directing people to better and more appropriate services, thereby easing demand on other parts of the service. There are plenty of good examples of service transformation all over Scotland, but the pace of change needs to pick up, as the Auditor General reflected.

The cost pressures that health boards face are also clear. However, some, including NHS Ayrshire and Arran, have identified and made significant recurring savings that will help us in the future. The move to the three-year financial planning model, together with assistance with brokerage repayments, is helping boards to plan and manage their finances during this period of transformational change.

The amount that the NHS spends annually on drugs—I think it was £1.8 billion last year—seems to have stabilised, too. However, we cannot ignore or dismiss factors that are outwith our control and which are a real cause for concern for us all—for example, the impacts that Brexit might have on the NHS workforce and its potential to cause reduced access to medicines for some patient groups.

In her most recent report to committee, the current Auditor General said:

"Despite the growing demand from population changes and increasing costs of delivering healthcare in Scotland, patient safety and experience of hospital care continues to improve. There are examples of new and innovative ways of delivering healthcare and managing costs."

However, we all know that there is a long way to go if we are to continue to deliver a high-quality healthcare service. I know that the Scottish Government and the health secretary are committed to doing just that.

17:15

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I remind the chamber that I have a daughter who is a healthcare professional in our Scottish NHS. I thank the Labour Party for bringing the debate to the chamber, and for once again using Opposition time to debate health services. I am grateful for the opportunity to close on behalf of the Conservatives.

Monica Lennon's motion states that

"the Scottish Government is not fulfilling its promise to the people of Scotland"

on its waiting time guarantee. Speech after speech has highlighted that continual failure by the Government. Joe FitzPatrick set the tone for the Scottish Government with what I call a head-in-the-sand speech, which called on Westminster somehow to protect the NHS in Scotland. I remind Joe FitzPatrick—because he is in the Government—that health is totally devolved to this Parliament. When on earth will the SNP start accepting responsibility for the mess that it has created?

Miles Briggs rightly highlighted not just the continual failure to meet the Scottish Government's much-heralded 12-week treatment time guarantee—which was introduced in 2011 by the then Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, Nicola Sturgeon—but that it has never been met. In fact, the last quarter is now the worst on record. Edward Mountain highlighted in his speech how only 58 per cent of patients in the Highlands are hitting that 12-week guarantee and that there is now a 78-week wait for orthopaedic treatment, which is completely and utterly unacceptable for patients.

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Brian Whittle: I do not have time.

Add to that the 18-week referral time that is consistently missed, the patients who are waiting too long for crucial diagnostic testing, the more than one fifth of patients who are waiting far too long for mental health treatment, and the one third of vulnerable children who are waiting too long for mental health support. That last point was highlighted only too starkly in an evidence session with children last night for the Public Petitions Committee, at which vulnerable young children were suggesting that they have little faith in the system. Cancer waiting times show that almost one fifth of cancer referral patients wait more than two months for treatment.

Monica Lennon brought workforce planning—more accurately, the lack of workforce planning—to the table. The Scottish Government has yet to produce a comprehensive plan, despite the matter being raised consistently by Opposition members. The figure of 800 new GPs by 2029 has been given by the Scottish Government, but Audit Scotland reported to the Health and Sport Committee that the Government could not give any workings on how it had come up with that figure, or say how it relates to forward planning. When Audit Scotland did some analysis based on current trends, it reported that the most likely outcome was that we would still have a shortfall of

664 GPs in 2029. That is not workforce planning; it reeks of fumbling in the dark to fend off further scrutiny.

I say to John Mason that we have world-class healthcare professionals who require world-class facilities in order to deliver all that they are trained for, and are desperate to deliver. That is how we would retain staff. Instead, we have the growing tragedy at the Queen Elizabeth university hospital in Glasgow coupled with the debacle of the Royal hospital for sick children and young people, which is full of modern equipment but is lying empty at a cost of £1.4 million a month to the health budget. Its opening was pulled literally hours before it should have been accepting patients. Neil Findlay highlighted the continuing failure to open the children's ward at St John's hospital full time. There we see the SNP's ability to oversee NHS building projects—we see it far too clearly.

Yesterday, in the Health and Sport Committee, I said to one of the cabinet secretary's colleagues that I thought that she was being thrown under a bus. Jeane Freeman is constantly firefighting, in this chamber and before committees, dealing with crisis after crisis that is not of her making. She did not cut the number of nurse places in 2012. That was done by Nicola Sturgeon, who was the health secretary then, but Jeane Freeman is having to deal with the fallout. She did not commission the new hospitals in Glasgow and Edinburgh back in 2008—guess who the cabinet secretary was back then—but Jeane Freeman is having to answer for the flawed procurement process that has allowed inadequate ventilation and water systems to be built in two major flagship hospitals, with tragic results. She did not implement waiting time targets and treatment targets, but Jeane Freeman is being measured against those failed SNP promises. She did not implement waiting time targets and treatment targets, but Jeane Freeman is being measured against those failed SNP promises.

The reality is that it has taken four SNP cabinet secretaries to get us to this point, at which crisis is heaped upon crisis, which is constantly letting down patients and our NHS staff. However, she will be measured against the escalating crisis and her attempts to mitigate her Government's catalogue of failures over the past 12 years. I am afraid that that report card is not looking too good.

The truth is that there is a lack of innovation and of original thought from a tired Scottish Government. There is a lack of joined-up cross-portfolio thinking. Ministerial statement after ministerial statement cannot cover up the lack of progress. One would think that the SNP's priorities might lie elsewhere.

17:20

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport (Jeane Freeman): I start with at least one correction—I do not have time to correct all the misspeaking in the debate. Miles Briggs quoted the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health as saying that it would take five years before the children's ward in St John's would be open. He failed to mention that that information was from a 2016 report that referred to a timescale of three to five years. We have already corrected the Conservative news release, but they keep on saying it.

I gently suggest that Mr Mountain and Mr Briggs get together on their position on escalation. Mr Mountain despairs at escalation, but only a few short hours ago, Mr Briggs was demanding that I do precisely that for NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde.

Edward Mountain: Will the cabinet secretary give way?

Jeane Freeman: I do not have time. There have been record levels of investment in the NHS since this Government took office in 2007. Despite UK Government actions that have short-changed us by £90 million this year, we have made the right political choice to invest more than £14 billion in our health and social care services this year.

Although improvement is about much more than money, let me just say that if we had followed Tory tax plans for well-off people, we would have had £500 million less for our public services. I have to go back to 2016 for Labour health plans, because Labour has not come forward with anything else—at least not officially, although Mr Rowley made a stalwart attempt. If we had followed Labour's plans, the NHS would this year be worse off by £750 million.

The challenges that our health service faces are faced across the UK and more widely. They include changing demographics, rising demand and citizens rightly wanting more care closer to their homes. That is why we have a waiting times plan. It is why we have increased training places across a number of professions, including medicine, nursing, allied health professionals and more, and it is why we have the major transformational plan for health and social care integration, to which Mr Coffey rightly referred.

We are seeing improvement. I have to say again that our A and E service has continued to be the best performing A and E in the UK for four years. Vacancy rates in nursing are half those in England. In cancer, we are meeting the 31-day waiting time target. I ask members, please, to get that right. It is wrong and unfair, on those who work so hard to deliver that, to ignore it in order to make a political point. We are seeing improvement

in performance against the 62-day target, too, and the specialist training places fill rate is at its highest so far.

All those numbers matter, because they all reflect the hard work of our staff. If we really want to thank them, let us paint a fair picture of what they are achieving.

The Conservative amendment wants 11 per cent investment in general practice services. We call that service primary care. We agree—that level of investment in general practice is what we are working towards, through investment in allied health professionals in pharmacy and optometry, which is exactly what our patients want.

However, if we care about services and our support for the NHS now and in the future, let us not pretend that Brexit in any form is anything other than a threat. There is no Brexit that will work for the NHS. It threatens more than staff recruitment, access to medicines and vital health research: it threatens the NHS as a public service that is free at the point of need.

The SNP has no intention of allowing bits of Scotland's NHS to be sold off to the private sector, as we see happening in England, or in allowing any part of our NHS to produce charge lists for new hips, new knees and cataract operations, which is what Mr Briggs's party presides over south of the border. Nor will we see any part of our NHS being traded away in a deal. That is why we need NHS protection legislation—

Brian Whittle: You are in charge.

Jeane Freeman: I say to Mr Whittle that we need protection against the UK Government, because what I have said is precisely what it is trying to do.

Brian Whittle: You are in charge.

Jeane Freeman: We are not in charge of trade, and we are not in charge of immigration. Mr Whittle's party is in charge of those things south of the border. He can shout at me as much as he likes, but he cannot deny his party's culpability and responsibility. It should take ownership of that.

There should be not a single party in the chamber that claims to represent the people of Scotland that does not support our demand for NHS protection legislation. Let us see, when the vote comes, how many of them really believe that our NHS should be a public service free at the point of need and that we should truly thank and applaud the staff of the NHS and paint a fair picture of everything that they are achieving.

17:25

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): This has been an excellent debate on the most

important subject for the people of Scotland: investment in our NHS. Understandably, it has been a passionate and occasionally boisterous debate—I am looking at the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport—but contributions were mostly insightful, knowledgeable and strongly held.

Waiting times are always a difficult matter. When a patient is suffering from an illness or an injury—I am sure that the cabinet secretary will want to listen to this—any time between cause or diagnosis and treatment is unwanted. It prolongs the pain, as well as adding additional stress to mental and physical wellbeing.

Of course, the debate is not about numbers on a spreadsheet; it is about the conditions that are faced by staff. Let us, across the chamber, thank our NHS staff for all the hard work that they are doing on the front line. *[Applause.]*

The debate is also about patients in our hospitals and communities. As my colleagues Monica Lennon, Mary Fee and Neil Findlay have made clear in their excellent speeches, NHS staff in Scotland have been underpaid, undervalued and underresourced, and patients have been feeling the pain of that, with A and E targets being missed, planned operations being cancelled, bed days being lost to delayed discharge and seven out of eight key targets missed for two years, according to Audit Scotland.

Like every member in the Parliament, I am passionate about the NHS. It is not just another issue, another debate or another headline. Like many members, I have family and personal connections with the service. My brother-in-law is a Highland mental health nurse, my neighbour is a midwife and a close friend is a nurse at an Edinburgh general practice.

My political hero—and I am not embarrassed about this—is Nye Bevan, the architect of the NHS. More than three score and 10 years ago, the first NHS patient, Sylvia Beckingham, was admitted to hospital to be treated—successfully—for a liver condition. She was patient alpha—the first ever patient treated by the NHS. It was a new service, truly national and free at the point of use, where the staff checked your pulse, not your purse. Many members have illustrated that perfectly this afternoon, by quoting dissatisfied constituents who have felt let down by the system.

That system allowed Patient Rights (Scotland) Act 2011—a good piece of legislation—to be put in place, guaranteeing a 12-week treatment time. That allowed hospitals and boards to manage expectations, and it allowed patients to have a known timeframe. We cannot forget, however, that waiting times are not just simple facts and figures. Behind the delays in getting an operation, there is often a person with anxieties, pain and stress.

The theme of this timely Labour debate has been investment in our NHS, long-term planning and the transformational delivery of health and social care, but members should not just take my word for it. Professor Sir Harry Burns told the Health and Sport Committee—if members care to listen—that the NHS needed complete “system change”. Dr Peter Bennie, former chair of the BMA’s Scottish council, said that the NHS is “stretched ... to breaking point”. A Royal College of Nursing Scotland survey showed that nine out of 10 nurses say that their workload has got much worse.

I close by reminding members that Nye Bevan famously said:

“The NHS will last as long as there’s folk with faith left to fight for it.”

At decision time, let us vote to put our faith in the front-line NHS staff across Scotland.

Business Motions

17:29

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-19950, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Tuesday 26 November 2019

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Scotland as a Science Nation

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members’ Business

Wednesday 27 November 2019

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
Communities and Local Government;
Social Security and Older People

followed by Scottish Liberal Democrat Party Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members’ Business

Thursday 28 November 2019

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister’s Questions

followed by Members’ Business

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
Finance, Economy and Fair Work

followed by Ministerial Statement: Final Report of the Women in Agriculture Taskforce

followed by Stage 1 Debate: Scottish Elections (Franchise and Representation) Bill

followed by Financial Resolution: Scottish Elections (Franchise and Representation) Bill

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 3 December 2019

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Committee Announcements

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 4 December 2019

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions:
Environment, Climate Change and Land
Reform;
Rural Economy

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 5 December 2019

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

followed by Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Portfolio Questions:
Transport, Infrastructure and
Connectivity

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

(b) that, for the purposes of Portfolio Questions in the week beginning 25 November 2019, in rule 13.7.3, after the word "except" the words "to the extent to which the Presiding Officer considers that the questions are on the same or similar subject matter or" are inserted.—[*Graeme Dey*]

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motions S5M-19951 and S5M-19952, in the name of Graeme Dey, on the stage 1 timetable for two bills, and business motions S5M-19953 and S5M-19954, in the name of Graeme Dey, on the stage 2 timetable for two bills.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Agriculture (Retained EU Law and Data) (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 27 March 2020.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Protection of Workers (Retail and Age-restricted Goods and Services) (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 29 May 2020.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Referendums (Scotland) Bill at stage 2 be completed by 6 December 2019.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the UEFA European Championship (Scotland) Bill at stage 2 be completed by 6 December 2019.—[*Graeme Dey*]

Motions agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motion

17:30

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The next item of business is consideration of a Parliamentary Bureau motion. I call Graeme Dey to move motion S5M-19955, on committee membership.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that Daniel Johnson be appointed to replace Monica Lennon as a member of the Solicitors in the Supreme Courts of Scotland (Amendment) Bill Committee.

Decision Time

17:30

The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh): The question is, that amendment S5M-19939.3, in the name of Shirley-Anne Somerville, which seeks to amend motion S5M-19939, in the name of Richard Leonard, on universal credit, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)

Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 65, Against 46, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The question is, that amendment S5M-19939.2, in the name of Michelle

Ballantyne, which seeks to amend motion S5M-19939, in the name of Richard Leonard, on universal credit, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 24, Against 87, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The question is, that motion S5M-19939, in the name of Richard Leonard, on universal credit, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)

Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)

Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 65, Against 46, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that universal credit, the two-child limit and the benefits cap should be scrapped in Scotland and across the UK, alongside the abhorrent 'rape clause', the benefit sanctions regime and the 'bedroom tax'; notes estimates that UK Government social security spending will reduce by £3.7 billion by next year, and believes that an independent Scotland with full powers over social security can ensure that Scotland has a social security system that is built with the people of Scotland to meet their needs.

The Presiding Officer: The question is, that amendment S5M-19940.2, in the name of Jeane Freeman, which seeks to amend motion S5M-19940, in the name of Monica Lennon, on investing in Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 65, Against 46, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S5M-19940.1, in the name of Miles Briggs, which seeks to amend motion S5M-19940, in the name of Monica Lennon, on investing in Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)

Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Harris, Alison (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)

Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 51, Against 59, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S5M-19940, in the name of Monica Lennon, on investing in Scotland, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Arthur, Tom (Renfrewshire South) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Cole-Hamilton, Alex (Edinburgh Western) (LD)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Denham, Ash (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Cowdenbeath) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)

Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Forbes, Kate (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Freeman, Jeane (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gilruth, Jenny (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)
 Gougeon, Mairi (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Greer, Ross (West Scotland) (Green)
 Harper, Emma (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Haughey, Clare (Rutherglen) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 MacGregor, Fulton (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 Mackay, Rona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 Macpherson, Ben (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (SNP)
 Maguire, Ruth (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Martin, Gillian (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (Ind)
 McMillan, Stuart (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Ross, Gail (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Dunfermline) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Todd, Maree (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Wightman, Andy (Lothian) (Green)
 Wishart, Beatrice (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow Pollok) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Balfour, Jeremy (Lothian) (Con)
 Ballantyne, Michelle (South Scotland) (Con)
 Bowman, Bill (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Briggs, Miles (Lothian) (Con)
 Burnett, Alexander (Aberdeenshire West) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (Eastwood) (Con)
 Chapman, Peter (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Corry, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Edinburgh Central) (Con)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Golden, Maurice (West Scotland) (Con)

Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Greene, Jamie (West Scotland) (Con)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Hamilton, Rachael (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Johnson, Daniel (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)
 Halcro Johnston, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Kerr, Liam (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Lennon, Monica (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Leonard, Richard (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Lindhurst, Gordon (Lothian) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Mason, Tom (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mountain, Edward (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Sarwar, Anas (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Simpson, Graham (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smyth, Colin (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Stewart, Alexander (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Tomkins, Adam (Glasgow) (Con)
 Whittle, Brian (South Scotland) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 69, Against 41, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament thanks NHS staff for their dedication and hard work as they care for the people of Scotland; welcomes the work being taken forward by the Ministerial working group to further promote and encourage a positive and caring workplace culture; believes that sustained investment through plans for waiting times improvements can support boards to better deliver for their patients; further believes that such investment, reform and planning is necessary as too many patients are waiting too long for treatment; understands that, in 2019-20, NHS Scotland will be £758 million better off because it has received better than real-terms increases since the beginning of the current parliamentary session; calls for the incoming UK Government to pass, as a matter of urgency, NHS protection legislation to absolutely exempt the NHS from any future trade deals, and to provide a veto over such deals to the devolved legislatures; notes that any form of Brexit could have a potentially devastating impact on health and care services; considers that Brexit will damage the economy and the ability to attract specialist staff for years to come, undermining the sustainability of the health service; notes that a focus on addressing health inequalities and prevention of ill health is essential for the long-term wellbeing of the people of Scotland, and believes that the future sustainability of the NHS is reliant on more investment, including in communities, better long-term planning and working with partners in local government for a greater pace of transformational delivery of health and social care that is fit for the 21st century.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S5M-19955, in the name of Graeme Dey, on committee membership, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that Daniel Johnson be appointed to replace Monica Lennon as a member of the Solicitors in the Supreme Courts of Scotland (Amendment) Bill Committee.

International Year of the Periodic Table

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-18139, in the name of Iain Gray, on the international year of the periodic table. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament acknowledges that 2019 has been designated by UNESCO as the International Year of the Periodic Table (IYPT) in tandem with the 150th anniversary of the Mendeleev periodic table; understands that the periodic table is an intrinsic tool to the study and practice of science and is regarded as one of human history's greatest advancements; commends the work of the Royal Society of Chemistry and others to promote IYPT and inspire the next generation of innovators; celebrates Scotland's rich scientific history and the impact that it has had across the world, and recognises a need to continue to support scientific research, STEM education, international collaboration, skills development and sustainability in order to continue Scotland's legacy as a world leader in science.

17:38

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): I am delighted to lead this debate on the international year of the periodic table, in which we celebrate the 150th anniversary of Mendeleev's first real periodic table as we know it today, and we mark science in the Parliament day, which has been taking place across the road in Dynamic Earth.

Any of the chemistry teachers with whom I worked decades ago when I was a physics teacher would probably think it a little ironic that I am bringing this debate to the Parliament, because, with all the hubris of the young, I used to cheerfully disparage chemistry as a discipline, arguing that it was little more than footnotes to physics or, worse, a kind of cookery with recipes—members should hear what I used to say about biology.

Now, with the wisdom of age, I know that I was talking rubbish then, and the periodic table is the central proof of that, because it represented a scientific revolution—in the sense that, after the philosopher Thomas Kuhn, we know that natural science progresses. After all, for centuries science had operated on the idea of four elements—air, earth, fire and water—which had not changed since Aristotle.

When Mendeleev built on the work of Priestley, La Voisier and our own Joseph Black and John Newlands to publish, in 1869, a new table of the known elements, according to atomic weight and valence, it was the final transition from the age of alchemy to the age of chemistry, a scientific revolution as dramatic as Copernican astronomy,

Newton's mechanics or Einstein's relativity. Like so many of those discoveries, it had an element of intuitive insight about it; Mendeleev claimed to have dreamed the table with only one correction to be made. Its structure apparently reflected his love of playing patience with cards.

The table is a genuine scientific paradigm, because it allows predictions to be made, in the first case, of then undiscovered elements. Mendeleev himself used it to predict the existence and properties of germanium, gallium and scandium, although, once again, he reached for his mystical side and gave them names from Sanskrit.

Others followed in those footsteps, including Scot Sir William Ramsay, who predicted and then discovered the noble gases, for which he received the Nobel prize in 1902. Newer elements have since been created in the lab, with the most recent, oganesson, being confirmed only in 2016.

Although the periodic table has had many representations—as a spiral, a circle, a cube or a cylinder—it is universal and fundamental. As the American science writer Sam Kean put it:

"Everywhere in the universe, the periodic table has the same basic structure. Even if an alien civilization's table weren't plotted out in the castle-with-turrets shape we humans favour, their spiral or pyramidal or whatever-shaped periodic table would naturally pause after 118 elements."

That includes the world's oldest surviving periodic table, which was discovered not so long ago in the chemistry department at the University of St Andrews, the table of light that is being projected as we speak—I hope—on to the University of Edinburgh's David Hume tower, just up the road, or indeed the macramé interpretation of the periodic table that was displayed by the Royal Society of Edinburgh over the summer. That comprised over 200,000 knots, which represented the scarcity and vulnerability of the elements, as well as their properties. It was not quite chemistry through interpretative dance, but chemistry through crochet.

The periodic table is a great icon, a powerful tool and a symbol, not just of the structure of nature, but of our capacity to describe the universe in which we live. Yet if it is to be of more than historical interest, we must face serious challenges. High-quality education in chemistry and other science, technology, engineering and maths subjects, accessible to as many as possible, is vital to ensure that future generations can stand on the shoulders of the giants of Scottish chemistry such as Black and Ramsay and move the science on.

However, chemistry is precisely one of those subjects that is badly impacted by the squeeze on

the number of subjects that pupils can take in the senior phase of school, a contraction that narrows the curriculum. It has also suffered from a shortage of teachers who are qualified and willing to teach the next generation of chemists. We cannot allow that to continue if we care about science.

Meanwhile, many of the rarest elements have become the most critical to our daily lives in devices such as mobile phones or electric cars. Natural sources of at least six of the elements in mobile phones are set to run out in 100 years or so, while 82 per cent of households are not even thinking about recycling old electronic devices such as phones. Meanwhile, 60 per cent of the world's supply of cobalt, which is used in batteries, comes from the Democratic Republic of Congo, where men, women, and children as young as six work and die in unspeakable conditions to mine it for 50p a day.

What a tragedy it would be if our generation failed to educate the successors to those pioneers of the periodic table, or instead of discovering the elements let some of them disappear from the earth, enslaving thousands on the way. For 150 years, the periodic table has been a force for good and an instrument of knowledge, powering human progress. Let us do what we have to, to make sure that it remains so for the next 150 years.

17:45

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): I do not know what my chemistry teacher would have said about me, but it probably would not be very flattering. In fact, Bert Seath, for it was he, whenever an experiment was taking place in the lab, used to leave the room, stand just outside the door and peer inside, so afraid was he of the potential results. That was entirely attributable to the students and not to any deficiencies in his teaching. Poor Bert had previously been blown up in an experiment and did not want to repeat that.

Iain Gray touched on an important point in relation to science. When we talk about subjects such as this, they do not stand alone from moral and social issues. Mr Gray was entirely right to talk about the conditions in countries such as Congo, which we depend on for much of our technology. Lithium, too, is extracted in appalling conditions yet electric cars depend on it and will continue to do so unless we change the technology.

The debate has been an excellent opportunity for my two interns, Claire Brigden and Anna Coleman, who this morning I asked to prepare some speaking notes. They have limited scientific knowledge so, as always, it was interesting to see

how much they could discover in a short space of time.

I thank Iain Gray for providing the opportunity to discuss the periodic table. It is one of those visual things that sticks in people's memory from their education. Even if the detail escapes them, the shape will stick with them. It is a rich tool for teaching and for remembering. To me as a mathematician—a very humble and poor one, I hasten to add—the periodic table is one of the great things in chemistry, because its symmetry and pattern mean that it lends itself to mathematicians in particular.

Like Iain Gray, my interns identified Sir William Ramsay and found that he is described as one of the greatest chemical discoverers of the time. I have always thought that it was a particularly notable achievement for someone, back in 1894, to discover a chemically inert gas, because how could it be detected when it does not interact with anything? My interns tell me that, when he named it argon, he did so because that is the Greek word for lazy, and as a gas it does not have any particularly notable chemical properties. Of course, having discovered one noble gas, he went on to discover another three, which was absolutely excellent.

That is an example of Scotland being a leader in scientific discovery. Of course, Iain Gray correctly identified that that did not come out of nowhere. It happened because we had a well-educated population who took an interest in philosophical and scientific matters. We are only about 500m away from the memorial to David Hume in the old Calton cemetery at the top of the hill next to the Scottish Government building. That celebrates one part of our achievement. At the end of George Street, we have a new statue to Maxwell. We celebrate our achievements.

However, we must have a new bank of highly skilled, STEM-literate employees, and they must be men and women. If we fail to engage the females of our race, we miss out on 50 per cent of the terrific intellect that is out there.

The periodic table gives us a universal language to talk about elements and molecules, and helps us to catalyse and synthesize scientific knowledge and excellence. Of course, it is used around the world and promotes joint progress, because we have a shared model, and collaboration will always be of value in science.

I very much welcome the opportunity to recognise the momentous contribution of the periodic table and acknowledge its continuing importance in scientific development and education.

I must say that, in the science wing of the school that I attended, my favourite thing was always the

Van de Graaff generator, which we could use to charge ourselves up to 1 million volts, and then go and discharge on other people—to their great shock and alarm. However, I also remember the periodic table, which is immensely valuable to us and will be to others.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am not going to comment.

17:51

Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con): I thank Iain Gray for bringing the debate to the chamber and allowing me the luxury of being a complete nerd. I am so disappointed and surprised that the chamber has emptied just because we are speaking about the periodic table.

I remind the chamber that, a long, long time ago, I was an industrial chemist. I love that kind of chemistry, which is about how elements are formed and how we are all children of the stars. Every element that forms in the world around us, everything that we see and everything that has ever been, or will be, was formed at the centre of giant stars.

Clouds of hydrogen gas coalesce under the pressure of gravity until that ball of gas is so massive that it spontaneously bursts into life as a nuclear fusion reaction, burning hydrogen as fuel. As hydrogen is burned, helium is formed, giving off heat at more than 5,000°C. The star is now hot enough to fuse helium into carbon, and when that continued fusion produces iron, the star's life ends. At that point, the chemical reaction that has been pushing out against gravity stops, and supergravity causes the star to implode.

That is called a supernova, and it will shine brighter than any galaxy for a short time. It is that explosion—that extreme gravity and heat—that fuses other elements together to form the heavier elements of the periodic table such as gold, lead and platinum, as well as all sorts of exotic elements. For those members who are wearing any kind of precious metals, is it not amazing to think that the trinkets that you are wearing began life at the centre of an exploding star?

The periodic table—also known as the periodic table of elements—is a tabular display of the chemical elements, which it arranges by atomic number, electron configuration, and recurring chemical properties. The structure of the table shows periodic trends. The seven rows of the table are called periods, with metals on the left and non-metals on the right. The columns are called groups and contain elements with similar chemical behaviours.

Column 1, for example, houses hydrogen and the alkali metals. Those alkali metals—elements

such as lithium, sodium and potassium—are extremely reactive, because they have one electron in their outer valence shell, which has a relatively weak bond with its positively charged nucleus. I knew that you knew that, Presiding Officer. It is not difficult to excite that outer negatively charged electron to leave its host, and, when it does, it does so quite energetically.

I do not know whether members have ever had the opportunity to drop a piece of potassium into water, but it is absolutely worth a go. Sodium street lights basically just pass electricity through sodium, exciting the outer electron to leave its host and give off energy in the form of light. At the other end of the spectrum, the elements with valence shells that are almost full, such as fluorine, chlorine, bromine and iodine, do exactly the opposite, because they are trying to fill their almost full shells. Along comes a hydrogen atom with its one electron and—boom!—they cuddle up and form elements such as hydrogen chloride, which in its aqueous form is hydrochloric acid. That is an exothermic reaction—it gives off heat. If you ever want to impress your kids or grandkids, drop some bicarbonate of soda into some vinegar in a glass. It effervesces, and you can feel the heat.

Column 8 has the inert or halogen gases, with full valence shells, such as helium, neon, argon and krypton, which I hear is a personal favourite of Superman.

Today there are 118 known elements, most of which are found in nature. However, as Iain Gray has already said, some synthetic elements are built in the lab. On 30 December 2015, the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry announced that it had officially recognised elements with the atomic numbers 115, 117 and 118. Of those, oganesson is the heaviest. Those elements are synthesised by slamming lighter nuclei into each other and tracking the decay of the superheavyweight elements that are subsequently produced. The new elements exist for only a fraction of a second, but that is sufficient for them to be given official recognition.

When Russian chemistry professor Dmitri Mendeleev first produced a version of the periodic table in 1869, he was clever enough to recognise that he must leave spaces for elements that were yet to be discovered. He was proved right. “So how many elements could there possibly be?”, I hear you cry, Presiding Officer. I am glad that you asked.

The Bohr model exhibits difficulty for atoms with atomic numbers greater than 137, as elements with those atomic numbers would require the outer valence electrons to travel faster than the speed of light, which, according to Einstein’s special theory of relativity, is impossible. However, it is now

hypothesised that the outer electrons might not need to circumnavigate the nucleus but need merely to oscillate. That opens up a whole new series of possibilities.

Presiding Officer, I have not had the chance to talk about Ernest Rutherford’s work in splitting the atom or Henry Moseley’s work with X-ray spectroscopy. What I am saying is that chemistry and other STEM subjects are far from being dry and uninteresting. On the contrary, studying them opens up the universe. As Iain Gray’s motion says, let us invest in STEM subjects and ensure that Scotland’s young minds continue to be at the forefront of discovery.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Well, well, well. A whole new Brian Whittle has appeared before us. He was more animated than I have ever seen him before—and that is saying something.

17:57

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): This will just be the same old Liam McArthur, Presiding Officer. I fear that, after that contribution, my speech will represent a handbrake turn.

I thank Iain Gray for securing this debate on an achievement that is among the most significant in science, and for introducing us to the concept of chemistry through crochet. Surely that craze will sweep the nation from here on in. I also thank the father of my colleague Alex Cole-Hamilton, David, for providing me with the wherewithal to contribute to this debate.

Iain Gray started by reflecting on what some of his former teaching colleagues might have thought of him bringing this debate to the Parliament. I can only hazard a guess that there would have been a state of mild shock among all the science staff in Kirkwall grammar school circa 1985 at the notion that I would participate in this debate.

Since Mendeleev ordered the first elements into his table 150 years ago, the periodic table has evolved into a resource that has furthered our understanding of the world around us probably more than even he could have imagined. For many of us, it was probably part of the wallpaper in science classrooms throughout the country. However, in reality, the periodic table serves as the underpinning of modern-day scientific research and offers clues about how our world might best function.

Let us consider something as simple as our everyday mobile phones. The smartphones that we rely on are home to 31 elements—do not ask me to name any of them off by heart. When we upgrade our phones, we effectively put those elements in our old phones to waste. Those phones either get stowed away in a drawer at

home where the elements cannot be recovered, or they are handed in, and they often end up in third world countries where they are mined using strong acid to retrieve the elements.

Many of those elements are already fast running out, including small earth elements such as terbium. However, extraction can have damaging environmental impacts, including water, air and soil pollution. We should recognise that and ensure that the United Kingdom takes the lead in more ethical recycling in the interests of our environment and because of our continuing need for those naturally occurring, but finite, elements.

Lithium batteries are other everyday items that we would do well to appreciate more and waste less. As Stewart Stevenson reminded us, they are fundamental to electric vehicles and, as Scotland rightly sets ambitious targets for massively increasing electric car use, with Orkney leading the way, of course, the demand for lithium ion batteries is likely to grow exponentially. As well as lithium, they contain valuable materials such as cobalt, nickel and manganese. Although there is enough lithium for all the cars that we will need to manufacture, it needs to be recycled and, as of yet, we still do not have an efficient system for doing that. In addition, cobalt mainly comes from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where it is often mined, as Iain Gray described, in dreadful conditions and by children. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has not yet deemed cobalt ores as conflict minerals, but many argue that it should do so and it is hard to disagree with that.

Technology can undoubtedly help us meet the challenging climate change ambitions that we have set but, in turn, we need to ensure that we act sustainably and responsibly in the use of that technology and the elements that underpin it. In these days of fast-paced change, it is strangely reassuring to think that something that was created 150 years ago is still the template that helps to shape our present and, indeed, our future. It is therefore absolutely right that we take time to recognise the significance of the periodic table, the debt that we owe Dmitri Mendeleev and, to a slightly lesser extent, the debt that we owe Iain Gray for providing us an opportunity to put that gratitude on the record this evening. Again, I thank Iain Gray and look forward to the remainder of the debate.

18:01

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I, too, congratulate Iain Gray on securing time for this debate.

I have to confess that I did not know that this year had been designated by UNESCO as the

international year of the periodic table. However, I am delighted that that is the case, because we have been treated to many fascinating speeches. Mine will be considerably more pedestrian, but I now have the names of colleagues who I think would be particularly useful in the pub quiz team.

When thinking about the debate this morning, I was instantly taken back to my school days and the science classroom, with the colourful periodic table emblazoned across the wall—I had to print off a copy of the periodic table just to remind myself of what I used to look at. I am not for a minute suggesting that my interest was more in the periodic table than in what my science teacher was trying to teach me, but I spent many an afternoon reciting and remembering as many elements as I could. I tried my best but could not remember them all, and certainly not in the right order.

I was clearly a rookie, but not so Tom Lehrer—I wondered who would be the first to mention him, so I am disappointed that my colleagues have not done so. Tom Lehrer is the American singer from the 1960s who used to recite the periodic table to the music of Gilbert and Sullivan. Members will be pleased to hear that I am not proposing to do that tonight, but I invite members to watch his performance on YouTube. I think that chemistry students would find it a wonderful and amusing learning tool.

We could have a whole other debate about our favourite element in the periodic table—I am worried that Brian Whittle might take me up on that—but I will mention one briefly. Gold is almost immune to corrosion and is ductile, malleable and a conductor of electricity, and it does not get oxidised. It is a sign of wealth and beauty, and it has been central to lots of mythologies. The Incas referred to gold as the tears of the sun, while, in “The Odyssey”, Homer mentioned gold as the glory of the immortals. All I will say is that Christmas is coming, so we could do worse than shop for some Au—number 79 in the periodic table.

I turn to the more serious points that Iain Gray raised and consideration of the way in which we support STEM education. Fewer young people take chemistry in the senior phase of school. Indeed, there seems to be a narrowing of subject choice in STEM subjects because of changes to the curriculum. That has an impact right through the system, because if fewer candidates move from the broad general education phase to the senior phase, if fewer candidates progress into STEM degree programmes and if we do not have enough STEM teachers, we have a systemic problem. I know that the Parliament’s Education and Skills Committee has called for an independent review of those challenges and I

hope that the Government will urgently arrange such a review.

As well as agreeing that STEM subjects should be available and encouraged throughout the learning journey, I think that we can all agree that STEM subjects need to be taught early. Some time ago, I visited a wonderful science hub—a joint venture between West Dunbartonshire Council and the Glasgow Science Centre—at St Patrick's primary school in Dumbarton. The partners have redesigned the learning space and made it fun, done some professional learning for teachers and encouraged the young people—pupils as young as primary 1—to be inquisitive. The children are so engaged—it is wonderful to see. As one put it, "It's more exciting than the classroom." Those young people are the scientists and innovators of the future. We need more of that in every primary school, and we need to support chemistry and other science subjects in every school across Scotland.

I congratulate the periodic table on its 150th anniversary and Iain Gray on bringing this very interesting debate to the chamber.

18:05

The Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science (Richard Lochhead): I, too, welcome the debate to celebrate the international year of the periodic table. I thank Iain Gray for bringing the debate to the chamber and for the powerful points that he made in his opening speech. The debate gives us all an opportunity not just to talk about the periodic table but to highlight Scotland's culture of science, discovery and invention.

Although I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate on behalf of the Scottish Government, the timing of the debate means that we are absent from the science and the Parliament event that is taking place across the road at Dynamic Earth. The event celebrates the achievements of young people, particularly those who have won prizes for outstanding performance in higher and advanced higher STEM subjects. As Brian Whittle said, there are not a huge number of MSPs in the chamber, but I hope that that is because many MSPs are at the reception in Dynamic Earth. I was supposed to be speaking there now, but I am delighted to be here, as the subject is an important one to discuss in Parliament.

The annual event that is taking place across the road, which is organised by the Royal Society of Chemistry, provides a good opportunity for the science sector to come together with MSPs to discuss the issues that it is facing. We should welcome the RSC's work in the area and the leading role that it has taken in this year's activities

to mark 2019 as UNESCO's international year of the periodic table. I particularly welcome the RSC's work to highlight the issues around the sustainability of the key elements that Iain Gray, Liam McArthur and others mentioned, which are found in smartphones, laptops, tablets and the rechargeable batteries that those devices depend on. They are rare minerals and there are many international debates on their sustainability.

Jackie Baillie mentioned gold. We should also mention strontium—number 38 in the periodic table—because it has a particular connection with Scotland, being named after Strontian in Lochaber. It was near there in 1790 that Adair Crawford and William Cruikshank discovered the mineral strontianite, from which strontium was later isolated, so there is a direct Scottish connection with the periodic table.

Dmitri Mendeleev's formulation of the periodic table back in 1869, which we are celebrating today, was a big story in the news just a few weeks ago, with a headline that said, "Periodic Table Found During Routine Cleaning at Scottish University May Be World's Oldest". The chart, which was believed to date back to 1885—only 16 years after Mendeleev put the periodic table together—was unearthed from a storage room in a chemistry building at the University of St Andrews.

I will touch on a number of the issues that members mentioned in the debate. First, if we are trying to inspire people to study chemistry and follow it as a career, it is important that we highlight the sector's importance to the Scottish economy. We are proud of Scotland's large, strong and successful chemical sector, which has an annual turnover of £3.1 billion and employs 11,000 people. It also has an impressive history of being one of the country's largest manufacturing exporters, with an estimated value of approximately £5.46 billion in 2017. It accounts for 6.7 per cent of Scotland's total exports. R and D expenditure on chemicals, chemical products and pharmaceuticals totalled £178.8 million in 2017, which was 14.3 per cent of the overall total for Scotland. That highlights the economic importance of the chemicals sector.

We should also remember that Scotland's universities outperform those in the rest of the UK when it comes to world-leading and internationally excellent research in chemistry.

Importantly, if we are trying to attract young people into chemistry, we should get the message out to them that chemistry jobs in Scotland are high-quality jobs, with salaries averaging £47,000 a year.

Iain Gray, Jackie Baillie and other members spoke of the importance of ensuring that the right courses are available, that people are studying

those courses and that we have the teacher numbers. It is not all doom and gloom: we currently have the second highest number of chemistry teachers in 10 years, which is good news.

Chemistry higher pass rates have been stable since 2016. Between 2014 and 2019, there was only a 0.8 per cent change in those rates, compared with a 4.5 per cent change for STEM subjects overall, so chemistry is quite stable. In 2017-18, there were 530 full-time equivalent entrants studying chemistry at first degree level in Scottish higher education institutions. On Stewart Stevenson's point about the gender split in relation to those studying chemistry, it is important to note that there was a pretty even split between male and female university entrants, so the gender balance seems to be improving.

As well as encouraging people to study chemistry, we are trying to encourage more people to become chemistry teachers. We approved 107 STEM career change bursaries in 2018-19, against our target of 100. We are offering more of those bursaries this year to attract more people into teaching STEM subjects, including chemistry, in our schools.

A third more full-time equivalent students are on engineering, science and maths courses in colleges than was the case in 2006-07.

Finally, 41 per cent of all modern apprenticeship starts in 2018-19 were in STEM frameworks.

With regard to the STEM strategy, I take on board the importance of attracting both genders to the study of STEM subjects at school, college or university, and to taking on apprenticeships in that area.

The issues raised in the debate are important and, as part of our five-year strategy, we will take them on board, alongside issues that were highlighted in the Education and Skills Committee's recent report on STEM.

We have more opportunities in the future to celebrate STEM subjects, including chemistry. It is really important that we take advantage of the 26th conference of the parties, or COP26, which will take place in Glasgow next year. There will be 30,000 delegates at that important climate change event, including hundreds of political and state leaders from around the world, so we must use that platform to promote Scotland's science sector, STEM subjects and our amazing science heritage.

Our rich history of discovery and invention, coupled with our track record of research excellence, continues to play a major part in Scotland being recognised as a science nation. In the coming days, we will have another opportunity to debate that in Parliament.

I thank Iain Gray for giving us another opportunity to celebrate all that by securing today's debate.

Meeting closed at 18:13.

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