

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 4 May 2000

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 4 May 2000

[THE PRESIDING OFFICER *opened the meeting at 09:30*]

Discipline in Schools

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): Good morning. Our first item of business is the Scottish Conservative and Unionist party debate on motion S1M-792, in the name of Mr Brian Monteith, on discipline in schools and amendments to that motion.

09:31

Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): It is now a year since we were elected and I am sure that most members accept that, although the public continue to support the Parliament, they are less enthusiastic about its overall performance.

This is the first Scottish Parliament for nearly 300 years. As we all go through a steep learning curve, some errors of judgment should be expected. One such error is raising public expectations too high. Instilling a belief that we can legislate away our problems is a misunderstanding that we must continue to suppress.

For example, we have an education bill that purports to legislate for better standards in schools. However, if we are honest with ourselves, we must acknowledge that the bill itself cannot deliver higher standards; it is the teaching profession that must achieve those standards for us—the parents—and, more important, for our children. We should look to the McCrone committee, not the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Bill, to raise the morale of the teaching profession. Furthermore, we must tackle the rising tide of indiscipline in our schools.

Teachers are leaving the profession—some say in droves. Although it is right that the bill should tackle incompetent teachers, Carol Fox of the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers has said:

“Never mind disciplinary procedures for incompetent teachers—what about statutory disciplinary procedures for pupils backed up by referrals to the Children's panel system or courts?”

And Carol Fox was previously a social worker.

I do not know of any head teachers who use exclusions lightly—and the figures bear that impression out. In 1996-97 and 1997-98, before

the Government introduced its target reduction of 30 per cent by 2003, exclusions accounted for only 0.57 and 0.53 of the school population in Edinburgh. It is our contention that introducing target reductions for exclusions—or what, in my day, were called expulsions—will result in more violence against teachers and pupils and greater disruption of pupils, with a consequent lowering of morale for the teaching profession, which can only affect standards.

If we examine the most recent available statistics—for 1998-99—we find that a total of 187 working days were lost by teachers as a result of violence in classrooms. Such violence includes not only physical violence, but verbal abuse, which can often be highly threatening. There were 1,388 recorded incidents against teachers and 517 against ancillary workers such as dinner ladies and jannies. However, not everyone is prepared to believe even the Government's statistics, and it is not yet possible to compare figures over the years. That said, the anecdotal evidence suggests that violence is rising.

What do some of the experts say? Glasgow teacher Hugh Reilly, a columnist and teacher known to many, has said:

“It will become more difficult to exclude them if they misbehave. When inevitably exam results decline, the finger of blame will deservedly point to those responsible, i.e. the teachers.”

What can we expect from the Government? Hugh Reilly continues:

“Sam Galbraith prattles on about the child being at the centre of everything and I have lived through the ‘every child is special’ guff dropped on me from high.”

Yet

“the herd of decent kids who dominate every school, even the so-called sink schools, are treated as nonentities.”

He was appealing for more concern to be shown for pupils who behave.

Last year, in a report to the City of Edinburgh Council, the education director said:

“Circular 2/98 has prompted a change in practice in exclusion from school, moving away from the ability to use informal exclusions. It is expected, therefore, with the loss of the informal exclusions as an available sanction, that there will, inevitably, be an increase in the numbers of formal exclusions from session 1998/99.”

Why are exclusions used? As I have said, they are used sparingly. This example was given at a recent conference.

“A boy was found trying to set light to a Chemistry bench with a cigarette lighter. When challenged he threatened to burn the teacher and became verbally abusive. After school on the same day the boy hung around with a group of friends and made rude and obscene gestures to the teacher. These matters were reported and the boy was eventually excluded.”

Note the “eventually”.

“However management were immediately concerned to work out strategies to enable this boy to return to school. They were less concerned about the protests of the teacher who was made to feel neurotic and inadequate. Finally following NASUWT intervention agreement was reached that this child would not return to that chemistry class. But the problem has not been solved. It has merely been moved around and another teacher may face more serious harm next time.”

In dealing with the issue, the focus was on the pupil and the concern was the exclusion statistics. What about the teacher? What about the other pupils? What about the message sent to the whole school about behaviour and punishment?

It is not as if the Government is not trying. It is, for instance, spending lots of money, because we know that it is resources that really make a difference—don't we? The Government has spent an amazing £95 million. Peter Peacock may not recognise that figure, because it is probably slightly bigger than his brief will tell him, so let me explain.

In a press release in January 1999, Helen Liddell announced £23 million to combat exclusion. Not content with that—after all, an election was coming up—she announced, in February 1999, £26 million to combat exclusion. The election being over, in September 1999 Sam Galbraith announced £23 million to combat exclusion—the press release headline said the money was “additional”. In February this year, Peter Peacock, the minister present today, repeated the announcement of £23 million.

That is an example of well-meaning but misguided promotion of the same money time and again. We welcome investment in trying to provide alternatives, but it is clear that the culture is more important and must change. Spending is not enough; how it is spent is just as important.

Throughout the country, there are schools—I have seen them and people have written to me about them—that have closed-circuit television that either does not work or is not supported by video facilities to record the actions of pupils as they come back to the school to wreak their revenge on buildings or staff. Mobile phones are also causing problems of indiscipline. Pupils are using them to summon their parents to the school to sort out teachers who have the audacity to attempt to correct their misbehaviour.

Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP): Nonsense.

Mr Monteith: It is not nonsense. A teacher in Edinburgh gave me an example of a teacher who tried to correct the behaviour of a pupil who was pushing children and staff in a corridor. The pupil then used his mobile phone to report the incident

to his parent, who came and barricaded himself in the office with the head teacher. The police had to be called. That is real, not make believe.

Teachers need to know that they have the full support of their peers and management when dealing with indiscipline. Head teachers need to know that they have the authority to act and to make a judgment about what is correct for the undisciplined pupil and for other pupils whose studies are being disrupted.

Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab): The member has given us a number of anecdotes about the difficulties with indiscipline that teachers may face in the classroom. Can he give us any examples of what he would do, save exclude the child from school?

Mr Monteith: I am coming to that.

Not just parents, but teachers and union officials say that head teachers must have the authority to act. Children, too, are concerned about discipline in schools and regularly cite it as one of the most important issues they face, whether in the context of bullying or of classroom disruption.

So what can be done to reduce the growth in violence and indiscipline? I suggest that Mr Barrie listen, as this was the point of his intervention. Teachers tell me that they support small class sizes. That would certainly help with crowd control. This party has supported a reduction in class sizes. When we were in government, class sizes were reduced and we support the current Government's moves to continue that.

The Government's social inclusion policy will, unfortunately, give kids equal opportunity—opportunity to disrupt lessons. Instead, we should look to reduce the number of exclusions by changing the culture of behaviour in schools. We should look to give head teachers the freedom to decide what is in the best interests of each pupil and of their fellow pupils in their school's community, on a case-by-case basis. That is the real child-centred approach. Plucking arbitrary target figures out of the air is prescriptive, self-defeating and damaging.

Special units in schools can be an alternative—and useful—but they are not a panacea. They should not be more plush than the classrooms they replace and they should not become a goal to be aimed for—as viewed from their peer group—by children with a corrosive culture.

Punishment does not need to be severe, but it must follow bad behaviour and reward good behaviour. There should be no delay; delays lessen the impact on the pupils concerned and their classmates. Without such an approach, the victims are the hard-working pupils whose schooling is damaged, the teachers whose

careers are often wrecked and the perpetrators who, learning nothing but contempt for authority, often continue their amoral behaviour in adult society.

As a parent, I want my two boys to be taught in a safe, happy environment by a safe, happy teacher. As a politician, I want teachers, and the dedicated, hard-working vast majority of pupils to know that we will protect and help them.

Some people may have expected me to ask for the belt to be brought back. I am sorry to disappoint them—I do not support that policy. There is a great deal of common ground in the amendments to my motion, but the one issue that we want to point to is target setting for exclusion. Let us remove those iniquitous targets and give teachers and head teachers the authority to act for the benefit of the school community and, in the long run, for the individuals who need help to mend their ways.

I move,

That the Parliament believes that improved discipline in Scottish schools would contribute greatly to improved educational standards and would improve teacher morale; further believes that the introduction of targets to reduce the number of pupil exclusions can have a negative impact on discipline; recognises that a more flexible approach is required that puts faith in the judgement of head teachers to resolve individual cases on their merits, and calls upon the Scottish Executive to abandon its agenda of target setting for numbers of school exclusions in favour of an approach based on the needs of individual children, their peers and teachers backed up by appropriate resources to provide the diversity of educational provision and sanctions against bad behaviour that are required to improve discipline.

09:42

The Deputy Minister for Children and Education (Peter Peacock): I am not quite sure where to start after listening to that.

Mr Monteith: Good.

Peter Peacock: Latterly, Brian Monteith said something that I could agree with: that he wants kids to be educated in a safe, happy environment with safe, happy teachers. I agree with that entirely.

In leading up to that point, Brian Monteith painted a picture of Scottish schools as if they were in a state of continuous war—that every school is a war zone, with riots going on. I will need to check the *Official Report* for this, but he said that we are, unfortunately, trying to give children equal opportunities. That is a most extraordinary statement to come from anybody, when giving equal opportunities and enhancing life chances is precisely what we are trying to do.

Mr Monteith: I think that the minister is taking

my point out of context. If he reads the *Official Report* he will see that my point was about the equal opportunity to disrupt schools—it was not the way he put it.

Peter Peacock: That is not the way it came across either. Mr Monteith's speech was really a litany of populist prejudice, masquerading as a policy speech from the Conservatives.

I wanted to have a reasoned debate about this serious, complex issue for Scottish children and Scottish education. I do not underestimate the difficulties that some teachers face at some schools at some times each day, at some times each term and at some times each year. Equally, I believe that we are beginning to address those problems seriously.

Unlike the Tories, with their 18 disastrous years of rule for Scottish education, we want to address fundamentally what alienates young people from the school system and the support schools and families require to keep as many young people as possible inside the school system, which will increase their life chances. We want never to write off any child, despite what Brian Monteith says to belittle that aspect of our approach.

Throughout the life of this Parliament, the Executive has been very active in promoting good attendance and discipline in the classroom and in helping to alleviate problems that would otherwise act against us. That is why we attach high priority to a sustained and what I believe will have to be a long-term approach to addressing the current problem and to tackling the causes of young people's alienation. That is why we are investing in early intervention.

We are trying to improve literacy skills and increase young people's confidence in the classroom—often, the process of alienation that leads to disruption in the class begins when the young person fails to gain the required literacy skills. We are trying to increase the number of classroom assistants. I am glad that Brian Monteith welcomed that.

We want to give more support in the classroom in the earliest years to ensure that children are given a proper start and do not fall out of the system. We are trying to identify and supply support for dyslexia earlier. We are investing heavily in the sure start Scotland initiative, which tries to identify children below the school age in families that face difficulties, to ensure that those children can be given the support to develop to a point at which they can make the most of their learning opportunities when they go to school.

We are improving pre-school and nursery education to ease the path into school to make learning more meaningful and productive for a range of people. We are promoting homework

support, which tries to ensure that support is available for children whose family support networks are not as strong as they should be. We are promoting before-school clubs and after-school clubs as a way of encouraging young people to be part of the school system.

Those and many other initiatives attempt to identify early those who may be beginning to start the process of alienation which can lead to disruption. Since 1998, all our schools have had locally agreed targets for attendance backed up by practical support materials and guidance to help them evaluate and develop their own practices.

The Executive is supporting measures such as out-of-school learning and education for work, which are designed to stimulate pupils' interest and will to learn. We are investing heavily in the new community schools programme, which focuses on the integration of services that provide support for children and their families and can help to resolve problems and difficulties in the home that might lead to lack of attendance and disruption in the classroom.

New community schools also serve as a launching ground for personal learning plans, a key feature of which is the involvement of pupils in drawing up their own programme of learning. The initiative will engage the pupil positively and allow them to take responsibility for their learning as they get older.

Bullying is a regrettable aspect of school life that can contribute to discipline problems. We are helping schools to reduce bullying through the anti-bullying network, which has a good reputation and makes available a range of anti-bullying materials to schools, pupils, teachers and parents.

Mr Monteith: The minister referred to 18 disastrous Tory years. Does he accept that it was Michael Forsyth, as Scottish Office minister with responsibility for education, who made the first moves to institute anti-bullying programmes?

Peter Peacock: A spark of light in a long and gloomy period is not a cause for rejoicing. The gloomy aspects of the Tories' time in office are what people remember.

The anti-bullying network also provides in-school training and a consultancy service to support individual schools in developing effective strategies and enables teachers to recognise and deal with bullying problems. We are also helping ChildLine to maintain its bullying helpline, which provides a valuable support service to young people who are suffering at the hands of bullies.

Exclusion from school, which Brian Monteith focused on, is an important issue that arouses strong feelings. We are conscious of the frustration that teachers sometimes feel in the

classroom when, for example, they have repeatedly to respond to disruptive behaviour from a minority of pupils—I stress that the problem is with only a minority of pupils. Exclusion will often seem to be the answer to these problems. We believe that exclusion from school is an important sanction that ought to be available to local authorities but that it should be used only as a last resort in response to serious breaches of discipline or criminal behaviour. Being excluded from school means missing out on learning and once pupils miss time it can be difficult to catch up and the process of alienation, which sees pupils being forced to the margins of the school system, can begin. Exclusion can mean that a pupil becomes disengaged not only from school, but from society—something that causes problems for everyone in the community.

We realise that there is a need for a multi-agency approach and to engage with other agencies in the community to address that problem. It is wrong of Brian Monteith to suggest that the exclusion policy and the targets that we are setting are some kind of imposition and that head teachers will have no scope to act in the school. Head teachers have absolute discretion to act in the school and to make the decisions that they feel are necessary. I have seen a huge improvement in the methods that head teachers employ to manage indiscipline.

Unashamedly, we have set targets for the reduction of exclusion. We believe that it is only right for an Administration that takes seriously the need to reduce exclusion—for the reasons that I have begun to set out—to set targets for itself so that it can measure whether it is achieving those targets and heading in the right direction. It would be wrong for us to take a hands-off approach to the issue.

Many problems in society stem from some of the factors that I have mentioned. By tackling those factors in schools, in a positive and constructive environment, we hope to reduce exclusions and disruption in schools and the longer-term social problems that emanate from exclusions from schools. I shall pick up other points later in the debate.

I move amendment S1M-792.2, to leave out from “believes” to end and insert:

“, whilst acknowledging the problem of maintaining discipline in schools, supports the Executive's continuing work to promote good discipline in schools; endorses the Executive's commitment to training and support for teachers in maintaining good discipline in the classroom; welcomes the provision of resources from the Excellence Fund to identify viable alternatives to exclusion from school and to integrate the support services for children and their families within the school setting, and welcomes the Executive's moves to encourage the greater involvement of parents in their children's education.”

The Presiding Officer: In view of the number of members who want to speak in both debates, there will be a four-minute limit on speeches in the open debate to enable everyone to speak.

09:51

Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP): The Tory motion is another example of the way in which the Tories are, only now, addressing an issue that they failed to do anything at all about during 18 long years in government. I say to Brian Monteith that invoking the memory of Michael Forsyth in this new Parliament is a sign of desperation indeed.

What we have just heard from Peter Peacock, the Deputy Minister for Children and Education, shows a degree of complacency over a problem that exists in our schools. The problem of indiscipline may or may not be growing: it is difficult to tell whether it is worse now than it was a few years ago. It does not help anybody to scaremonger about such matters, as Brian Monteith did for 10 minutes this morning. It is clear, however, from the views of teachers and others who work in education, that the problem of indiscipline in schools is becoming much more difficult to deal with.

Indiscipline comes in many forms. One of the problems with Brian Monteith's speech was that, in true tabloid form, he focused on only the high-profile cases. There are, nevertheless, serious cases of indiscipline in schools. The results of a survey that was published earlier this year revealed that, in 1998-99, nearly 2,000 violent attacks on teachers and school staff took place. That survey should not be ignored by any member of this Parliament. The most horrifying statistic from the survey was the fact that 40 per cent of those attacks were committed by pupils in primary schools—a fact on which we should all reflect.

It is appropriate for us to ensure that the strongest possible message is sent to young people that violence in schools will simply not be tolerated and that any pupil who commits violent acts will be dealt with severely and can—and should—expect to be excluded from school. Zero tolerance of violence in our classrooms is the message that this Parliament should send out loudly and clearly.

There must also be an effective strategy to deal with the more endemic problem of minor, but persistent, misbehaviour that disrupts classrooms, takes up the time of teachers and saps their energy, burdens head teachers and damages the educational experience for all children. That type of behaviour is notoriously difficult to deal with. Much good work is under way, and I acknowledge that. The promoting positive discipline initiative,

which convinces young people that good behaviour is ultimately more rewarding than bad behaviour, is the right approach. However, such an approach will not work in all cases. Much more needs to be done to tackle the causes of disruption and to enable teachers to deal with it.

It is important to say that the onus should not be on teachers alone. Teachers are not social workers, psychologists or health workers; nor should they be expected to do the job of parents. Parents must be expected to accept responsibility for the behaviour of their children. We must also recognise that children who are disruptive—especially those who cause serious disruption—have real social and emotional problems. It is right to say that, in such cases, exclusion should be the last resort and that those children deserve support to stay in mainstream education. However, it is not enough simply to say that, nor is it enough simply to set targets for reducing exclusions and to expect the education system to cope. Targets alone will not improve discipline—many teachers feel that the statistical targets are part of the problem, rather than part of the solution.

Increasingly, mainstream schools must deal with children with emotional, social and behavioural problems without any extra resources, in a climate where teachers feel that they are being asked to perform impossible tasks that are, essentially, conflicting. Inclusion is right, but it is not always easy and it does not come cheap. If we are to cut exclusions without causing disruption in our schools, there must be more on-site specialist provision—more learning and behavioural support teachers and one-to-one support for children with the most severe difficulties.

Peter Peacock will say that the Government is spending more money on all those services, but the picture on the ground is different. Rather than increasing provision, local authorities are being forced to cut those services. Specific grants from the education budget for social work services are projected to fall from £4.2 million in 1998-99 to £2.3 million in 2001-02. Much more needs to be done. We must train teachers properly to deal with disruptive pupils and with the problems that they cause. Class sizes must be cut—not just in the early years, but across the board. That is one of the most important steps that can be taken to create the right environment for the promotion of good behaviour.

An interesting research study carried out by Moray House Institute of Education a couple of years ago showed that 73 per cent of primary school teachers and 85 per cent of secondary school teachers cited the reduction of class sizes as the priority in improving school discipline.

An effective discipline policy must give head teachers the right to exclude where such action is

absolutely necessary. Apart from anything else, there must be the threat of exclusion as a deterrent. There comes a point where the behaviour of an individual is so bad that not to remove them would deny the rights of the majority. Head teachers must be allowed to exercise their judgment.

When exclusion is the only answer, we must ensure that it is used constructively—as part of the solution to the problem of indiscipline, not just as a means of punishment. We must not export the problem to the streets. I say to Peter Peacock that exclusion must not lead to children missing out on learning. We need more off-site specialist provision. There are local authorities in Scotland that have no off-site provision for children who have been excluded from school. That cannot be allowed to continue.

This issue is complex—more complex than Brian Monteith recognised in his speech this morning. Indiscipline in schools cannot be dealt with by soundbites or by a glib, populist approach. Equally, the problem cannot be dealt with by the Government's approach of simply imposing targets, which it expects other people to meet. It is time for a more complex and sophisticated solution that recognises that this problem must be dealt with urgently.

I move amendment S1M-792.1, to leave out from “improved discipline” to end and insert:

“indiscipline in Scottish schools undermines efforts to improve educational standards for all children and damages teacher morale; believes that whilst exclusion of pupils from schools should always be a last resort, headteachers' professional judgement must not be unduly restricted by the imposition of statistical targets for reducing exclusions; and calls upon the Scottish Executive to implement a national strategy for improving school discipline which includes an emphasis on the role of parents, improved teacher training, enhanced specialist provision in schools, increased numbers of learning and behavioural support teachers, a reduction in class sizes, and a constructive use of exclusions.”

09:58

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): I, too, listened with great interest to Brian Monteith's speech—I hope that he is not leaving the chamber. We heard some colourful, anecdotal illustrations from him, and I share Nicola Sturgeon's view. His speech was a bit too populist for me. However, it gave away Brian's view: he is locked in a mindset of the past. I will illustrate that with a small tale.

When I was a pupil at Tain Royal Academy, we had a bad boy who not only filled a fire extinguisher with weedkiller and sugar in an attempt to blow up the school—that was his ultimate act—but I remember that he put sugar in the rector's petrol tank. That lad was expelled. As

it would not be fair to record his name, I will not say it, but I can assure the minister that it was not me. I met that fellow just the other day in the street and, pointing to something in the newspaper, I said, “Look at that.” However, I did not get through to him and suddenly remembered that he could not read; he never could. Of course he could not read. He was a casualty of the bad old system.

I hope that all members would accept that exclusion is not at all desirable, and I have some statistics that will back up that view. A recent MORI poll in England indicated that 72 per cent of children excluded from school had offended in the previous year, compared with only 28 per cent of those who attended school regularly. A report by the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, “Learning the Lessons”, includes research findings from the Metropolitan police and estimates that 40 per cent of all robberies, 25 per cent of burglaries and 20 per cent of thefts in London are committed during school hours by children aged between 10 and 16. I put it to the chamber that exclusion leads to a form of ghettoisation; it is a means by which one can send children into outer darkness and not worry about them. Brian Monteith has, quite rightly, owned up to saying that the day of the taws is over, and so it is. We must move away from the mindset of the past and move towards a new way of doing things.

Peter Peacock has touched on the resources being made available to teachers. I hear what Nicola Sturgeon says about social work, but if she were to go to an authority such as the one that runs my old school, Highland, she would discover that councils are up front about saying that there is new money in education and it is very welcome. Their only concern is about whether funding will continue when the current period is over. I hope that it will.

Nicola Sturgeon: Will Mr Stone give way?

Mr Stone: I will not give way. I do not have much time left.

The underlying trends are there. The notion of good pupil pressure can be made to work. That is closely linked to what the minister said about community schools. I would like the community schools scheme to be extended, perhaps even into primaries, as I am sure that it is the way forward.

One thing that interested me about what Brian Monteith did not say was that he did not mention the role of parents. The minister's amendment mentions

“the greater involvement of parents in their children's education.”

That is something that Nicola Sturgeon also

touched on, and it is absolutely fundamental. It is about community schools, it is about good pupil pressure and it is about involving parents. Those three new directions are radically different from the old mindset that led to ghettoisation and, ultimately, led to an old classmate of mine, now in his mid-40s, not being able to read. I urge members to support the minister's amendment.

10:02

Mrs Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab): It is important to start a debate such as this by stressing the points upon which we are all agreed. I hope that we all agree that teachers should be able to teach without fear of abuse, physical or verbal, from pupils or from their families. We must recognise that cases such as those outlined by Brian Monteith occur and have to be dealt with. We also agree that, if there is indiscipline in a class, it will be more difficult for the teachers to teach and for the pupils to learn. Again, that is an issue that we must address. However, I regret the way in which the motion has been worded, because it concentrates on exclusions. A more positive approach to the whole discipline issue would have been more effective.

Many schools are now involved in promoting positive discipline, and there are various theories as to how to do that. The most commonly used package in Scottish schools is "Turn Your School Around". It is a behavioural management package that can be used in primary and secondary schools. It has eight components. I will not list them all, but the best known are the concepts of circle time and golden rules. Such discipline packages involve pupils in establishing the rules. They also give teachers the opportunity to work with their pupils to establish a relationship and to build up their confidence.

All the theories about positive discipline show that the teacher needs to be assertive. Lee Canter, one of the theorists, said that the assertive teacher is one who

"clearly, confidently and consistently states expectations to pupils and is prepared to back these words up with actions".

The behaviour of the teacher is therefore a crucial element in the discipline procedure.

Those packages also involve parents, and Jamie Stone stressed the importance of involving parents. It should be fairly obvious to all of us that parents and teachers working together will have a more positive effect on pupils. However, the reverse situation, where the relationship between parent and teacher has broken down, will always be open to difficulties. We must remember that parents have their own experiences of schools. Some parents will have been in situations that

have led to them now feeling no respect whatsoever either for the school or for the education process. That attitude is passed on to their children and it can be difficult to re-establish a relationship. However, excluding a child will serve only to perpetuate that line of broken relationships without dealing with the problem.

Mr Monteith: I thank the convener of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee for giving way. Mary Mulligan said much that I agree with, as I agree with much of what the previous speakers said. For the avoidance of doubt, does she accept that the primary point that is addressed in our motion is the target setting of exclusions? We are not saying that exclusions are right; we are decrying the fact that there are targets to reduce exclusions, which puts pressure on head teachers and takes away their ability to make independent judgments.

Mrs Mulligan: The aim of setting targets to reduce exclusions is to ensure that more children are included within the education process and receive a positive experience. We welcome that. I am concerned about the view that excluding pupils shows how tough we are. The more difficult option is to keep the pupils in school and work to manage their behaviour.

Brian Monteith tried to rescue his motion and his speech by being positive towards the end of his speech, but exclusions are only a small part of the disciplinary process. Exclusion only achieves what Brian Monteith criticised: it just moves the problem around. What do excluded children do? They are more likely to be left with time on their hands, which is time to cause more trouble.

Less serious discipline problems do not require exclusion, but they may be experienced more frequently by teachers, and they are just as demoralising. That is why the positive teaching measures that Peter Peacock outlined are so important. The motion has raised an important issue of discipline in our schools. I hope that the debate will contribute in a more positive way than the motion has set out to do.

10:07

Richard Lochhead (North-East Scotland) (SNP): I would like to talk about disruptive behaviour in the classroom, and also the increase in stress-related absence among teachers throughout Scotland. The minister painted a rosy picture, and Nicola Sturgeon was right to say that he was complacent. Since I have been elected I have spoken to many classroom teachers and head teachers throughout the north-east of Scotland, and I can tell the minister that morale in many schools—not every school—is at rock bottom. Members would not believe some of the

horror stories that teachers tell.

It is clear that disruptive behaviour is one of the factors behind the increase in stress-related absence, which is a topic that I have mentioned before in Parliament. I was interested to find out some statistics recently from Aberdeenshire Council. Because of local government cuts, the council was looking for teachers to apply for voluntary severance. I thought that I would find out how many teachers applied for it, because it would give an indication of teachers' morale in the area.

Aberdeenshire Council's director of education wrote to me on 25 April. I can tell the minister that 275 teachers called the council to inquire about voluntary severance, which means that 12 per cent of teachers want out of their jobs. The director of education also told me that at that time, 210 staff were off ill. That is between 10 per cent and 11 per cent of the work force. The minister should not paint too rosy a picture. He should find out the national figures for Scotland, because they would indicate the morale of teachers.

Dundee City Council is another of the few councils that keeps statistics on stress-related absence among teachers. The council wrote to me and said that between 1 August and the end of December last year 2,093 days were lost through stress in the city of Dundee. If that figure is extrapolated, 5,000 days per year are lost in the city due to stress—nearly five days per teacher. Those are appalling statistics.

Violence in the classroom is one of the reasons why morale is low, and why so many teachers are taking time off due to stress, but it is not the only factor. Having heard some of the stories, which I shall tell the minister, of what is happening in the north-east of Scotland, I find it no wonder that morale is low.

We are talking about exclusion. I know of a couple of cases in Aberdeenshire. In one, a child assaulted his fellow classmates. An auxiliary teacher was brought in to help the classroom teacher to cope, and the child assaulted the auxiliary teacher. That teacher was transferred to another primary school because the parents refused to acknowledge that there was a problem, and they refused to let their child see a psychologist. There was nothing that the school could do about that, apart from transferring the child to another school. The child went to another school and assaulted his fellow pupils there. The classroom teacher in that school had to take early retirement through stress because of that situation.

There are many such examples from north-east Scotland. Another child is at his third primary school because his parents refused to acknowledge that their child has a problem. They

blame the schools for all the hassle in the classroom. Once again, the teachers can do nothing because their hands are tied. I hope that the minister will look into those examples following today's debate.

We all know that education suffers as a result of destructive behaviour in the classroom. The five to 14 curriculum suffers and teachers cannot meet their targets because they are spending so much time dealing with destructive behaviour in the classroom. A child can assault staff, be a menace in the playground and disrupt the education of the other kids in their class, but the options that are available to staff to deal with such problems are extremely limited. A child might also assault the teacher. I know of one case in which the child was excluded for five days. The child is back at school and the teacher is now terrified. There is nothing that the school can do in the situation.

We need more resources to provide alternatives-to-exclusion units on site at schools. It is fair enough not to want to exclude children, but there must be resources for alternatives. In Aberdeenshire, local government cuts mean that the council has to get rid of teachers and there is a lack of units that provide alternatives to exclusion.

Many factors other than destructive behaviour cause stress-related absence among teachers. I ask the minister to respond positively to the points that are being made in the debate. I also suggest that he visits north-east Scotland. He should get in touch with teachers and head teachers and hear what they have to say.

10:11

Mr Murray Tosh (South of Scotland) (Con): I will declare an interest, in that I was a teacher for 25 years and I remain a member of the Scottish Secondary Teachers Association.

The past year since I left the classroom has been the fastest and most stress-free of my working life. Allowing for the fact that it has been a year since I was a teacher, I took the precaution yesterday—in case things had changed remarkably for the better—of checking facts before I dared to speak in the debate. The SSTA tells me that it has just completed a major survey of its membership and the results will be announced in the next few days. The survey was about discipline and it is the association's belief that discipline ranks first among the concerns of secondary teachers. It is even ahead of the perennial issue of pay and the recurring problem of curriculum change, which at the moment centres on higher still.

The survey generated a major—indeed, in the association's terms, overwhelming—response. The problem is not about the headline-grabbing

incidents and the soundbites that were referred to earlier. Such incidents remain rare, fortunately, and in many cases there are sanctions available to deal with them. What is defeating and wearing and leads to the stress-related illnesses, absentee rates and the preoccupation among older teachers with securing early retirement is the persistence of relatively minor indiscipline. One can hardly imagine, if one has not faced or confronted it, how such indiscipline can be a problem. The problem is the relentless grind and the wear and tear of people who will not co-operate, people who are upset and people who are alienated from school or society.

Peter Peacock's speech was positive and contained much that I can identify with, but he seems to see the discipline problems in schools as being the result of alienation of the pupil from the school. In fact, very many of the problems come from outwith the schools and are nothing to do with the schools. The difficulties cannot all be resolved by dealing with parents because parents are often not available or do not have control over their children. Schools are being asked to deal with many wider social problems and teachers must develop coping strategies.

Most of the time teachers cope very well by trying to be lively and interesting and by being non-confrontational in dealing with children. Teachers cope by being persistent and patient and by deploying their personalities. I am sure that the chamber will have worked out by now why I was an excellent teacher. [*Laughter.*] However, the most skilful, tolerant and experienced teachers do not always cope. It is always likely that there will be situations that strike out of the blue because of something that happened in another classroom, something that happened yesterday evening or something that happened at the pupil's home.

Exclusion is part and parcel of school life. It includes the five-minute exclusion outside the door that a teacher gives someone to allow that person to calm down and to enable the teacher to rearrange the lesson after an incident has taken place. It also includes informal exclusion when a school sends someone home for a few days until a meeting can be set up with social workers, parents or whoever a teacher wants to talk to. Schools do not readily and quickly press the expulsion or the ultimate exclusion button. The number of recorded cases indicates that it is rarely used. When it is used, that is because the school is at the end of its tether with the pupil in question. No one seeks to exclude lightly.

We have to raise further the profile of discipline in schools. It should be a much greater component of in-service training and of Government guidance to schools and education authorities. It should feature much more prominently in the inspection

process, because it is fundamental to the good management and the smooth day-to-day operation of a school. I was reassured by what the minister had to say this morning about the exclusion targets. There is concern in schools that the exclusion target that has been set is arbitrary. People want to know where the figure of 30 per cent comes from and what it will mean in practice.

Sometimes head teachers are seen as company men, who represent the education authority against the teachers instead of championing the teachers against the authority, whose interest is to keep as many children in school as possible. If we are empowering head teachers, people will be happy with that. If we are saying that head teachers have the right to exclude pupils for a period of days to calm down a situation and to bring people in, they will be happy with that too.

When discussing education in this chamber previously we talked about the structure of promoted posts in the context of a pay review. The structure of promoted posts is also extremely important in the context of discipline. Part of the process of managing people is being able to refer someone on to a figure of greater authority—like you, Presiding Officer—who knows that there are lines that must not be crossed.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): You are close to one now.

Mr Tosh: If we flatten the structure of promoted posts in secondary schools, there is a danger that we will make the human and personality difficulties in schools more difficult to contain. We might end up with more exclusions as a result, as then all we would have left is the nuclear button.

10:17

Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab): The implications of the Tory motion and the tone of Brian Monteith's contribution do nothing to advance what is a complicated and diverse issue. Apparently, if the Scottish Executive did not have targets on school exclusions, head teachers would not have greater flexibility to exclude disruptive students, but that is exactly what head teachers have at the moment.

Previous speakers have been quite right to say that indiscipline among a minority of pupils in our secondary schools and some of our primary schools is an increasing problem—as it is, as Murray Tosh indicated, in society as a whole. However, it is important to bear in mind that different education authorities, and different schools within those education authorities, sometimes have quite different policies on school exclusions. The exclusion rates in high schools even in the same education authority can vary quite markedly. High exclusion rates do not equal

good schools, and low exclusion rates do not equal poor schools. Given that there is no such correlation, we have to consider whether higher or lower rates of exclusion are the result of the ethos in particular schools.

As Peter Peacock and others have already said, exclusions should be regarded as the last resort and as a measure to deal with very serious breaches of school discipline or regulations. We need to consider what else can be done in schools to support pupils with social, behavioural or learning difficulties. We have already heard about behaviour support units in schools, greater use of learning support services in schools and the possibility of campus units. It is also important that schools have stronger links with the outside agencies with which they have day-to-day contact: the psychological services, community education and, dare I say it, social work.

I am glad that Brian Monteith does not wish to bring back corporal punishment. That is in marked contrast to his colleague Lyndsay McIntosh, who in the debate of 24 February on physical chastisement seemed to indicate that we should be considering that. It was certainly Shuggie the security man's solution in *The Scotsman* today.

Mr Monteith said that we should punish bad behaviour and reward good behaviour. No one would take issue with that. However, he has to realise that, when we exclude some pupils, we reward bad behaviour, because exclusion is exactly what they wanted. The challenge that faces all of us, and educationists in particular, is to find a way of holding on to those disenfranchised pupils in S3 and S4. We should not reward them by sending them on the merry-go-round, which is what often happens when pupils are excluded. They move round from school A to school B to school C, usually ending up in a residential educational establishment.

Mr Monteith: Does the member feel that maintaining the school-leaving age at 16 is a contributory factor to the problem that he has been speaking about? Would he support a change in the leaving age, which might allow pupils to go to further education colleges earlier and therefore stay within the education system, or might allow them to find education through work with an employer that provided education? That would keep them in education, but away from the school that they may have rejected.

Scott Barrie: Many people have tried to promote that idea. The school-leaving age is 16; for a large number of pupils—especially those whose birthdays fall in the latter half of the year and who cannot officially leave school until December but who intend to leave school as soon as they are 16—we often consider joint placements with FE colleges or some other

arrangement to fill those last six months. Taking a child-centred or an individual approach, which Mr Monteith seemed to rubbish, is exactly the way to proceed.

As I said, excluding a pupil from school is often seen as rewarding bad behaviour. We must understand what we are doing when we exclude a kid. We are probably reducing their life chances considerably. We had a debate on looked-after children earlier this year, in which we talked about the lack of good outcomes for many young people in the looked-after system. Many young people who find themselves excluded from school have poor outcomes in later life. I remember being told by an educational psychologist during my days in social work that every time a child moves between schools, he or she can lose up to six months of education. If the child is excluded from two or three schools, a considerable amount of learning opportunity is lost.

My time has run out. I look forward to listening to other people's contribution.

10:23

Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP): This has been a debate of contrasts. The strongest contrast has been on the Tory benches. We had what one can only call the William Hague, saloon bar, skinhead approach to politics, in which all the popular prejudices were displayed. Thanks to Mr Monteith, things are now even worse. We now know that Lord Shaftesbury lived in vain, that working children are to be reintroduced into society and that the school-leaving age is to be dramatically lowered. Mr Monteith's contribution explained why the Tories have been excluded from Scottish politics for so long and why they will continue to be excluded. It would have been depressing, but there was a curious ray of sunshine, and I have to describe Mr Murray Tosh as that ray of sunshine. That will embarrass him and probably hold back his progress in the Scottish Conservative party.

Mr Tosh: I have been called worse.

Michael Russell: His contribution was excellent and distinguished. He has practical experience, and has pointed out to us many of the problems and some of the solutions. At the heart of what Murray Tosh said is the fact that serious exclusion is failure. It is a failure of children to integrate, to socialise and to be able to work with their teachers and their peers in society. It is a failure of parents to care for and to manage their children. It is a failure, as Mary Mulligan pointed out, of parents to establish a relationship with the school. That can happen for many complex reasons, not least of which may have been the parents' own experience at school. It is a failure of the school and teachers

to cope. That is not a criticism, but a moment comes when a breathing space of some sort is required for the sanity of the school staff and the smooth running of the school. It is a failure of the system, whether that be the local authority as employer or the Government or Executive as resourcer. It is the failure of the system to resource and support individual teachers, schools and families. Exclusion is an expression of failure and how we overcome that failure is the subject of this debate.

Mr Monteith *rose—*

Michael Russell: No, not at the moment.

The debate should not be an excuse for a litany of individual incidents to make Scottish education appear to be a cross between “Blackboard Jungle” and “Nightmare on Elm Street”—which is what we had from Mr Monteith. Instead we must look at tackling failure.

Although Mr Peacock has spoken of some of the things that are being done, he has not looked widely enough at good practice elsewhere, including, perhaps surprisingly, practice south of the border. Just last week Mr Blunkett announced more resources for learning support units and for secondary schools to take on and tackle the issue of difficult pupils. In France there is more investment in ancillary staff and counselling, coupled with more investment in policing schools. The police have a useful, if regrettable, role in assisting a school if things get out of hand.

Involving parents in education is good practice everywhere. Schools do not have the sole responsibility for educating children; it is a joint responsibility in which parents are deeply involved. We must find strategies and methods to bridge that gap because, as good teachers know, to educate children without parental involvement is to invite failure. When serious exclusion takes place, it is the relationship between the child, the family and the school that is at the heart of solving the problems presented. That is not easy, but children should not be excluded from school and left to be a burden to the community. As Nicola Sturgeon said, we must not export the problem outwith the school. The family must be involved in the solution.

I regret the way this debate began, but it is worth having. I hope that it will finish more positively and contribute to solving the problem, not just for schools and teachers but for families.

10:27

Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): Following Mike Russell in introducing a more positive slant—and what Scott Barrie said is closest to where I am coming from—we should not be approaching this

from a Roman discipline angle. The debate should be about how to maintain an atmosphere that supports the enjoyment of learning.

What are the problems in maintaining that atmosphere in schools? Our society remains deeply divided with between 20 per cent and 30 per cent of children living in poverty. That is where part of the problem starts. I am glad that the Executive has committed itself to addressing Scotland’s problem of poverty.

I have no particular problem with setting targets. I want to see targets for conversion to organic agriculture, for example. But targets should be realistically negotiated in education on a school-by-school basis. Setting an overall target of a 30 per cent reduction in exclusions for Scotland is unrealistic. A school-by-school negotiation of targets can help each school to address its problems in a realistic way.

From the bottom of my heart I support Richard Lochhead’s call for research into the numbers of teachers in Scotland suffering from stress, absent through sickness and volunteering for early retirement. Those problems became increasingly evident throughout my teaching career—37 years, Mr Tosh—a third of it in schools that could be described as difficult to teach in. The school I taught in last was in many ways very easy to teach in, but is still a school where teachers suffer from overwork and stress and feel undervalued. At bad times of the year the absence rate was spectacularly high on occasion.

I support what Peter Peacock is trying to do but I am also sympathetically aware that it is not enough because of very limited resources. To follow on from what Mike Russell said, we should find money and put it where it is really needed.

There are already signs that we want to get kindergarten and pre-school education up to a higher standard. However, in primary schools, if we could reduce class sizes to under 20, it would have the most spectacular effect on the quality of education and the stress on teachers. It would mean that the bulk of children going into secondary schools were keen on being in school as they would not have been alienated by being taught in classes of 30. We must get it into our heads that a class of 30 is still too big for a primary teacher to cope with. The children do not get the attention that they deserve.

A class is sitting in the public gallery. I am sure that they would like to have an extra teacher, although I am also sure that they are very fond of the teacher who is with them. Smaller classes would make it easier for everybody, children and teachers. Our aim must be to reduce class sizes. That would do so much to solve this problem.

10:31

Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): I am glad to be able to speak in this debate. I am sorry that I missed the beginning of Mr Monteith's speech, as it was clearly very interesting. Did I miss the bit about boot camps and consignment to the army? I am sure that it will be coming, from what other members have said about the tone of his speech.

This is a serious and important issue. There are times when exclusion—or expulsion as it was called in my day—is necessary, because of the disruption caused by a small minority of our pupils. However, it should be the last resort and should be used only when every other avenue has been explored. As Murray Tosh said, and as I know from my experience, that is often the case.

Part of the problem that we face is that, sadly, for many pupils and even for their parents, exclusion is not seen as a punishment. The cynical bit in me might say—Scott Barrie made this point, too—that some see it as a reward and a badge of honour. In some of our communities, a person has to be excluded to be somebody. We must consider why that is so.

The lack of discipline in much of our society is an indictment of what happened in the 1980s. People were seen to have little value. Education did not matter because, whatever happened, people felt that they were going to be consigned to life on the dole or a poorly paid job and would have to live in poverty—that was the experience of their parents, brothers and sisters, so why should it be any different for them? That situation has led to increased drug abuse, crime and social exclusion.

If we are serious about tackling the problem of discipline in our schools, we must deal with the problem of social exclusion in the wider society. We must tackle the issues that cause disruption, a number of which were mentioned by Nicola Sturgeon, Peter Peacock and Mike Russell. One is the fact that parents do not feel involved in their children's education any more.

I welcome many of the recent initiatives. Before I was in politics, I was a community education worker. I worked in what was then the new initiative of home-school community partnerships, which brought together the home, the school and the community to build up the link that was missing. Those partnerships are valuable, as they bring into school parents who had a bad experience of education and whose educational outlook was dull, but who now see that they can play a vital role in their child's education. Those partnerships should be supported and encouraged—I know that the Executive is doing that.

We must deal with other problems that cause

exclusion. Children who have difficulty in reading and writing can quickly become bored because they cannot grasp the basics; that can lead to indiscipline. The early intervention strategy is beginning to kick in and is proving successful in tackling some of those problems. The frustration of some of the kids with whom I worked in community education arose because they could not read or write—they could not compete with their friends on a level playing field. The only way in which they could deal with that and get attention was by being bad. The problems grew from that. We failed to tackle some of those problems.

Early intervention is an important step forward, as are alternatives to exclusion. Just before I left my previous job, I was working on some of the pilot projects for alternatives to exclusion. As Scott Barrie said, forming partnerships with local further education colleges and local business is important for some young people, but for others the right option is to keep them in school and to help them towards educational achievements that they have ruled out throughout their educational life. To get some standard grades at any level is an achievement for those people and it gives them a new status in their communities.

We need to reduce the number of exclusions. If we fail to recognise that any increase in the number of exclusions is a bad thing for society, the Government and the Parliament will fail to act. I support the Executive's amendment and ask members to reject the simplistic solutions proposed by the Conservative and Scottish National parties.

10:36

Shona Robison (North-East Scotland) (SNP): Nobody, with the possible exception of Brian Monteith, really believes that excluding children is in itself a good thing. However, I do not believe that the option of exclusion should be de facto removed by target setting.

Discipline problems in schools are destructive for teachers and pupils. They have a profound impact on teacher morale and turn the teacher's day into an exercise in crowd control rather than imparting knowledge. I will focus on the issue of violence against teachers. It is a terrible admission to make that our society has such a problem.

In 1998-99, there were 245 acts of violence per 100,000 pupils, which directly resulted in the loss of a total of 187 working days. Of course, those were only the reported incidents—I am sure that there were many unreported incidents. In total, there were nearly 2,000 violent incidents in that year, almost 40 per cent of which took place in the primary sector. More than half the incidents that were reported involved violence, and the majority

of other incidents involved verbal abuse.

What should be done about the problem? The Executive has implemented various schemes targeting disruptive behaviour, such as the alternatives to exclusion programme, which aims to support authorities in finding other ways of dealing with disruptive behaviour. Although such programmes are welcome, it must be recognised that any pupils facing exclusion are likely to have been involved in serious incidents in the school. It is on that point that I have concerns about the Executive's approach, which appears to be driven by easily defined numerical targets, such as reducing expulsions by a third. Although it is good to reduce the number of expulsions, setting targets for that may lead to schools trying to cope with very disruptive or even violent pupils, which may have devastating consequences for teachers or other pupils. The approach fails to recognise the individual requirements of pupils and may not be in their best interests in the long run.

Schools need to keep the option of expulsion—I was pleased that, to some degree, the minister confirmed that they would be able to. Schools' decisions on discipline should not be influenced in any way by Government targets. Does the minister really believe that target setting will not influence a head teacher's decision on expulsion?

We recognise that disruptive pupils have special needs. As has been stated, to meet those needs schools require adequate facilities, learning support, adequately trained teachers and appropriate class sizes, all of which cost money. However, education authorities across the country are having to make cuts in many areas. The clear message to the Executive from today's debate is that Scottish schools need to be adequately resourced if real improvement is to be made in standards of discipline.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We now move to winding-up speeches.

10:40

Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Etrick and Lauderdale) (LD): I begin with a slightly off-the-wall complaint. I wish the Parliament would give us a wee bit more notice of motions and amendments. That information is arriving very late and it is difficult for our staff to help us to prepare. I am not talking about the Conservatives' business in particular; it is simply that I have been asked to raise that matter today.

As a teacher who left the profession—although not in a drove as Brian Monteith suggested—I was very interested in the singular contribution of Mr Montooth. Jamie Stone spoke about violent incidents. When I was a pupil, three pupils went into the chemistry department and burned down

my school. In a very good job-creation scheme, two of those pupils got jobs building the new school. That is true.

Brian Monteith's motion contains some grains of sense but is misguided at its heart. I am not a fan of targets or target setting, but targets themselves are not wicked. They should be sensible, open to discussion and agreed with the people involved so that they direct policy in an appropriate way. In this case, I am slightly worried about the 30 per cent target. I wonder where it came from; work might need to be done on that.

As Brian said, the problem with disruptive pupils is to be solved not by politicians but as far as possible within the school and, failing that, within the local authority. A pupil should be excluded from education only as a last resort. It is sensible to recognise that we cannot wash our hands of disruptive or difficult pupils. Pupils who are not inside the education system are alienated from society, community and from our values. We ignore that alienation at our peril. As Jamie Stone indicated, the London statistics show that the crime rate among kids who are not in school is astonishing and deeply worrying. Those children include not just the ones who have been permanently excluded, but those who are skipping school.

The acceptance of open-ended exclusion is a doctrine of despair. Setting targets is not the problem, although I hope that it can be part of the solution. We do not think that classroom teachers should be forced to tolerate chronic disruptive behaviour that seriously damages the working ethos and good order of their classes. Richard Lochhead and Murray Tosh spoke effectively and accurately about teacher stress and the way in which exclusion can be part of the solution. I want to make a distinction between long-term exclusion and the temporary exclusion that Murray was talking about, in which pupils are sent home for a couple of days and their parents are brought in to discuss the problems with the school. That is not reprehensible; it is a tactic that tries to bring in the parents and is used effectively on a daily basis.

We are all in the same camp—even Brian Monteith—because we want to improve discipline in schools. Peter Peacock gave a full account of developments in his opening remarks, which, as Nicola Sturgeon acknowledged, are positive steps in the right direction.

Scott Barrie talked about bringing in social workers and so on; that, too, is absolutely right. All those other agencies should be involved. Murray Tosh and others talked about parents, whose involvement is valuable.

I agree with Robin Harper about class sizes. Everyone in the profession would say that class

sizes are important. When the minister revises the Scottish schools code, I hope that he will accept that and examine class sizes carefully.

In a sense, I agree with some members that the terms of the Executive amendment, on paper, sound a bit complacent. I am glad that the minister's speech showed that that was not the case and I am pleased that the tone of the rest of the debate was in keeping with that.

I regret that the debate has been so short. The issue is complex and, if the Tories thought that it was worth debating, they should have given it the whole morning. Teachers need our support, as do parents and pupils. The solution will not be easy and will not come cheap. If we all work together, we can do something about the problem.

10:46

Nicola Sturgeon: For all that the Tories' credibility on this issue is somewhat limited, I am glad that we have had the opportunity to debate the matter.

Ian Jenkins rightly said that politicians alone cannot solve the problem of indiscipline in school. That much is true, but it is also true that the policies that we adopt will have a real impact on other people's ability to tackle the problem. It is also the case that the policies that politicians adopt have the potential to hinder those who are at the sharp end and have to deal with the problems. That is why I have to conclude by saying that I am not over-impressed by the Tories' approach, nor indeed by that of the minister. As I said, the Tory approach, which simply takes a few examples and presents them as the norm in our schools, is scaremongering. That does a service to nobody, whether pupils or teachers.

Mr Monteith: Nicola Sturgeon and others have been consistent in trying to portray our position as something that we have made plain it is not. Does she accept that my opening speech was based not only on examples and quotes from a social worker, a teacher and a director of education—none of whom, I believe, is a member of the Conservative party—but on comments from her own past speeches?

Nicola Sturgeon: I did indeed identify the direct quotes from a speech that I made at a recent conference. Brian Monteith drew on that conference a lot today; I think that he attended it for 45 minutes out of the entire day, so I am glad that he has, at least, read the conference notes. In any event, his approach is to scaremonger and to use examples that, I am sure, are valid but are to some extent taken out of context.

On Labour's approach, I accept that much good work is under way but there was a hint of

complacency in the minister's speech. I would have liked him to acknowledge—perhaps he will do so when he sums up—that the imposition of statistical targets can be a problem. Many head teachers will admit privately that the pressure not to exclude—brought about by the targets—and the pressure of the bureaucracy that surrounds exclusions lead in some cases to children remaining in mainstream schools when it would be to the benefit not only of other pupils but to those children themselves for them to be removed, even temporarily, from those schools. In other cases, those pressures lead to head teachers using informal exclusion, whereby they work around the formal procedures by asking a parent to take a pupil out of school for a couple of days to allow a situation to calm down. Neither of those things is to the benefit of anybody in the education system.

The minister needs to acknowledge that part of the reason why teachers feel under so much pressure is that they are being asked to perform tasks that are, on the face of it, conflicting. On the one hand, they are asked to teach an increasing number of pupils who have serious problems and whose behaviour may disrupt daily the entire classroom. On the other hand, they are expected to raise standards continuously and to ensure that their school is high up the league tables, a position for which they will be held publicly accountable. Such matters should not be conflicting, and would not be if we valued the work of a teacher in keeping a difficult pupil within mainstream education as much as we valued the work of a teacher in getting a well-behaved pupil through his or her exams. However, that is not the current culture of education in this country and, as a result, a lot of pressure is placed on teachers.

Schools around the country are finding that they have to do more with less; although they have to keep difficult children within mainstream education, they do not have the resources to do so. We need more specialist teachers, learning support teachers and behavioural support teachers and more facilities in schools to deal with pupils who cause most difficulty.

Finally, I want to say a few words about exclusion. Many speakers have said that exclusion is seen as a reward for bad behaviour; the minister himself said that it simply allowed pupils to miss out on learning. We must fix that problem, because exclusion should not be seen as a soft option or a means of exporting the problem elsewhere. If exclusion is part of a discipline strategy, it should be used constructively. Although I do not often cite David Blunkett, the Executive could learn from his work in this area to ensure that exclusion is used constructively to the benefit of pupils who require to be removed. I am not sure that the Tories or Labour are dealing with the complexities of this issue, and I look forward to

the minister's closing remarks.

10:51

Peter Peacock: After a faltering start, this has turned out to be a good and thoughtful debate. I am sorry to embarrass Murray Tosh—sometimes we Hawick people have to stick together—but I have to say that his speech was excellent; he drew on his own experience to recognise that this issue is complex and serious. That speech contrasted sharply with Brian Monteith's recovering bovver-boy approach. I should add that Robin Harper and Ian Jenkins, who were both teachers, also gave thoughtful speeches that drew on their experiences.

I stress that the Executive takes this issue very seriously. This morning's debate has shown that there is much common ground among the parties, and I welcome the chamber's support for our efforts. We are trying to make a comprehensive start to tackling a complex and long-standing issue that will take a long time to resolve to anyone's satisfaction.

I have been listening to members' suggestions about what the Executive can do further on this matter. Policy and practice is developing in this area, and we want to take further action where possible. I have visited some of the new units that are being developed partly through the alternatives to exclusion fund—notwithstanding Richard Lochhead's comments, I understand that such funding is being used to develop two new units in Aberdeenshire. Such units are finding new ways in which to address young people's difficulties, to engage them in the education process and to help them to confront their behavioural problems and deal with them positively.

Mr Tosh: I recently visited Burnfoot Community School, which the minister will know well, and was impressed by the efforts to build children's social skills at an early age to tackle deep-seated social problems. Can the minister say whether resources for such measures will be mainlined and made permanent for those schools, and whether resources will be available to extend the practice to other places?

Peter Peacock: Expenditure for the new community schools programme is part of the Executive's overall baseline. This phenomenon is not temporary; we want the principles and the culture change embodied in the concept of community schools to be rolled out across the system. This process is not at an end; it is just beginning.

As Murray Tosh, Scott Barrie, Nicola Sturgeon, Robin Harper and Karen Gillon have pointed out, the situation is not easy and there is no one

answer to the problems confronted by schools. As they rightly say, the issue does not just concern schools; we must widen our approach and involve organisations such as health and social services agencies and the police. Part of the reasoning behind the new community schools concept is to allow that to happen more effectively.

Although the issue is not just about setting targets, targets are important. First and foremost, targets set a broad direction for us to move in. For example, pressure must be brought to bear to reduce the number of exclusions. Being excluded from school is the beginning of the process of being excluded from society. We want to combat that.

Setting a direction through targets is important. It creates a focus for attention and drives forward a search for the alternatives to excluding young people. However, targets are only one part of the approach. I have already alluded to our early intervention programme. Classroom assistants have been introduced to address to some extent the issue of class sizes—bringing the ratio of pupils to teachers to an average of 1:15 rather than 1:30. I hope that, over time, that will develop. Sure start Scotland tries to take a more comprehensive family approach to developing support for young people. Pre-school and nursery education are allowing earlier intervention. There are also out-of-school clubs, homework support, new community schools—which we have talked about—and the personal learning plans that are developing from them.

The need to bring the police more actively into the school setting has been mentioned. I hope that that was not meant in a draconian sense. Part of the ethos of new community schools is to encourage the development of proper partnerships and arrangements with such agencies. The anti-bullying network is playing an important role. There is also a need for continuing professional development to support teachers in their task. Initial teacher education is also important in teaching people how to deal with discipline matters. That is being developed.

Scott Barrie referred to the school ethos. It is important that that is developed and that schools encourage achievement, celebrate success, have high expectations for every child and find means to include children in their education. A number of members referred to the importance of involving parents as partners in the education process. We share that view. We want to develop that and to give it a high priority. That is why the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Bill begins to place burdens on local authorities to find ways of involving parents in their children's education.

There is a list of things that we want to do and that we are doing. Targets are only one part of a

comprehensive package, which sets the direction and sends a clear signal about what we want.

Richard Lochhead: Will the minister give way?

Peter Peacock: I must wind up.

In the final analysis, it is the head teacher's judgment of a situation that must carry the day. I would not criticise a head teacher who, having put in place the proper mechanisms to deal with discipline matters in his or her school, felt, as a final solution, that they had to exclude somebody. They must decide whether exclusion is necessary to relieve pressure on the school and to allow time to develop alternative mechanisms and so on.

In that context, I believe that we have a positive approach. When David Mundell, who is usually a positive person, winds up, I hope that he will move away from some of the rather damaging comments made by his colleagues. I hope that he will be able to expand on his party's policy of lowering the school-leaving age, because I am interested to know to what age it would be lowered—15, 14, 13, 12, 11, 10 or whatever—as I am not clear about that. I hope that he will develop a positive agenda. There is much that we share and there is much to be done. This is a serious issue that must be addressed.

10:58

David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con): This has been a useful and helpful debate. I take issue slightly with something that Ian Jenkins said. It would be useful if he were to bring pressure to bear on his coalition colleagues to ensure that the Parliament's agenda better reflected the issues that people want to be debated. Discipline in schools is a real issue for parents, pupils and teachers. It is higher up the agenda of the average person in Scotland than some of the things that have been debated in Parliament in the past year. I am sure that Ian Jenkins will use his influence in the coming months.

Scott Barrie: What subjects was the member thinking of?

David Mundell: Section 28, for example, was a subject raised by the Executive, which we then had to use our time to debate.

Nicola Sturgeon: Will the member take an intervention?

David Mundell: As long as it is a small one.

Nicola Sturgeon: I have a query. The Conservatives have made much of section 28—there is no debate about that. Will David Mundell enlighten the chamber as to why the Conservative education spokesperson, having lodged amendments on section 28 to the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Bill, failed to turn up to the

committee meeting on Tuesday to move them, which meant that those amendments fell? Is not that a waste of parliamentary time?

David Mundell: I am not familiar with the circumstances.

As always in such debates, the contributions of people who have been directly involved add greatly to the discussion. Murray Tosh, Robin Harper, Ian Jenkins and Karen Gillon—speaking in her capacity as a community education worker—bring perspective to a debate such as this, and their contributions are helpful to everybody participating.

My wife recently returned to teaching as a supply teacher. I was struck by the availability of work. When Lynda first said that she was going to return to teaching, she thought that she would work one or two days a week, but found that there is a constant search for supply teachers.

That shortage must be a result of stress and of the management system, which takes so many teachers out of the classroom during the working day. The continuity of having the same teacher must be related to the issue of discipline. That is an important factor, which I would like Peter Peacock to consider.

Murray Tosh spoke about teachers being asked to deal with all the problems of society. That is not something that we can or should ask of our teachers. They cannot deal with marital break-up, the conflict between parents or parents wanting children to do things in the evening other than their homework. We must understand that the background against which teachers are working is changing. As Murray indicated, we should give them the support within the teaching environment—with in-service training, for example—to be able to deal with those issues relating to wider society.

Jamie Stone and Mary Mulligan talked about parents. Parents have an enormously important role, but a worrying recent statistic is that about one in 10 violent incidents within schools involve parents themselves. That is a cause for concern.

A head teacher to whom I spoke recently told me that he was concerned about what happened around the school gate and his inability to control it. That is one of the problems with exclusion. The head teacher's remit extends to the school gate; if people are inciting or causing difficulty outside that gate, that is a matter for the police, time scale issues arise and the problem becomes much more complicated.

Shona Robison spoke about violence against teachers. That is a serious problem, which reflects changes in society and in how classrooms are managed.

The Scottish Executive has set a target of reducing the number of school exclusions by 33 per cent by 2002. We have clearly stated in this debate that we do not accept that target, as we do not believe that such targets will work. We are constantly told that education should be pupil centred, yet the Executive's policy is to set a national target that bears no relation to what is happening in individual schools. The needs of the child, their classmates and their teacher are not part of that target. The decision to exclude any pupil must be made on the individual merits of the case.

The working environment is very much driven by targets. As members have said, there is a conflict of interest between the individual classroom teacher and the local authority, which wants to please the Scottish Executive by meeting the targets. That conflict of interest creates an environment that is not wholly suitable for dealing with the issues.

We agree with the Executive that every effort should be made to improve behaviour and reduce violence and disruption while retaining as many pupils as possible in mainstream schools. We believe that that can be achieved through programmes that promote positive discipline—those programmes were started by the Conservative Government—and through having special units that act as sin bins. David Blunkett has recognised the need for more such units, which allow good order to be maintained and educational standards to be upheld for pupils in mainstream schools who would otherwise have their education disrupted.

As it is important that we listen to the views of those who are most directly involved in the areas that we are discussing, I conclude by quoting Nigel de Gruchy of the NAS/UWT. He said:

"When serious anti-social behaviour occurs, it must be seen by other pupils to be met with a response. The message has to be that such behaviour is simply unacceptable. If it cannot be cured or at least contained then exclusion must follow. But it is essential to convey a message to everyone else."

On that point, I reiterate support for our motion.

Elderly and Disabled People

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The next item of business is a Scottish Conservative and Unionist party debate on motion S1M-790, in the name of David Mundell, on services for elderly and disabled people, and amendments to that motion. I call Mary Scanlon to speak to and move the motion.

11:04

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I am delighted to speak to the motion. The Executive and the Parliament will be judged by how they care for the most vulnerable in our society. I am pleased to take part in this debate, to ensure that the views are heard of those who are unwilling or unable to speak up for a better service.

I commend the Health and Community Care Committee for allocating time to this issue and recognising the need for care in the community to be a priority for the health service. I have not been reassured by any of the evidence that we have heard in that committee. If anything, the submissions have served only to heighten my concerns.

Although we have to address pressing problems today, we also have to lay foundations for preventive care and support to ensure that the problems of today are not the problems of the future.

While I welcome the earmarking for preventive care of £26 million of hypothecated tax from cigarettes, the clear message is, "Smoke more fags and the national health service gets more money." However, if Scotland smokes more fags, the NHS will need more money. With around 2,500 blocked beds in Scotland, not only is the Executive failing to provide those patients with the appropriate care, but the patients are being imprisoned and institutionalised in hospitals, although research shows that that approach disables patients and results in a loss of independence.

The enforced bed stays also prevent other patients from accessing health care and cost around £90 million a year. In order to help the elderly, the mentally ill and the disabled, it is clear that we need one budget. The Conservatives believe that that should be a health service budget that can provide seamless care from hospitals to homes and the community.

A recent report by the Scottish health advisory service on services for older people in the Highlands says that there is no multi-agency

strategy for older people's services in the Highlands that could create a vision or a model for the delivery of care. I say to the minister that there is no multi-agency strategy for Scotland. The only thing that is clear about the Executive's strategy is that there is no strategy.

The report goes on to state that a Highlands-wide needs assessment should be undertaken. I suggest that we need not only a Highlands-wide needs assessment; we need a Scotland-wide needs assessment for the elderly and the disabled. The same report says that there is no vision for older people's services in the Highlands, nor is there a lead person to take services forward. Today we look to the minister to set out a clear vision and to become that lead person to oversee care of the elderly and the disabled.

It cannot be right that an elderly person who has exercised his or her choice of taking a place in a home in the private sector is told by social workers that they will receive no funding for six, nine or 12 months. However, if he or she wanted to occupy a room in a local authority-owned home, he or she could have instant access to funding. That makes a mockery of freedom of choice. It cannot be right that there is a two-tier health service for the elderly, in which those who can pay receive the care of their choice at the time of their choice, and in which those who cannot pay are left languishing in hospitals while the NHS and social work departments engage in their system of cultural incompatibility and attitude preciousness—as it was described to the Health and Community Care Committee.

We must be able to measure best value, quality and the most effective care for the elderly, whether it is provided by councils, privately or by the voluntary sector. Age Concern says that many older people are being forced to go private, to use savings and to pay for treatment that they previously expected to receive through the NHS. The recent Accounts Commission report mentioned that the highest costs did not always correlate with the highest quality, and that councils should base decisions on the local provision of residential and nursing home care on sound information about the quality and cost of providers. There is also concern that those decisions should be, and are not, open to public scrutiny.

Today, I ask the minister to hold not only the health service managers but councils to account for care in the community. In a press release this week, the Minister for Health and Community Care announced:

"One year on from devolution, we have achieved a great deal in the NHS."

I agree with that statement, and give credit where it is due. The Executive has achieved a flu crisis

the like of which has not been experienced for years. Despite a promise on 10 January to set up a working group, on 4 May there is still no working group. The Executive has achieved more blocked beds in Scotland's hospitals than there have ever been. There have been more petitions, meetings and marches by the people of Scotland, who are worried because they do not trust the health service that they have known and always depended on.

The Executive has had an acute services review in Scotland carried out by health trusts in a secretive, arrogant and bullying manner, as it threatens, centralises and rationalises our hospital services. That has not been debated in public, so it is hardly surprising that the public are worried. There are also more than 1,200 unfilled nursing vacancies in Scotland.

Ms Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (SNP): In backing what Mary Scanlon has just said, I draw members' attention to a paper that was written by Dr Anthony Toft, the past president of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, and submitted to the Lothian division of the British Medical Association in February. He discusses the climate of fear in the national health service, and says that it has spread from the management to the doctors. The sort of response that the Executive has frequently given in this Parliament is similar to that which was displayed by Lord Callaghan, who returned from a trip abroad and said, "Crisis? What crisis?" In fact, everything that Mary Scanlon said is borne out by that paper.

Mary Scanlon: I thank Margo MacDonald for her intervention—I, too, have been quite shocked by the bullying, arrogance and secrecy.

Ministers treat members' business debates initiated by members of their own party with arrogance, responding with a party political broadcast that does not address the unique points raised. The members' business debate last Thursday, which was initiated by a Labour member, was an example of that practice. If ministers treat their own people like that, there is little hope for the rest of us. If the culture of bullying and arrogance is to change, that change must start with the ministers.

We have also heard today that Scotland's only heart transplant unit is turning away hearts for transplant. As we enter the debate of presumed consent for organ donation, the health service lacks the resources to carry out donor transplants.

The Executive has also achieved a budget process that is secretive and complex. We cannot trace where the money goes, whether it addresses clinical priorities and whether it provides best value. The Executive has managed to achieve a joint investment fund for general practitioners, to

enable them to offer additional services to patients. However, the process has been made so difficult that no GP practice in Scotland has been able to get a penny out of that fund.

We can add to that long list of achievements, as the Executive has managed to achieve more glossy brochures, more focus groups and more announcements on the same pot of cash than has ever been achieved before in the world of politics. In one year, the Executive has achieved a level of arrogance that the Tories could not reach in 18 years.

I refer to targets. We were promised NHS Direct by early 2000. Members could be forgiven for thinking that a nurse-led service would involve the Royal College of Nursing. However, the RCN has not even had a telephone call about that service.

Another target is that the Executive

“will launch a new generation of walk-in/walk-out hospitals.”

Yet the Scottish Association of Health Councils knows nothing about that target, saying that no patient has ever benefited from that type of care or been assessed under it. The chairman of the board general managers group said yesterday that health board managers had been given no targets or guidance on walk-in, walk-out hospitals.

On top of that, we have the target of establishing 80 one-stop clinics by 2002, yet no planning or budget allocations are in place. More statistical information is given about the Meat Hygiene Service than about the national health service. When we ask civil servants about income, we are told that income is “netted up”—a few more weeks of such jargon and civil servants will be more than “netted up”.

All that adds up the fact that spending by the national health service in Scotland and by councils on health care is difficult to trace. We cannot even identify the money allocated to health targets in Scotland. What has happened to the patient-centred health service? The minister is in a position to address the problems of today's health service, and to set in place plans for care of the elderly and disabled—

Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP) *rose—*

Kay Ullrich (West of Scotland) (SNP) *rose—*

Mary Scanlon: I will give way to Kay Ullrich, although I am on my final sentence.

Kay Ullrich: Have I come to the wrong debate? I thought that this debate was about community care.

Mary Scanlon: This debate is about community care, but as members of the Health and Community Care Committee are aware, we cannot

see where money is being spent on community care. We are asking for accountability and for the needs of the elderly and disabled to be met, and for that to be done, the appropriate management structure must be put in place.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Please come to a close.

Mary Scanlon: I ask the minister to address the problems of today's health service and to put in place plans for the care of the elderly and disabled. I ask him to get a grip of the health service and to start to listen to the people whose lives depend on the services that he manages, in order to ensure that they are given dignity, respect and the care that they need.

I move,

That the Parliament notes that many elderly and disabled citizens across Scotland feel let down by the Scottish Executive and its failure to deal with issues which most directly affect them; further notes that such citizens are being faced with escalating charges for variable social and other services provided by local authorities; believes that many local authorities are taking measures which restrict choice for the elderly in their selection of nursing or residential care; considers that a lack of local authority resources for nursing home places and a lack of co-ordination between health and social work has led to a 40% increase in bed blocking in the NHS since 1997; recognises that local authorities are systematically withdrawing financial support from facilities used by elderly and disabled citizens, and calls upon the Scottish Executive to abandon its agenda of political correctness and replace it with a programme that delivers to Scotland's elderly and disabled citizens affordable services, freedom of choice in care and the dignity and respect they deserve within our society.

11:19

The Deputy Minister for Community Care (Iain Gray): It will come as no surprise that I reject the terms of the Conservative motion. Apart from anything else, it is a bit of an all-embracing motion for a 90-minute debate. However, I welcome the choice of this morning's topic, which is of great importance. I have to agree with colleagues on the Scottish National party benches that it is a pity that the Tories chose not to address the motion that they lodged. Mary Scanlon spent more time talking about the Minister for Health and Community Care than about the elderly and disabled people who feature in her motion. They received no mention at all.

I welcome the debate because improving support for our more vulnerable fellow citizens is precisely the kind of opportunity offered to us by the people of Scotland almost a year ago. I join Mary Scanlon in welcoming the decision by the Health and Community Care Committee to conduct a major investigation into community care and care for the elderly.

Since last year, we have increased investment

in services for older people to around £2 billion. Making something of the opportunity that we have means not only spending more but spending better. It means putting people at the centre of services, listening closely to what the people who use those services have to say and acting on that.

Every time I meet representatives from older people's organisations or disability groups, they all ask for widened access to direct payment schemes, to allow them to have care packages tailored to individual needs. I confess that that is not a message that I expected to hear, but it is a pervasive one. I have listened, and the Executive will, this year, extend direct payments to people over 65. That is an improvement to service demanded by those who want to use the service.

The overriding message that I hear is that, like everyone else in Scotland, older people and people with disabilities want to live full, independent and secure lives. We do not presume that older people are passive recipients of services, but where people need support, they expect it to be flexible, appropriate, efficient, sustainable and of high quality. That is why we have focused on better and quicker decision making, helping more people to get care at home, and that is why we insist on agencies working better together.

We are taking steps to ensure that we move from rhetoric about the benefits of joint working to real changes that benefit the users of services. This year, £7.5 million has been invested specifically to do that. It is unfortunate that Mrs Scanlon does not recognise that agencies can work together. Indeed, Highland Council has been able to appoint someone to lead on children's services, and there is no reason why bodies providing services for older people cannot also work together.

Bruce Crawford: I am sure that the minister will agree that providing aids and adaptations for people with disabilities is a complex area and raises a whole range of issues. He has talked about working together, but I suspect that much work will be needed in adapting buildings, installing ramps and providing various aids, given the variety of arrangements that exist in different authorities. Some authorities, as I am sure he is aware, provide adaptations free of charge, some will reimburse costs and others have different arrangements again. What advice will the Executive give to local authorities to bring about uniformity of practice, so that agencies throughout Scotland can work together to sort out the problem?

Iain Gray: That is a good point. The joint futures group, which I chair, is currently developing practical non-negotiable steps to ensure better joint service delivery. Aids and adaptations are

one of the areas that it is examining, and I think that we should perhaps go beyond merely giving advice and be more directive about things. I hope to make progress on that issue soon.

Ms MacDonald: Will the minister give way?

Iain Gray: I have just taken a lengthy intervention and I would like to move on. I am watching the clock.

Any serious approach to improving services must have quality of service provision at its heart. That is why we will establish the Scottish commission for the regulation of care, which will for the first time enforce uniform national standards in all areas of care—residential, day and home care—whoever provides it. Older people themselves are being fully involved in the process of drawing up the care standards that will be used. The standards of residential care for older people will be issued for wide consultation very soon.

We have also recognised as never before that much, and perhaps most, of the care that is delivered in Scotland is provided by informal carers. As we speak, carers throughout Scotland are discussing with local authorities how the £10 million that has been earmarked for carers services will be used. That is local authorities being held to account: not by the Executive, but by the people who depend on the services that the authorities provide. Carers who have never received support are responding to a media campaign to identify hidden carers. Those are not small measures—they will make big differences. They are not quick fixes—they are changes to how services are designed and delivered.

Alongside those measures, we are aware of the need to address issues of charging for care. Funding for care is being actively considered as part of the spending review. The work of the joint futures group on charging for home care will feed into that. I agree that people need a system that is sustainable, fair and consistent, and it must consider funding of home care as well as residential care. I am determined to deliver that, and I will take the time to get it right.

Ms MacDonald: I draw the minister's attention once again to the meeting in February of the local arm of the British Medical Association, which said in its report:

"We are particularly concerned regarding the role of social work, nursing homes and home nursing and whether there will be enough funding for the care of the chronic sick and aged persons, and particularly those outwith hospital beds, but so unwell as to be unable to be cared for in their own homes."

I appreciate much of what the minister said about the mechanism that he means to put into effect, but here we have doctors concerned that the

funding might be inadequate. They also draw attention not to bed blocking, but to early discharge into communities where carers are not ready to take on board the caring that they will have to do.

Iain Gray: It would not be possible to respond to those issues in the time that I am allowed, but I wish to make this point. We are not ignoring those issues and concerns—we are addressing them, but we are addressing them thoroughly. We are working with local authorities and health boards to ensure that improvements are sustainable, and with users and carers to make sure that the improvements are what is needed.

However, clearly there are priority areas on which we can focus investment now. That is why earlier this week we announced that £60 million of the additional national health service funding in the budget will be distributed to the NHS in Scotland. But before that can be spent, the service must demonstrate how it will improve performance in four key target areas, one of which is a major drive in conjunction with local authorities to minimise delays in discharge from hospital. From 1 April we introduced a mandatory quarterly census of delayed discharge, not only of the number of discharges, but of the causes, of which there are at least 40. That means more information as well as more resources to allow a permanent reduction in delayed discharge.

In summary, investing resources, setting higher standards, driving joint working and putting people at the centre of service design and delivery is the path on which we have set out in the past year. We will not be deflected from it, because it is the right path.

I move amendment S1M-790.2, to leave out from the first “notes” to end and insert:

“welcomes the Executive’s commitment to improving service provision for frail elderly and disabled people in Scotland by creating modern user-focused services; notes the progress of the Carers’ Strategy in Scotland, the drive towards joint working between the NHS and local authorities, and the development of national standards for care; further notes the additional funding for health boards announced this week to be used in part to reduce significantly delayed discharge, and endorses the Executive’s vision of a Scotland where every older person matters.”

11:28

Kay Ullrich (West of Scotland) (SNP): Members will be relieved to know that I will speak about care in the community, but I have to commend Mary Scanlon for her bravery in standing inside the glasshouse while she threw stones at new Labour on this issue. Everyone welcomes a sinner who repents, but in her case repentance seems to have taken the form of total

amnesia. Has she forgotten that it was the Tory party that introduced the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, the concept of which everyone agreed with, but that it was also the Tory party that refused to back the initiative with adequate resources? Of course, that long-standing Tory underfunding of community care has continued under the new Tories.

Rightly, much has been said about the 2,500 elderly and disabled people who are languishing in inappropriate hospital beds and who are unable to access the type of care that they have been assessed as needing. Let me put that into context. It means that an average-sized local authority will currently have around 150 people on its waiting list for long-term placement, one third of whom will be waiting in hospital beds. The local authority will have funding to place only two people per month.

It does not take a genius to work out that we are faced with a never-ending waiting list. For practical reasons, social work departments will always place people who are in their own homes—where they are deemed to be at risk—before they place people who are in hospital beds. Those in hospital beds might be inappropriately placed, but they are still seen to be safe.

A stand-off seems to have developed on funding. Local authorities claim that they are being starved of the funding that they need to provide adequate care in the community, while the Executive claims that local authorities receive sufficient funding—they cannot both be right. The facts, however, seem to support the claims of the local authorities. We all know that there have been years of underfunding and that, as a result, local authorities have run up huge deficits. This year’s local government finance settlement will mean yet another real-terms cut.

Is it any wonder that when Sir Stewart Sutherland compiled his commission’s report, he found that about £70 million had been diverted from social work departments’ indicative funding for community care to other social work areas? The Association of Directors of Social Work has said that, because of the severe cuts in social work departments’ funding, money that was earmarked for community care will have to be diverted to ensure that priority areas—such as child protection and families—are adequately funded. Is that what the Executive wants? Local authorities are robbing Peter to pay Paul and, unfortunately, evidence suggests that the Peter who will continue to be robbed is elderly and disabled.

The new council budgets show that the first cuts have already been made in services to the elderly and the disabled. Since new Labour came to power, 10,000 fewer people have been receiving home care. Sheltered housing wardens have been

removed and home helps' hours have been slashed while charges have been raised. Day centres have closed and, regrettably, the list goes on and on. It makes one wonder why, when local authorities are faced with cuts, they immediately make scapegoats of the elderly and the disabled.

There can be no doubt that the way forward for community care is full implementation of the recommendations of the Sutherland report, but we have been deafened by the sound of new Labour's dragging feet in the past 14 months. While Labour delays, the misery gets worse. Surely there cannot be a member who has not had a constituent's inquiry on community care. So far, all that Parliament has had from the Executive are holding answers, the occasional touchy-feely soundbite and—of course—self-congratulatory amendments such as that which we are debating today.

Iain Gray: Can I take it from that, that Kay Ullrich believes that the formation of the independent Scottish commission for the regulation of care is a touchy-feely soundbite? The formation of that commission meets one of the key recommendations of the Sutherland report.

Kay Ullrich: I know that the formation of that commission was one of the key recommendations of the Sutherland report, but we are all waiting to hear what will happen regarding the recommendations on personal care, the three-month disregard and many other facets of that important report, which has been lying gathering dust on the shelf for 14 months.

If Iain Gray has any doubts about the reality of community care today, he should listen to the elderly and the disabled. He should listen to their carers and to the social workers and health workers who are totally dismayed when they look for resources, but find that they simply do not exist.

No matter how the Executive tries to spin the matter, patients and social work and health care professionals will tell Iain Gray loud and clear, "Community care ain't working."

I move amendment S1M-790.1, to leave out from the first "that many" to end and insert:

"the failure of successive Conservative and New Labour Governments in Westminster and of the Scottish Executive in Holyrood to provide adequately for elderly and disabled citizens in Scotland; condemns the cuts in grants to Scottish local authorities which have undermined much of the good work being carried out throughout Scotland at a local level; supports greater guidance being given to local authorities to ensure that money intended for the provision of community care and other services for the elderly and disabled is channelled into those areas and not diverted into other sectors of local authority spending; urges real joint working and partnership between central and local agencies, and calls upon the Scottish Executive to implement in full those aspects of the Royal Commission into Long Term Care of the Elderly which fall within the

scope of the Parliament."

11:34

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): I am bound to say that the Tory motion is convoluted and the way Mary Scanlon spoke to it—addressing matters that are not in it—did not assist in clarifying what the Tories are trying to put across. The motion is about issues such as bedblocking, local authority restrictions and liaison between social work and health care. Those are central issues. There is a bit about the disabled, but I think that the disabled deserve a separate debate. This is not the place to deal with that issue and I do not propose to do so.

There are undoubtedly a number of issues that need to be addressed, but who are the past masters here, for goodness' sake? The previous Conservative Government, which created the internal market. The two-tier system about which Mary Scanlon waxed indignant was also a creation of the Conservative Government, which set one health trust against another, cut local government services to the quick and widened the Pontius Pilate-type fault line between councils and health boards into a yawning chasm. The Executive has had to try to repair the damage and put in place again a health service that meets need in these areas. If we are talking about repentance, I would advise our Conservative colleagues to let a little more time pass before they become too indignant on these matters.

Mr David Davidson (North-East Scotland) (Con): Does the member agree that the waste that went on in councils was responsible for their failing to play their part when the community care project was set up? In particular, councils supported huge contracts that were run badly by direct labour organisations and lost hundreds of thousands of pounds. Does the member agree that councils chose not to put community care high enough up their agenda?

Robert Brown: There is an element of truth in what David Davidson says, but it is not the central issue. The central issue is the bureaucratic and structural reorganisation that caused the various problems and the lack of mechanisms to deal with them. That is now being addressed.

There is a great deal of common ground in this debate: all parties represented in the chamber have committed themselves to increases above the rate of inflation in spending on health and the associated area of community care. We all want value for money in the way those resources are spent and it is fair to say that none of us has a monopoly of good ideas regarding the way in which the problems might be tackled. The work of the Health and Community Care Committee in that

regard is important. I hope that in due course the Executive will take note of its recommendations.

What is the scale of the problem and what are the objectives of public policy in this area? Research by my party estimated that bedblocking costs more than £30 million a year in Scotland. The fact that our figure differs so widely from that given by Mary Scanlon bears out her call for a Scotland-wide needs assessment. Parliamentary questions have revealed that each bed costs between £700 and £1,000 per patient per week, depending on the specialty. In December 1999, there were, on average, 35,000 available staffed beds in Scotland, more than 2,000 of which were accounted for by patients, mostly elderly, whose discharge had been delayed. As Iain Gray rightly says, this is a complex problem, but it is clear that we can do better. We must put considerable effort into that.

The people whom we are discussing are not just numbers or statistics, they are individuals with varying circumstances. They cannot be heaved about the place as if they were freight—they are all individuals and they all matter. For most of them, undoubtedly, the preferred option would be high-quality care at home, which the motion does not address. For others, it might be residential or nursing care. The difference between those two types of care is important, as the Sutherland commission noted. Residential places cost between £220 and £360 a week, whereas a place in a nursing home has been estimated as costing between £700 and £1,000 a week, which is not very different from the cost of an NHS bed. There are cost savings to be made, but they are not quite as great as people sometimes suggest. The 40 causes of delay that the minister mentioned are the key issues.

There are practical issues, including issues of availability. In England there is an entirely different pattern of health care, with more than 90 per cent of all homes and 83 per cent of places in residential care homes being provided by the independent sector. That is not the position in Scotland, where only 5 per cent of health care takes place in the private sector. That includes hospital care as well as nursing care. There are not enough designated nursing home beds to deal with the bedblocking problem. Comparisons that have been made recently in the press with what happens in England do not stand up to examination.

The Scottish Executive's multi-level approach to this issue, in which the emphasis is on narrowing the Pontius Pilate divide between social work departments and health services, is important. Speedier assessments, the use of the same definitions on, for example, delayed discharges, and incentives to work together will cut the

bureaucracy that is part of the problem. There is also a cultural issue. The Scottish Association of Care Homes talks about a "dead man's shoes culture", meaning that for budgetary reasons councils delay assessments until a patient dies, despite the fact that there are vacancies in care homes. That is a growing problem because of the fact that people are living longer.

I sympathise with the Government's problems, but we do not want spurious markets, forced privatisation of care, or ill treatment in ill-regulated and unsuitable establishments. If possible, we want care at home, rehabilitation to a lesser dependency wherever practicable, and good quality care at all levels. Those are the Executive's objectives and I hope that ministers will take on board the ideas that have come from this debate and from the Health and Community Care Committee.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Members should note that time is limited. I will indicate to members when I want them to wind up. To accommodate as many as possible, I will ask members to adhere strictly to the four-minute time limit.

11:41

Mr Keith Harding (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I would like to widen the debate to include the general services that are provided to the elderly and disabled. The Executive's social inclusion strategy must ensure that every older person matters. Its objectives must be, first, to ensure that older people are financially secure and, secondly, to increase the number of older people who enjoy active, independent and healthy lives. To date, there has been more rhetoric than reality.

The 73p increase in pensions, which was more than wiped out by council tax, rent and water rates increases, hardly lives up to the first objective. The £5 billion windfall tax on pensions did not live up to it either. The recent local government settlement certainly does not support the second objective. Although the overall settlement grew, so much was ring-fenced or top-sliced to meet the Executive's priorities and spending guidelines that councils had to make substantial cuts in other service areas.

In recent weeks, we have seen the closure of libraries, a reduction in new book investments and an increase in audio-visual and internet charges; an increase in charges for home helps and meals on wheels; the proposed closure of the Carrick Street day centre in Ayr—which was a major issue in the recent by-election; an increase in charges for leisure and sports facilities; a reduction in travel subsidies; an increase in charges for burials; and

a reduction in grass-cutting services for the elderly. The list goes on. The only thing that new Labour is not cutting is the grass. Ask the residents in Fife.

There have been reductions in grants to the voluntary sector, which has an obvious impact on the elderly. Nursing homes have been closed because Labour-controlled councils will not increase payments even in line with inflation. The disparity between fee increases and cost increases in recent years has had a devastating impact on many providers and therefore on the services provided for older people.

Labour policies have impacted adversely on nursing homes. Labour's disastrous working time directive will add 1.5 per cent to the payroll costs of most homes. The salaries of trained nurses have increased by an average of 7 per cent. That is welcome, but nurses make up 33 per cent of the work force of most homes. Labour policies have also led to increasing suppliers' costs.

Much has been said in the chamber about free television licences for the over-75s and about winter fuel allowances. I should declare an interest, because I have just learned that I will receive that allowance. Although those measures are welcome for existing pensioners, new pensioners will still be £500 worse off as a result of the abolition of the age-related married couple's allowance. Once again, Gordon Brown gives with one hand and takes away more with the other.

As is becoming common with this Executive, new burdens are not being financed. I do not criticise local authorities for that—they cannot pay what they do not have—but I do condemn the Scottish Executive. It has let down the elderly, who are in the twilight of their lives. They do not want jam tomorrow; they want a little butter now—to improve the quality of their lives, to avoid constant scrimping to make ends meet and to live out their remaining years with a degree of independence and happiness. That is all they ask for and it is what they deserve.

11:44

Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab): I would like to start by thanking the Conservatives for today's motion. Care for the elderly and disabled is key to any civilised society. I also welcome the opportunity to highlight some of the good work that is being carried out by the Scottish Executive, while also highlighting the mess that we have been left to deal with after 18 years of Tory neglect.

I am not sure whether the Tories are guilty of poor timing or poor judgment. I suspect that it is a little bit of both. The Tories lodged a motion highlighting the problem of bedblocking in the

same week as the Minister for Health and Community Care announced that £60 million would be allocated to health boards, with the key condition of a reduction in the number of delayed discharges. Once again the Tories are lagging behind the debate rather than leading it. It is with breathtaking hypocrisy that they accuse us, as we begin to deal with the mess left by the internal market, of restricting choice and, as we enter a period of the highest sustained spending in the history of the NHS, of systematically withdrawing financial support.

We are systematically increasing spending on social services: an extra £51.3 million this year, £43 million next year and a guaranteed £35.7 the following year. However, meeting the needs of older people and those with disabilities is not just about increased spending; we must also ensure that services are responsive to users' needs.

Shona Robison (North-East Scotland) (SNP): Can Karen Whitefield tell me whether, unlike in every other area in Scotland, the home help service in her area is increasing?

Karen Whitefield: I will get on to the services in Lanarkshire, which I am proud of, in a minute.

It is important that services are centred on people, as individuals, not on bureaucracy. The Sutherland report recommends that more people should receive high-quality care that allows them to stay in their own homes. That is the view of most of my constituents and the majority of elderly people in Scotland. I am pleased—

Kay Ullrich rose—

Karen Whitefield: I have already taken an intervention and time is short—I am sorry, I am moving on—

Kay Ullrich: Will the member—

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Patricia Ferguson): The member has indicated that she is not taking an intervention. Please sit down.

Karen Whitefield: I am therefore pleased that the Scottish Executive is responding to the need for improved and better co-ordinated home and support services. The joint futures group—

Mary Scanlon rose—

Karen Whitefield: I am sorry—we have heard enough of Tory views of health care. We need to talk about realities instead of fantasy.

The joint futures group on community care will respond to the Royal Commission on Long Term Care for the Elderly by creating the right conditions for productive partnership working between health boards and social care services. Improving home care services helps to alleviate the problem of bedblocking and frees resources for acute

services.

I am pleased to say that Lanarkshire Health Board has below average bedblocking and that there has been a drop between last year and this. The health board also reports an improved occupancy rate in private nursing homes between March 1996 and March 1999 of around 82 per cent of available beds. In the past year, the occupancy rate rose to 93 per cent. That improvement reflects a significant increase in the number of people supported by social work departments making use of resource transfer from health to social care as a consequence of the local joint strategy for care of the frail elderly.

To borrow a phrase, "the truth is out there"—but it is not in the Tory motion. The Scottish Executive is accused of following a politically correct agenda. If providing co-ordinated home-based health services for elderly and disabled people is political correctness, we are guilty. I call on the Conservative party to abandon its agenda of political hypocrisy and support the modernising programme of the Scottish Executive instead.

11:49

Shona Robison (North-East Scotland) (SNP):

I begin by paying tribute to the army of home helps who, in the face of adversity, keep a totally under-funded and stretched service going by their dedication to their clients, going beyond the call of duty. Karen Whitefield should speak to the home helps in her area. They will tell her that the service has been reduced year on year, cut after cut, as it has been elsewhere in Scotland.

I will draw on my experience as a home care organiser in one of the most poverty-stricken areas of Glasgow where we experienced a consistent reduction in the home help service and the closure of the home from hospital scheme. The service was inadequate to meet people's needs and restricted to those in immediate or imminent danger of being received into care. It therefore excluded many people whose lives would have been improved by receiving the home help service.

Those lucky enough to receive the home help service received an inadequate service, despite the best efforts of the dedicated home helps and the hard-working managers who had the weekly task of putting together the jigsaw puzzle to ensure that hundreds of clients received some level of service in the face of unfilled home help posts, frozen posts, sickness and holidays. That often involved last-minute phone calls to clients to ask whether they could manage as someone else was in more dire need. I am talking about people who needed assistance to get in and out of bed, assistance to wash and who needed to have their

meals prepared—all basic human needs. It is a cinderella service for some of the most vulnerable elderly and disabled members of the community.

On top of all of that, year upon year, I had to send out letters to tell people about the escalating charges; they were going to have to pay more for receiving less. I would often have to visit a client who had been identified as no longer being able to remain at home. We were then faced with another dilemma: it was almost impossible to have someone admitted to care in the area because of the strict limit on the number allowed to be admitted to residential or nursing homes due, yet again, to budget constraints. Once the quota was reached, no more people could be admitted, so it came down to the luck of the draw.

It is no wonder that we often had to resort to persuading reluctant GPs to agree to admit an elderly person into hospital, which would at least get them out of their home and into a safe environment. That was not easy when GPs also had instructions not to admit people to hospital due to bedblocking. I and my colleagues fought tooth and nail to get confused and frail elderly people into hospital because they were at risk. I make no apologies for that. That was and is the reality of community care the length and breadth of Scotland.

Something radical must be done. Iain Gray talked about the £60 million put in to assist discharge from hospital, but home from hospital schemes have already closed, so in essence that money will only set up what has already been removed; it is completely inadequate to solve the problem. We must have a radical overhaul of the system and a major injection of resources to ensure that they are adequate to provide intensive home care when that is required to allow someone to remain at home and residential and nursing home places when remaining at home is no longer an option.

Anything less than that is not good enough, because our elderly people deserve much better. They deserve, and have a right to, a quality of life.

11:53

Trish Godman (West Renfrewshire) (Lab): My last job in social work was to assess elderly patients in Drumchapel hospital for community care. I also trained workers in residential care and, as a councillor, was chair of an advisory group assessing standards in residential care. At that time I was also chair of the social work resources committee, which looked after the money for social work in Glasgow. My experience in this matter is obviously not narrow.

I do not believe that any member wants a return to when older people remained in hospital when it

was not necessary, but I believe that this motion, by implication, seeks to broaden the role of the private sector in the provision of social and health care. As Robert Brown said, Scotland has not gone down that road and I do not believe that it should.

The motion also states that citizens are being faced with escalating charges for variable services. Social work is not a universal service; it has always been means tested. In Renfrewshire, and indeed in Glasgow when I was there, each social work client gets a benefits check. In the past four years, that has generated some £3.65 million for home care clients in Renfrewshire.

The motion also says that the provision of local authority residential homes has steadily declined. That is true, as such homes are closing and the balance of provision in most authorities is heavily weighted in favour of non-local authority homes. However, users and carers are still offered a choice. One reason for so-called bedblocking is that users are holding out for a vacancy in their preferred home. It is correct that they should do that. The whole ethos of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 is that people should be able to choose where to go.

I am concerned by what Kay Ullrich, for example, said about the possibility of moving patients who are blocking acute beds into nursing homes after three months. I cannot think of any patient whom I have assessed being willing to go into a nursing home as a stopgap before going home. Patients who go into nursing homes are highly dependent and they know that, unfortunately, they will probably live there until they die.

Kay Ullrich: Will the member give way?

Trish Godman: No, I have no time to take an intervention.

I am very concerned about that method of dealing with blocked beds. There are many other methods.

Mary Scanlon spoke about local authority withdrawal of community care funding. I can only speak for Renfrewshire and Glasgow. Renfrewshire has allocated all new moneys that it has received for community care from central Government since 1996 to the expansion of provision. In addition, new moneys that have been allocated for the support of carers have been fully committed and the resource transfer of £3.7 million from the health board has been fully committed to developing community care services. Research for the Health and Community Care Committee's report on the subject may show that provision is patchy, but some councils are providing good community care services.

The Scottish Executive agenda is also about moving from traditional forms of residential care toward care and support at home or in different forms of supported accommodation in the community. Those approaches recognise and strengthen the rights, dignity and respect of vulnerable older people and adults with disabilities. They also reflect the wishes of users and carers. Representative groups, carers, users and statutory agencies are keen to develop a partnership to work together, with joint investment of resources by the key agencies. As Iain Gray said, that will take time. I believe that that is the hallmark of a mature democracy, not of political correctness. Our aim is to create a genuinely tolerable society for everyone, including our elderly constituents. I urge members to support the Executive amendment.

11:57

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): It is particularly important to mention the work of the voluntary sector. I strongly believe that, as Mary Scanlon and others have said, this society must recognise that it is failing pensioners. There is a danger that agism is replacing racism.

Recent attacks on the elderly by Labour politicians—outside the chamber—cannot continue or be condoned. In my constituency, pensioners have been made to feel worthless and neglected by South Ayrshire Council's closure of the Carrick Street halls. The symbolic act of closing lunch clubs and the Carrick Street halls makes pensioners feel belittled and devalued. That is not good enough in a civilised society. Selling property for profit must not come before providing for pensioners.

Responsibility for the care of those badly treated pensioners is falling more and more on to the voluntary sector. In Ayr and Troon, Churches are taking on the job of providing lunch clubs in church halls with a willingness and enthusiasm that is truly humbling. I pay tribute to the leadership and enthusiasm that has been shown by the Church leaders with whom I have been in touch on this matter.

As some members have said, a fundamental reassessment of the position of elderly people in society is needed. If it is Government policy gradually to reduce support for the elderly, we have a problem on our hands. The facts speak for themselves. Whether it is robbing pension funds, cutting tax relief for health care schemes, closing lunch clubs, or withdrawing facilities, the impression that is received is consistent: people should not get old because the Government will ignore their needs and neglect them. That must stop.

At present, the burden of care is being picked up by families and communities. If that is to continue, we need legislation to encourage the family unit, rather than to destroy it. We need the reinstatement of a significant tax relief for married couples, because the nuclear family unit provides the first line of care for the elderly. We need to smooth the path of and give more recognition to the voluntary sector for the increasing work that it is about to undertake on society's behalf. Above all, we need to change mindsets and to stop the Administration treating pensioners as second-class citizens.

Society must start squaring up to its obligations to a generation to whom we all owe a debt. Members have quoted many people. I shall quote from the Bible: "As ye sow, so shall ye reap". We must remember that we will all get old someday.

12:01

Dorothy-Grace Elder (Glasgow) (SNP): I think that that was the new member's maiden speech and I congratulate him on it.

I have been sitting here thinking that the catering department is not to blame for the great clashing of pots calling kettles black that we have heard this morning. The Conservatives—if I have got it right—are getting stuck into new Labour for the offence of following Tory policies. There is logic there somewhere, although I have not yet worked it out.

In the short time available to me, I want to talk about the elderly and those with disabilities. The talk everywhere is of social inclusion, but all I see on reality street is social exclusion, as facility after facility closes. Mary Scanlon referred to bullying. That is true of social work departments where good social workers attempting to stand up for their clients are being bullied.

Fortunately, here in the Scottish Parliament we meet real people who come from the outside to protest. I am sure that members will never forget the occasion when members of the deaf-blind community visited us. One young man, who has been deaf-blind from birth, told us that his one treat is a weekly visit to the bowling alley. He also told us that the treat must stop because his care attendant from Crossroads is being withdrawn.

People with multiple sclerosis cannot get decent wheelchairs, or beta interferon, which would help prevent many of them having to use a wheelchair in the first place. A typical letter in *The Herald* from someone with a disability says that, just a year ago, their home help charge was suddenly raised from £1,500 to £2,700 per annum and that this year they are being asked to pay a new charge of £104 per annum for use of a community service alarm that has hitherto been free. The writer says that at least that can be cancelled and they can

accept the risks of lack of mobility. They would not pay up for the alarm because they could not. The letter came from West Kilbride, but it could have come from anywhere.

The author, Anthony Powell, stated:

"Growing old is like being increasingly penalized for a crime you haven't committed."

That sums up our agist society. Age discrimination can kill. When the terrible news broke yesterday that the heart transplant unit at Glasgow royal infirmary might have to close—something that we will resist powerfully—the first fear was that people over 50 will not receive heart transplants and are going to be written off.

We are returning the elderly to an age of fear, which is where they came from. They were born into an age of fear, where people talked of the shilling cough and the three shilling cough—they were frightened to get ill because they could not afford treatment. They created the welfare state to end that fear. They are being sent to an age of new fear. They are frightened of losing their homes to pay for care in their last years, of coping with the withdrawal of home help services and of being written off by the national health service that they created with the deadly initials DNR—do not resuscitate. Even the language of today's bean-counting NHS is chilling and Orwellian newspeak.

Who are the bedblockers? They were once the young, strong men and women who brought this nation through a world war and who went on to create the welfare state from which we all benefit. The bedblockers are the men and women who worked and contributed to society for 50 years, from 14 into their 60s. They are the people who are being betrayed. They are the people who deserve the best of times for a change and who deserve at least to live with decency or dignity. If we let them down, they will rebel against us. No seat is safe, nor does it deserve to be.

12:05

Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab): Listening to Opposition members this morning makes me wonder whether they have been like Rip Van Winkle. Have they been to sleep and blotted out their consciousness in the years of Tory misrule? Do they have collective amnesia, or were they just plain insensitive to the suffering of our people in those years?

David Mundell's motion made me reflect on the long budget meetings when I was a councillor and depute leader of the then Fife Regional Council during those years. My recollections are of grim times, when the local authority budget-making process meant that, year after year, we were forced to identify cutbacks of £20 million and more. We do not need lessons from the

Opposition.

We have considered the past, but if we look into the crystal ball, what we see ahead of us with the Tories is the new Tory health tax. The Tories have said that people will have to go private for major operations. This is nothing short of a Tory tax rise on hard-working people. For example, the Tories have said that people should pay for hip operations. Hip replacements cost at least £5,000, but the Tories say that that is not expensive. Now they admit that they want to privatise the health service and to charge people for major operations.

Mr Davidson: Will the member give way?

Helen Eadie: No, I am sorry.

The Tories want people to pay to see their general practitioner. [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Helen Eadie: The Tories want people to use the NHS only for life-threatening conditions. They would reduce the NHS to a second-rate safety net service.

The Tories' own Norman Fowler started the care in the community policy ball rolling. Patricia Godman, Kay Ullrich and others have said this morning that they agree on the policy but that it never received the funding to make it work. My colleagues in the Scottish Executive, in having to work on that legacy, have an especially difficult task to cope with. The fundamental role of the local authority changed from being a provider of services to being an enabler of services, the bottom line being that local authorities were handed one of their most important, difficult tasks in history.

I represent Dunfermline East constituency—a bit of a misnomer because the constituency does not have any part of Dunfermline in it. There is no shadow of doubt that there is a strong tradition of concern for and care of the elderly in that area. Reflecting that, the constituency has many active pensioners and carers groupings with a history of working in close partnership with the council and with Fife Health Board for better services.

Fifers believe in pragmatic politics. The Labour council considers the care of its elderly in a wider and more holistic way. It is the only council in Scotland to have free public transport for pensioners. Only two other places in the UK have such a scheme: Liverpool and London. Some £13 million of public money is spent on subsidising buses and trains for the benefit of all elderly and disabled people in Fife. I sincerely hope that, in the fullness of time, Scotland can show a guiding light and can provide free public transport services for all our pensioners.

The Scottish Executive recognises and

acknowledges that there are real problems to be tackled in our communities. However, against a background of years of Tory neglect, it is having to seek the co-operation of local authorities and health boards in what is an extremely difficult mission. If we consider some of—

Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): Will the member give way?

Helen Eadie: I am sorry. I do not have time.

Turning to the bedblocking that has been talked about this morning, the Scottish Executive is committed to ensuring that the problem of delayed discharge is dealt with. Like Karen Whitefield, I welcomed the news on 1 May, when Susan Deacon announced the £60 million of the new budget money. In a move designed to deliver better results, the money is going to health boards with strings attached. The money is to be used to improve performance, and health boards will be given their share of the cash only when they have shown how they will use it to improve patient services. One of the key target areas for improvement is a major drive to reduce the number of delayed discharges from hospitals, which lead to blocked beds in Scotland.

I hope that we will support the minister this morning.

12:10

Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD): Winding up the debate will be quite difficult, because it has had many different strands. I will try to go through what members have said and pick out the underlying themes.

Information has been a running theme throughout the debate. Mary Scanlon mentioned Scotland-wide needs assessment. Bruce Crawford talked about aids and adaptations and the wide difference in provision around the country. Robert Brown picked up on the need for information and, as Trish Godman said, information can be used to help people to access benefits and bring much more money into the system. Trish Godman and Helen Eadie outlined areas of good practice; such information can be shared. We need to tighten up systems and collect information in ways that will enable identification of needs, co-operative working and monitoring of effectiveness. Iain Gray mentioned the quarterly review of delayed discharge, which will be useful. That information can be fed into the system to make it better.

Mary Scanlon also mentioned the acute services review. That review is not necessarily a bad thing; indeed, it is very necessary. The review must be done properly and must involve people, but when resources are under pressure, they must be used effectively. To me, reviewing and rationalising

services is a good way forward if we do it properly, take people with us, and explain what we are doing and why.

Iain Gray gave recognition to informal carers. I want to highlight the work of young carers, to which an awful lot more attention needs to be paid. Those young people are picking up adult responsibilities without having access, in an adult way, to support and resources. That is a key area.

Kay Ullrich talked about years of underfunding, especially for local authorities, and I quite agree with her on that. I was astounded by Keith Harding, who went on about pensions and local authorities, funding for both of which was eroded systematically by the Tories. I was also astounded by his remarks about the working time directive. We all want more services, but not at the expense of people having to work long hours for poor pay, with bad training. That was appalling.

Mr Harding: If the member had listened, she would know that all I was saying was that the working time directive had had an impact on nursing home costs that local councils will not meet. The directive is putting nursing homes in difficulties, and many are closing.

Nora Radcliffe: I think that I heard exactly what was said, and my remarks stand. We cannot provide more and better services at the expense of the staff who work in the homes. We have to meet the costs; it is right that we should do so.

Mr Davidson: Does the member agree that it is quite awful that Aberdeenshire Council has passed on huge charges for warden services to the elderly as a means of trying to balance its badly run books? Does she agree that it is bad for a council to single out a defenceless part of the community and deprive the elderly of the little money that they have?

Nora Radcliffe: I challenge that. Aberdeenshire Council is not badly run. Given the council's funding, it provides services at a much lower cost per head of population than almost any other council in the country. The council is grievously underfunded and is having to take measures that are deeply regrettable, but that is not down to bad management.

Services need resources, but resources can mean less dependency on services. The basic old age pension has been devalued over two decades. If people of pension age had a reasonable income, they would be far less dependent on social services and health services. The most effective thing that we, or Westminster, could do for the elderly and the disabled would be to whack up the basic pension. It was interesting to hear the minister say that people mostly wanted direct payment schemes that enabled them to purchase their own services. That brings us back

to the point that if we give people a decent income, they can sort out their affairs for themselves.

12:15

Mr Duncan Hamilton (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Although this has been a reasonable debate, Helen Eadie's speech gave the lie to any suggestion that last week's rebellion over warrant sales would herald a new, refreshing era of independent and radical criticism from the Labour back benches. Regrettably, her speech was nothing more than a Scottish Executive press release.

I will concentrate on three areas, one of which—institutional agism in the NHS and the question whether rationing exists—has not received sufficient attention in this debate. I will also touch briefly on local authority funding and the position regarding the Royal Commission on Long Term Care for the Elderly.

The Executive has said that the rationing of health care—the idea that the elderly would be pushed down the list, would not receive treatment or would be excluded altogether—does not exist; in fact, we heard the same claim only a few days ago. Everyone is interested to hear the minister's response to the criticisms of the British Geriatrics Society, which has cited examples of over-75s being excluded from important Government targets and of over-65s being rarely offered breast cancer screening, even though two thirds of mortalities from that disease come from that age bracket. Such criticisms suggest that there is a systemic problem with older people's access to the same level of service that others receive in the NHS. We must identify whether that problem exists, and if it does exist, I hope that the minister will act quickly to ensure that such unacceptable discrimination in the NHS does not continue.

On the issue of local authority funding, we should start where Nora Radcliffe left off. If a coalition partner claims that there is grievous underfunding of local authorities, perhaps the problem exists. Furthermore, we have not yet had an answer to Kay Ullrich's question whether local authorities' claim that they are not receiving adequate resources was right or wrong. Labour councils are blaming the Labour Executive for the situation, but the Executive has not provided any answers.

Let us examine the figures. Since 1993, there has been a real-terms drop of 9 per cent in local authority funding. The Tories should not look too smug, as that includes the period when their party was in power. For 2000-01, there is a shortfall of £298 million in local authority funding across Scotland. Those figures are from the Labour-

controlled Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, not from the SNP research department. Is it any surprise that there is bedblocking and that 2,500 to 3,000 are receiving inappropriate care? That is the problem that we must address. Until we get into the figures for local authority spending and make such funding adequate, we will not make any necessary progress.

Shona Robison made a very telling speech about the reality of the shortfall in local authority funding and how that will affect services such as home helps and the ability to help people to care for themselves at home. Those services are critical to the philosophy of community care, and will not happen without adequate resources.

The Royal Commission on Long Term Care for the Elderly has become something of a totem for this Government's commitment to the elderly. Although no one wants to undermine attempts to implement some of the commission's recommendations—for example, the national care commission, which the minister mentioned and which should be welcomed—we must ask about the Executive's attitude to the rest of the report. As so many measures, such as the three-month disregard mentioned by Kay Ullrich, could be implemented overnight by the Government, we must ask why it chooses not to do so. It has been suggested that some of those powers are reserved to Westminster; however, that is not really true. Age Concern and other organisations have said that all but two of the key recommendations can be implemented by this Executive, if the will is there.

Most people in Scotland understand that we need a rational and mature debate about provision of care for the elderly in the NHS and local authorities and as part of the community care philosophy. However, such provision must be backed by adequate resources. Without that, and without the implementation of the Sutherland commission's recommendations, most people will rightly say that the Government's commitment has been radically undermined.

12:19

Iain Gray: I have listened to the debate carefully. I appreciate and have certainly never denied that people face real problems and that services must improve. My point, however, is that considerable progress has been made. In the first year of the Parliament, a firm foundation has been laid for genuine and sustainable improvement in services for some of our most vulnerable citizens. That does not indicate indifference or complacency—it is a fact.

We are helping agencies to work together to

focus on people's needs, setting higher standards, supporting Scotland's carers and increasing investment in health and social care. As I have said, we believe that listening is central to getting that right—taking the time to listen and to consult on issues such as, for example, national care standards.

I am happy to listen in the chamber too. I did listen carefully and thought that I heard Mary Scanlon announce a Tory policy to remove community care from local authorities and shift it to the NHS. I confess that the idea flashed by before she could develop it, so I cannot be certain that that is what I heard. Trish Godman heard an echo of privatisation, which was perhaps there too, but Mary did not go on to develop that either. She did not develop either of the two apparently new policies that she announced.

I listened in vain for constructive engagement from the SNP in how we can improve services for the elderly and disabled. I confess that I saw a glimmer of a constructive proposal in the SNP amendment, but maybe I was clutching at straws. Opposition members, as always, have focused on spinning the numbers, so that a £53 million increase in local authority social work is called a cut and introducing a proper census to identify regularly the scale of delayed discharge is called ignoring the problem.

Mr Hamilton: Will the minister give way?

Iain Gray: No, I am sorry.

Increasing NHS resources by £300 million and then by a further £173 million is called failing to invest. Progressing Sir Stewart Sutherland's recommendations on the care commission, on carers, on direct payments and on joint working between agencies is described as gathering dust and touchy-feely soundbites. Duncan Hamilton may not have described it as that, but Kay Ullrich certainly did. She referred to the sound of dragging feet. She has told me before that she hears dragging feet. I am quite concerned about it. I am reminded of Caligula, who constantly heard the sound of galloping horses in his head. Things ended rather badly for him.

Dorothy-Grace Elder: Will the minister give way?

Iain Gray: No.

Where was the debate about the new models of sheltered and very sheltered housing that I have seen in Brechin and Moray, where older people are being given the chance to move back to their own tenancies, which offer independence within the security of an intensive home care package? Where was the debate on community rehabilitation teams, such as the one in Edinburgh, which are so successful that they can lead to a reduction in

dependency following a hospital stay? Where was the debate on day care and respite for those with dementia, provided in homes not institutions, as I have seen in Stirling, Falkirk and Clackmannan? What about the brokerage of independent living fund direct payments in Grampian, which is giving disabled young people homes, jobs and the lives that they want?

I agree that too many people do not have access to those kind of improved services, but they are around and I would like a rational debate about them. I am open to suggestions from anywhere as to how we can do more to spread good practice and bring in new and better approaches.

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): Will the minister give way?

Iain Gray: Certainly.

Mr Hamilton: I see that the minister will take interventions from his own party.

Cathie Craigie: If the minister would like to learn more about spreading good practice, I invite him to come to my constituency, where not only was the first charter mark award in Scotland for a local authority elderly care home won last year, but the NHS has won a charter mark award for its care of the elderly. Will the minister come to see such partnership working in practice?

Iain Gray: I thank Cathie Craigie for that invitation. I say to Duncan Hamilton that that was a tougher intervention than most of his.

We have yet to hear from the Tories, for whom David Mundell is winding up. When I came in at the end of the previous debate, Peter Peacock pointed out that David Mundell is a reasonable and positive member of the Parliament. I go along with that, so I look forward to hearing him develop the policies that were hinted at by Mary Scanlon. I look forward to hearing about the Tories' new ideas, their alternative approaches and their proposed strategic shifts in service delivery. Presiding Officer, I am nothing if not an optimist.

12:24

David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con): I feel rather like Johann Lamont did last week during the warrant sales debate, when she received praise from Tommy Sheridan.

It is important to have had this debate and, as I said at the conclusion of the previous debate, it is important for the Parliament to have discussed this morning's issues. Iain Gray, in his winding-up speech, mentioned some other things that are worthy of debate in this chamber in the more expansive way that is possible with the time available. Robert Brown made a similar point. We

could have had the whole morning devoted to either of the two topics. We wanted to raise a further important issue within the time that was available to us. The two topics are fruitful ones, and are worthy of discussion in the Parliament.

Iain Gray: I appreciate the fact that the motion has covered a lot of issues, on which we could spend a great deal of time. Within David Mundell's motion is a criticism of what is described as the Executive's "agenda of political correctness". I point out that the Conservatives have on occasion used their debating time to discuss matters such as section 2A, when the same time could have been spent discussing services for the elderly and the disabled. I hope that such discussions will be the pattern for the future.

David Mundell: As I indicated at the end of the previous debate, it was the Executive that put section 2A into the political environment. The Executive has allocated time to the census debate, time which could have been used much more usefully to discuss topics such as those chosen for today. I hope that this morning's debates set a pattern for the discussion of issues that people are concerned about.

I want to comment on two contributions. I could agree with most of Trish Godman's contribution, but when I drafted the motion, I had no hint of privatisation in my mind. As far as I am aware, there is no such hint in our policies here in Scotland. As for Helen Eadie, I do not know where she got the statements that she referred to. The Conservative party in Scotland will make policies for Scotland, and that is underpinned by our view that all NHS treatment in Scotland is free at the point of delivery. That is clearly our position. I do not know what the source of Helen's material was, but it was not accurate in relation to our position in Scotland.

We often talk in terms of social inclusion, and not a day goes by in this Parliament when it is not mentioned. That is not a topic that people talk about in the post office queue or in the supermarket, and it is therefore important that we discuss the issues that people really understand and are concerned about. Those include the question of why, for example, people in Stranraer are faced with the cost of their meals on wheels service rising overnight from £1.05 to £2.99, the highest price in Scotland. The same meals on wheels service may cost £1.40 here in Edinburgh.

A number of views have been expressed in relation to the past, and many MSPs seem to be wedded to a blame culture. From my positive stance, I really want to improve things by dealing with the immediate practical problems facing elderly and disabled people throughout Scotland. Everyone must acknowledge the fact that the elderly population is growing. In parts of the South

of Scotland, which I represent, one in four people is over the age of 60, and a growing part of the population is over 80.

It is vital that an effective strategy to ensure that people receive the help and support that they require lies at the heart of the Executive's priorities. It is clear from a range of evidence that Scottish pensioners feel let down, and not just by the UK Labour Government's promises of massive pension rises—promises which have come to nothing, of course. They also feel let down by the way in which the Executive has presided over an allocation to local authorities whereby council tax increases have outstripped pension increases.

Pensioners and disabled people find themselves paying for services for which they did not previously pay or facing massive price hikes. I have given Dumfries and Galloway as an example, although I do not regard that council as typical as it is led by an odd coalition between Labour and the SNP, which appears to disagree on everything bar allowance payments.

In the south-west, an area that is typical of Scotland, elderly people are being deprived of a choice about the home in which they will receive nursing care. I do not want to comment on the legal action or the auditor's report in relation to externalisation of residential homes in Dumfries and Galloway, but this Parliament must be able to reaffirm its view that people are entitled to freedom of choice when they are required to move into residential or nursing care.

The basic entitlement of any elderly person in Scotland should be the freedom to choose an establishment that is close to their community and their family or where people that they have known all their lives are living. They do not deserve to be shipped off to a place in which the council has been able to purchase spaces on a bulk basis and which is miles away from their domestic connection. They certainly do not want to be part of the bedblocking problem that Mary Scanlon mentioned earlier.

Bedblocking is one of the clearest ways in which the Executive will be judged on its aim to deliver joined-up government and an holistic approach. It is clear to the public that, while having elderly people in NHS beds might save £300 to £400 a week, it costs another section of the public purse nearly £1,000 a week and deprives someone else of a medical place. We need to see evidence of co-ordination between agencies rather than a scramble for funds.

A number of the most significant issues for the elderly and disabled groups are, as Kay Ullrich and Duncan Hamilton pointed out, reserved matters. Pensions, which we debated some weeks ago, is an obvious issue, as is the UK

Government's response to the Sutherland report. We must have that response as soon as possible. The Government must work more closely with the UK Government, not just on politically correct issues, but on issues that matter to the Scottish people. The Executive must adopt a programme that delivers to our elderly and disabled citizens affordable services, freedom of choice and the dignity and respect that they deserve.

Business Motion

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): The next item on the agenda is consideration of business motion S1M-795, in the name of Mr Tom McCabe on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, which sets out our business programme.

The Deputy Minister for Parliament (Iain Smith): Before I move the motion, I draw members' attention to the amendment to this afternoon's business to take a motion without debate from the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body on the setting up of the Scottish Parliament branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

I also advise the chamber that the SNP business for next Wednesday afternoon will be on the subject of independence.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following revision to the Business Motion approved on 27 April 2000—

Thursday 4 May 2000

after Debate on the Role of Sport in Social Inclusion, insert—

followed by SPCB Motion on the establishment of the Scottish Parliament CPA Branch

and (b) the following programme of business—

Wednesday 10 May 2000

2.30 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Non-Executive Business – Scottish National Party

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business – debate on the subject of S1M-769 Mr John Munro: The Black Cuillin

Thursday 11 May 2000

9.30 am Ministerial Statement on Drugs Action Plan

followed by Committee Business – Transport and Environment Committee Report on Telecommunications

followed by Business Motion

2.30 pm Question Time

3.10 pm First Minister's Question Time

followed by Debate on Special Educational Needs

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business – debate on the

subject of S1M-737 David Davidson: A90 Upgrade

Wednesday 17 May 2000

9.30 am Time for Reflection

followed by Executive Debate on Glasgow Regeneration

12.00 pm Ministerial Statement

2.30 pm Continuation of the Executive Debate on Glasgow Regeneration

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 18 May 2000

9.30 am Executive Debate on Community Care

12.00 pm Ministerial Statement

followed by Business Motion

2.30 pm Question Time

3.10 pm First Minister's Question Time

3.30 pm Executive Business

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

The Presiding Officer: The question is, that motion S1M-795, in the name of Mr Tom McCabe, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

12:34

Meeting suspended until 14:30.

14:30

On resuming—

Ms Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer.

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): Give me a second.

Ms MacDonald: Only a second, Sir David.

The Presiding Officer: We will hear a point of order from Margo MacDonald.

Ms MacDonald: In view of the Parliament's stated objective of achieving transparency and accountability in its dealings, I am interested to discover why—in light of today's news that the Holyrood project's sponsor will carry out her duties no longer—you ruled as inadmissible a question on her role as a civil servant, for which I believe the Scottish Executive is accountable?

The Presiding Officer: I did not rule that it was inadmissible; I said that I would not accept an emergency question on the matter, because the matter is not an emergency. We will get on with question 1, from Pauline McNeill.

Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

National Health Service (Asylum Seekers)

1. Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether any additional funding has been allocated to the Greater Glasgow Primary Care NHS Trust to cover health support services for asylum seekers accommodated at Kingsway Court and other sites in Glasgow. (S10-1605)

The Deputy Minister for Community Care (Iain Gray): Under normal budgetary rules, a substantial part of any additional costs will automatically be picked up centrally. I expect Greater Glasgow Health Board to meet the remainder from the overall resources that are available to it, which amount to more than £800 million this year.

Pauline McNeill: Will the minister join me in warmly welcoming asylum seekers to Kingsway Court in my constituency of Glasgow Kelvin? Does he accept that my concerns are related to Glasgow's health budget and that there is a danger that placing a further financial burden on the primary care NHS trust will further disadvantage the city of Glasgow, which has the worst health record and the poorest population in Scotland?

Iain Gray: I agree that we have a responsibility to make proper arrangements for those who seek asylum and refuge on our shores. It is right that Scotland and our cities play their part in that. I am confident that Glasgow will do so and that the NHS will play its proper part. As Pauline McNeill knows, the Executive continues to work on the funding of health services in Glasgow, taking into account Glasgow's particular health problems. We are doing that in particular through the on-going work on the Arbuthnott review, which has been debated in Parliament.

Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): Does the minister agree that the Government's voucher system is degrading and dehumanising, that it does not provide a reasonable standard of living and that it is completely alien to the Scottish tradition of hospitality?

Iain Gray: As members know, the arrangements for housing and living costs are a matter for the Home Office as part of an arrangement reached between it and the host local authorities—in this case Glasgow City Council.

Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab): Does the minister agree that it is unacceptable that additional funding is not being made available for health, when additional resources have been made available for matters such as housing and social work services that are making additional demands of local authorities?

Iain Gray: I indicated in my original answer that some account is taken of the increase in the patient load in primary care through the general medical service's non-cash limited budget. That budget will be uprated to deal with additional patients. Generally, what is important in the debate is a sense of proportion. Greater Glasgow Health Board is responsible for looking after the health of just under 1 million people. When we talk in those terms, the increase is relatively small and I am confident that the health board will take the measures that it feels are necessary to ensure that services are delivered.

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): Question 2 has been withdrawn.

Special Needs Education (Sport)

3. Allan Wilson (Cunninghame North) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive, in the light of the move towards inclusion of pupils with special needs in mainstream schools, what provision SportsScotland has made for these pupils in its school sports programmes. (S10-1631)

The Deputy Minister for Culture and Sport (Rhona Brankin): SportsScotland helps to provide sporting opportunities for children who have disabilities in mainstream schools in several ways, including funding the BT top play top sport

programme, the sportsability programme, the Royal Mail's ready, willing and able for sport programme and a Scottish disabilities sport resource pack for teachers, leaders and coaches.

Allan Wilson: Does the minister see a role for school sports co-ordinators in developing access to sport for young people with disabilities? If so, will she encourage the appointment of co-ordinators in areas where there are none at present?

Rhona Brankin: Yes. In my speech in the debate following question time, I will make an announcement about the number of school sports co-ordinators currently in place. School sports co-ordinators have a central role in developing programmes of physical activity and sport for youngsters with disability. That is one of the specific areas that school sports co-ordinators have been asked to look at. They will be evaluated according to whether they have been successful in providing access to sport for all children, whatever their ability.

Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): Can the minister assure us that, when she and her ministerial colleagues are developing personal learning plans for children with special needs and disabilities, sport and physical activity will be included as an important way of helping such children to develop their motor neurone capacity?

Rhona Brankin: I am sure that my colleagues would agree that sport and physical activity is a very important part of the curriculum, whatever the needs and abilities of the youngster concerned. In the case of youngsters with physical disabilities, specific, tightly targeted programmes—sometimes involving physiotherapists—are necessary. Those would be seen as an important component of personal learning plans.

Lifelong Learning

4. Mr Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how the extra money given to further education colleges will promote lifelong learning. (S10-1630)

The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Nicol Stephen): The additional £28.4 million will help further education colleges to provide an additional 20,000 student places this year, targeted particularly at those from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. That will enable them to achieve their full educational, training and employment potential. Of that funding, £10 million will go towards providing the latest information and communications technology.

Mr McNeil: Can the minister assure the Parliament that that money will be directed at those groups that find it difficult to access further

education? I am referring to the unemployed, contract workers and the low paid. If that is what he intends, how will he achieve it?

Nicol Stephen: That is what I intend. Many of the Executive's policies are aimed at achieving greater social inclusion. It is our aim that 20 per cent of the growth in student numbers should come from the most deprived areas of Scotland, as a way of promoting social inclusion. There is a premium payment to further education colleges worth £4.3 million for taking students from the 20 per cent of most deprived areas in Scotland. On top of that, there has been a 12.8 per cent increase in the funding for student bursaries, which is well ahead of the increase in student numbers. Again, that is targeted at encouraging the groups that Duncan McNeil has mentioned into further education.

David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con): What steps will be taken to ensure that the money to which the minister has referred will be used to develop IT skills in both teaching and learning?

Nicol Stephen: We are concerned to encourage more activity in that area. There is a balance between the Executive passing down funds to the Scottish Further Education Funding Council and the funding council distributing that funding to individual colleges. The extra £10 million to which I referred is the allocation that the funding council has made to the individual colleges, to ensure that they expand their distance-learning courses and participate further in internet and e-commerce activity, as a way of driving forward the knowledge economy. If, despite those extra funds, that does not happen on the ground, the Executive and the funding council will want to take firmer action to ensure that it does. However, at the moment we are taking a co-operative, partnership approach. From the great explosion that has taken place in initiatives associated with e-commerce, we are convinced that there will be increased activity in that area.

Local Government Finance

5. Mr Gil Paterson (Central Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it has considered the memorandum on local government finance by Professor Arthur Midwinter dated 25 April 2000 and what response it is proposing to make. (S10-1636)

The Minister for Finance (Mr Jack McConnell): Professor Midwinter's memorandum was submitted to the Local Government Committee to inform its consideration of the budget for 2001-02. The Executive looks forward to hearing the committee's views, which I will take into account in the preparation of the budget proposals.

Mr Paterson: Given that Professor Midwinter is using the Executive's own figures, does the minister accept that the Executive's support for local government is now £0.5 billion less, in real terms, than it was seven years ago?

Mr McConnell: No. I think that those figures are regularly distorted. The figures for this year show one significant fact: the agreed grant settlement for local authorities for next year contains the highest increase that there has been for seven years. That increase is resulting in significant investment in education, in social work and in other vital services. That is good news for local government. We can build on the settlement through the consultation process with the Local Government Committee in future years.

Mr Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): Is the minister making any plans for next year to ensure that the real-terms decline in revenue support grant that is allocated to Aberdeenshire Council is reversed? He will know that my constituents are, yet again, having to cope with an 8 per cent increase in council tax and with real cuts in council services.

Mr McConnell: At the end of a local authority budget process that was, at times, difficult, it is helpful that Aberdeenshire Council, like one or two other councils, has been shown not to have had to make the more dramatic changes in its budgets that had been predicted during the winter. However, it is important that we learn lessons from this year's settlement and that we improve on the settlement next year. That process is under way. I am meeting the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities again next week and I am meeting the Local Government Committee on Tuesday. I look forward to those discussions being productive in the months ahead.

Mr Murray Tosh (South of Scotland) (Con): Does the minister accept that the squeeze in council resources that has been identified by Professor Midwinter is at the root of the disastrous reduction in council expenditure on roads maintenance in recent years? A reduction from £400 million to £300 million a year is pretty substantial in my judgment. The newspapers have trailed the substantial increases that it is believed Mr Prescott will make next month. Will the Executive ensure that the Scottish consequential will, at least in part, be allocated to Scottish local authorities to allow them to carry out essential road and bridge maintenance?

Mr McConnell: I welcome Mr Tosh's support for the Executive's efforts to turn round the years of decline in the maintenance and building of roads in Scotland. I also welcome his denial of the performance of the previous Government in dramatically running down that budget in the early and mid 1990s. That Government's plans, had

they been allowed to continue, would have led to the decimation of the Scottish road network. I will welcome his support when we announce further plans in the months and years ahead.

Scottish Health Technology Assessment Centre

6. Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive whether the Scottish health technology assessment centre will ensure equality of access throughout Scotland to new and existing drugs and treatments. (S10-1597)

The Minister for Health and Community Care (Susan Deacon): The newly established Health Technology Board for Scotland will provide a single source of national advice to the national health service in Scotland on new drugs and therapies. That will ensure that effective innovations move quickly into mainstream practice and will help to ensure equity of access across Scotland.

Mary Scanlon: The Health Technology Board for Scotland will provide advice to health boards. In a written answer to me, the minister stated:

"Boards will be expected to take account of that advice".—[*Official Report, Written Answers*, 26 April 2000; Vol 6, p 25-26.]

Is it the case that health boards will still ultimately determine which drugs and treatments are provided, and that postcode prescribing will not be stamped out, contrary to what the minister promised last November?

Susan Deacon: I find a certain irony in the fact that a member of the Conservative party seems to be implying that we should dictate to the health service what it does, given that the Tories presided over the fragmentation of the NHS into a series of local entities. We are now putting it back together again.

As I have been setting out to the NHS this very morning, we are now putting in place an effective new relationship with the NHS in Scotland that will allow local health bodies to operate effectively, but that will establish a centre of national guidance and advice. We are committed to ending postcode prescribing, which we think is wrong. We have put in place a body that is open, transparent and involves patient and service representatives. Its advice will be published openly. It is for health boards to look to that advice in taking local decisions. I would find it surprising, to say the least, if they were not to follow that advice; they would have to justify publicly a decision not to do so.

Ms Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (SNP): As the minister widened the question from postcode

prescribing, I wonder whether I might ask what would happen if a health board were to do what she considered was less than a good job in looking after its own patch. There is an example from this patch, where, we are told, it is being suggested that the Lauriston building—a new building serving the Edinburgh royal infirmary—should be put up for sale, which would mean that we lost city-centre facilities. No one would have even contemplated that a year ago in Edinburgh. Will the minister consider telling Lothian Health Board and the trust concerned that under no circumstances should the Lauriston building be sold off?

The Presiding Officer: Is that to do with the original question?

Ms MacDonald: Yes.

Members: No.

Members: Yes.

Susan Deacon: No.

Ms MacDonald: Susan widened the question in her answer.

The Presiding Officer: Is the building a technology centre?

I am assured that that matter is not linked to the original question; we will move on.

Caesarean Births

7. Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what factors have led to the high proportion of Caesarean births in Scotland and what reasons there are for disparities between different health board areas. (S10-1615)

The Minister for Health and Community Care (Susan Deacon): A rising rate of Caesarean sections has been observed throughout the western world. Although there is no scientific basis for a correct rate of Caesarean section, the Scottish Executive will examine the issue as part of our work to develop a national maternity services framework.

Scott Barrie: Given the significant differences in the rates between different health board areas, does the minister agree that a Caesarean section should be carried out only for a genuine medical reason or because of the woman's choice, rather than because of the view of an individual obstetrician or group of obstetricians?

Susan Deacon: We discussed maternity services in a members' business debate last week, when I made clear the importance that I attach to developing effective maternity services that enable women to make informed choices about their care right through pregnancy and in

giving birth. No one really knows why there has been an increase in the rate of Caesarean sections. It is important that we ensure that practices are used only when clinically appropriate. We must also ensure that women are in a position to make informed choices. We are now putting in place the first ever national framework for maternity services in Scotland; its first report will be published in October. I think that it will provide a very effective and informed basis for moving forward.

Mr Keith Raffan (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD): Would the minister care to comment on the proposals by Forth Valley Acute NHS Trust to centralise maternity services in Falkirk? There are serious concerns in the Stirling and Clackmannanshire areas about the impact that that could have, especially on those who live in rural areas. I know that the matter is a decision for the board, but will she assure us that she will monitor the consultation process undertaken by the trust and the health board, to ensure that the views of people in the area are fully considered?

The Presiding Officer: That question also seems wider than the original question.

Susan Deacon: Well, that—

The Presiding Officer: It is. Do you want to answer it?

Mr Raffan: It is about maternity services.

Susan Deacon: I think that it is important and relevant that—

The Presiding Officer: Is it relevant to the main question?

Susan Deacon: In the sense that it is about the future of maternity services, I would judge so—but I am not the Presiding Officer.

The Presiding Officer: The question was about the variation in the rate of Caesarean births; I do not think that Mr Raffan's question is relevant. We will move on. I ask members to ensure that supplementary questions are relevant to the main issue.

Multiple Sclerosis

8. Dorothy-Grace Elder (Glasgow) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive whether there are plans to increase the number of specialist nurses for multiple sclerosis patients and what the current number of such specialist nurses is. (S10-1607)

The Minister for Health and Community Care (Susan Deacon): Information is not held centrally on the current number of such specialist nurses. It is for NHS trusts to determine the number needed to meet the clinical needs of their local population and to recruit appropriately qualified nurses.

Dorothy-Grace Elder: Minister, really! I must thank Susan Deacon for answering the question, but not for the answer that she gave. I must also add that some of us are rather tired of the blancmange non-answers that we are getting. The Multiple Sclerosis Society in Scotland claims that there are only seven specialist nurses for MS patients throughout the whole of Scotland. That is only seven nurses to 8,000 MS patients, many of whom are, as the minister is aware, young people, including mothers, struggling to stay on their feet.

How does the minister intend to deal with the inequalities throughout Scotland? For example, Greater Glasgow Health Board has refused to supply interferon to help to keep people on their feet who have been approved for beta interferon treatment. Will she introduce a national policy for treatment of MS patients, as Shetland has requested?

Susan Deacon: Let me make it clear that I very much understand the needs of MS sufferers. I have spent a lot of time—both as a minister and in dealing with constituency cases—looking into a range of the issues that Dorothy-Grace Elder has raised. I have also responded in some detail to a number of written parliamentary questions on this subject, from her and from other members. If she looks at the *Official Report*, she will see that the first answer that I gave was a precise answer to the specific issue that she raised. However, I am delighted to have the chance to make some wider points.

First, as we discussed in relation to Mary Scanlon's question, the Health Technology Board for Scotland has been established. That board will play a crucial role in examining treatments such as beta interferon. It will attempt to provide one source of national advice, because there is no national consensus among clinicians at the moment about the appropriate use of that treatment.

Secondly, we are putting in place an appropriate balance between national planning and local decision making. For example, in August last year, we established the Scottish integrated work force planning group. That will help us to look at where, or if, there are gaps in specialties in terms of nurses and doctors and to plan training and resources effectively across Scotland, while still enabling local health bodies to take local decisions.

Finally, at a national level, work is going forward under the auspices of the Scottish needs assessment programme to consider the whole range of needs of MS sufferers and to examine the range of treatments and support from which they could benefit. That will inform our policy making at a national level.

Childminders (Registration)

9. Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it has any plans to review the legislation regarding the registration of childminders. (S1O-1634)

The Minister for Children and Education (Mr Sam Galbraith): I have been considering responses to last year's consultation on the regulation of early child care. That includes regulation of childminders. I will announce conclusions shortly.

Irene Oldfather: I thank the minister for his answer. Is he aware that there is an anomaly within the system, whereby child carers who look after children in the family home are not able to register as childminders and so cannot qualify for child care tax credit? Will he give an assurance that he will look into that as part of the consultation?

Mr Galbraith: It is fair to say that the regulation and registration of early education and child care is probably one of the most tricky problems that I have had to deal with in some considerable time. It requires a great deal of my attention. I am just about ready to make announcements on it but, before I do, I will give due consideration to the point raised by Irene Oldfather.

Debt Recovery Law

10. Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive when it intends to make a policy statement on debt recovery law in Scotland. (S1O-1602)

The Deputy First Minister and Minister for Justice (Mr Jim Wallace): In my statement to the Justice and Home Affairs Committee on 31 August last year, I said that we must

"ensure proper consideration of the diligence system as a whole."—[*Official Report, Justice and Home Affairs Committee*, 31 August 1999; c 21.]

That was repeated in November 1999 in the Executive's memorandum on Mr Sheridan's bill and it remains our view. Arrangements for taking forward that review are under way.

In respect of poindings and warrant sales, the Executive is committed to abolition, but on the basis that an effective and humane alternative is put in its place. That was also the conclusion of the Justice and Home Affairs Committee. I hope that our proposal to take this forward on a cross-party parliamentary basis will command the support of all members of the Parliament.

Alex Neil: Will the minister state that—contrary to press reports at the weekend allegedly coming from the Executive—the Executive has no intention of killing the Abolition of Poindings and

Warrant Sales Bill by stealth? Furthermore, will he give an assurance that he will set the objective of having that bill and the complementary measures ready for implementation no later than 2001?

Mr Wallace: Mr Neil will recall that I said last week that we hoped to introduce legislation before the end of 2000-01. That is our objective. It is certainly not our intention to kill off by stealth the abolition of poindings and warrant sales. We believe—the Justice and Home Affairs Committee, too, expressed this view—that, standing alone, Mr Sheridan's bill is flawed and that additional measures are required to ensure that a humane and workable system replaces poindings and warrant sales.

Mr John McAllion (Dundee East) (Lab): Does the minister accept that there is a distinction between the reform of the present system of seizing people's moveables—the system of poindings and warrant sales—and outright abolition of that system and any other system of seizing people's moveables for the recovery of debt? If he accepts that distinction, will he make it clear whether the Executive seeks to delay the enactment of Tommy Sheridan's bill so that it can present proposals for the abolition of any system of seizing people's moveables as a means of debt recovery or so that it can replace the present system with another system for doing precisely that?

Mr Wallace: Last week, I said that we were committed to the abolition of poindings and warrant sales but believed that there ought to be some system for diligence against moveable property. I think that people would find it intolerable if those who can pay do not pay. There has to be some system in place, but we want to ensure that the inhumane aspects of poindings and warrant sales are consigned to history. I hope that we can attract cross-party support to ensure that the legislation that we introduce meets the objectives that the Parliament clearly expressed last week.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): What advice and guidance will be given to small businesses that are struggling to avoid bankruptcy in the face of the determined refusal to pay by those who are well able to do so, or indeed the refusal to pay timeously, which in certain cases can drive them into bankruptcy?

Mr Wallace: I have just explained that there ought to be some form of diligence against moveables to cover cases of people who can pay but will not pay. Likewise, we could not expect commerce to progress smoothly if Scotland became known as a place where people could avoid paying debts arising from business transactions into which they had entered voluntarily. That is why it is important to have a

review of the whole area of diligence, and not just of diligence against moveables. Arrangements for such a review are under way. In that context, the Parliament owes a debt to the work of the Scottish Law Commission, which will be able to inform the review on a range of diligence issues. Those who suggest that the Law Commission is in some way politically biased do not recognise the valuable work that it has carried out for parties of all colours.

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): Will the minister take this opportunity to confirm that he will take part in the group involving the majority of Scotland's most representative voluntary organisations that work with those in debt and in poverty? That group has now been formally established to work to improve and humanise debt recovery.

Mr Wallace: That is the first invitation that I have received to join that group. I have said that we intend to set up a working group that will examine a range of diligences. That group will consider matters relating to debtor protection, which is an important issue, as well as to debt recovery. The Executive is committed to securing debtor protection.

Glasgow Housing Association

11. Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will detail the membership of the board of the proposed Glasgow housing association. (S10-1622)

The Minister for Communities (Ms Wendy Alexander): The framework document that was published on 10 April set out the proposed membership of the interim management committee of the Glasgow housing association. The organisations that were listed in that document included Glasgow City Council, the Federation of Tenant Management Co-operatives, Glasgow Citywide Tenants Forum, housing associations and the Scottish Trades Union Congress. Each is invited to nominate representatives on the committee. There will be a public advertisement for the chair.

Fiona Hyslop: Will the minister admit that it has taken almost a year to come up with the so-called Glasgow housing association and that there is a danger that it will have an in-built Labour majority—the mirror image of Glasgow City Council—particularly if the tenants representatives come from the hand-picked council neighbourhood forums? What assurance can she give that under her proposed housing association the political hands in management will not be the same as those who have mismanaged Glasgow housing in the past?

Ms Alexander: As I have said several times, the

prize on offer is such that we do not want to make political capital out of the project in any way. The Scottish Executive is not directly represented on the proposed interim management group of the Glasgow housing association. As the proposal is drawn up over the next year, it is important that there is co-operation between all the interests involved, including the tenants, the city council and others, to ensure that the debt is removed, £16,000 goes into every council house in the city, rent is guaranteed and up to 3,000 jobs are created in a hard-pressed city.

M77

12. Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what steps it is taking to monitor the environmental and economic impact of the construction of the M77. (S10-1616)

The Minister for Transport and the Environment (Sarah Boyack): Studies of traffic, air quality, noise and local road safety have been undertaken before and after construction. The results are to be published in the summer and similar studies will apply to the proposed motorway extension between Fenwick and Malletsheugh.

Johann Lamont: I thank the minister for that reply. However, is she aware that, although the M77 has now been completed for more than four years, many of my constituents are still waiting for compensation and for appropriate landscaping work to be done? Is she also aware that, because of the proposed changes to the assisted areas map, although Pollok constituents are bearing the environmental costs of the M77, support to develop the economic and industrial potential offered by the M77 may be denied? Will the minister and her department give a commitment to meet the local communities to ensure that those concerns are fully pursued and that the impact of the M77 on the health and well-being of my constituents is closely monitored in the long term?

Sarah Boyack: Johann Lamont is right that it is extremely important to consider the impact of new road schemes and their aftermath, particularly on the communities that are directly affected. The study that will be published this summer will be important in quantifying some of those issues and in enabling the local community to see what the impact of the road has been. I hope that that process will be transparent. I would be happy to explore, if it is appropriate, the possibility of officials from the development department engaging in dialogue with representatives of the community that Johann Lamont serves.

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): Does the minister agree that there were massive environmental benefits from the stretch of the M77 that was opened by Michael Forsyth? Could she

give a starting date for the construction of the Malletsheugh to Fenwick stretch of the A77 upgrading? Does she agree that that will have massive implications for the safety of travellers on that road and for economic development in Ayrshire?

Sarah Boyack: I am happy to give the commitment that we are continuing to progress with the M77, as requested by Phil Gallie and many members of the Parliament. The scheme was prioritised on the grounds of safety, economic development issues, integration, access and environmental quality.

In reference to Mr Gallie's first question on whether I agreed with the benefits of Michael Forsyth opening the M77, the whole purpose of the studies that are being carried out is to allow us to consider the issues of air quality, environment and noise. The publication of those studies in the summer will allow us to consider the situation before and after the scheme; that will answer Mr Gallie's question.

Modern Apprenticeships

13. Trish Godman (West Renfrewshire) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what the current number of apprenticeships created by the modern apprenticeship scheme is, how many of these apprentices are young women and what is the range of industries in which they are employed. (S10-1608)

The Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Henry McLeish): At the end of March 2000, there were 13,954 modern apprentices in training, 2,354 of whom were young women. Those young women were employed in several sectors including administration, retail, hospitality and catering, customer service, travel services, information technology and management.

Trish Godman: I thank the minister for his reply. Will he tell me whether the needs of women were considered at the policy design stage and how the effectiveness of modern apprenticeships in tackling gender inequalities is monitored and evaluated?

Henry McLeish: The figures that I have given indicate that those issues could have been more effectively tackled at that point. There is a traditional approach to the placing of young women in modern apprenticeships—that has to be changed. There is massive under-representation; when we see such differential figures, we should do something about it.

The enterprise network is about to embark upon a campaign to highlight the gender differences and to consider what can be done. I have asked my department to consider women in science, women in modern apprenticeships and women in business

start-ups, because the same prevailing prejudices that exist in other parts of the economy affect modern apprenticeships. I would be willing to discuss with parliamentary colleagues how best we can campaign to get more young women involved.

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): What steps have been taken to encourage apprenticeships, especially in the construction industry? In Glasgow and the surrounding areas in particular, the proposed housing stock transfer is expected to result in a huge investment in housing, while thousands of jobs will be created in the construction industry.

Henry McLeish: That has highlighted one of the key—and weak—areas in the participation of young women. Of the 2,767 involved in construction, only 23 are female. The figures for Glasgow, with 2,000 modern apprenticeships, are also very disappointing. As part of the overall review and of the promotional exercise, we will wish to work with Scottish Enterprise Glasgow to ensure that those figures can be improved and to open up a wide avenue of choice for young women.

It is interesting that many young women leaving school go directly into further education, bypassing modern apprenticeships. That is an issue which we should recognise.

Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP): Is the minister aware of the differential patterns of investment in modern apprenticeships by local enterprise companies? Does his department monitor that issue? Does he believe that the current investment in modern apprenticeships by different local authorities—which I assure him varies considerably in different parts of the country—succeeds in delivering the strategic direction to modern apprenticeship training that the Scottish economy requires?

Henry McLeish: Those are three good points. We are not taking proper cognisance of the differential investment throughout the country. The new economic framework prioritises not only the areas in which we would like to see investment, but the areas that will serve Scotland well in the new knowledge economy. In our work with the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee, it is important that anything which the Executive does reflects the wider priorities of the Scottish economy. That reflects the questions that have been asked this afternoon.

Tweed Industry

14. Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has to support and encourage the tweed industry. (S10-1624)

The Deputy Minister for Highlands and Islands and Gaelic (Mr Alasdair Morrison): Sir David—[*Applause.*] I need not say any more. [*Laughter.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order. We need a verbal answer, not a visual one.

Mr Morrison: You have both, Sir David.

Assistance is provided to the tweed industry through the enterprise network. In addition, we have recently established a textile forum for the purpose of discussing with the industry issues affecting sectors such as Borders cashmere, Harris tweed and technical textiles. The first meeting of that forum will be on 12 June this year.

Mr Stone: As we have heard from members in the chamber, we all applaud the fact that Mr Morrison is wearing such a remarkable, dazzling—astounding, even—jacket.

The minister will be aware that Hunter's of Brora, in my constituency, has recently gone into liquidation and that the rescue of that company is essential to the fragile local economy of east Sutherland. Will the minister give me his assurance that the Scottish Executive will give the maximum backing to the local enterprise network's efforts to secure a buyer and a rescue package for Hunter's of Brora?

Mr Morrison: I will deal with the compliment first—I congratulate Jamie Stone on his exquisite sartorial judgment. Contrary to rumour, I am not colour-blind. [*Laughter.*]

To deal with the serious points raised by my friend Jamie Stone, as a local member, he appreciates that a significant amount of assistance from Highlands and Islands Enterprise has already been provided to that company. We now have an excellent modern facility and a skilled work force; the company was producing a high-quality product.

I assure Mr Stone that HIE has been in talks with prospective buyers about aid to re-establish a manufacturing operation in Brora. That could take the form of financial or other assistance towards further development expenditure of a capital nature or, indeed, of aid towards staff training.

First Minister's Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Scottish Executive Priorities

1. Mr Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what are the Scottish Executive's current main priorities. (S1F-284)

The First Minister (Donald Dewar): The Executive's priorities were set out clearly in "Making it work together: a programme for government", which was published last September. That document explained what we are committed to achieving in government and turned our priorities into a programme for action, on which we are now delivering. If Alex Salmond looks round Scotland, he will see evidence in plenty that that is so.

Mr Salmond: I have been looking at the newly released labour market statistics for Scotland. I do not know whether the First Minister has yet been shown those statistics by his officials, but within the detail is the fact that not only has manufacturing employment fallen by 25,000 in Scotland since Labour came to office, for the first time ever it has fallen below 300,000. Is the First Minister aware of that? Is he concerned? Does he acknowledge the difficulties that are faced by the textile, engineering and food processing industries? Above all, what will he do about it?

The First Minister: I, too, look at the statistics quite carefully. I notice, for example, that output in the manufacturing sector in Scotland increased by 1.4 per cent in the four quarters to the end of the third quarter of 1999, compared with a decrease of 0.7 per cent for the United Kingdom as a whole. That is not always a reverse pattern, and of course we welcome it.

Alex Salmond will know that Scottish manufacturing exports increased by 7.8 per cent in real terms, again in the year to the end of the third quarter of 1999. In addition, he will be aware—because I tell him every time I get the opportunity and I know that, ultimately, it does settle in—that we have the lowest unemployment claimant count for 24 years.

I am well aware of the fact that we also have a very high level of employment—as distinct from low unemployment—in Scotland. There is no doubt at all that in financial services, biotechnology and electronics, we are building a modern and strong Scottish economy.

To be fair to Alex Salmond, I know that he will welcome in particular the very significant and

remarkable investment that is coming from Motorola, one of the leading-edge firms in the electronics industry, which is pinning its colours firmly to the Scottish mast and investing £1.3 billion in Fife.

I think it is going well. I want to see that continue.

Mr Salmond: Let us see how well it is going—or not. I saw the release on Scottish manufacturing exports. Does not the First Minister think that that release should mention somewhere the fact that manufacturing exports are still 3 per cent less in Scotland than when Labour came to power? That might explain why manufacturing employment has fallen below 300,000 for the first time since the industrial revolution.

Does the First Minister recall that right through the 18 Tory years, he dispensed with the argument—as did his colleagues—that the claimant count was an accurate reflection of unemployment? Throughout that time, he argued that the International Labour Organisation definition was the correct measure of unemployment. Is the First Minister aware that, according to the ILO definition, unemployment in Scotland is 7.5 per cent? That is not just well above the UK average, but 3 per cent higher than it was this time last year.

Why does the First Minister disparage the claimant count measure of unemployment when he is in opposition, but refuse to acknowledge the true measure of unemployment when he is in government?

The First Minister: I fear that we are getting a deplorably selective view of the picture from Alex Salmond, which does not come as a total surprise to me. I remind him that the ILO figure for unemployment in Scotland—of 7.5 per cent, as he correctly said—is well below the European average of 8.8 per cent. Total employment rose by 23,000 in the year to December 1999 and through to February 2000.

Employment in Scotland is at around its highest level since 1966. I know that Alex Salmond goes round Scottish industry, as I do, and talks to people in many different areas. I know, too, that he will have been told that in areas such as financial services there is very genuine and very real growth, and that in the areas where we can trade, as we do successfully, on our remarkable record in higher education and our skills in research and development, we are attracting industry and attracting support.

Perhaps Mr Salmond would like to look at the latest Bank of Scotland quarterly survey, which recorded a substantial rise in manufacturing output and service output, which was sustained, in both cases, for well over the past year.

Nothing is perfect; we can always do better. However, it is rather unworthy of Mr Salmond to whinge and complain in the present atmosphere and situation.

Mr Salmond: I have a copy of the previous issue of the "Scottish Engineering Quarterly Review", in which the chief executive says that hard times are continuing for the manufacturing sector. Is he whingeing or complaining, or is he simply reporting what his members are saying?

Does the First Minister recall that, in their years of opposition, he and his colleagues described the claimant count of unemployment as meaningless and bogus? Has he seen the real figures for employees in employment, which show that for full-time workers—not part-time workers or people in Government schemes—there are fewer employees in employment in Scotland than there were in 1993, when John Major was Prime Minister and Ian Lang was Secretary of State for Scotland? If the First Minister does not recall praising those people when they were in power, why is he pleased with a record that is worse than theirs?

Will the First Minister stop patting Henry McLeish and himself on the back and realise that manufacturing jobs are down; that, since he came to power, exports are down; and that unemployment is up? He should stop the mutual self-congratulation and do something about the real crisis in the Scottish economy.

The First Minister: I very often have to deal with bogus points, and very often in these exchanges.

I should tell Alex Salmond—in a low-key way—that no one is likely to recognise his picture of the Scottish economy. Our current record of employment is good and there is genuine growth in the manufacturing export sector and in the modern—and some of the older—industries. For example, the Executive is entitled to claim some credit for the brokering of a deal that saved the jobs at Longannet only a year ago; indeed, it has continued to give help to that particular plant.

There are problems in some of our older industries, and we are doing everything we can to preserve jobs there. There is no doubt that the fight that was put up for Govan is being continued and that efforts are being made to find solutions to difficult problems. However, it does not help when Mr Salmond and his colleagues manufacture stories of doom and gloom.

Cabinet Reshuffle

2. David McLetchie (Lothians) (Con): To ask the First Minister whether he has any plans to reshuffle his Cabinet. (S1F-292)

The First Minister (Donald Dewar): No.

David McLetchie: A predictable, if regrettable, answer.

On the subject of ministerial portfolios, it is unfortunate that the First Minister appears to be unwilling to spare even one of his many ministers to take responsibility for the Holyrood project by participating in the progressing group. According to one newspaper, they are allegedly too busy. After all, compared with the situation three years ago, we now have four times as many ministers and a building that is costing five times the initial estimate. Will the First Minister finally get a grip on the project by ensuring that there is direct ministerial responsibility within the group for building the new Parliament on time and within the revised budget?

The First Minister: Although I do not want to trouble the chamber with a history lesson—or a constitutional lesson—I am genuinely astonished at Mr McLetchie's comments. He has constantly said that there should be a rebalancing of power and responsibility between the Executive and the legislature, and has always held himself up as being particularly proud of Parliament's rights. He must recognise that the building has by law been passed to Parliament and away from the Executive, and is now a matter for the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body and the progressing committee to which the SPCB wishes to delegate some activities. If I were to insist or suggest that the committee should include ministers from the Executive, we would be invading the space dedicated to the Parliament in a way for which various MSPs heavily criticised us when the suggestion was first made a few months ago.

I want the progressing committee to be set up. However, I am well aware that, despite great efforts by our representatives, it seems almost impossible to get agreement on the committee's composition. Instead of sniping and hopelessly confusing the roles of the Executive and the legislature, Mr McLetchie should concentrate on helping to get the committee up and running; by doing so, he would be doing more for the dignity of Parliament and the effective policing of the project than he has so far achieved.

David McLetchie: If the First Minister had acknowledged that there was an interest in how £200 million of public money would be spent, the whole project might have been better handled from the outset.

It would be much easier to judge whether the First Minister's Cabinet was as busy as it is claimed if we knew what it was doing half the time. Will the First Minister follow the example of his Labour counterpart in Wales, the First Secretary

Mr Rhodri Morgan, and publish the minutes of Cabinet meetings, or will he leave that to his acting deputy to introduce, when he is in what I hope will be very temporary charge of proceedings?

The First Minister: What a very pleasant end to that question. The answer to the main point is that we have no such plans, but I confess that I, too, have been reading the questions that are advanced in the press. I notice that in referring to Jim Wallace, Mr McLetchie described him as a wee, pretending First Minister. It looks as if Mr McLetchie is determined to get back to the nursery and to march forward bravely to his second childhood.

Scottish Parliamentary Elections (Anniversary)

3. Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what plans the Scottish Executive has to mark the anniversary of the first Scottish parliamentary elections. (S1F-296)

The First Minister (Donald Dewar): If I could find the page, it would help me to answer the question. The important point is not to have specific celebrations—although I believe that there is a genuine and important record of achievement to be celebrated—but to continue the good work that has been done over the past year. It is interesting to note that of the total of 159 commitments in the programme for government, 37 were due to be completed by May 2000 and that—I think I am right in saying this—only one of those is not now in hand. It is that kind of positive progress—the sensible allocation of public funding, the effective government of Scotland and the creation of opportunities for those who have not had opportunity in the past—that is likely to be the mark of the past year and the next year. That is what people in Scotland want.

Des McNulty: I take it that the First Minister is giving me firm assurances that we will see further Executive action. I want in particular to highlight the efforts made this year to increase student support and spending on the national health service. Are those the kind of things that we can expect in the forthcoming year?

The First Minister: Yes. I remember well the proposition that the partnership would founder on the rock of student finance. We have put in place a scheme that will increase support for students in higher education in Scotland by around £50 million year on year and, most important of all, will give a heavy weighting to wider access for students from families with a limited financial background.

It is important that we examine that and the many other things that have been done with a special Scottish face. I think, for example, of the

Drugs Enforcement Agency, of Jim Wallace's consultation paper, with its radical plans to make appointments to the higher judiciary transparent, and of—here I must pay tribute where it is due—the support and help that we have had from colleagues at Westminster, which, for example, has allowed Susan Deacon to have a substantial boost to health spending this year. The increase amounts not to £300 million as was planned, but to about £470 million, which, I hope, will have a real impact on the efforts of the hard-working staff in the NHS.

Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP): Does the First Minister agree that one of the best ways in which to celebrate the anniversary of the Parliament would be to transfer substantially more of the reserved powers from Westminster to this Parliament, which would make a real difference to the people of Scotland and would give the Parliament, in particular, fiscal independence and guaranteed representation in Europe?

The First Minister: It is nice to hear the voice of one of the factions within the SNP—the very distinctive voice of Alex Neil. I really welcome it. I remind him, because I know that he will want to consider this point, that as his own financial spokesman, Sir Andrew Wilson—[MEMBERS: "It is not Sir Andrew."] I am sorry. I hasten to reassure John Swinney that he is not someone whom one can totally forget on all occasions. It was Andrew Wilson who was acting—or perhaps deputising—as financial spokesman, who accepted that there would be a fiscal deficit in an independent Scotland. Therefore, financial independence becomes a fiscal deficit and a fiscal deficit can be closed by cutting public spending either in education or in the health service, or by higher taxation. If Alex Neil wants to campaign on those platforms, he is entirely entitled to do so.

Water Charges

4. Richard Lochhead (North-East Scotland) (SNP): To ask the First Minister, further to the answer to question S1W-4291 by Sarah Boyack on 26 April 2000, what assistance the Scottish Executive is considering making available to pensioners and low-income households to assist them in paying their water bills. (S1F-289)

The First Minister (Donald Dewar): We are keeping a careful eye on the situation and we recognise the relevance of that point and the problem that we face. To put the matter into something of a context, however, the average water charge in England and Wales in this financial year is £219; it is £189 in Scotland. However we organise the industry, the one inalienable, inescapable fact is that we will have to spend around £1.6 billion over the next three years.

As Richard Lochhead well knows, there is a relationship to ability to pay—the charges are geared to the council tax band. A household paying the band A charge will be paying half the sum paid under band H, and two thirds of the sum under band D. There is a gearing in the payment mechanism, which I hope will at least do something to help.

Richard Lochhead: Is the First Minister aware that pensioner and low-income households—indeed all households—were appalled last month to receive through their letterboxes water bills showing rises ranging from 18 per cent in some parts of the country to a massive 43 per cent in the north and north-east, and that, since Labour came to power, some people's water bills have increased by 300 per cent?

Can the First Minister tell us why the Scottish Executive has abandoned Scotland's water industry and its water consumers, who have been left to foot the whole £1.6 billion bill, which the First Minister referred to, for upgrading the infrastructure? All that comes on top of rising council tax and people in Scotland being asked to pay the highest price in the whole of Europe for petrol.

Does the First Minister accept that his responsibility is to help the people of Scotland out of poverty and to live affordable lives, as opposed to plunging them into further poverty and bleeding them dry?

The First Minister: I perhaps regret giving those figures in my initial answer instead of waiting for the second shot, but I have the advantage of being able to repeat them.

Self-evidently, someone in the lowest council tax band will be paying half the charge paid by those at the upper end of the banding scale, so there is a substantial differential. By and large, better-off people live in high-band housing and the poorest-off live in low-band housing. It is also important to remember that 27 per cent of properties in Scotland are in band A. I repeat that charges in Scotland are below the average charges in other parts of the country.

I do not like the fact that we are having to pay for the difficulties of the past and are having to find a heavy investment in the water industry over a very short period. However, we are not abandoning, but remembering, the water industry in the interests of those who consume its product. The one thing that we must not do is breach our obligations in law and with regard to European Union directives. We would then no longer be able to say with a degree of honesty that we are proud of our water supply in Scotland. It demands investment, and that investment will take place.

Richard Lochhead: Can the First Minister

confirm that the Scottish Executive is not giving one penny of the Scottish block towards assisting pensioners and low-income households with their water bills, which have risen by up to 43 per cent?

The First Minister: I have already explained to Richard Lochhead that we have a graded system of charging. I can also point him to a large number of things that we are doing, at both the Westminster and Scottish Executive level, to help people at the bottom end of the income scale. Indeed, this cannot be taken in isolation, and I could cite a whole range of measures, including the £150 heating allowance for pensioners, the working families tax credit, the new 10p band in income tax or the weighting that I referred to in connection with water charges.

There are no escapes: it is the privilege, I suppose, of opposition, but it is the Opposition's ultimate responsibility that it takes every issue in isolation and demands the ultimate help in every case. It should start adding up the sums, and see who is fit to govern this country.

Flooding

5. Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD): To ask the First Minister what steps the Scottish Executive plans to take to tackle the effects of the flooding in the north and east of Scotland last week. (S1F-288)

The First Minister (Donald Dewar): I take this opportunity to say that I have every sympathy with those affected by the recent flooding. Scottish ministers continue to give a high priority to flood prevention. I acknowledge the role that councils and the emergency services played in helping those worst affected by the extreme weather over recent times. Reinstatement of damaged property and other losses incurred are matters for the owners concerned and their insurers. The Bellwin scheme is a discretionary scheme that exists to meet councils' revenue costs in alleviating the immediate effects of flooding. No representations have yet been received from councils for the Bellwin scheme to be triggered following the recent flooding.

Nora Radcliffe: Does the First Minister accept that, although the fact of global warming has been recognised by taxing the causes, we have lagged behind in providing funding to deal with the effects, such as the recent flooding, that local authority funding should be augmented to allow the necessary preventive measures to be taken to deal with flooding and that a national strategy could pull together best practice and co-ordinate effort across Scotland?

The First Minister: I have sympathy with the need for proper planning. I will, however, say that we were dealing with quite extraordinary

circumstances, even if only over a short period. Kinloss experienced 67 hours of continuous rain. That must be some sort of unenviable world record. Clearly, Kinloss was crying about something—I look for further information to its representative in Parliament. The rain gauge in Haddington recorded 133 mm of rain. I am told that the mysteries of statistics suggest that a rain event of that sort happens only once every 650 years.

I remind Nora Radcliffe that we have helped with substantial schemes. The Perth flood prevention scheme, which will be completed in 2001, cost £18 million. We have given £4 million in recent years for preparation work for flood prevention and another £4 million last year.

I accept that more could be done. If circumstances allow us, we will look to do what we can.

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab): The First Minister will know of the unprecedented problems in my constituency and the rest of Edinburgh last week and the considerable consequential cost. In view of that, will the Executive take a sympathetic view of the council's imminent application for assistance under the Bellwin scheme?

The First Minister: Funnily enough, the provost of Edinburgh did not mention that imminent event when we had dinner last night.

Obviously, we will apply the relevant rules and consider any application that comes to us fairly, equitably and with sympathy. However, the rules will be the rules.

Sport

The Presiding Officer (Sir David Steel): Our next item of business is a debate on motion S1M-793, in the name of Rhona Brankin, on the role of sport in social inclusion, and amendments to that motion.

15:34

The Deputy Minister for Culture and Sport (Rhona Brankin): I am delighted to open this Parliament's first full debate on sport and to make the link between sport and our vision of achieving a fairer and more just Scotland in the 21st century. We are determined to do that by putting social justice and equality of opportunity at the heart of our agenda, delivering a fairer and more just society—a Scotland where everybody matters. That is why, in November, we set out our vision for delivering social justice in Scotland, setting ourselves 10 specific targets and 29 milestones to achieve that aim.

Fundamentally, our vision is about people—making sure that they have the opportunity to get a proper education, to get a decent job, to have good health and to live in a warm house. However, our vision is also about the quality of life—having leisure time and having the opportunity to enjoy that leisure time and to do the fun things that help to make living worthwhile.

Sport is an immensely valuable activity in its own right. It is a focal point in the lives of a large percentage of Scotland's population, whether people are involved actively or as spectators. Sport is also hugely significant as a contributor to other aspects of Scottish life. My colleagues in the Scottish Executive and I have acknowledged that broader role of sport in the "Partnership for Scotland" document, in which we have embraced the role of sports in health, education, social inclusion, economic development, tourism, community regeneration and lifelong learning. Sport can make a major contribution to tackling the priority social policy issues that face Scotland today. However, sport cannot do that alone.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): Will the minister give way?

Rhona Brankin: I would like to get further into my speech.

Sport must have a strong and meaningful partnership with health and education, in particular. It must look to itself, to be certain that it is doing everything in its powers to eliminate all forms of discrimination and exclusion. We are all aware that sport can divide people: not in the sense of healthy competition and partisanship, but

through unhealthy prejudice and discrimination. In developing sport and supporting opportunities for all, the Scottish Executive wants to achieve a more inclusive society in which respect is fostered and in which prejudice and discrimination have no part. We will seek to accentuate the positives of sport, its capacity to increase the self-esteem of individuals, build community spirit, increase local interaction, reduce crime, improve health and fitness, and create employment.

Fergus Ewing: I am sure that all members agree with everything the minister has said. The minister took the trouble, as did many other members, to hear the case that was presented yesterday evening by the Camanachd Association. I know that the association was grateful for that. Does she accept that the case that the Camanachd Association presented meets all the criteria that she has outlined? Will she support the case that the association has made for an enhancement of its modest funding of £15,000 a year, which has been frozen at that level for the past six years?

Rhona Brankin: I thank Fergus Ewing for his kind words of support. Decisions about funding are taken by sportscotland, which is receiving an extra £1.5 million through the comprehensive spending review, as announced by Sam Galbraith.

The Scottish Executive's aim is to increase the participation in sport of people of all ages and abilities, and to encourage young people to remain active in sport as they enter and progress through adulthood. Our national strategy for sport, "Sport 21", was published by sportscotland and contains a target to increase the number of people who participate in sport from groups that include people with disabilities, women and young girls, people who live in areas of economic and social disadvantage, rural communities and people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP): Will the minister give way?

Rhona Brankin: Not just now.

Sportscotland has recently commissioned two pieces of research that relate to that target in the wider context of social inclusion. The first piece of research was commissioned jointly with the Scottish Executive and focused on the role of sport in regenerating urban deprived areas. The research report will be published in the near future and the result should help to develop best practice in promoting social inclusion through sports activity. The findings are generic to disadvantaged areas and will be relevant to rural as well as to urban communities, which is important.

The second research study focuses on the participation in sports of people with disabilities and people from ethnic minority backgrounds. The

research centres on the barriers that prevent people from those groups participating in sport and on ways in which those barriers can be overcome or eliminated.

Sportscotland is developing a framework for monitoring the implementation of "Sport 21", the national strategy. The first annual review comprised the drawing together of five expert forums to consider the issues that face Scottish sport one year on from the launch of the strategy. One of the forums concentrated on sport and social inclusion. Its recommendations for future action were fed in at the first meeting of the "Sport 21" national review group, which I chaired on Tuesday. That group will produce a report on progress in implementation of the strategy, which will be published soon.

It is also important to recognise that sportscotland is committed to working with social inclusion partnerships over the next three years to establish a sports element in the work of the partnerships. Sport is already a significant component of several SIPs, including greater Easterhouse, Castlemilk and Dundee.

Nicola Sturgeon: I am grateful to the minister for giving way.

Will the minister address the place of community sports facilities in the Executive's thinking? She will recall a recent members' business debate on the closure of Pollokshaws sports centre in Glasgow. It has now closed and the building is falling into disrepair. The people of that community, which is one of the most deprived in Glasgow, do not have access to local sports facilities.

Does the minister think that community sports facilities are central to a social inclusion strategy?

Rhona Brankin: As Nicola Sturgeon would expect, social inclusion depends on active, involved communities. To answer her point about Pollokshaws sports centre, Glasgow City Council went through a detailed process of facilities planning to decide the best local facilities for sport and recreation in Glasgow. Having discussed the matter with the council, I am convinced that it came up with the best model. Indeed, the model used by the council to make judgments about facilities for sport in Glasgow was based on the model developed by sportscotland. We recognise that community sports facilities are central to the development of our sports strategy.

During question time, in answer to Allan Wilson, I gave details of the programmes that sportscotland has in place for people with disabilities. Sportscotland also signed up to the Commission for Racial Equality's leadership challenge and is in the process of developing an action plan to implement some of the challenge's

key objectives to help foster racial equality in Scottish sport.

Sportscotland is also a signatory to the 1994 Brighton declaration on women in sport, which sets out a comprehensive set of principles for the development of opportunities for women in sport. Significant progress has been made in Scotland to increase the number of women participating in sport. From 1990 to 1992, only 47 per cent of women participated in sport regularly, rising to 57 per cent by 1996 to 1998. However, further efforts are needed to increase the number of women involved in coaching and in sports administration.

More than £200 million of new facility investment has been made available by the lottery sports fund, which is administered by sportscotland. Much of that investment has been made in some of the most deprived communities in Scotland.

Mr Lloyd Quinan (West of Scotland) (SNP): Will the minister give way?

Rhona Brankin: If Lloyd Quinan does not mind, I must move on.

While facilities are important, the top priority is to engage with people. As I said, the outcome of the comprehensive spending review for sport announced by Sam Galbraith gave a major boost to the development of youth and school sport. He announced a three-year £8.1 million package of measures that target youth sport to develop the school sport co-ordinator programme in secondary schools and the top play top sport programme for children of primary school age.

Those programmes and related initiatives will help put in place a framework to extend and widen sporting opportunities for all Scottish children and assist in the development of healthy, active lifestyles. I am pleased to announce today that there are now 213 sports co-ordinators in place after only one year of the programme. We are therefore well on course to achieve our target of a co-ordinator in every secondary school by 2003.

There has been a lot of interest in recent years in maintaining and enhancing the close, special relationship that football fans have with the club they support. Concerns have been expressed that the increasing commercialisation of top-level football amounts to a form of social exclusion. The establishment of supporter trusts has been advocated as a vehicle for taking a share in the ownership and administration of clubs. Certainly supporter trusts are one way of increasing supporter involvement, but they are not the only way of achieving that aim and the Scottish Executive is not convinced that they are the best way.

I am pleased to announce, however, that we intend to ensure that guidance is made available

to those who may be interested in establishing supporter trusts. At this stage, however, we do not intend to divert scarce public funds into assisting groups with the legal and other costs involved in establishing such trusts. Our top priority is to assist in setting up the network of football academies that will help to bring through more talented young players to perform well at the top levels of the sport.

Fiona McLeod (West of Scotland) (SNP): Will the minister give way?

Rhona Brankin: No, I am running out of time.

We favour enhancing the links between supporters and their clubs for the benefit of both. I propose to raise the matter at the next meeting of the football partnership, which I chair.

Sport has a vital role to play in promoting social inclusion. The Scottish Executive is giving a strong lead to sports organisations, local authorities and others bodies that can ensure that the role of sports is positive. This is an exciting time for sport in Scotland and for everyone involved in it. I believe that sport will rise to the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead and will play its part in improving the quality of life of all Scotland's people.

I move,

That the Parliament endorses the Scottish Executive's vision of achieving equality of opportunity for all; supports its aim of making Scotland a more inclusive society where inequalities between communities are reduced; recognises the important role which sports can play in promoting social inclusion; and commends the work of the Executive, sportscotland and other agencies to widen participation in sport as part of personal and community development.

15:46

Fiona McLeod (West of Scotland) (SNP): As the minister has said, sport can bring us together, as players and participants or as fans and spectators. I regret that this afternoon's self-congratulatory motion will not bring this chamber together.

Sport can foster well-being, physically and emotionally, and it brings a sense of belonging. Why, then, are we debating the proposition that sport can be part of social inclusion? By building on the natural benefits of sport, we can help to overcome the deep-seated problems that exist in some Scottish communities. Sport can build healthy individuals and contribute to the wealth and health of society as a whole.

The SNP takes issue with the final self-congratulatory passage of the motion. The Government talks a good game but, when we consider the facts, examine the evidence and look for the cash, we find that the money is missing.

There is a £2.3 million shortfall in investment in sport in Scotland this year. That figure comes from the Government's own document, "Investing in You". Local authority grants for leisure and recreation have been frozen since 1998. In Scotland, we spend £1.91 per head of population, while Denmark spends a whopping £42 per head and Finland spends £11. We can learn lessons from that international comparison.

An analysis of sportscotland reveals that the funding does not stand up to the targets in the rhetoric. Sportscotland has a sport and social inclusion forum, to which the minister referred. A recent document published by the forum said that

"local and affordable facility provision right down at a neighbourhood level"

was incredibly important in ensuring social inclusion. It went on to say that

"the cost of participation remains a consideration".

If we look at the funding that sportscotland has put into sports facilities since 1996, we find that the reality does not match up to the rhetoric. Two of the most deprived local authority areas in the country, West Dunbartonshire and Inverclyde, have received respectively four awards and seven awards from sportscotland's sports facilities awards scheme. They have each received £700,000, which represents 0.8 per cent of the total sum spent on sports facilities in Scotland by sportscotland. Over the same period, merchant company schools in Edinburgh received a grant of £2.3 million. It does not appear to me that the social inclusion rhetoric is being followed through in reality.

Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Is Fiona McLeod aware that for a long time sportscotland, which manages lottery funding for sport, sought applications for money for cricket and associated projects, but none were forthcoming? Is she aware that, having accepted money from the lottery sports fund, the merchant company has to make public access available? In fact, there is now greater public access to cricket than there was before the new facility was built.

Fiona McLeod: I am glad to hear that a private school is opening its doors to the public when it is getting public funding. The point that we return to is that two of the most deprived local authorities in Scotland—both Labour-controlled authorities—were unable to find the match funding to provide significant investment in sports for their deprived communities.

All sportscotland awards reveal a similar pattern. If we look at recent awards to rural communities—which, as the minister announced, is a key group that we want to include in sport and social inclusion—we find that Borders received the amazing sum of £3,265, Dumfries and Galloway

got the astonishing sum of £1,000, and in a recent round of awards Angus did not get any award

It is not just money that we have to examine: we must look at the criteria and targeting that are used to provide that money to the public. The minister referred to the key groups that sportscotland says it will fund—the disabled, women, rural areas, areas of economic and social deprivation and ethnic minorities—but as my examples show, the rhetoric does not match the reality. In fact, funding is missing those targets. Rather than leave the unelected quango of sportscotland, which I recall has nine male board members and four female, to set criteria, surely this Parliament should be setting the criteria to ensure that the country achieves our aims of social inclusion.

I must praise the many volunteers who support sport in this country through the many hours they give in coaching, especially in coaching young people. Parliament has often praised the work of volunteers. The SNP amendment would not just praise them; it would give them a say in ensuring that sport is built from the grass roots up and that funding is given where it is needed. Our amendment would include the participants and the providers in sport in building a healthy and winning Scotland.

I move amendment S1M-793.1, to leave out from "commends" to end and insert:

"calls for the establishment of a national network of locally accountable partnerships between local authorities and sports organisations with funding directed towards community sports initiatives."

15:53

David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con): I have no doubt that the opportunity to participate in sporting activity, however defined—I will return to that later—can be one of the most pleasurable, rewarding and developmental aspects of anyone's life. The opportunity to participate in team sports in particular gives the chance to learn how to work with others, to meet people from different backgrounds and to develop new skills. That is why many businesses have turned to sports coaches such as Frank Dick and Craig Brown to try to develop the same ethos in their workplaces.

The opportunity to participate—and to do so at a level that is appropriate to the participant—is the key to any sport strategy for Scotland. That is not to argue against competitive sport, which we need in order to ensure that we have sports men and women of the highest calibre and to ensure that there is scope for competition within sporting activities. However, we must also ensure that everyone has the opportunity to become involved at the level appropriate to them. They can aspire

to improve or to continue as they are if that is their choice. That should not mean a lowest-common-denominator approach; it should mean choice. We would welcome that.

I want us to move away from the approach that was prevalent during my school days, which discouraged the less sportingly able from participating. That approach was the process of picking teams for rugby, football, hockey or whatever, where the physical education teacher selected two captains—usually the best players of the particular sport—the rest of the pupils were lined up and people were picked alternately. That was never categorised as exclusion and I did not regard myself as being excluded, although I was often among the last to be picked.

Ms Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (SNP): Will David Mundell give way?

David Mundell: I am about to confirm that neither was it a boost to my confidence to be potentially the last to be picked—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): Order. Is Mr Mundell giving way?

David Mundell: Not at this point. I will give way at the end of my life experience story, which Margo has interrupted.

My point is that the environment did not encourage those who were less able to participate. We should not retain such an environment—everybody should be able to participate at their own level.

I want to raise the issue of what we mean by sport and who should decide whether a sporting activity has merit and social respectability and is politically correct. Yesterday I was fascinated by a discussion I heard on the radio on applications from sports to become Olympic sports. Sports such as synchronised swimming and beach volleyball—which I know my colleague Brian Monteith participates in—have been ridiculed, although they are activities that require a great deal of skill. I heard that snooker and bridge are being seriously considered as Olympic sports. Apparently, the problem with bridge is that the drug-testing rules for it would be the same as are applied to athletic competitors and, because most of the participants in bridge competitions would be older, their medications would lead to their failing the tests.

I would like to see an Executive strategy that does not seek to ascribe any particular merit to any sport at the expense of others. That is why I oppose any changes to the law that would restrict country sports. The fact that one does not participate in a sport does not make that sport less worthy. Fashion, snobbery and political correctness should not influence such decisions.

Alex Neil, Cathy Jamieson and I, among others, are keen to support the Scottish Homing Union in its efforts to keep the traditional sport of pigeon racing alive in Scotland. Racing of pigeons should be allowed to continue—it is an important sport and social activity throughout Scotland. Pigeon fanciers have a right equal to that of bird watchers and naturalists to participate in their sport or hobby.

Let us not be snotty or politically correct when we talk about sport. Let us ensure that we judge our strategy by its output. We should be able to combine having world-class sports men and women in their chosen fields with providing opportunities for everybody to participate in any activity they choose at the level that they want. That should be done against a backdrop of an egalitarian and non-judgmental approach to the range of sporting activities in which people can participate.

I move amendment S1M-793.2, in the name of Mr Brian Monteith, to leave out from “endorses” to end and insert:

“supports the aim of the Scottish Executive to widen participation in sport by all sectors of society but does not believe this aim will be achieved by its proposed strategy.”

15:58

Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): David Mundell has struck a chord with me—I remember being second to last to be chosen on most occasions when teams were picked. I will not tell members about the condition of the person who was last to be picked.

I will tell a wee story—I usually tell wee stories and David Mundell has provided me with a way in to one about social inclusion in sport. Two or three months ago, I was going through some old papers when I came across the draw sheet that named all the participants in a British boys golf championship at Carnoustie that I played in in the 1950s. There, on the sheet, was the name of Ian Jenkins from Rothesay Academy. Three or four places further up the list was the name of Lord James Douglas-Hamilton from Eton College. I am sorry to say that Lord James did better than me, but that was a bit of social integration that I am sure we both benefited from.

Sport has long been recognised as an agent of social mobility and, to some extent, social inclusion. We can all think of boxing heroes—lads from poor backgrounds who have become popular and won fame and financial rewards—such as Benny Lynch, Barry McGuigan and Jim Watt. In soccer, there are many players and some managers who have made the grade in a big way.

In wider terms, states such as Kenya and other north African nations take a proud place on the

Olympic and world stages in ways that win them self-respect and international respect well beyond that which is generated by their economic strengths.

However, in this debate we are not talking about high-profile, skilful individuals whose sporting ability has lifted them out of a disadvantaged environment. We are talking about something more important than that—the lifestyle and life chances of socially excluded youngsters and others across the country. We are talking about combating serious potential health problems. It is a real worry that surveys have shown that youngsters are not taking enough exercise to protect their health, and it would be good if we could convince local authorities and schools of the crucial importance of sport.

I worry about making additional demands on the school curriculum, but I support the “Sport 21” objective of increasing the amount of time that is dedicated to physical education in primary schools. Life-enhancing activities such as music and sport, which have the potential to change people’s lives positively for long after they leave primary school, should be given a higher priority than some of the more ephemeral elements of the curriculum, if there is competition between the two.

We are talking also about the social development of individuals. As David Mundell said, working with others in teams and clubs can give isolated individuals a much-needed sense of belonging. We must recognise the tremendous power of peer-group pressure and of youngsters’ need to be accepted by their group. It is a challenge for us, because if we can make it cool to play sport and harness peer group pressure positively, through sport, we will be doing ourselves and the individuals concerned a massive favour.

Sport can give an individual a sense of self-respect. Youngsters who do not do well at school may succeed in non-academic areas. Sport and games can also bring excitement into young people’s lives. Youngsters seek excitement, and the opportunity to take part in sports and games can offer a creative and positive outlet for the urge to seek colour in what might otherwise be grey lives in poor areas. Without sport, excitement may be found in socially destructive ways.

Sport can also help foster a sense of community identity. People are proud of successes from their communities. They identify with local sports men and women and local teams. The very existence of such teams and clubs provides a focus for the hopes and aspirations of the community from which they spring.

I commend to the chamber the summary papers of a series of forums that were held by “Sport 21”

implementation and review groups during the last quarter of last year. In the context of today’s debate, I would pick out the work of the sport and social inclusion forum and the work of the forums on sport and schools and sport and the voluntary sector. The last of those recognises the vital importance of unpaid volunteers in the promotion of sport across the country.

All the reports emphasise the importance of opportunity and access—the need for local and affordable provision right down at the neighbourhood level, as Fiona McLeod said. The nature of the provision is also important—it must be attractive to youngsters and it may need to be presented differently from how it was presented in the past. We must also be careful about the cost of participation. People always want to have the best sports equipment—even kids who come from poorer backgrounds want to look good, which is expensive.

The importance of local government’s role is recognised in the papers. One problem is that not all authorities view sport and leisure as core services. In the context of social inclusion, that must be remedied.

Funding is also mentioned in the papers. Lottery funding can be helpful, but here, as in many other areas, there is a danger of setting up projects on three-year funding that find themselves in difficulties at the end of that period. This Parliament needs to examine three-year funding, in sport as well as in other areas.

The forums point to a positive way ahead. I am convinced that the programmes to which the minister has referred in this debate and in a parliamentary answer are leading us in the right direction. If we can increase participation in sport across the board, society will benefit through having a healthier population and through the positive economic benefits that will go with that. Communities will benefit through having identity, pride and social cohesion. Men, women and children will benefit, both as individuals and as social beings. I commend the Executive’s approach. Although I am unhealthy, unfit and worried, I call on Scots everywhere to get up, get out, and get active.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Thirteen members have asked to speak. Clearly, it will not be possible to include them all. However, it would be helpful if speeches could be kept to around four minutes, plus interventions.

16:06

Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): As one of the great unfit, I welcome this debate. Since I was elected, I have had no time to get to the gym, which I used to do

regularly. During David Mundell's contribution, I was thinking about what sport had done for me in my youth. It was through our chosen sport of karate that I met my husband, so it was a very interesting relationship right from the start.

Ms Margaret Curran (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab): Who won?

Cathy Jamieson: Who do you think won? I am very non-competitive, as Margaret Curran knows.

I wanted to say a wee bit about some of the genuine opportunities for social inclusion in sport and to give some positive examples from my constituency. At the weekend, when the sun was shining brightly on Cumnock on the open-air swimming pools that are coming on stream for the first time, we had a fun run. It was organised by a number of people in the local community, including people from the health board, the police and the social inclusion partnership.

The object of the run was to get young people actively involved. It was not to win a prize, but to get a couple of hundred people of all ages, shapes and sizes—although not me, because I was not fit enough to participate—running round the track, just for the sheer pleasure of getting out and participating in sport. We also wanted to combat the notion that the only opportunity for young people in some of the excluded areas is the drugs culture. The young people were a credit to the event. I also pay tribute to the local football club, Kilmarnock, some of whose players and staff got involved in a genuine community event.

In her speech, the minister referred to opportunities for people with disabilities. I am delighted that the world blind bowling championships will be held in Girvan in my constituency in August next year. I know that the minister is aware of that and that some funding has already been made available to allow that valuable championship to take place. The club that is hosting the event is having some difficulty in accessing capital to make some of the changes that will be required to allow access for people with disabilities. I know that the minister will want to be kept up to date with the club's progress on that.

Although I welcome much of what the minister said today, I was disappointed about one thing—and she will know what it is. It concerns the issue of supporter involvement in football clubs. I chair the Scottish Co-operative party group in the Parliament, and we have pushed for such involvement. South of the border, the Co-operative party has set up Supporters Direct, which will give the kind of advice and support that supporters who want to have a greater involvement in their club need.

One way of getting social inclusion is to allow

people to take ownership of the facilities and resources that they use, and to allow them a democratic voice. The push for involvement is all about that. To use the same language as is used in social inclusion partnerships and in the voluntary sector, a small investment in capacity building is surely required if we genuinely want to empower people to get actively involved. We should give them some ownership and give them some say. A huge amount of money is not required. The minister has said that she does not intend to divert money from the football academies and the other valuable things that are being proposed, and I would not ask her to do so. However, we can surely try to take the idea of involvement forward and give people a real opportunity.

We need the people who, week in and week out, support and get involved in sport. We can talk as much as we like about social inclusion, but to get people out there actively participating requires work at all levels. I hope that those comments can be taken on board in future developments.

16:10

Ms Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (SNP): I endorse what Cathy Jamieson has just said and will come back to that, but I must deal first with the terrible trauma revealed from the Tory front bench. I had no idea that David Mundell had such a terrible PE teacher. If he had been in my class, I would have chosen him first and he would have had a completely different attitude to sport.

Mr Mundell went on to be a bit skeich about synchronised swimming. As a wee girl I was so desperate to get into the Hamilton baths synchronised swimming team that I lied about my age. I have since changed that bad habit. When Cathy Jamieson spoke about the Cumnock outdoor pool a few folk tittered. I mind going there from Hamilton as a wee girl for inter-club galas. Sport never did me any harm; it made sure I did not get into trouble. It was only when I took up politics that trouble started.

I endorse the sentiments expressed in the debate. Although there are amendments to the motion, it is generally agreed that sport is an essential component of getting people—particularly poorer and older people—out of their houses and into the community, and that is what matters. I want to address how we might do that and change the culture that Ian Jenkins referred to. It is great to wear a football shirt that identifies a person with Man United or whoever, but when young people are sitting watching television or some other screen, it is not so great. Young people used to spend hours playing heidie against a wall or out in the garden or the street learning how to trap a ball properly. That does not happen

any more and it should.

I make a particular plea for the sort of people who, contrary to David Mundell's experience, can inspire and help people to reach the levels of attainment and fitness that they have to have to properly take part in sport and enjoy it. People only really enjoy sport if they do not always get gubbed. Ian Jenkins would have liked golf better if Lord James hadnae beaten him thon long time ago. We need more specialist PE teachers in schools and particularly in primary schools. I am sorry that the Minister for Children and Education is not here to hear me say, yet again, that unless we catch children young, we will not change the culture of watching rather than taking part in sport.

I realise that this is a devolved Parliament and that we cannot spend all the money we might want to. I have ideas for that too, but I will not go into them just now. We could shift some of the education spending to specialist PE teachers coaching in schools and incorporate them into the sort of scheme that Fitness Scotland could introduce to train people in communities to be coaches and community sports leader. That would also start to redress the balance in terms of classroom assistants. Primary teachers do not have the time, nor do most of them have the motivation or the skill to coach and teach PE.

Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab): Is the member aware that top play top sport involves specialist teachers going into primary schools? While I take the point that there could be more specialist teachers, that is a way to progress.

Ms MacDonald: Thank you. I agree but I want more of them.

I question the statistics that the minister gave that show 50 per cent of women taking part in sport. A huge number of younger women do not take part in sport because fashion takes over as soon as they reach their mid-teens, if they even stick with sport until then. I would be interested to look at those statistics.

Before we can get people taking part in sport, we need coaches in the community. We need to find a way to use the facilities and organisations we have, such as Fitness Scotland, the teacher training colleges and the specialist PE teachers, to get people into the community to teach folk who will then teach younger people to get them into sport for life. The motion talks a good game, but Fiona McLeod's amendment puts the ball in the back of the net. I urge members to support the amendment.

16:15

Mr Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab): I am pleased to be able to speak

in today's debate for two reasons. First, as a Labour MSP, I am firmly behind the Scottish Executive, local authorities and other agencies working to tackle social exclusion. Secondly, as Michael McMahon the sports fan, I am pleased that the Parliament is turning its attention to this important area.

I welcome much of what Rhona Brankin has said today about the link between sport and tackling social exclusion and about the Executive's strategy to promote sport throughout Scotland. The contribution that sport can make in the fight against social disadvantage cannot be overstated. The benefits of participation in sport are clear in terms of health improvements, community cohesion, social development and the sense of personal achievement.

As a keen follower of sport and as someone again familiarising myself with the inside of the gym, I welcome the Executive's sport for all philosophy, even for thirty-something MSPs. I also welcome the Executive's commitment to widening participation for all in sport. All Scots, regardless of their level of ability, income, gender or age, should have access to good-quality sports facilities and opportunities to participate.

I welcome the Executive's moves to increase sports opportunities for our young people. Over the years, many children have been denied the chance to participate in sport and develop their talents. I was pleased when Labour launched the new Scottish institute for sport to provide opportunities for everyone under 18 to get involved, and stay involved, in sporting activity.

I welcome the team sport initiative, which has helped 180,000 young people and 12,000 coaches, teachers and leaders, the top sport programme to encourage active play and sport in primary schools and the action taken to tackle the loss of playing fields through the new planning procedures.

Fiona McLeod: I am interested that two Labour members have now mentioned the top sport scheme. Do they realise that the budget for the scheme for the years 1999 to 2003 is only £700,000? The majority of its budget comes through sponsorship from British Telecom, not through money from the Executive.

Mr McMahon: I am disappointed that someone could be annoyed that £700,000 is being spent. We must look on the positive side.

The Executive has placed great emphasis on the development of sport in Scotland. I welcome its commitment in the programme for government to establishing a Scottish football academy, with associated network academies, and to ensuring that every school in Scotland has a sports co-ordinator in place by 2003. I note that a football

partnership has been established to take forward proposals for football academies, which will be in place over the next three years.

As a member with two social inclusion partnerships operating in my constituency, I am glad that the key role of SIPS in developing the link between sport and social inclusion has been highlighted by the minister.

While discussing the role of sport in social inclusion, I would like to raise the issue of the Scottish Football League's recent decision to fine Hamilton Academical football club 15 points for failing to fulfil a fixture in April of this year.

I recently had the pleasure of meeting Ally Dawson, the club's manager. I was heartened to hear his plans for taking the players around south Lanarkshire schools and public parks for training sessions in an effort to encourage young people to become active in sport and to raise the profile of the club, which has been away from the town for six years. He did not pontificate about social inclusion or theorise about the importance of sport for education, but he could see the practical support that he, the players and the club could give to the local community from the privileged position that they have.

As members may be aware, the decision by the SFL, which was described as "savage" by one football commentator, Brian Scott, will relegate the Accies to division 3 for next season. It penalises the players, the fans and the town. Equally important, it threatens the future finances of the club when, today, it has just been announced that it has been given the go-ahead for the planned new stadium project to return to the town.

The decision is about more than the Accies club. The decision by the SFL directly threatens the livelihood of players, who were forced to take industrial action against their employer because payment of their salaries had been delayed, not for the first time, because of the club's already precarious financial situation. Those are the same players who are willing to take part in community outreach projects, which are so valuable to the Executive's sports strategy.

Regardless of the internal politics of Hamilton Accies, the league's decision will force the club, which is already hard up, to make further savings from the pay bill. The livelihoods of the club's support staff as well as its players will be threatened by the ruling—not much social inclusion there. I think that it is the league's responsibility to assist its member clubs to get away from the breadline rather than to put them on it or, as in the case of Hamilton Accies, to take the bread from their mouths.

An appeal on the decision will be taken tomorrow. I hope that the Executive and the

Parliament will send the message to the Scottish Football League that it must reconsider the punishment, take into account the club's circumstances on the day on which it did not play Stenhousemuir, and not make its situation worse.

16:21

Mr Keith Harding (Mid Scotland and Fife)

(Con): The policy of inclusiveness in sport for all members of society that is proposed by the Executive is laudable and has cross-party support. We acknowledge the achievements so far and do not wish to appear negative, but find it difficult to understand how the policy can be fully delivered without adequate financing. I hope that the minister will enlighten us about where in the Scottish block the resources that are required to deliver the policy will come from and about the services that will suffer as a result.

In "Sport 21", the Scottish Sports Council suggested the facilities that were required to begin to address social inclusion and sport in general. I regret that I will have to list some of them, but I think that we have to be aware of the enormous task that the Parliament faces: 11 new build or replacement swimming pools; 38 indoor bowling halls; 11 athletic tracks; 160 sports centres; 19 ice halls; 98 squash courts; 500 replacement and 400 new outdoor tennis courts; 47 municipal pay-as-you-play golf courses; 80 synthetic grass pitches; 307 grass pitches for football and hockey; 80 cricket pitches; and 250 various refurbishments. Those are community facilities for councils to run. An extensive array of national and regional facilities that are too numerous to detail here are also required.

In 1998, the total cost that was projected to 2003 was more than £220 million, of which community facilities represented almost £120 million. To fund that ambitious programme, local authorities would be required to find some £22 million per annum, which is equivalent to just over half of their current gross capital expenditure on such facilities. That takes no account of the substantial revenue expenditure that will be incurred and will have to be met mainly by councils, which are cutting back on those services. Is this another area that will be top-sliced by the Minister for Finance?

Councils have had to increase charges for leisure and sports facilities because of the recent local government settlement. If the facilities that are proposed are provided, the question of affordability will arise. In the late 1980s, Stirling District Council introduced the very successful passport for leisure scheme, which gave access to the unemployed, pensioners and low-income families to all leisure and sports facilities, at reduced prices or even free. Such a scheme could be considered nationally, but if it were, we would

again run into the question of costs as councils are cutting back in those areas.

Opening up sport and leisure to the socially disadvantaged—low-income families, pensioners, ethnic minorities and the unemployed—is not a question only of concessions on charges. We must promote the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, provide transportation, equipment and clothing and improve accessibility, all of which have cost implications. Who will pay? New burdens must be financed in full. We would appreciate an explanation of how this worthy policy can be delivered.

16:24

Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): I sometimes wonder whether, if talking were a sport, politicians could get sponsorship. I applaud all the organisations and individuals who participate in activities that keep the kids off the streets and give them a decent education and something to look forward to. I welcome the debate because it is the role of Government to achieve equal opportunities for all and to ensure that our people, young and old, benefit from a healthy lifestyle and access to some form of exercise, whether it is organised sport or something else.

It is time for me to use the not-so-nice words, minister. The consequences of the real cuts in local government moneys—£255 million to be exact—by the Executive and the school rationalisation programme are that schools are closing down, playing fields are being lost and swimming pools are being shut. As a result, more folk will be socially excluded than will be included. I ask the Executive to think again about giving more money to local government.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): Does the member agree that often when we discuss social inclusion and sport, we are focusing on boys—football and so on—in the hope that eventually some of them will play for a team that we hold dear? Would Sandra White acknowledge some of the important initiatives that identify the needs of women in sport? Would she join me in congratulating Glasgow City Council on supporting the women's 10K on 14 May? I am not mentioning it just because I am going to be running in it, but because it is a useful initiative and I hope that the member will join me on the day.

Ms White: I am certainly thinking about it. I support Glasgow City Council's initiative to encourage more women to run in groups, which allows them to feel safe. People can get application forms for the run from any Glasgow City Council library.

I would like to draw Johann Lamont's attention

to an aspect of the amendment. Is she aware that by attaching the football academies to association football clubs, girls and women are automatically excluded from participation? [MEMBERS: "No."] Association football has a rule prohibiting mixed football above the age of 13.

"Investing in You" says that the Executive will raise the standard of performance of all sports. As Fiona McLeod said, that is supposed to be done with a spend of less than £2 per head, in comparison to Denmark where the spend is £42 per head. I ask the minister whether the Executive is investing enough money in that. Taken together with the cut in moneys to local government, even Houdini could not escape the fact that there might be social exclusion.

I would like to concentrate on the situation in Glasgow for a few minutes.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Briefly. You have one minute.

Ms White: One minute? That certainly will be brief.

I want to list the playing fields that have been lost in the Glasgow area because of the school closure programme and Glasgow City Council's policy: Cowlairs, Colston Road, Torr Street, Ellesmere Street, Ruchill park, Springburn park, Balmore Road and Lambhill. More recently, we have lost the playing fields at Chirnside school and St Augustine's school.

Patricia Ferguson and I attended a meeting in Glasgow City Council about the closure of those playing fields. The minister may think that it is not about money, yet the planning committee's submission to the council says:

"Although there is presumption against redevelopment of sports pitches, account should be taken of the need to create a financial asset to bolster the PFI process to build new schools."

That is a terrible indictment of the Executive and what it is doing to local government.

Not everyone has a car, not everyone can afford to go to sports centres and not everyone wants to participate in sport in a centre. I urge the minister to ask Gordon Brown for more of his surplus cash to give to local authorities on the proviso that they spend it on saving playing fields for local communities.

16:29

George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD): I would like to talk about our real national game, which dates back some 2,000 years: shinty. I was delighted that the minister attended a presentation last night on how the problems facing our national game may be overcome. The minister may play a

vital role in overcoming some of those problems.

I have some information for those members who are not aware of shinty, where it is played or what it is about—or for those members who were at the presentation, but have some problems recollecting what was said. Shinty is indigenous to Scotland; it is a team game played with a stick and ball throughout the country. Its real strength lies in the Highlands, particularly in Argyll and Bute where there are between 12 and 14 teams. It is a team game that is based on strong family ties. The Kingussie team that played in the Camanachd cup final last year contained three brothers. It has real community identity and great community spirit, with community support for many of the teams.

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab): Does the member agree that one of the truly fascinating things about the development of shinty in the past few years is its inclusive policy towards women and girls? What would seem to outsiders to be a very macho game is making itself as open as it can to young people of pre-school age—by first using plastic sticks—and especially to women.

George Lyon: I thank the member. I had been going to mention that, but she has taken half of my speech.

Like football, which some regard as our national game, every Saturday afternoon at 3 o'clock, thousands of players throughout the Highlands and Islands, and indeed throughout Scotland, play shinty. Unlike football, we do not kick off; we throw up—that is the official title. My recollection of football games was that throwing up usually happened at 3 o'clock on a Sunday morning after the game.

Shinty is a unique game, which is strong in the Highlands. However, there are still university teams, in Edinburgh and in other parts of the country. The big challenge is to try to develop it in other areas of the country. Shinty provides access to organised sports. There are two national leagues, five area leagues and three national youth competitions. The premier competition is the Camanachd cup. The semi-finals are being played this weekend; the final will be next month.

There is an international dimension to the shinty: the international series, in which shinty players and the hurling fraternity from Ireland have a one-off international game, usually every summer. It is an exciting game, which is normally televised and is well worth watching.

The real challenges facing the game are how we can encourage youth development more within rural communities and how we can encourage urban communities to take the game up. The key point is that only two development officers cover the whole of Scotland. It is an impossible task for those people to engage with communities and

schools and to try to develop the game.

Shinty has become dependent on sponsorship. Much of the budget is sponsorship related. If shinty is to continue, work has to take place in schools to encourage young people to take up the game at an early age, before other diversions—which Duncan Cameron, the president of the Camanachd Association, described as “women and drink”—come into view when they reach 14 and 15. That is not a politically correct way of putting it, but there we go.

If shinty is to develop, and it is important for rural communities that it does, I ask the minister to consider an increase to the £15,000 core funding from sportscotland, which has been frozen for the past five years. It is a ridiculously low figure. I ask the minister to put some real money in, so that shinty can go from strength to strength in future.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Finally, with apologies to members who have not been called, Dennis Canavan.

16:33

Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West): I welcome this opportunity to debate the role of sport in social inclusion and the importance of sport as part of personal and community development. At an international level, Scotland's performance in sport often leaves a lot to be desired.

Participation in sport is important for improving standards, but it is also of crucial importance for social and health reasons. Recent research at Ninewells hospital revealed that a quarter of 11 to 14-year-old children showed signs of heart disease. Another study at Yorkhill hospital found that child obesity had more than doubled over the past decade. Those problems are due not only to bad diet but to lack of physical activity.

The relationship between sport, health and education must be given greater priority. In the limited time available, I want to devote most of my remarks to school sport. I welcome what the minister has said about the appointment of school sports co-ordinators, but the role of the teacher is also important. Sadly, school sport has never recovered fully from the teachers' dispute of the 1980s. It would be unrealistic to imagine that we can turn the clock back to the good old days when teachers worked unpaid overtime to run school sports teams, but the McCrone committee should consider what must be done to encourage more teachers to help develop sports opportunities for young people.

The Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Bill refers to

“the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the child or young person to their fullest

potential.”

If that potential is to be fulfilled, school sport must be given greater priority. It is all very well, and desirable, for children to be educated in literacy, numeracy and computer skills, but if they spend most of their leisure time glued to a television or a computer screen, their social skills and their health will be the losers.

I read in a recent report that one local education authority in Scotland had banned competitive football for primary schoolchildren. Of course, there are perfectly sound reasons for concentrating, at an early age, on basic ball skills and not forcing young children into 11-a-side competitive matches on full-size pitches, but a complete ban on competitive football for all primary schoolchildren is ludicrous. Sport, by its very nature, is competitive and children can learn a lot from competing and from the experience of losing as well as winning.

I welcome the recent announcement that sportscotland will invest £2.8 million in a new programme to improve sports opportunities and standards of physical fitness for children aged four to 12. That is a positive, exciting initiative. Not long ago, the main emphasis of Government policy on sport was to encourage people to continue participation after they had left school, but if young people do not participate when they are at school, there is nothing to continue.

The Scottish Executive must show a lead in trying to ensure that the sportscotland initiative is a success. That will require team effort, and the teacher is a key player in the team. If teachers are given the status, the resources and the incentives that are required, the children in our schools will benefit and Scotland can become a nation of winners with a higher degree of social inclusion and community spirit.

16:37

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): First, I have some sincere advice for the SNP. If the debate had been handled correctly, there might have been a chance for a motion to be agreed that included what Rhona Brankin proposed and at least some of the ideas in the SNP amendment. However, it is not realistic to expect the Executive to agree to cut out a sentence that commends its work.

If the SNP wants merely to embarrass me and other members who—although we agree with the sentiments of its amendment—feel that we have to support the Executive loyally, that is okay; it can go ahead. If, however, the SNP wants to achieve something, which it could have done—we could have had parliamentary approval for some of its ideas—I suggest that, in future, it negotiates. That

has happened in any decent council in which I have ever been involved. Very often, agreement can be reached if people negotiate in advance and say, “If we say this, will you say that?”

Ms White: Mr Gorrie is advising the SNP that if it negotiates, it may get a settlement. Perhaps if he advised Jim Wallace and the Executive, he might get an agreement. Mr Gorrie should keep his advisements for his own party and not direct them at us.

Donald Gorrie: I am saying, merely, that if the SNP wishes to get something carried, it can negotiate; if it does not want to, that is up to it. I agree that it is up to the Executive to respond to any overtures from the SNP. If I am wasting my breath in trying to give advice, so be it.

There must be more funding for all council services. Funding for recreation has continued to be cut, year after year. The Executive must examine that issue.

We must use other budgets to aid social inclusion through sport and other community and youth activities. That will be difficult, as other departments—such as health, social work, police, education or housing—will have to give up a part, although a very wee part of their budgets to fund such activities. A more inclusive coaching and administrative system demands a certain amount—though not a great deal—of money. In that way, we can recruit professionals, whether physical education teachers or professional coaches, to coach volunteers so that we can make use of the huge resources of people over 50, for example, who have retired early and could coach all kinds of sports. Furthermore, there should be more money for sport in primary and secondary schools and for after-school activities, which might require people to be paid.

We must also examine the huge administrative costs and priorities of the lottery. As the lottery involves much unnecessary bureaucracy, and its funding mechanism is separate from the rest of sportscotland, we should find out whether there are any cheaper methods of securing funding. Any lottery system that pours millions into a white elephant such as Hampden needs serious examination.

I support the argument for using a small amount of money to help the supporters clubs movement. That is not merely the fad of one or two MSPs; there is cross-party support for it, as it is a good idea. Although the minister is right to say that such a movement is not the only way forward, it is one way forward. Professionals are prepared to give advice, but money is needed to get local schemes off the ground—I seriously urge the use of some community development money, which need not be sports funding. It is very important for a

community, particularly a deprived community, to feel involved in a reasonably successful local professional football team.

16:42

Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Listening to David Mundell's speech, I was reminded of the original playground policy on social inclusion: "One potato, two potato, three potato, four." That rhyme ensured that a specky four-eyes like me could get into the team at the first pick. As Ian Jenkins mentioned, I later found out that being in sport was the coolest thing. It was my lack of vision, not my svelte figure, that let me down when, at a rugby trial, I dived triumphantly over the line with the oval ball—only to find that it was the 25 yd line.

I listened to the minister with interest and agree with many of her comments: I, too, want a Scotland where everyone matters. She mentioned jobs, education, housing and health, to which I would add safety, in the sense of the rule of law. She also talked about sports and the arts. Perhaps in her closing remarks she will mention any developments towards considering sport as part of the culture of this society and whether it will be mentioned in the cultural strategy when that is published.

I pay tribute to Raymond Robertson, who, when he was the minister with responsibility for sport, laid the foundations for "Sport 21", an initiative behind which all parties can unite. The "Sport 21" document has some interesting statistics on broadening social inclusion. For example, there were 125 swimming pools in 1989 compared with 164 pools by 1997. In 1989, there were 60 development officers; that number has now grown more than five times to 337. In 1989, only nine national governing body courses—organisation being an important aspect of inclusion—were held in the Highlands. By 1997, there were 60. Things have been moving in the right direction and I have every reason to believe that the Executive's policies aim to further that, which I welcome.

Sport is not all positive; some aspects of it can be negative and we must guard and campaign against those. In particular, there is the problem of sectarianism within sport, of which we are all aware and which I am sure the chamber will unify in fighting against. Certainly, my eyes were opened when I first turned up at a Rangers match and was given verbal abuse. I could not understand why, as someone who just happened to be wearing green and who was a Protestant—

Tommy Sheridan: It was because you were a Tory.

Mr Monteith: I could not understand why someone would think that I was a member of

some religious faith not akin to that of Rangers, but there we are; we find those things out. In other areas, especially in racism in sport, there is still much to be done. I point the minister to the issue of Asians in football. Asians have a love of football—they play it in the street—yet there is scant evidence of them coming forward through our coaching system.

Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): On that point, will the member join me in congratulating Craig Brown, Rangers, Celtic and other clubs on the launch of their "Kick racism out of football" initiative, the biggest of its kind, which I hope will kick racism from the terraces of Scottish football once and for all?

Mr Monteith: I certainly welcome the initiative.

I echo the comments made by Margo MacDonald about specialist teachers—a policy that I feel needs particularly strong support. I would like to hear from the minister about what more can be done to protect playing fields, which are particularly important in allowing access to sport for people of all ages and both sexes.

We have lodged an amendment to the Executive's motion because we remain to be convinced that the Executive can meet the targets that it sets. However, we wish the Executive well in setting out to achieve those targets.

16:47

Mr Lloyd Quinan (West of Scotland) (SNP): This has been an interesting and wide-ranging debate. It has also led us to discuss the remits of other organisations, particularly the Scottish Football League, the Scottish Football Association and sportscotland.

Everyone on the SNP benches seeks to eliminate prejudice and inequality in all areas of Scottish life and to promote social inclusion. The Deputy Minister for Culture and Sport has announced a number of initiatives today, with figures attached, but we have had little in the way of a practical presentation of how the structures will come to pass. I will seek answers from the Minister for Children and Education in his closing remarks, particularly on the cuts in funding for sport, which amount to close to 20 per cent this year. We want to know whether he intends to freeze funding next year and what he intends to do about the loss of more than £5 million a year in lottery funding for sport.

The crucial element, which many members have touched on, is that, until we sort out the local government settlement, it will be extremely difficult to deliver an enormous amount of what everyone in the chamber wants. So many areas are a matter for local government, yet we never seem to be

able to give a strategic direction to local authorities, which ties in with the lack of finance.

In her opening remarks, the Deputy Minister for Culture and Sport referred to the fact that decisions about funding are made by sportscotland. Why, then, do we have a sports minister? She also referred to the research that is being done on promoting social inclusion and said that the delivery date would be some time in the near future. I hope that Mr Galbraith will be able to give us at least an approximate date, “near” and “future” being not exactly specific.

I thought that what Cathy Jamieson had to say was very interesting. As always, Cathy enters these debates with practical examples. I have to support the SNP’s preference for supporters coming first. That would entail a branch structure in Scotland that would address the current concerns among many supporters of football clubs in Scotland and develop a sense of social inclusion.

The football academies have taken up many headlines. We are not absolutely convinced that their attachment to Scottish Premier League clubs promotes social inclusion. Our feeling is that their attachment to clubs such as Hamilton Academical, Brechin City or the clubs in the lower divisions would help to secure the future of those clubs and to promote social inclusion. We have two specific concerns about the academies. First, the Scottish Premier League clubs will gain the advantage of training, facilities and the services of the graduates, but we do not know what the payback to taxpayers in Scotland will be. Secondly, is the Executive thinking seriously along the lines adopted in other countries in Europe, that a percentage of transfer fees for graduates of the academies could go back into those facilities? We believe that that would be a sensible approach.

As there are already football academies up and running, serving the needs of what are businesses that seek to make profit in the longer term—I can cite most of the SPL clubs, including Rangers, Celtic, Kilmarnock and St Johnstone, and I should mention last week’s fantastic announcement by Hibernian Football Club and Midlothian Council—we would like proper devolution of the academies, possibly to the area sports institutes. They could be attached to first division, second division or third division clubs.

It has been mentioned that girls in Scotland are not allowed to play mixed football over the age of 13. This could have further effects with regard to Europe, the Union of European Football Associations and FIFA, but it would be useful if the Executive could at least meet the Scottish Football Association and suggest that it develops social inclusion not just in Scotland, but throughout the footballing world—it should address the issue to

UEFA and FIFA—by a change in the Football Association rulebook that would allow mixed football over the age of 13.

We are aware that women apprentices are attached to a couple of clubs in Scotland. That is a remarkable step forward. However, do we provide sufficient support for those women who have chosen to enter the profession actually to have careers as professional footballers in this country? The Executive needs to speak to the Scottish Football League, the Scottish Football Association and the SPL clubs on that issue, too.

One initiative that has been suggested is that of a professional league for women in Scotland. If it were properly developed, that could tie in with the SPL. The women’s league’s games could be played on the same day in the same stadiums, thereby clearly promoting the inclusion of women in sport.

We would support the motion if it were not so self-congratulatory and if it did not set out so little about the structure through which the Executive intends to achieve what it pats itself on the back for. We therefore ask that members support the SNP amendment.

16:53

The Minister for Children and Education (Mr Sam Galbraith): How long have I got, Presiding Officer?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Until 5 o’clock.

Mr Galbraith: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

I shall not bore everyone with my prowess as a sportsman; instead, I shall start by congratulating the many individuals who give unflinchingly and unstintingly of their time to look after people who play sport. They look after my kids and the kids of other members. They give of their time with no recompense and no satisfaction other than taking part in and promoting their sport. I would like, on behalf of the Executive and, I hope, the whole Parliament, to thank all those individuals.

I go along with the comments of Brian Monteith and thank Raymond Robertson and Michael Forsyth—there, I have said those two words—for their contribution to sport. Dennis Canavan, who was around at the time, will agree that sport was non-party political, and that we had much co-operation from Michael Forsyth at the time—I have said those two words twice in the one debate, so there you are. I had hoped that we could have had this debate in a similar context, so I am sorry that amendments to the motion were lodged. I would like to think, however, that we could take things forward in a non-party political manner.

That is one of the reasons why we have

sportscotland: to try to keep politics out of the business of the distribution of funds. Once money is distributed to individuals and groups on a political basis, we will get it wrong. Decisions have to be based on what is best for sport, not what is best for our vote. People who would mix politics and sport do sport a great disservice.

I have no problem with the SNP amendment, other than with the fact that, as Donald Gorrie said, it is an impossibility. Moreover, it states what is happening already. There are already 60 sports councils and I do not see the point in accepting an amendment that would delete mention of some of the things that we want and that states what is already happening.

Fiona McLeod made a number of points but I think that it would help if she read the relevant documents and understood the figures. She made some spurious comparisons between the amount that we spend and the amount spent by other countries. I will give her a bit of advice: be careful about international comparisons and remember to compare like with like. Denmark has a starting rate of income tax of 40p in the pound. That might be what the SNP wants, but we should be careful with such figures. She quoted a figure of £1.91 per head in Scotland. I do not know where she got that from. Sportscotland's figure is £1.69, but added to that investment is the lottery funding of £20 million a year and almost £100 million a year in local authority investment. That takes us well over £10 per head. The SNP must remember to get its figures right and try not to make everyone look as poor as possible by ginning away with the lowest figure. I will give a valid international comparison. Sportscotland spends £1.69 per head whereas, in England, only 76p per head is spent. Even the SNP will have trouble ginning about that.

I agree that the amount of spending in deprived areas has always been a problem, but I think that it is fair to point out that 20 per cent of lottery sports allocation is for areas that we consider to be deprived. That is not a bad proportion, so I will again advise the SNP to be careful about using statistics selectively. We acknowledge that there was a problem. That is why we ensured that lottery allocation had to be involved with social inclusion and gave sportscotland the power to generate applications.

Fiona McLeod: One hopes that sportscotland will apply the guidelines correctly. As Mr Monteith told us, the organisations from which it most recently generated applications were the Edinburgh merchant schools, for cricket.

Mr Galbraith: Of course, that is not quite the case. Again, we see the SNP using half of a piece of information. The directions were given to sportscotland after that point. Fiona McLeod should read the documents before she speaks

about such matters.

Cathy Jamieson talked about the important area of football supporters trusts. I would like to compliment Kilmarnock Football Club on the contribution that it makes. For a lot of football clubs, particularly in small communities—

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): What about Ayr?

Mr Galbraith: Ayr, too—I include them all. Everyone shout more names and I will include them, too.

Tommy Sheridan: Alloa.

Mr Galbraith: Alloa, there we are. I include them all.

Football clubs play an important role in social inclusion in their communities and I pay tribute to that fact.

On the important question of football supporters trusts, my only worry is that a lot of the formal organisations are not all that keen on the idea. We should not rush into this. I heard Michael McMahon talking about Hamilton Accies. I well understand his problems and I hope that the football league will hear what he has said.

I do not want to talk too much about football, but I have to correct something that Sandra White said. Football academies have to be used by the community. They will not be limited to premier league clubs and they will have a geographic spread. On the issue of playing fields, she should be aware that national planning policy guideline 11 ensures that the Sports Council must be consulted and that, if the Sports Council does not give its approval, we have to take its views into account.

Keith Harding asked how we would find the extra £200 million-odd. That £200 million has already been found; he will receive a report from the Sports Council on grant aid and matching funds.

Sport is of great value to health and pleasure, but its inclusive role has so far been neglected. That is an important role, which the Executive wants to reinforce. I therefore commend our motion to the Parliament.

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The next item of business is consideration of motion S1M-789 in the name of Des McNulty, on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, on the establishment of the Parliament's Commonwealth Parliamentary Association branch. I ask Des McNulty formally to move the motion.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament notes that the General Assembly of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) has approved the Parliament's application to join the CPA; agrees to establish a Scottish Parliament branch of the CPA, and further directs the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body to make arrangements for the establishment of the branch.—[*Des McNulty.*]

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Mr Tom McCabe formally to move motion S1M-796, on the approval of Scottish Executive reports, and motion S1M-797, on the designation of lead committees.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the following reports be approved:

Special Grant Report on Grant in Aid of Expenditure on Rural Public Passenger Transport for 2000-01 (SE/2000/17)

Special Grant Report on Grant in Aid of Expenditure on South Fife to Edinburgh Rail Services for 2000-01 (SE/2000/34).

That the Parliament agrees the following designation of Lead Committees—

The Justice and Home Affairs Committee to consider the Census (Scotland) Amendment Order 2000 (SSI 2000/draft).—[*Mr McCabe.*]

Decision Time

17:02

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): We now move to decision time. There are 12 questions to be put as a result of today's business.

The first question is, that amendment S1M-792.2, in the name of Peter Peacock, which seeks to amend motion S1M-792, in the name of Mr Brian Monteith, on discipline in schools, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Galbraith, Mr Sam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 MacLean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahan, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)

Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Johnston, Nick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Mr Alex (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 60, Against 17, Abstentions 29.

Amendment agreed to.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Because

amendment S1M-792.2 is carried, amendment S1M-792.1, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, falls.

The third question is, therefore, that motion S1M-792, in the name of Mr Brian Monteith, on discipline in schools, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Galbraith, Mr Sam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Etrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 MacLean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahan, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)

Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Johnston, Nick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Mr Alex (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 61, Against 18, Abstentions 28.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament, whilst acknowledging the problem of maintaining discipline in schools, supports the Executive's continuing work to promote good discipline in schools; endorses the Executive's commitment to training and support for teachers in maintaining good discipline in the classroom; welcomes the provision of resources from the Excellence Fund to identify viable alternatives to exclusion from school and to integrate the support services for children and their families within the school setting, and

welcomes the Executive's moves to encourage the greater involvement of parents in their children's education.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The fourth question is, that amendment S1M-790.2, in the name of Iain Gray, which seeks to amend motion S1M-790, in the name of David Mundell, on services for the elderly and disabled, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Galbraith, Mr Sam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 MacLean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahan, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)

Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Johnston, Nick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Mr Alex (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 61, Against 44, Abstentions 2.

Amendment agreed to.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Because amendment S1M-790.2 is carried, amendment S1M-790.1, in the name of Kay Ullrich, falls.

The sixth question is, therefore, that motion S1M-790, in the name of David Mundell, on services for the elderly and disabled, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Galbraith, Mr Sam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Etrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 MacLean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahon, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Johnston, Nick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Dr Winnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Mr Alex (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 61, Against 18, Abstentions 26.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament welcomes the Executive's commitment to improving service provision for frail elderly and disabled people in Scotland by creating modern user-focused services; notes the progress of the Carers' Strategy in Scotland, the drive towards joint working between the NHS and local authorities, and the development of national standards for care; further notes the additional funding for health boards announced this week to be used in part to reduce significantly delayed discharge, and endorses the Executive's vision of a Scotland where every older person matters.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The seventh question is, that amendment S1M-793.1, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, which seeks to amend motion S1M-793, in the name of Rhona Brankin, on the role of sport in social inclusion, be agreed

to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Mr Alex (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Galbraith, Mr Sam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)

Johnston, Nick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 MacLean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 McMahan, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 29, Against 78, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The eighth question is, that amendment S1M-793.2, in the name of Mr Brian Monteith, which seeks to amend motion S1M-793, in the name of Rhona Brankin, on the role of sport in social inclusion, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)

Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Johnston, Nick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Galbraith, Mr Sam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 MacLean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahan, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)

Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Ms Margo (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Mr Alex (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 17, Against 63, Abstentions 27.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The ninth question is, that motion S1M-793, in the name of Rhona Brankin, on the role of sport in social inclusion, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Did I hear a no?

Members: Yes.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Davidson, Mr David (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)

Galbraith, Mr Sam (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Lab)
 Harding, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jenkins, Ian (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Johnston, Nick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North-East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 MacLean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAllion, Mr John (Dundee East) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McIntosh, Mrs Lyndsay (Central Scotland) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Lothians) (Con)
 McMahan, Mr Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Raffan, Mr Keith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mr Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North-East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Thomson, Elaine (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
 Tosh, Mr Murray (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)
 Young, John (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Elder, Dorothy-Grace (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)

Gibson, Mr Kenneth (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 McGugan, Irene (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Mr Gil (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Quinan, Mr Lloyd (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (North-East Scotland) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Mr Alex (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Ullrich, Kay (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 77, Against 0, Abstentions 27.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament endorses the Scottish Executive's vision of achieving equality of opportunity for all; supports its aim of making Scotland a more inclusive society where inequalities between communities are reduced; recognises the important role which sports can play in promoting social inclusion; and commends the work of the Executive, sportscotland and other agencies to widen participation in sport as part of personal and community development.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The 10th question is, that motion S1M-789, in the name of Des McNulty, on the establishment of the Parliament's Commonwealth Parliamentary Association branch, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament notes that the General Assembly of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) has approved the Parliament's application to join the CPA; agrees to establish a Scottish Parliament branch of the CPA, and further directs the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body to make arrangements for the establishment of the branch.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The 11th question is, that motion S1M-796, in the name of Tom McCabe, on the approval of Scottish Executive reports, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the following reports be approved:

Special Grant Report on Grant in Aid of Expenditure on Rural Public Passenger Transport for 2000-01 (SE/2000/17)

Special Grant Report on Grant in Aid of Expenditure on South Fife to Edinburgh Rail Services for 2000-01 (SE/2000/34).

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S1M-797, in the name of Tom McCabe, on the designation of lead committees, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees the following designation of Lead Committees—

The Justice and Home Affairs Committee to consider the Census (Scotland) Amendment Order 2000 (SSI 2000/draft).

Glenrinnes School

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): I ask members who are not staying for the final item of business to leave the chamber quietly and quickly. Private conversations should be conducted outside the chamber.

The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S1M-626, in the name of Margaret Ewing, on the closure Glenrinnes school. The debate will be concluded after 30 minutes with no question being put. Members who wish to participate in the debate should press their request-to-speak buttons as soon as possible.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises the importance of primary schools to our rural communities; asks for clarification of the Scottish Executive's policy on the retention of such schools; is concerned that Glenrinnes school is threatened by closure despite being the only focal point in the village and despite the sound educational arguments proposed by parents and prospective local residents; and considers that the proposals by Moray Council to close this educational facility, which could accrue only £3,500 to Moray Council, should be rejected.

17:11

Mrs Margaret Ewing (Moray) (SNP): I thank all members who signed motion S1M-626 and all those who have indicated that they would like to speak in the debate. I shall try to keep my speech brief to enable as many as possible to participate. It is important that the Executive is aware of the strong feelings about this issue and about the principles that underpin the motion.

I should point out a factual error in the motion. The £3,500 referred to is a figure that, even now, is debatable, as it relates to the additional expenditure that would be involved in transporting children from the Glenrinnes area to schools in Mortlach or Glenlivet. All of us are bombarded with statistics from time to time; perhaps I should attend Glenrinnes Primary School, given its excellent record in teaching numeracy.

We are here not to talk about money, but to speak about the principles of the motion, which seeks clarification of the Executive's policy on rural schools in general and on Glenrinnes in particular. We are talking about the costs to children's education and about parents' concerns about the welfare of their children. We are talking about the costs to the future of the glen—a lovely part of one of the most remote areas of my beautiful constituency. From a previous conversation with Peter Peacock, I know that he took time at the weekend to visit the Glenrinnes area and is therefore well aware of the place that I am speaking about.

We should remember the cost of school closures to communities. The people of Glenrinnes did not set out to make the future of their school a totem pole, but it has become a test case of the Executive's policy on rural schools. Other members who are here this afternoon are also aware of the importance of rural schools. I understand that a petition has already been submitted to the Education, Culture and Sport Committee and that a letter has been written to the Executive about Toward Primary School in Argyll and Bute, although no response has so far been received. I am sure that members from that area, including my colleague Duncan Hamilton, will refer to that.

All of us in this fledgling Parliament, which is now approaching its first anniversary, have a commitment to serve the whole of Scotland. Yesterday evening, we debated Govan; tonight, we are debating Glenrinnes. I cannot think of two more contrasting areas, but all such debates are equally important to the people of those areas. The commonweal of Scotland will be measured in genuine concern and genuine action for all in our nation.

Glenrinnes Primary School has been operating since 1958. The building—a modern building requiring little maintenance—was erected on a plot of land gifted by Miss Isabella Cowie and sold to the council in 1963 for a fee of £50.

The school is the focal point of the tiny community. There are no other community features—there is no post office, shop, place of worship, doctor's surgery, or even a pub—so the school is seen as the hub of the community. It holds a special place in the hearts and minds of the people. The school meets all health and safety requirements. It is equipped with closed-circuit television. It has a 100 per cent record of parental involvement. I am sure that many of my colleagues would wish to see a similar record in their schools. It also has a set of school rules and disciplinary procedures that have been agreed by the pupils, teachers and parents, and has an excellent academic record.

In the substantial file that I have accumulated on this issue, which I will not read out, I have received letters from local businesses: from the whisky industry, because Allt a' Bhainne distillery is directly opposite the school; from property developers; and from those involved in quarrying, farming, fishing, forestry and tourism. They have all submitted letters of support. The indications are that the school roll could rise quite substantially within the next three years because of developments in the community. We wish to retain the school as an attraction for people coming into this area of the Moray constituency.

In the petition that was submitted to the

Education, Culture and Sport Committee, all of those facts were made clear. Those who signed the petition were not people who were tackled on a wet or windy morning in the main street of a large city: they were people who had a relationship with the community, either at present or historically. I understand that the issue is to be considered by other committees in this Parliament, and that Jamie Stone has been asked by the Education, Culture and Sport Committee to act as the rapporteur on rural schools. We expect that a report should be submitted this month, or in the near future, on the future of rural schools as a whole. Depending on that report and its findings, there may be a full investigation into a clarification of the Executive's policy.

Given that education is one of the critical spheres of policy that has been devolved to this Parliament of ours, it would be folly to proceed with the closure of any rural schools at this stage until we have fully debated and fully investigated the situation that is affecting our communities. We should have an overarching policy for our rural schools, so I ask the Executive, and Peter Peacock in particular, at least to look at the possibility of a postponement in this case until that overarching policy has been agreed.

I promised to be brief, so I will end with these words from a card from the children of Glenrinnies, in which was enclosed a piece of white heather. It is from Richard, Faye, Emily, Cameron, Rowan, Duncan and James. It reads:

"Thank you for trying to save our school. I hope this heather brings yourself, and the school some good luck."

I say to the minister that we need more than luck: we need protection, a policy, and action. I hope that we will have a positive response from him this evening.

17:19

Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD): I want to endorse what Margaret Ewing said about the importance of rural schools to the communities in which they are sited. As she said, in many of our communities there is no pub, the post office has gone, the shop has gone, and all that is left to give social cohesion is the local school. It is important that if schools are meeting educational targets and are offering a good educational experience to their pupils, as most rural schools are, we do everything in our power to maintain them.

It is important that children are brought up and educated in the community in which they live, because that provides social cohesion and a network of activities around the local school. That holds the whole community together and gives it a focal point. Our rural schools are an asset that we should value highly.

I have no direct contact with Glenrinnies, but that school is controlled by the same local authority—Moray Council—as the school at Boharm in my constituency, which is also threatened with closure. The way in which the council has dealt with the proposal to close Boharm School has been far from satisfactory. I will cite one aspect of its consultation.

The council's projection was that the school roll would fall from 10 to seven in the next three years. That figure was challenged during the consultation and the council produced a revised forecast that showed that the roll would be expected to rise to 22 in the same period. The report that went before the full council contained the first, discredited, figure and tacked on the revised figure, which demonstrated the continuing viability of the school, at the back as an annexe. That is reprehensible.

Margaret Ewing mentioned that Jamie Stone has been appointed rapporteur for the Education, Culture and Sport Committee, but Moray Council has treated that committee with contempt. It has refused to allow Jamie Stone to visit the school at Boharm and has refused to enter any dialogue with him about the rationale behind its decision. That is outrageous.

I endorse everything Margaret Ewing said about the importance of our rural schools. We need to look closely at the process that is gone through when schools are threatened with closure.

17:21

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I am pleased to support the motion in the name of Margaret Ewing and I congratulate her on making her points with compassion and empathy, not only for the children at the school, but for the rural way of life that everyone who represents rural areas—including, I am sure, the Deputy Minister for Children and Education—values. It is Parliament's responsibility to ensure that rural voices are heard.

I agree that we need clarification. There is a test case that we can examine. As a list member for the Highlands and Islands, I have received representations from parents and communities from Ulva Ferry Primary School on the isle of Mull and from places such as Boharm and Glenrinnies in Moray.

I attempted to contact Moray Council to ask it why Boharm School is being closed. I was assured by the chief executive that it was for educational, rather than financial, reasons. I see that Margaret Ewing has also been given that excuse. I asked him for research that would prove that children from small schools go on to achieve less in terms of qualifications and careers than their counterparts in larger schools. I asked him to point out to me the ways in which children in

smaller schools are disadvantaged. Unlike Jamie Stone, I received a letter in reply. I will be very happy to pass it on to him.

The letter says that

“coupled with issues such as drug education, citizenship and behaviour management there is clearly the need for an increased level of peer interaction between children such as cannot always be provided in a very small school situation”.

I say to the minister that if we extended that attitude to the rest of Scotland, I would be seriously concerned about the future of dozens of schools in Moray and throughout the Highlands and Islands.

The next criterion that was mentioned was

“The need for groups of children of similar developmental stage to be linked together in working or investigative groups . . . including team games, orchestras and bands, peer group activity.”

Can we truly keep a school open only if it has 11 guys for a football team and if it can mount an orchestra and support a band for pupils to march in? The situation is becoming farcical, but those are justifications for closing a school from the chief executive of Moray Council.

The letter goes on to talk about management and administration. I believe that the administration of some small schools in Ayrshire has been transferred to larger schools. That has allowed the smaller schools to stay open. I hope that Moray Council will examine good practice elsewhere.

Probably the two most telling reasons for proposing to close the school are

“Best Value for available resources”

and

“disparities in funding levels with regard to pupil average costs”.

Although the council talks about education, its main concern is finance.

I believe that it is the responsibility of Moray Council to ensure far greater utilisation of the school buildings. As has been said, the school is the hub of the community. I ask the council to consider some of the points that have been made by parents. There is concern that a precedent is being set here, due to pressures on local government finance. That will affect not only children’s school experience and education, but the rural fabric of the rest of Scotland.

17:26

Mr Duncan Hamilton (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I, too, congratulate Margaret Ewing on securing this debate. I acknowledge that the

motion relates specifically to Glenrinn Primary School, but I would like to consider the wider implications of this case, as Margaret indicated I would. In particular, I want to focus on the principle to which Mary Scanlon just referred—whether this decision is based on cost or whether it is based on educational theory.

Argyll and Bute is the area that in recent times has been most closely associated with this issue. Last week a petition was submitted against the closure of Toward Primary School. Schools at Ulva Ferry, which has been mentioned, Newton, Drumlembie, Glassary and Bridge of Orchy are also facing closure because the council needs to find £175,000. In the grand scheme of things, that does not seem to me to be a particularly large sum of money. We need to establish whether the decision to close these schools is being made only because the money is not available. Is there an educational rationale for it, or is that simply a cover for the cut in resources?

I want to throw into the debate some of the latest evidence from America. It is argued that there is a critical point below which there is no benefit from reducing class sizes. I want to quote one of the key findings in the latest report by the National Institute on Student Achievement, part of the Department of Education in America. It says:

“The significant effects of class size reduction on student achievement appear when class size is reduced to a point somewhere between 15 and 20 students, and continue to increase as class size approaches the situation of a 1-to-1 tutorial.”

The point that is being made is that the idea that smaller class sizes, particularly for those in the early stages of their curriculum development, inhibit learning development is a nonsense. America has been through this debate and has come out the other side. People there are now saying that smaller schools should be preserved and that we should go forward on the basis of smaller class sizes. I hope that the minister will take that into account.

I say to Nora Radcliffe that the idea that a council can simply ignore a committee of the Scottish Parliament was firmly laid to rest by the Public Petitions Committee in the case of Stobhill. The committee has written to Argyll and Bute Council about the Argyll schools specifically to avoid the sort of situation that has arisen in Moray. Nora Radcliffe may want to go down that route also.

We need to get away from having a crisis of this sort every year. This year it affects the schools that we are discussing today, but next year it will affect other schools. We need a long-term, clear strategy so that parents know that if rationalisation has to take place it will happen on a fair and open basis—on the basis of what is best for children,

rather than simply to cut budgets. Today, the minister has an excellent opportunity to tell us whether there is a theory behind what we are doing, or whether this is simply a crude budget cut. If it is, that is a sad indictment of current Executive policy.

17:29

Alex Johnstone (North-East Scotland) (Con):

It seems that I find myself addressing Peter Peacock on the subject of rural school closures quite often. This is not the first time, and I am sure it will not be the last.

I hope in the short time available to me—I do not intend to take very long—to develop a small theme. We have heard how important rural schools are and that small rural schools are not necessarily bad rural schools. I have referred before to my experience and that of my children, who went to a small rural school and received a quality education there in composite classes, sometimes in difficult surroundings. It is the quality of our schools that is important.

The issues surrounding rural school closures were highlighted when we discussed Boharm Primary School. The example that I would like to bring to members' attention today is slightly different. St Vigeans Primary School is on the outskirts of Arbroath. For what I believe are primarily financial reasons, there has been a proposal to close it. It has a roll of 42 pupils. In the past, it was classed as having a capacity of up to 50 pupils, but because of the required pupil:teacher ratio, 42 is the maximum it can take.

Until recently, St Vigeans was classified as a rural school, but for a reason that I have yet to understand, boundaries have been moved and the school is now in the Arbroath area. Of the 42 pupils, only 14 live within the catchment area. The parents of the other 28 have chosen to bring their children in. It is a glowing tribute to a tiny school that operates with two composite classes that it can attract pupils who live a considerable distance away. I visited the school last night and spoke to a number of parents, including one couple who regularly make a 22-mile round trip to deliver or collect their children.

Despite all that, there is pressure to close the school. We have to remember that quantity is not always the best thing for education, and that children who come from a rural background are often far better suited to attending a rural school than they are to being bundled into major schools in the county towns. We have to keep that at the front of our minds.

Another reason for mentioning St Vigeans is that it is in an area controlled by a SNP council. Peter Peacock and I have had our discussions: I

suggested that the Executive is the cause of the problem; he suggested that it was the good old Tories. I would like to suggest that perhaps we are all partially responsible for the situation. Decisions are being made on the basis of finances, not on the quality of education.

Mrs Margaret Ewing: Through this motion, we hope that the Scottish Parliament, with its responsibilities for education, will look for different criteria from those that have existed in the past. I am sure that Mr Johnstone agrees with that.

Alex Johnstone: Yes, I acknowledge that point.

I would like to close by saying that I hope that, at the end of this debate, we can all go forward and look for those new criteria for dealing with rural schools. We should consider them in terms of the quality of education they provide rather than in terms of the financial burden they place on local authorities. We should find a way of dealing with this issue that is satisfying not only to the Executive, but to the parents and—especially—to the pupils who attend rural schools.

17:33

The Deputy Minister for Children and Education (Peter Peacock):

I find myself in a slightly anomalous position. I know that members will appreciate the procedural problems. This debate is specifically about Glenrines, but it opens up wider questions on policy. As members have said, Moray Council has sought the consent of Scottish Executive ministers for the closure of Glenrines primary school. However, the papers relating to the school are currently with our officials; neither I nor Sam Galbraith have seen any of those papers. We will see them soon but, meanwhile, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the particular circumstances of Glenrines, which must await full and proper consideration in the light of the advice that we receive. To do otherwise would be regarded as prejudicial to our consideration of the case.

Mrs Margaret Ewing *rose*—

Peter Peacock: I will give way in a minute.

It has been useful to hear the points that members have made about the particulars of Glenrines, all of which will be taken into account when we come to make our decision. Margaret Ewing delivered her speech in measured tones as usual. Others have done so too, and I recognise the genuine concerns of members. In the light of the restriction on me, however, I would like to consider some of the wider factors that affect all such situations.

Mrs Margaret Ewing: On that point, can the minister tell me when the papers were received from Moray Council, what time had elapsed, when

they will be looked at and when we can expect a conclusion?

Peter Peacock: I will write to Margaret Ewing with the details and dates, as I do not have them to hand. I know that Glenrinnnes was out of sequence with the other schools in Moray. The papers came in later than those on Boharm school and others.

Brian Adam (North-East Scotland) (SNP): Will the minister extend the same courtesy to those of us who have been in touch with him on Boharm and some of the other schools?

Peter Peacock: With pleasure. It may be helpful to look at the points of principle underlying the Glenrinnnes and other cases and at some of the background factors. The Executive believes that full consideration must be given to these cases and all relevant views must be considered and addressed.

Setting aside particular cases, I understand the concerns about school closure proposals and that they can be, and invariably are, very strongly felt in rural areas in particular, though not uniquely in rural areas. However, local authorities have a responsibility to keep provision of schools under review. That applies in all areas of Scotland and all types of settlement. They have a duty to plan for the long-term provision of schools in the area, not just a duty—although they also have that—to the current schools and children in them. That is very difficult and challenging and I am not going to criticise any council for exploring the issues with their local population. It is their duty.

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con) *rose*—

Peter Peacock: I will give way in a moment.

The Executive wants to see a strong network of rural schools but that does not necessarily mean the exact network we have today, although it will predominantly be that network. In many rural areas the pattern of distribution of schools was established in the late 1800s and was based on reasonable walking distances between the settlements and their schools. Life moves on and settlement patterns change as do traditional ways of life.

Many rural schools once served large, mainly agricultural communities with significant numbers of children and poor travel facilities. Time spent at school was shorter and the link with the land and agriculture was more prominent. Changes in agricultural practices and other countryside activities mean that in many areas those factors do not apply. The ease and convenience of transport is vastly improved even from 20 years ago, let alone 120 years ago when much of the pattern of schools was established.

Schools are very different places. The curriculum and the way in which it is delivered has changed hugely over the years. No one is suggesting that a sound education cannot be delivered in a small school—I want to stress that. It has to be for a great many children in the most remote communities. In the communities that Mary Scanlon and others referred to there are no alternatives to the existing pattern because the distances between the schools are too great.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): I appreciate that the minister finds himself in a difficult position, but Nora Radcliffe said that the local authority concerned has apparently refused to co-operate with a committee of the Parliament. I understand that the minister is bound by statutory procedures brought in before the Parliament was established, but people voted for the Parliament and for the right to have their case put in its committees and other bodies. That must be taken into account.

Would it be possible for the papers to be returned to Moray Council with the direction that it should co-operate with the elected Parliament, so that the parents of Glenrinnnes and other schools in rural Scotland that are facing closure have the opportunity for the reporter on the matter, Jamie Stone, to consider it before the statutory process is taken further?

Peter Peacock: As Fergus Ewing says, the statutory procedures constrain our actions. However, I understand that Moray Council has agreed to meet Jamie Stone.

Mrs Margaret Ewing: On that point, how can the minister say that he understands that there is an agreement to meet Jamie Stone when he cannot tell us when the papers were received from Moray Council and what progress there is on them? It seems to me that there is a total contradiction in what is happening here. We are trying to get to the root of the matter and see if this Parliament has the courage to stand up and say that new procedures will be adopted.

Peter Peacock: I discussed the matter with Jamie Stone and I understand that Moray Council has agreed to a meeting with him.

Mrs Margaret Ewing: When?

Peter Peacock: That is a matter between Jamie Stone, on behalf of the parliamentary committee, and Moray Council.

A great many children will have no alternative but to remain in the schools that they are in because of the population distribution in the most remote parts of Scotland. There can be gains to children's learning in being able to interact with a wider range of peers and to have access to a wider range of teachers and materials, where that

choice exists, but it does not exist everywhere.

Although Mary Scanlon derided it to some extent, participating in sport, music, art and drama becomes possible in larger groups. That is a factor, but it is by no means the only factor.

Brian Adam *rose*—

Mr McGrigor *rose*—

Peter Peacock: The Deputy Presiding Officer is asking me to wind up, so I will have to resist the members' temptations.

There is a full statutory consultation process involving parents and school boards when an authority proposes the closure of a school. Authorities have to take account of the representations before them in reaching decisions. That ensures that there is a full opportunity for all issues surrounding closure to be aired and debated. I firmly believe that that is best done at a local level. In this Parliament, almost all of us are committed to strong local government. Education is a key role for local government.

Proposed closures, as we all know, can be highly contentious and people invariably express doubts about the basis of the council's case. That is democracy at work; it is part of the process of reviewing those matters. There are many cases where, in the light of consultation responses, authorities have decided not to proceed with certain proposals.

In March 1998, Brian Wilson, one of my predecessors as an education minister, stressed—and I underline this in view of some of the comments that have been made—that schools should not be closed on financial grounds alone. He invited local authorities to apply a “test of proportionate advantage” to any proposed closure of a rural primary school. That test is intended to ensure that the educational and financial gains deriving from a school closure stand up to scrutiny and that they outweigh any negative effects that a closure may have on the rural community and the children and families concerned.

The term “test of proportionate advantage” reminds local authorities that, in considering and consulting on school closure proposals, they should address all the potential benefits and disbenefits related to education, finance and community that might be at issue. It would be naive to suggest that those issues are always capable of fine definition.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Patricia Ferguson): I must ask you to close, minister.

Peter Peacock: I am moving to a conclusion.

The principal determinants of school provision are the circumstances in a local area. It is right that each situation should be examined on its

individual merits, because those vary so much across Scotland. Above all, it is correct that, as far as possible, these are local decisions. However, the concerns about rural schools have always been recognised through the requirement for authorities to seek the consent of Scottish ministers where the distance between the school proposed for closure and the alternative school is greater than 5 miles for primary schools and 10 miles for secondary schools. In that formula the interests of the children are being balanced with the travel burden upon them. That is the correct focus. In considering proposals coming to us for consent, we apply a similar test of proportionate advantage to the case. We look at all the factors in the round.

I know that Jamie Stone is reviewing, on behalf of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee, the issues surrounding rural school closures. I look forward to the opportunity to discuss that report with him and with the Education, Culture and Sport Committee, once it has been received.

I trust that giving that background has been helpful to members' understanding of where the Executive stands on those matters.

Meeting closed at 17:44.

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