



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 16 May 2012

Session 4

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body

Information on the Scottish Parliament's copyright policy can be found on the website - www.scottish.parliament.uk or by contacting Public Information on 0131 348 5000

Wednesday 16 May 2012

CONTENTS

	Col.
TIME FOR REFLECTION	8939
BUSINESS MOTION	8941
<i>Motion moved—[Paul Martin]—and agreed to.</i>	
NATIONAL PARENTING STRATEGY	8942
<i>Motion moved—[Aileen Campbell].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Neil Bibby].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Nanette Milne].</i>	
The Minister for Children and Young People (Aileen Campbell).....	8942
Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab)	8946
Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con)	8949
Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP)	8952
Anne McTaggart (Glasgow) (Lab)	8953
Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP).....	8954
Siobhan McMahon (Central Scotland) (Lab)	8956
Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP).....	8958
Mark McDonald (North East Scotland) (SNP)	8959
Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD).....	8960
Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP)	8962
Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)	8964
Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con)	8965
Hugh Henry (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)	8967
Aileen Campbell.....	8969
NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND BILL: STAGE 3	8973
NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND BILL	8989
<i>Motion moved—[Fiona Hyslop].</i>	
The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop).....	8989
Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab)	8992
Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)	8994
Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP)	8996
Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab)	8998
Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP).....	8999
Annabel Goldie (West Scotland) (Con)	9000
Fiona McLeod (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)	9001
Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD).....	9002
Liz Smith	9003
Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)	9005
Fiona Hyslop	9006
BUSINESS MOTION	9010
<i>Motion moved—[Paul Martin]—and agreed to.</i>	
PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU MOTION	9012
<i>Motion moved—[Paul Martin].</i>	
DECISION TIME	9013
“A ROAD TO HEALTH”	9018
<i>Motion debated—[Alex Fergusson].</i>	
Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con).....	9018
Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)	9020
Aileen McLeod (South Scotland) (SNP)	9022
Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab)	9024
The Minister for Public Health (Michael Matheson).....	9026

Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 16 May 2012

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

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Good afternoon. The first item of business this afternoon is time for reflection for which our leader is the Reverend Brian Oxburgh, who is the minister of Tayport parish church.

The Rev Brian Oxburgh (Tayport Parish Church): Presiding Officer, members of the Scottish Parliament, ladies and gentlemen—I am grateful for the opportunity to share these few minutes with you.

How are you? I ask that question in all sincerity, because I cannot help but notice that on television and radio news programmes and in the newspapers every day there are political stories, and every day a politician somewhere is interviewed and asked to answer questions or to make a comment. That may give some people the impression that politicians are available every day, but you need to rest. We all need to have rhythms of rest and work.

In modern Scotland, much of the Christian church is in decline. The Bible is read less than it once was and its message and the teaching of Jesus guide us less and less. The Sabbath day is largely neglected and with each passing year the business of life encroaches upon it.

To be sure, the Sabbath was intended to be a day that was set aside for worship. It was also a day that was set aside for rest. Jesus wisely pointed out that

“the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath”.

Jesus took a rule that had become oppressive and showed that it was intended to be a release and a blessing, and a means of ensuring that everybody took rest and granted rest to others—to everyone. Jesus commended a healthy work-life balance. He cared for people’s wellbeing.

The complexities and business of modern living have made a healthy balance much harder to achieve, but a healthy balance is better for us as individuals, for our families and for our friendships. How do busy people such as you, in pressured vocations, achieve balance in work, home and personal life? How do we find the time to reflect on spiritual matters? Do you and I really find the time? Jesus told a story of a busy man who worked hard and then took early retirement to enjoy himself but died before he could enjoy his

retirement. That man had no time to enjoy life or reflect on spiritual matters.

I want us to reflect and to consider how well we care for ourselves. Jesus claimed to offer life in all its fullness yet, to have this life, we have to rediscover his wisdom. I commend the wisdom of Jesus to you and pray God’s blessing on you. Thank you.

Business Motion

14:04

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-02903, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, which sets out a timetable for stage 3 consideration of the National Library of Scotland Bill.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that, during Stage 3 of the National Library of Scotland Bill, debate on groups of amendments shall, subject to Rule 9.8.4A, be brought to a conclusion by the time limit indicated, that time limit being calculated from when the stage begins and excluding any periods when other business is under consideration or when a meeting of the Parliament is suspended (other than a suspension following the first division in the stage being called) or otherwise not in progress:

Groups 1 to 4: 30 minutes.—[*Paul Martin.*]

Motion agreed to.

National Parenting Strategy

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-02888, in the name of Aileen Campbell, on the national parenting strategy for Scotland.

14:05

The Minister for Children and Young People (Aileen Campbell): The Scottish Government's aspiration is for Scotland to be the best place for children and young people to grow up in. We want all our children to have the best start in life so that they can develop into healthy, happy, confident and successful individuals who are ready and equipped for the challenges of adult life. That aspiration is shared across the chamber.

I am delighted to talk about the Government's national parenting strategy, which aims to set out a cohesive and compelling narrative about the value and importance of parenting and how it contributes to improving outcomes for children and young people. I also look forward to hearing constructive thoughts and views from representatives across the chamber, which will enable the debate to contribute to the strategy.

Parents and carers are the greatest influences on their bairns' lives, so we must ensure that they get the support that they need when they need it. I want a parental culture in Scotland in which it is completely normal and never a failure for parents to ask for help or advice to enable them to grow in their role. I want parents to feel empowered, valued, supported and confident in their ability to care for their children. A national parenting strategy will bring the necessary leadership, co-ordination and momentum to this crucial issue and will ensure that, across the public sector and wider Scottish society, we focus on ways in which we can all work together to support parents and carers to do their important job well.

Many of us know that being a parent is both the most rewarding and most challenging role that we ever take on. The strategy will be aimed at all parents, because parents in all circumstances can find parenting difficult. We must ensure that more targeted intensive support is available for families who need it most. The strategy will be relevant not only to mums and dads, but to anyone who is involved in bringing up children—not least grandparents, who play a hugely important role in childcare and provide additional practical and emotional support to their wider families. It is crucial that the parenting strategy recognises and supports the roles that grandparents and other family members play in bringing up children.

The strategy will also include the vital role of kinship carers, adoptive and foster parents—

whom it is particularly important to mention during fostering fortnight—and corporate parents, including all of us in the chamber, who have a duty of care and responsibility for our looked-after children. Whenever I refer to parents, I refer to all kinds of parents.

The early years framework that was published in 2008 highlighted the strong influence that parents have on their babies and very young children. The work of the chief medical officer, Sir Harry Burns, has taught us about attachment behaviour, the importance of consistent parenting to help children right from birth to make sense of the world, and the impact that environmental and biological influences have on the development of babies during pregnancy. However, parents often struggle with older children and teenagers—in fact, around a third of all calls to parentline Scotland are from parents of teenagers. For that reason, the parenting strategy will cover the widest possible age group, from pre-conception to adulthood. It will also consider how we can prepare our children and young people to be confident parents of the future.

The strategy must make a practical difference to parents, so it is important that it will have the views of parents at its heart. Over the past few months, we have gathered the views of more than 1,500 parents from throughout Scotland. I say a huge thank you to the many organisations that hosted discussion groups on our behalf. I also record my heartfelt thanks to the parents who took the time to tell us about their experiences. I have had the privilege of meeting some inspirational characters and brave families who have told me—through tears, smiles and laughter—what they believe we need to do. Their views will help to shape our approach.

We asked what would make a real practical difference to them as, for example, disabled parents, teenage parents, grandparents or parents who are affected by imprisonment, substance misuse, alcohol or domestic abuse. We also asked what the best things are about being a parent, because the strategy will also aim to celebrate parenting and to demonstrate the positive value that we must place on parents and carers for the role that they play in improving outcomes for children and young people.

I am delighted that our approach has won praise from Children 1st's chief executive Anne Houston, who said:

"Children 1st welcomed the Scottish Government's commitment to develop a national parenting strategy for all parents and carers. We welcome the Scottish Government's approach to seeking views from such a wide range of people with a parenting role, many of whose voices are not normally heard."

We will publish a report of parents' views in June. I have met some of the groups of parents and seen some of the early feedback, so I know that it will be a thought-provoking report.

When we talk about parents, many of us tend to think about mums, so I want to talk about fathers. I am pleased to see a number of dads in the chamber and will be interested to hear what they say during the debate. In our consultations, we have had a lot of feedback from dads, who often tell us that they want to be more involved in their children's lives but are sometimes made to feel unwelcome or excluded.

Mark McDonald (North East Scotland) (SNP): Will the minister give way?

Aileen Campbell: I will give way to dad Mark McDonald.

Mark McDonald: Does the minister agree that an issue that affects fathers—albeit that it is outwith the Scottish Government's remit—is the short time that they are given for paternity leave, which often does not allow them to pick up some of the slack, especially if the mother has postnatal depression, or allow time for significant bonding with their child?

Aileen Campbell: Mark McDonald has made a valid point. The issue was the subject of discussion in the context of the Queen's speech in the United Kingdom Parliament, and I look forward to hearing more details about that. We will certainly reflect the wider views of dads in our parenting strategy.

We want to change how we see and respond to fatherhood. In a modern successful Scotland, we want to encourage and support fathers to play a more active role in their children's upbringing. The strategy will consider how services and communities can become more dad friendly and at how employers can encourage dads and mums to balance the worlds of work and parenthood.

There is no doubt that the agenda is huge and challenging and that change cannot be achieved overnight, which is why we are taking a phased approach. As a starting point, in September we will set out our aspirations for parents and for children and young people throughout Scotland. The position statement will help us to sharpen our focus on parenting, to place higher value on the role of parents, to articulate the benefits of supporting parents and to make the case for parents across a range of services and sectors, while ensuring that appropriate support is tailored to meet need. It will also reflect what parents have told us would make a practical difference, and will set out more detailed plans for later phases of work.

On the basis of meetings that I have had with parents, I anticipate that the next phase of our work, which will kick off later this year, will focus on three strands: parenting in the early years, parenting of older children through to adulthood, and preparing our children and young people to be the parents of the future.

I have set out what is planned for later this year, but we should not forget that a huge amount of excellent work is going on to support parents in Scotland. At national level we have a continuum of support from universal provision to specialist targeted support, which can be shaped to meet the particular needs of children and families at different stages of their lives. At local level, I have had the pleasure of visiting a number of projects and hearing at first hand from the parents who have benefited from their work.

The getting it right for every child approach is making a practical difference by ensuring that our key policies and services are child centred. We want to continue to build on that approach. As the motion says, a number of excellent initiatives are helping to support parents throughout Scotland, including the highly successful play, talk, read campaign, which encourages positive interaction between parents and their wee ones. This year the campaign has a bespoke bus, which is travelling to some of our most deprived and isolated communities.

The family-nurse partnership programme is a preventative, intensive home-visiting programme, which is delivered exclusively to teenage first-time mothers. The programme will be expanded so that by the end of 2013 it will support three times as many families as it currently supports.

A key and recurring theme that parents raise is childcare, which has been the subject of intense debate in Parliament. We know that high-quality early learning and childcare are vital in improving outcomes for children, and in enabling parents to participate in the labour market, so we are putting in place a range of measures to increase the amount of flexible affordable provision.

The forthcoming children and young people bill will increase the flexibility of early learning and childcare provision by increasing entitlement from 475 hours per annum to 600 hours per annum of early learning and childcare for three and four-year-olds and looked-after two-year-olds. This financial year we committed £4.5 million from the early years change fund to support local authorities in providing early learning and childcare for our most vulnerable two-year-olds, and we have established a £4.5 million communities and families fund to support community-based solutions for family support and childcare.

We will develop public-social partnerships to pilot early learning and childcare services in areas of particular or unmet need, and we will hold a national summit in June to explore new ways of working with the private sector to promote more flexible working and family-friendly practices. In addition, we are establishing a sub-group of the early years task force to consider how we might develop high-quality integrated and co-ordinated family centres and early learning and childcare services.

In conclusion, I say that I am very excited about the parenting strategy and the role that it can play in improving lives in families across Scotland. I know that we all recognise the importance of supporting parents as a way of improving outcomes for children and young people, and I will sincerely welcome constructive views from colleagues across the chamber on the approach that I have set out.

I move,

That the Parliament supports the Scottish Government's aspiration to making Scotland the best place in the world for children to grow up; acknowledges that the vast majority of parents in Scotland already provide excellent support for their children; recognises the vital role that parents and carers play, not only in improving outcomes for children and young people in their care, but also in creating stronger communities and a more positive future for all; agrees that all parents need support at times and that parents and carers bringing up children in difficult circumstances may need additional support; welcomes the development of a national parenting strategy as a way of driving forward the shared ambition for improving outcomes for children and young people across Scotland; supports the approach taken to gathering the views of a diverse range of 1,500 parents whose voices are not normally heard and using this as a foundation for the national parenting strategy; thanks the many organisations that have hosted discussion groups with parents on the Scottish Government's behalf, and welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to continued working in partnership with parents and a wide range of partner agencies to develop the detail of the work.

14:15

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): I do not think that any member would argue about the importance of parents in a child's life. Parents and other guardians are often the biggest influence on children's life chances, and we know that children thrive in a stable and supportive home environment.

As I have said several times before, we will work with the Government when it is doing things right and we will challenge it when it is not. The Labour Party has a track record of commitment to supporting parents and children. The "For Scotland's children: Better integrated children's services" report in 2001 drew together an action team of experts from local government, the national health service and the voluntary sector to look at how better to integrate children's services,

and it was Labour that introduced the getting it right for every child agenda to ensure that all Scotland's children, young people and their families have consistent and co-ordinated support. I am pleased that the Scottish National Party Government is carrying on that agenda.

Labour members therefore welcome the Scottish Government's indication that it plans to support parents and other guardians, but we want to see more urgent action to support parents. The truth is that there is little to applaud or oppose so far in relation to the national parenting strategy and this debate. We have a debate not to launch a consultation process or even, at the end, to discuss the strategy. The strategy is not yet tangible, and although most people would support the broad principle of a strategy in which parents are consulted and that seeks to support them with parenting, the real test is still to come.

Aileen Campbell: I grant that a lot of the consultation work with parents who face particular challenges has been done, but my intention in having the debate was to give members an opportunity to shape and focus how we take forward the parenting strategy. I hope that Opposition members support that approach.

Neil Bibby: I will certainly give the minister some suggestions later in my speech.

Better preparing and supporting parents in the responsibilities and opportunities that are provided by parenthood gives us the chance to set out how we would like our children to grow up. It is vital that we use the opportunity to do just that and—crucially—to support parents rather than simply to lecture them. We need to develop a strategy that embeds in our culture the idea that it is natural—that it is expected, even—that all parents need advice and support at some stage. We must challenge the stigma that says that only vulnerable parents and parents at risk need a helping hand. That is why Labour members want to see more action from the Government to support parents and other guardians. We want to see the Government deliver on the promises that it has already made, and we want to take the opportunity to make other suggestions.

We want the Government to support parents. That should include working with local authorities, health boards and the voluntary sector to improve the existing network of family centres, and it should start with communities in which there are the highest levels of deprivation. Family centres provide support and advice for parents as well as specialised intensive work with vulnerable children. That can include play sessions, transition support, mentoring and respite. I know that both the Labour and the SNP manifestos included a commitment to a new generation of family centres,

so I expect that we will see specific plans for that detailed in the strategy.

It has been mentioned that we also need to see action to increase free childcare and nursery provision for three-years-olds and four-year-olds. As we know, the SNP Government made a pledge on that back in 2007, and it could be introduced now with a simple piece of legislation. Instead, childcare measures are being folded into a children's bill that will take years to implement. We want action to support parents and other guardians sooner rather than later.

We support initiatives such as the FAST—families and schools together—project, which is run by Save the Children. It aims to boost the chances of children in the UK's most deprived areas by supporting parents to improve their children's learning and development at home so that they can reach their full potential at school.

According to Save the Children, teachers have reported, after just eight weeks, a 10 per cent improvement in reading, writing and maths among children who are enrolled in the FAST programme, and that 73 per cent of parents have become more involved in their children's education. That demonstrates significant developments in a short time. I was pleased to visit one such project in Clydebank late last year.

We also need a corporate parenting strategy that will improve our performance as corporate parents to the most vulnerable children who most need our help. We hope and anticipate that commitments to those ideas will be part of the national parenting strategy.

We need action from the Government to support parents and other guardians. Although the Scottish Government talks a good game in that regard, we would feel more confident if the Government had already delivered on its commitment to support parents and on the promises that it has made. There would be no better way for the Scottish Government to show that it is serious about supporting parents and other guardians than to deliver on those specific promises.

I mentioned increased nursery provision earlier; another such commitment is on kinship care. The level of financial support for kinship carers is less than the support for foster carers in far too many local authorities, and we hear from kinship carers about patchy support depending on which local authority area they live in. Patchy support is little better than no support at all.

We know that the First Minister committed on 27 September 2007 to providing £10 million to fund financial support that is equivalent to that which is paid to foster parents. Successive SNP ministers made further commitments that the promise would

be met via the concordat with local government by 2011 at the latest, but that is still not happening.

In 2007, the Scottish Government promised aid to kinship carers—who are often elderly and making sacrifices to help children, and who are seeking not massive sums but simply equal treatment—and yet it did not deliver. What does that say about the Scottish Government's commitment to supporting parents and guardians?

Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

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

Neil Bibby: If the Government continues to let down kinship carers, what hope do other parents have that the national parenting strategy will help them?

If the Government is serious about supporting parents and other guardians, it should deliver on its commitments. Parents, kinship carers and children need support. I hope that the national parenting strategy will be a strategy of action that supports parents and children and delivers on the promises that have been made.

I move amendment S4M-02888.3, to leave out from “development” to end and insert:

“input from many organisations; believes that kinship care should be an essential part of a National Parenting Strategy, and calls on the Scottish Government to bring forward Scotland-wide implementation of the promise made by the First Minister on 27 September 2007 to provide £10 million for kinship care allowances.”

14:22

Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): We Conservatives welcome the debate, and in so doing we recognise the importance of a permanent and loving family environment in which to bring up children. The Scottish Government's motion rightly highlights the role that parents and carers play in the development of our young people, but perhaps more important is that it acknowledges the need to support families who are experiencing difficulties.

I think that all members in the chamber would agree that children's formative years are shaped by the environment in which they are brought up, and that factors such as poverty and poor health can have a negative impact on a child's eventual transition into adulthood.

The recent growing up in Scotland survey gave an insight into some of the more worrying statistics that are available on physical health, such as the prevalence of tooth decay. Approximately 38 per cent of children in primary 1 suffer from that condition, which is linked to the fact that approximately 35 per cent of schoolchildren

consume snacks with high sugar or fat content more than once a day, while 69 per cent lack a varied fruit and vegetable diet.

We all know that if children are to develop into healthy and responsible adults who have achieved their educational and physical potential and are ready to take on the role of parenting the next generation, there is a lot more to it than food. Their earliest years are all-important. The briefing that members have received from Barnardo's Scotland—an organisation for which I have enormous respect—neatly sums up what we should be aiming for in a society in which, sadly, there exist families in which there are generations of people who have not had good parenting and who do not have parenting skills to pass on.

Barnardo's says that a national parenting strategy should be based on three principles: “prepare, advise and support”. It says that it must also

“focus on all aspects of parenting from pre-conception, pre-birth, birth, early years, 16-18, and transition to adulthood.”

I absolutely agree with Barnardo's, and I think that we should always bear in mind what it says as the national strategy develops. I was encouraged by the minister's comments in that regard.

I was also pleased by the minister's comments about fathers, because I am totally convinced that it is extremely important that children have, where possible, positive interaction with both parents. To date, many fathers have had a raw deal, particularly when relationships have broken down.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): A number of fathers have been in touch with me about that. Does Nanette Milne agree that the courts seem to start from the position that the mother should have the main contact and the father must argue for every inch?

Nanette Milne: Yes, I absolutely agree with John Mason. My family has experience of that situation, although we had a very positive outcome and my grandchildren have great access to both parents. It is a serious problem that worries me a lot. As a grandparent, I am extremely fortunate, but some grandparents have serious difficulties in being able to look after their grandchildren.

I turn to children in care or, more specifically, looked-after children. We recognise that among them there is a significant problem with regard to educational attainment, and it is quite clear that there is a link between attendance and exclusion rates and being in care, whether it is residential, kinship or foster care. In the past 10 years, we have seen the number of looked-after children rise by a staggering 69 per cent—the figure now stands at over 15,000, which is the highest level for 30 years. In my region—North East Scotland—

the number of children in care in Dundee has doubled over the space of a decade and children's services are said to be reaching saturation point.

The problems do not stop once children have left school. In 2009-10, 56 per cent of young adults gained five or more qualifications at Scottish credit and qualifications framework or higher level. A mere 0.5 per cent of school leavers who were in care got the same results.

The establishment of the early years task force in November last year was a real and welcome attempt by the Scottish Government to bring together key stakeholders including local government, the national health service, the police and the third sector—all of which have an impact on the early years of children's lives. Helping the most vulnerable of Scotland's children is a particular aim of the task force, and I look forward to the development of the childcare strategy as it evolves to support all Scotland's parents in their vital task.

The general theme of the amendment in my name, which I hope the minister might be minded to accept, is that we feel that, if we are to help our young people to appreciate the responsibilities that come with parenthood, schools must have a role to play. Therefore, our amendment pays tribute to the teachers who are trained in providing the invaluable additional support that our most vulnerable young people require at the earliest age. I hope that the minister shares my concerns about the fact that the number of those teachers appears to be falling. Perhaps she will address that situation in her closing remarks.

We are very happy to support the Government in developing a parenting strategy if the intention is to bring all the necessary strands together in one overarching framework, which parents and teachers alike want to see.

I move amendment S4M-02888.1, to insert at end:

“; recognises that, as well as parents and carers, schools also have an important role to play in helping young people to appreciate the responsibilities that come with parenthood; pays tribute to the teachers who are trained in providing additional support requirements and who do so much to ensure that the most vulnerable young people are identified at the earliest age; notes with concern the recent evidence that indicates declining numbers of these teachers, and calls on the Scottish Government to address this concern as a matter of urgency.”

The Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate. I remind members that speeches should be up to four minutes long.

14:28

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP): I am glad to speak in this important debate on a national parenting strategy for Scotland.

I congratulate my colleague Jim Eadie on sponsoring yesterday evening's event in Parliament that showcased Children 1st's national services. The excellent presentations detailed the work of three key support services that are funded and supported by the Scottish Government. The first was safeguarding in sport, which works with sports' governing bodies and with clubs, parents and—above all—children to ensure that young people who participate in sport are protected and supported, and that proper practices are in place.

Parentline Scotland was the second service that was highlighted. It is the free helpline and e-mail service that Children 1st runs for anyone who is concerned about a child. It is provided by trained volunteers and call takers and is open seven days a week, 365 days a year.

We then heard about the work that Children 1st is doing on national kinship care and about the advice and support that it provides to families and carers who are in that position. Mr Bibby mentioned that little support is akin to no support at all, but I remind him that no support at all was available before 2009, when the Scottish Government introduced the looked-after children regulations, which for the first time allowed the payment of allowances for kinship carers.

Children 1st treated us to a couple of role-play calls to their support services. It was immediately obvious that signposting to other support agencies and local programmes is a key element in their successful outcomes. It brought home to me the importance of cross-agency, cross-society integrated partnerships to the success of a national parenting strategy.

The minister's motion expresses Scotland's ambition to have all our children safe, secure and adequately and appropriately supported in reaching their full potential. As the work of Children 1st has demonstrated, the approach must be holistic and involve all aspects of a child's life—education, social interaction or sporting activity. The role of the voluntary sector is key to that success.

A national parenting strategy must ensure that all partners—education, social work, health, and the voluntary sector—work seamlessly within a framework of services and service planning that addresses a continuum of need, from prevention and early intervention to acute services. Although we recognise that key services will be delivered locally, this is a national strategy that should deliver national improvements and outcomes for our children.

Parents and carers must be an integral part of that support service. I believe that parenting and caring are undervalued roles in our society. Mark McDonald mentioned paternity leave, which is perhaps an indication of that—we have such little time with young children, as parents. Parents and carers must be part of the solution, and they must be integrated into it and not be defined as the problem. Our integrated services must work with parents in improving outcomes for our young people.

Much of today's debate will focus on the early years. However, we must not forget that there are children in the system who need our additional support. I commend Made4U in ML2, which is in my area—Central Scotland—and is working with young people to build resilience in the parents of the future.

14:32

Anne McTaggart (Glasgow) (Lab): I am always glad to have the opportunity to discuss how we can improve the lives of children and young people in Scotland, and today is no different. However, it would perhaps have been more useful to have the opportunity to debate an actual parenting strategy rather than just a motion that welcomes its development.

When we have a UK Government attacking public services and delivering damaging welfare reform that will impact on the lives of people throughout the country, it has to be recognised that, often, it is children and young people who are hardest hit. That, coupled with the Scottish Government's cuts to further education and its continued broken promises on education and the falling numbers of pre-school teachers, mean that, for many people, childhood is not shaping up to be the happiest years of their lives, which is a pity.

John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP): Like in Glasgow.

The Presiding Officer: Mr Wilson, will you please stop shouting across the chamber?

Anne McTaggart: The importance of the early years to a person's development is now more apparent than ever. That should be reflected by action to improve children's start in life. The SNP's commitment to increase nursery education to 600 hours could have been part of that. However, just as with the parenting strategy, parents and children are still waiting on its delivery. That commitment could have been met quickly and simply, but instead it is held up and will be part of the forthcoming rights of children and young people bill.

Thankfully, as I am sure that members will agree, Labour in Glasgow has committed to

guaranteeing that every child in the city will have 15 hours of childcare a week from the age of three, which means that it is delivering more hours than the current Scottish national provision, despite the swingeing cuts that Glasgow City Council received from the Scottish Government.

Sandra White: Will the member give way?

Anne McTaggart: My Labour colleagues in Glasgow—

Sandra White: Will the member give way?

The Presiding Officer: The member is not giving way.

Anne McTaggart: —will also extend the vulnerable twos programme, which offers support to vulnerable children across the city and will focus resources on parenting support for people with children in the early years. Furthermore, another 10 family learning centres will open across the city over the next five years. All those actions will support children and young people as well as the adults who look after them and I hope that the Scottish Government will encourage other local authorities to implement similar policies. If the Scottish Government wants to make Scotland the best place in the world to grow up in, what is happening in Glasgow provides great examples of what needs to be done.

However, as a parent of three children who are all at school now—I hope—I know that if we want to improve the lives of children and young people, we need to do more than deliver in the early years. Like the national parenting strategy, the forthcoming children and young people bill presents an opportunity to take forward an agenda that will improve the lives of all children, including the most vulnerable young people in our communities, which is most important. Under it, ministers will be required to have regard to children and young people's rights and views in making policy. Although that is, of course, a step in the right direction and although I support the intention behind the proposals, I must point out that children and young people might still lose out if the proposals do not cover local authority and health board decision making. The same goes for the national parenting strategy, which must cover all areas that impact on the lives of young people and the adults who look after them.

That kind of overarching approach to enhancing the lives of all Scotland's children and young people is a must. They deserve the best life chances and we must do our bit to support that.

14:36

Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): I congratulate the minister on securing this debate on the national parenting

strategy and the Government on taking the time to consult families from a wide variety of backgrounds and all the organisations involved in parenting in developing the strategy. There is no magic bullet in parenting; if there were, we would all be using it and would be having no problems in bringing up our children.

I recall impending parenthood, the plethora of bestselling parenting guides and arguments with previous generations about the best way of parenting. We always ask children what they want to be when they grow up and give them lots of careers advice, but do we emphasise enough the enormous and lifelong commitment involved in being a parent? Nothing is more important than giving our children the best start in life, and parents must come to realise that parenthood is not about material things but about caring, nurturing and developing their children.

As a result, I am pleased that a key part of the strategy is building parents' resilience, skills, capacity and confidence and raising the importance and value of parenting—and, in turn, children—in our society. We are certainly not helped in those efforts by certain media outlets that portray children as little more than fashion accessories.

Given my previous comments about the importance of antenatal classes as a vehicle for learning not only about the process of birth but about the wider context of bringing up children, I was dismayed to read last week about a recent National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children report that cited a survey suggesting that 65 per cent of new mothers from middle-class backgrounds but less than 39 per cent of disadvantaged mothers have attended antenatal classes. We need to do some work on that area, and it will probably fall to general practices and primary care to ensure that, through health visitors, midwives and others, parents receive the support in very early years that they need.

The NSPCC report also touched on the isolation felt by new mothers. I know that, as a new mother who had just moved into a new area, I would have felt pretty isolated had it not been for the support of the local mothers and toddlers group.

We must congratulate organisations such as Parenting Across Scotland that keep bringing the problems of families to our attention through their literature and the events that they frequently hold in Parliament. I always make the effort to attend those.

As the minister has said, we know about the importance of the time between pre-birth and school. Long gone are the days when, once the health visitor's visits had finished, children did not

come to the attention of the authorities again until they started school at the age of five.

We have seen the increase in childcare and nursery provision. The increase is on-going and exponential.

Family-nurse partnerships are a great concept that is currently being rolled out, although we would not think so if we listened to some Labour members.

I am glad that the minister mentioned the teenage years, and I commend the work of the Blue Horizon Youth Project in my constituency.

The pressures continue, but we are working on them.

14:41

Siobhan McMahon (Central Scotland) (Lab):

Developing a national parenting strategy that is coherent and relevant to families across Scotland is a laudable aim, but the motion is an extended exercise in stating the obvious. The Scottish Government is seeking the admiration of Parliament for aspiring to make Scotland

"the best place in the world to grow up"

and for having the foresight to canvass the views of 1,500 parents and carers. It flanks that with a series of humdrum observations, such as

"all parents need support at times"

and

"parents and carers bringing up children in difficult circumstances may need additional support".

Given the overwhelming banality of those statements, I am relieved that the Government is taking the time to gather more informed opinion.

Although the Government's aim to make Scotland

"the best place in the world to grow up"

is an excellent example of Salmond's much-cherished blue-sky thinking, we might want to begin by making Scotland the best place to grow up in the European Union or even in the UK.

As my colleague Neil Bibby observed in a debate in March, the Labour Government of 1997 to 2010 made children and young people a top priority. The introduction of 3,500 sure start centres, which were targeted at the poorest areas, was listed by the Institute for Government as one of the most successful policies of the past 30 years. Sure start was predicated on empirical evidence that illustrated the importance to a child's development of being talked and listened to, and being treated with patience, empathy and understanding. It was a genuine attempt to tackle the devastating correlation between the early

experience of poverty and deprivation, and poor educational performance and life prospects.

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Siobhan McMahon: No, thanks. Despite the coalition Government's sad, if predictable, dismantling of it, sure start remains a shining example of the early years provision to which we should aspire. Unfortunately, the Scottish Government is lagging behind.

On Monday, I attended an informal childcare conversation with parents at the Burnbank family centre in Hamilton, which was organised by Save the Children. For the parents I spoke to, flexibility is critical. As they pointed out, 600 hours of free nursery provision is no use if it is not available when parents need it. Flexibility is especially important to low-income families, who rely most on state childcare and are more likely to be engaged in professions with rigid working hours.

To achieve that, we might look to Europe for inspiration. A recent submission from Children in Scotland to the Parliament's European and External Relations Committee made a persuasive case for the formation of an early childhood education and care system that would be similar to those that we find in other European countries. The submission outlines how that would improve the prospects of young children while simultaneously tackling the problems of female and youth unemployment through increased flexibility for parents and demand in the childcare workforce.

Combining high-quality, nurturing care with good early learning requires a skilled and qualified workforce. The European countries that have such a workforce have the best outcomes in terms of children's happiness, health and wellbeing. That is what we should be aiming at.

There are examples closer to home of what a good parenting strategy might consist of. Last September, North and South Lanarkshire councils, in conjunction with NHS Lanarkshire and other service providers, formulated a parenting strategy. It includes a range of core commitments that are aligned to benefits and outcomes that are designed to provide support and guidance to local parents and care providers. It also offers a range of innovations for future consideration. For example, it stresses the importance of engaging with male parents and carers as early as possible, and encourages them to have a positive and active role in their child's life. It also recommends the signposting of locally arranged activities such as parent and toddler groups, parent and teacher meetings and parent support groups. Those encompass the whole parenting spectrum, from prenatal classes to managing teenage behaviour.

As many members will know far better than I do, parenting is a lifelong vocation.

Those are just a few ideas for how we can enhance childcare in Scotland. We must concentrate on getting it right for Scotland's parents and carers. In doing so, we can help to give our children the best possible start in life which, I believe, is the most that any Government can offer.

14:45

Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP): I am delighted to take part in the debate. I had hoped that it might be slightly more consensual and that we would hear from Opposition members about some of the good things that have been happening. The Government has done a remarkable job of listening to what parents require. It is important that we listen to what parents ask for and that we act on that information. We are in phase 1 of a three-phase national strategy. I hope that Opposition members will make a slightly more positive contribution to the next debate on the issue.

The minister said that being a parent is both rewarding and challenging. I endorse that. I am a father of twins. This might be difficult to believe but, when my wife told me that she was expecting and that it was twins, I was speechless. However, being an Aberdonian, I thought that two for the price of one was perhaps not a bad deal. The challenge of being a parent soon came home to me. Because I am not a heavy sleeper, I decided with my wife—who was delighted at the time—that I would get up during the night to feed and change both my girls. One night, my wife sat up straight in bed and said, "You are remembering, aren't you, to give the bottles to both of them and not to the same one twice?"

It is a challenge being a parent. Initially, we thought about how we would manage and who we could turn to. We were supported by family, the medical profession and health visitors. That still happens today.

Last night, Children 1st said that it had just received its 40,000th phone call to parentline. Although it is to be congratulated on that service, the figure shows that there is a problem and that people are crying out for help. That is why the strategy has been introduced which, as a parent, I am delighted about.

When I heard about the play talk read campaign, that took me back to the time that I had with my children when they were very young. I was scolded many times by my wife because telling them a story before they went to bed was supposed to calm them down, and I was not very

good at that—I probably excited them more with my storytelling than I would have if I had been reading from a book.

There are challenges for parents. There is a challenge for me as a parent because I now have only one daughter, who is a teenager. The reward and the challenge are still there and my daughter, Fiona, knows how to challenge her father.

The Presiding Officer: I think that you speak for all fathers of daughters everywhere.

14:48

Mark McDonald (North East Scotland) (SNP): As another father of a daughter, and of a son, I recognise much of what my colleague Dennis Robertson said. My brother had a not dissimilar reaction to that of Dennis Robertson when he found out that his wife was expecting twins.

I will cover three areas: postnatal depression; paternity leave, which I raised in my intervention; and play. On postnatal depression, during a Finance Committee discussion on family-nurse partnerships, the issue of the psychological impact on the child of a parent with postnatal depression was highlighted. That is why it is key that we consider how to ensure early diagnosis of postnatal depression. A suggestion that I throw forward is that the minister could speak to her colleagues in the Government about whether, at the six-week postpartum check-up that every woman has, women could be asked to complete the Edinburgh scale test, which detects postnatal depression. That might help with early diagnosis of the condition, which can often be missed, and would prevent women from developing more severe postnatal depression further down the line.

Another issue that we perhaps need to look at is how we develop and nurture support groups for women with postnatal depression, both support groups that are co-ordinated by local authorities or health boards and ones that come together organically when they are formed by women in communities who know each other and know that they are suffering from postnatal depression. How can we support those groups to ensure that they develop and help those women? Organisations such as Home-Start Aberdeen, which recruits and trains volunteers to visit families at home and offer them informal, friendly and confidential support, have a vital role to play in signposting and in helping to identify people.

I touched on paternity leave in my intervention on the minister. As I have been through the process myself, what I am saying might sound a bit selfish. As a local authority councillor, I was in the fortunate position that I could work more from home, which meant that I got a bit more time with

my children, but often that is not possible and the father has only a fleeting two weeks with the child.

Paternity leave does not take into account the fact that the woman might have complications. For example, if the mother has had a C-section, she has six weeks when she cannot drive and is not allowed to do any heavy lifting. If she has older children who are perhaps four or five years old, it can be a real difficulty if she is not allowed to lift them to any great degree or carry them and is unable to go out and do the shopping. Consideration must be given to those issues. I acknowledge that the matter is not within the remit of the Scottish Government, but I hope that the minister might factor those issues into her considerations and the discussions that she might have with her UK counterparts.

I believe that play is vital in developing children's social skills and more needs to be done to increase opportunities for play. I welcome the funding that the Scottish Government has allocated in that regard. Local organisations in my area, such as Aberdeen Play Forum, are doing a lot of work to try to increase opportunities for play by working with a range of organisations.

We must also include reading within play. I always remember the quote attributed to Albert Einstein:

"If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales. If you want them to be more intelligent, read them more fairy tales."

Initiatives such as bookbug, which is run by the Scottish Book Trust, are vital. Although we focus on a wide range of areas, the most important advice that we can give to parents is this: play with your children and read them bedtime stories.

14:52

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): As a father of two sons, I dedicate, if not my speech, at least the flourishing grey hairs on my head to the pair of them.

I have put on record my support for the development of a national parenting strategy and recognise that the debate is part of that process. This will not be a straightforward exercise. To be successful, it will need to encompass and reflect a broad range of circumstances and needs. That is borne out in the motion, which rightly highlights the work that is being done by some of the many stakeholders, including parents. The rather self-congratulatory tone of the motion is predictable, but I support its general thrust.

Of course, however difficult the task of developing a parenting strategy, the challenge will be in ensuring that its fine sentiments are matched by appropriate action that delivers the shared

ambition that we have for what it should be like to grow up in Scotland. Some of that will be about practical support, advice and guidance being given, including at an early stage in our schools. Some of it will be about helping to shift cultural attitudes, not least by reducing the stigma that is attached to seeking help, and by considering the role of fathers, which Mark McDonald and others have rightly highlighted.

The two amendments raise valid points in the context of developing an effective and comprehensive parenting strategy. Nanette Milne's amendment picks up a theme that emerged in the Education and Culture Committee's evidence session earlier this week on additional support for learning. I hope that ministers will take the issue seriously.

Neil Bibby is right to express the particular needs of kinship carers, which deserve specific attention. Indeed, as a number of us saw last night at the Children 1st reception, the existence of a dedicated kinship carer support line is testament to the fact that the group has distinct needs, which are best met by appropriately trained staff and volunteers. The First Minister's promise in 2007 to deliver parity in care allowances was unambiguous. It raised expectations, falsely as it turns out. Rectifying that may not be straightforward but, as things stand, the issue is having a demoralising effect on many kinship carers.

In the brief time that is available, I will touch on a few of the many points that merit much more detailed consideration. A distinct component of the strategy must relate to the corporate parenting of looked-after children. The outcomes for that group—particularly for children who are looked after at home—remain unacceptably poor. A commitment to addressing that persistent problem is resolute across the parties, and action is taking place on the ground. That is exemplified by Barnardo's, Aberlour and other organisations, which are also active in raising awareness about the need to better equip those who are responsible for corporate parenting.

Emphasising the importance of the early identification of problems, risks and, when necessary, intervention will be key. There is an interesting debate to be had about how long a corporate parent should remain responsible. After all, when a son or daughter leaves home, they do not cease to need their parents' support, encouragement and love.

Seeking advice and support as a parent is not always easy, of course. A perceived stigma is undoubtedly attached to that. In some cases, it might be felt that help with parenting is for those who are in crisis—Neil Bibby made that point. In other cases, people might be unwilling to engage

with services that could provide help. Each situation requires a different solution, which illustrates the difficulty in developing a strategy that is seen as relevant across the board.

Barnardo's talks about the three principles—to prepare, to advise and to support—with the focus on all aspects of parenting from pre-conception through to the transition to adulthood. That makes sense, and there is much good work to draw on, which must be properly harnessed. Partnership working and signposting across and between agencies must be embedded, and the Parliament must scrutinise progress rigorously and demand changes when they are necessary.

Improving the availability and affordability of childcare is key, as the minister acknowledged and highlighted in the childcare debate that I led in the chamber earlier this year.

We will return to such issues many times in the coming months and in the context of the upcoming children and young people bill. I look forward to that and to working with all who have an interest in the subject to ensure that we achieve what is a shared ambition across the chamber.

14:56

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): Last week, I saw my 17-year-old son bedecked in a cow costume, off to his last official day at school—it was him in the cow costume, not me. I make it clear that, although I live in and represent a rural constituency, cow costumes are not the recognised uniform of the local secondary school; rather, that was part of the sixth years marking a landmark day in the way that only teenagers could.

When I turned back down our hallway after locking the door behind my son, my eye was drawn to a picture of Lewis and me preparing for his very first day at school, some 13 years ago. Initially, I was struck by how much thinner I was and by how much more hair I had back then, not to mention the fact that my son was quite cute back in 1999. Inevitably followed the thought, "Where on earth have the years in between gone?"

That moment gave way to pondering whether my wife and I had, as parents, done a decent job in raising not only our younger child but our 23-year-old daughter. Given the people whom they have become, I think that the answer is yes, but the credit for that belongs not only to us but to our parents, because is it not the case that a person's take on parenting derives mostly from the manner in which they were raised?

When someone has kids, no one hands them the A to Z of parenting. Advice—sometimes

welcome and sometimes not—is offered from a variety of quarters but, generally speaking, people go with their instinct, which inevitably has been heavily influenced by their experiences of growing up. Why else do we parents find ourselves, after we have picked up our kids from something or sought to guide them in a particular direction, thinking, “Oh no—I’ve become my mum and dad. I remember them saying exactly the same thing to me”?

Not everyone who becomes a parent has such great experiences growing up as my wife and I did or has the family support network that we were fortunate enough to enjoy. That is why I warmly welcome the national parenting strategy, which is designed to enable parents and carers to provide the best environment possible in which to raise children. It aims to remove barriers to positive parenting and is about creating a truly nurturing and supportive environment for the forthcoming generations of Scots.

I was struck by a comment that Donna Bell of the growing up in Scotland study made a couple of months ago. She said:

“A lot of the international evidence and some of the evidence from Scotland suggests that some people in ... straitened circumstances are very good parents. We would not make a link between such circumstances and poor parenting. It is very clear ... that it is about what parents do, not what they are”.—[*Official Report, Finance Committee, 7 March 2012; c 842.*]

That is a valid observation. It is extremely easy to make sweeping generalisations and to assume that kids from disadvantaged backgrounds are automatically more likely to be poorly raised and to end up not realising their potential. Financial circumstances and the home environment are of course determining factors, but plenty of kids from less affluent backgrounds are raised well.

There are kids from wealthier families who are allowed to do as they please and end up getting into bother. I have previously mentioned the issue of underage drinking in certain towns in my constituency. If we talk to the police officers charged with dealing with that issue, they will tell us that the problem crosses all sectors of society. Indeed, they will tell us that, all too often, the least supportive responses they get when they take home inebriated 12 and 13-year-olds are from the relatively affluent households.

I hope that the national parenting strategy reaches out across the social spectrum, educating and supporting parents from all parts of society so that we improve the life chances of our children.

Although this debate will not command the television minutes or column inches that others do, it is no less important than others we have had or others still to come. I can think of nothing more important than, as the motion says,

“making Scotland the best place in the world for children to grow up”.

Independence, and putting Scotland’s wealth to work for the people of Scotland will greatly assist in that process, but today we can start our country on that path. I support the motion.

15:00

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab): One of the pleasures of growing older is a return to the early years through looking after and playing with grandchildren. Apart from the pleasure that I get from that, it has reinforced my belief that how we treat children in the early years of life—in particular, in the first three years—is absolutely crucial for the development of individuals and the future of society. That is why I welcome the emerging strategy from the Government. In the past, people would probably have said that parenting is not the business of Government, yet I can think of little that is more important for Government to address now.

I particularly welcome the minister’s statement that strand 3 of the strategy would be about preparing young people to be the parents of the future. I am sure that most of us in the chamber—the younger ones and the older ones—did not really have any preparation for being a parent. I am looking forward to that part of the strategy because I think that it is a desirable prerequisite for the support that parents need once they have children. The fundamental principle underlying the strategy should be support for all families but with more intensive support, and sometimes very intensive support, for those families that need it most.

There is perhaps a distinction to be made between supporting families in general, which can be formal or informal and is offered by a variety of people and professionals, and specific parenting support that is delivered by people who are trained to ensure high fidelity to a specific programme. There are many outstanding examples of support for parents in the first sense. I mention in passing organisations for young parents in the Pilton and Granton parts of my constituency, such as Circle and Stepping Stones, and, in Leith, Home-Start and Dr Bell’s family centre. I apologise to those that I have not mentioned. Dr Bell’s is an interesting example of a family centre on a fairly small scale, and I am pleased that the Government is considering family centres as part of the support given to parents.

On specific programmes, the positive parenting programme, the incredible years and the family-nurse partnership have the strongest evidence behind them. I am particularly interested in the family-nurse partnership because it focuses on the very early years. As I said, I have come to

believe—and I think that many in Parliament share my view—that the years nought to three are the most fundamental years in anyone's life, and that how people are treated then will determine their life outcomes. I was reflecting the other day that, sadly, many people spend the rest of their lives trying to undo the damage that has been done to them in those first three years of life.

In that regard, there is an issue about the balance between universal and targeted services. Health visitors have a key role to play in identifying the most vulnerable children and allowing other services to move in to give them support. Perhaps we went too far in targeting health visiting under the “Health for all Children 4” arrangements, although, as they were introduced when I was the responsible minister, I will hardly criticise them. However, I am pleased that the Government is now talking about implementing the new Hall 4, which involves continuing visits to a larger number of families. I welcome that.

Giving support at an early stage is fundamental. If we do that, more children can stay in their families. However, we recognise that in some cases children have to be removed from families. When that has to take place, the earlier it happens, the better. I recently had an interesting conversation with a constituent who has had difficulties in adopting children. She explained to me that the process has taken two years and is still not complete. I wrote to the cabinet secretary about that and eagerly await a reply. I hope that the issue of adoption can be looked at because when adoption is necessary it should take place as speedily as possible.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):
We now come to the closing speeches.

15:04

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I thank the organisations that provided useful briefings for the debate, including Save the Children, Barnardo's Scotland, Children 1st and Children in Scotland. Like other members, I declare an interest as a proud father. I have six children—that is not bad for a Protestant. My eldest is 23 years old and my youngest is five years old. I hope that they will all be Conservatives one day, but who knows?

The Scottish Conservatives know that a child's early years are key to their future. I am very lucky to come from a happy family, and to have a happy family. I do not mean to say that a family should not argue, but families should be taught that argument is better than fighting. It is vital that children develop and achieve their potential.

We recognise that virtually every parent will need support at some stage in the parenting

experience, with particular assistance required for parents who face the most acute challenges and difficulties. When she was our party leader, my esteemed colleague, Annabel Goldie, was right to talk about the obligation on politicians to help the people who struggle most with parenthood. We are proud that our manifesto committed to moving £20 million from the health budget to provide more and better support for new parents through a massive increase in home health visiting services.

On a personal note, my wife, Emma, gave me some input for the debate. She made a valid point that specific time should be set aside when children and parents can sit down together, without the distractions of electrical gadgets, gaming kits or televisions, and have proper conversations. Most people would agree that it is important that children are listened to by their parents, and that they learn the art of conversation from an early age. Some games, toys and gadgets can isolate children in an unreal fantasy world that can lead to loneliness and unhappiness. Instead, we want children to integrate with children their age in team events, in group activity, and, above all, in conversation.

I have had many memorable conversations with children in the Parliament and at school outreach events, especially at primary schools. The children are often shy, and teachers are too quick to step in to ask the questions or answer for the children. What a joy it is sometimes to be asked by an articulate child an articulate question that inspires a conversation with others on the merits or the lack of merits of certain subjects. Young, articulate children can easily embarrass politicians, and they are a credit to those who parent them and those who teach them. They are the seed of a sustainable, civilised society, and that is why my friend Nanette Milne's amendment on teachers is so valid in the debate.

I support the statement in the Barnardo's Scotland briefing that the parenting strategy must include all those who have a parenting role, including the corporate parent. Neil Bibby pointed that out. Looked-after children have some of the worst outcomes in Scotland. In many ways, the parent who needs the most support appears to be the corporate parent. Children without natural parents have so many disadvantages. It is up to a caring Government to ensure that their corporate parent is provided with every possible means of improving the lives of those children and giving them hope for and excitement about their future.

I thoroughly agree with Aileen Campbell's aspiration to make Scotland the best place in which to bring up children. If she could do something about the weather, it might help.

I support the amendment in the name of my colleague Nanette Milne.

15:08

Hugh Henry (Renfrewshire South) (Lab): I start by referring to a point that Dennis Robertson made. He said that he had hoped that the debate would be more consensual. In fact, it has been a consensual debate, because there has been little disagreement. There are a number of points on which we can agree. We all agree on the need for better parenting and the need to support parents who are struggling, and we all agree on the need to support families that are particularly vulnerable.

However, Mr Robertson will recognise that it is understandable that there is a degree of frustration, in that we do not have a strategy to discuss. The headline in the *Business Bulletin* states that the debate is about the “National Parenting Strategy for Scotland”, but we do not know what that strategy is.

Dennis Robertson: Will the member give way?

Mark McDonald: Will the member give way?

Hugh Henry: In a minute.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Henry will take an intervention in a minute.

Hugh Henry: This is not the launch of the consultation, because that has already taken place. The debate is not about the strategy itself, because we do not know what the strategy is. It seems to be about the aspiration to have a strategy, which we are all signed up to. I therefore question the purpose of what we are doing just now.

Mark McDonald: Perhaps this is an opportunity for members in the chamber to provide constructive input to the strategy alongside that gathered during the consultation. Is that not a possibility?

Hugh Henry: There are very well laid-out parliamentary procedures for enabling parliamentarians to have that input. Normally, the Government would go back to a parliamentary committee and have a detailed discussion there. Perhaps that is still to come. In addition, if the issue is so significant, why have no significant proposals been produced for us to respond to and debate fully?

Maureen Watt congratulated the minister on holding a debate on the strategy. We are frustrated, because we do not know what the strategy is and we are looking for detail.

As I said, there are things on which we all agree. There is no doubt about the need for more family centres. I would have liked the opportunity to discuss that and I hope that the minister will still come forward with details of how the Government will expand and develop the role of family centres across Scotland.

I agree with what Mark McDonald said about the role of play. I would like a specific reference to be made—one to which we could respond—to the significant contribution that play makes in nursery education and in families, and to changing the nature of how children learn in primary 1. When we were in power, we had that debate, so that the approach is now more about play-based, experiential development than simply talking at children. Play is significant and we know that children develop through play. It would be good if, in her closing speech, the minister could give us some detail on the role that play will have.

I also hope that in her closing speech the minister will respond positively to the constructive comments that have been made about kinship care and the need for us to see the promised investment. Will we finally hear today how the money will be spent and how the approach will be developed and spread across Scotland?

We also need to hear something specific from the minister in her summing up about the failure not just of the SNP Administration but of the Labour and Liberal Democrat Administration and, at a national level, of the Conservatives to do something about the position of looked-after children. We have all failed looked-after children, and we have all failed in our corporate parenting responsibilities. If only one thing comes out of such debates, it should be that, together, we are all signed up to do something to right a continuing wrong.

I hope that in her summing up the minister will say something specific about the problems in the adoption process that have been highlighted. There are still far too many hurdles and delays placed in the way of potential adoptive parents and children who would benefit from adoption. Many of those are down to bureaucracy rather than ill will. Surely by now we should together have learned about some of the problems that exist and should have responded with arrangements that are more caring and more easily understood for children who require adoption and families and parents who want to adopt.

There is consensus, and all that we are looking for today is some of the detail. I hope that on the specific issues that I have identified we will hear specific details from the minister so that we can all go forward together. The last thing that we need is warm words and platitudes from all parties in the Parliament. What we need is action. That is why I look forward. Just like the minister, I want to be excited about a parenting strategy, but so far I do not know what there is to be excited about. I look forward to the minister in her closing remarks making us all excited.

15:15

Aileen Campbell: Hugh Henry's closing remarks were certainly quite a challenge—I do not want to disappoint him. I thank all colleagues for their largely helpful contributions. In particular, I congratulate Clare Adamson, who became a stepgranney recently. I assure members that the Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that all families in Scotland receive appropriate, timely support that is based on their needs.

We all acknowledge that bringing up children is a hugely rewarding job and we heard many people talk about their own first-hand experiences as parents, but we also accept that it can be the hardest job that there is. If we are serious about improving outcomes for our children and young people, we need to ensure that parents and carers get the support that they need, when they need it.

I am disappointed that some speakers felt that having an opportunity to help to shape a national strategy was a negative approach. I imagine that if I had published a strategy that they had not been able to feed into, they would have grumbled about that as well. Nevertheless, we all agree that investing in parents is a good thing—not only for children and young people, but for our communities and for the cohesion and productivity of our country. It is part of building a better future for us all.

We have made a good start. We accept—I accept as Minister for Children and Young People—that we have a lot of ground to make up. We need to do more, but we are determined to build on that good start as we move forward, because supporting parents to be the best that they can be and to do the best that they can is one of the most effective ways of improving the health, wellbeing, opportunities and life chances of children and young people.

We also recognise that supporting parents can help to prevent difficult circumstances from escalating or even arising—by making sure that we listen to parents and act on what they tell us. That is one of the key themes that has come through from some of the discussions that I have had with parents. Parents want to feel valued and they need to feel that their voices are being heard.

If parents are equipped and able to nurture their children and give them the love, support and guidance that they need as they grow up, that can help to reduce a whole range of negative outcomes. For that reason, we see our commitment to support for parents as part of our work on prevention and early intervention.

We have plenty of evidence about the importance of parents in reducing crime and offending behaviour. Parents have a key role in developing self-control, reducing the risk of and

building resilience to trauma, building strong social bonds and setting appropriate boundaries for behaviour. By improving our support for parents we expect to see positive impacts across a range of outcomes. Supporting parents is good for Scotland, as we all stand to gain, whether or not we have children ourselves.

I turn to specific comments from members, who made valuable contributions to the debate. Clare Adamson made the important point that there is a need to articulate parents' value to society. I agree absolutely, and I am determined to ensure that the strategy will do that and make us all value parents' contribution to society a whole lot more.

In an informed speech, Nanette Milne referred to the growing up in Scotland study and the need to tackle some persistent intergenerational problems. We recognise that we need to make sure that there is much more mixing up of society, so that people experience life alongside older people and so that we break the cycle of poverty. We must make sure that parents who, as children, did not have the best start in life are given more tuition to be responsible parents themselves. They can then go on to be good parents and ensure that the persistent cycle of intergenerational social problems is broken. We have an opportunity to do that with the forthcoming children's bill and with this parenting strategy. I am glad that Nanette Milne made that important point.

Nanette Milne also mentioned the importance of schools for the strategy. I agree absolutely. I note that the curriculum for excellence covers the responsibilities of parenthood. I take on board her points, but I also recognise that teachers now have much more well-rounded training so that, when they have completed their registration, they are able to identify additional needs.

Maureen Watt spoke about the isolation that many new mums feel. The groups that I have met all note the importance of building up networks, making new friends and finding others with common interest. She also spoke of the need to build resilience, which is essential if we want to enable and equip families and communities to find their own solutions.

Dennis Robertson spoke about being a proud Aberdonian, about getting a two-for-one deal when he had his twins and about being a modern man and helping with the nappies. His serious points about coping and normalising the seeking of help were an important part of the debate.

Mark McDonald raised specific issues about post-natal depression and the importance of early diagnosis. Having gone through childbirth myself, I know how difficult it is to have a newborn child and I can only imagine the difficulties that are faced by women who have post-natal depression. We must

ensure that we get things absolutely right. He also made points about parental leave. I will happily discuss those issues with him and will factor the nuanced points that he made about parental leave into the strategy and other pieces of work that I am undertaking.

Liam McArthur noted the need for almost a culture change in the way that we view parents and what we must do to ensure that we value good parenting. Along with Hugh Henry, Jamie McGrigor, Malcolm Chisholm and others, he highlighted the real work that we need to do to make sure that we get things right for looked-after children. I do not think that any of us can look at the current statistics without realising that we need to do a lot more. The Education and Culture Committee and others are undertaking good work to articulate the importance of focusing on that group of children.

Nanette Milne made a related point about looked-after children who have not had a good experience of being looked after by the corporate parent. She said that we must ensure that they are able to be good parents themselves when they have families.

Graeme Dey made an important point when he observed that our value as parents is not who we are or what we have, but what we do. Playing and cuddles do not cost anything, and we must get right some of the simple things that we do.

Malcolm Chisholm noted some specific parenting strategies that are on-going throughout Scotland, including the positive parenting programme, the incredible years programme and family-nurse partnerships. He also highlighted the importance of speeding up adoption placements. I agree with that. We all know that, for that particular group of children, better outcomes can be achieved if we can get permanent placements for them earlier.

We are not starting from scratch. As we have heard, lots of really innovative and effective work is already under way throughout Scotland to support some of our most vulnerable parents. Siobhan McMahon and Neil Bibby cited some good practices in their local areas, and Neil Bibby also mentioned Save the Children's FAST project. I have seen at first hand some great examples of different agencies working in partnership to support parents through schools and prisons, for example. Many of those projects live in the vibrant and vital third sector, to which I pay tribute for the hugely important role that it plays in supporting families throughout Scotland.

Hugh Henry wanted me to mention play specifically. We have taken forward the hugely successful play talk read campaign. I do not know whether he has had an opportunity to visit the

campaign bus, but I recommend that he do so. We have also announced money through go play, and support has been provided through grounds for learning to ensure that children have much more access to play opportunities. Given that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child specifically notes a child's right to play, a rights-based approach is a fundamental part of how we approach this agenda.

Hugh Henry also wanted me to talk about kinship carers. I gently remind him that no Administration has done more than the current one to recognise kinship carers formally. We will continue to work hard to ensure that they are supported and will continue to lobby Westminster to make sure that it recognises their specific and unique parenting role, just as the Scottish Government has recognised it.

As I said at the start of the debate, it is the Government's ambition to make Scotland the best place in the world for children to grow up in. I am sure that that ambition is shared by everyone here today. However, it is a journey—we know that we are not there yet and we must create the type of Scotland that we want our children to grow up and flourish in.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Minister, you must conclude, please.

Aileen Campbell: I welcome everyone's contributions to the parenting strategy and hope that members have valued this opportunity to shape the direction that we are taking in the strategy. This is an important time for us all in Scotland, and this is an important move by the Government that has been widely welcomed by people across Scotland, including the groups that I have met. I hope that, when the strategy is published, it will be welcomed by all members as well.

National Library of Scotland Bill: Stage 3

15:26

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

The next item of business is stage 3 proceedings on the National Library of Scotland Bill. In dealing with the amendments, members should have the bill as amended at stage 2, the marshalled list and the groupings to which I have agreed. Those documents—SP bill 2A, SP bill 2A-ML and SP bill 2A-G, respectively—should be available at the back of the chamber.

If there is a division, the division bell will sound and proceedings will be suspended for five minutes for the first division of the afternoon. The period of voting for the first division will be 30 seconds. Thereafter, I will allow a voting period of one minute for the first division after a debate. Members who want to speak in the debate on a group of amendments should press their request-to-speak buttons as soon as possible after I call the lead amendment in the relevant group.

Members should refer to the marshalled list of amendments.

Section 3—Acquisitions, deposits and disposal of objects

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Group 1 is on means of acceptance on deposit. Amendment 1, in the name of the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, is grouped with amendment 2.

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): At stage 2, I lodged an amendment that added new subsection (1A) to section 3, to recognise that the National Library of Scotland may receive acquisitions by virtue of legislation other than the bill. For example, as one of six legal deposit libraries in the United Kingdom and Ireland, the National Library receives 90 per cent of its acquisitions through the system that was established under the Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2003. The 2003 act is not directly referred to in the bill as a means through which the National Library can acquire items, so the amendment captured all relevant legislation under which the library can acquire items.

Amendments 1 and 2 are purely technical and will extend section 3(1A) so that it applies to deposits as well as to acquisitions. Therefore the same principle is applied: the National Library can accept deposits by virtue of legislation or rules of law other than the bill.

The approach in amendments 1 and 2 is consistent with the drafting approach that is taken

throughout the bill. Rather than provide a list of all relevant legislation that applies to the National Library, the amendments provide flexibility to accommodate future legislative developments, as was the case with the amendment at stage 2.

I move amendment 1.

Amendment 1 agreed to.

Amendment 2 moved—[Fiona Hyslop]—and agreed to.

Section 5—Legal publications

15:30

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Group 2 is on legal publications. Amendment 3, in the name of the cabinet secretary, is the only amendment in the group.

Fiona Hyslop: Amendment 3 is a technical amendment that is concerned with dispute resolution between the National Library and the Faculty of Advocates. It might be helpful to members if I put the amendment in context.

On 22 December 2011, the national librarian and the dean of the Faculty of Advocates signed two memoranda of agreement to reinforce their operational relationship. The first memorandum contains guidelines on how both bodies will work together to manage and maintain access to their respective collections. The second memorandum deals with the ownership of items that are currently held by the National Library which are the property of the faculty. It also sets out the dispute mechanism for any ownership claims and requires that both parties draw up deposit arrangements for current and future items owned by the faculty but in the possession of the National Library.

Amendment 3 extends the application of the dispute resolution provision that is set out in section 5(5) to cover section 6. As it stands, section 5(5) deals with the handling of disputes about what constitutes a legal publication for the purposes of section 5, which deals with legal publications that are made available between the National Library and the faculty. The amendment ensures that disputes about what constitutes a legal publication for the purposes of section 6, which is on the joint arrangements, are handled in the same way.

I expect any disputes between the National Library and the faculty to be resolved amicably, in line with their close and long-standing working arrangements. That is why any disputes are to be resolved by agreement by both parties in the first instance and, failing that, by arbitration. Those arrangements are acceptable to the National Library of Scotland and the faculty and are in line

with the dispute resolution in the memoranda of agreement between both bodies.

I move amendment 3.

Amendment 3 agreed to.

Section 8—Directions and guidance

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Group 3 is on Scottish ministers' power of direction. Amendment 4, in the name of Liam McArthur, is grouped with amendment 5.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): Committee colleagues will recognise the amendments from stage 2; some may even be wondering why they are being asked to strike them down again. Leaving aside my fading hope of inspiring a rebellion on the Government's back benches, I thought that it was important to allow members to consider the issues inherent in both amendments.

Amendments 4 and 5 deal with ministerial powers of direction, raise questions about the relationship that ministers have or should have with bodies such as the National Library of Scotland, and reflect wider concerns about the extent and nature of the powers that ministers are seeking more generally.

I acknowledge that, following the publication of the initial bill, Fiona Hyslop has sought to define the powers more tightly, but in resisting the amendments at stage 2, she argued that her objectives are to future proof the legislation, safeguard the efficient running of the NLS, and achieve balance and accountability. That position is not unreasonable, but we are passing a bill that sets out the statutory functions and duties of the National Library, which relies on central Government for 86 per cent of its funding and will operate under a new, streamlined board structure. We are also approving ministerial direction in relation to general powers that are set out in schedule 1. They will be significant in achieving the cabinet secretary's objectives, and I simply do not accept that a persuasive case has been made for loading the dice further in favour of ministers, even as a last resort.

In its evidence, the NLS said that it regretted the principle of ministerial direction, but Ms Hyslop accepted that

"a power of direction has never been applied to cultural public bodies".

Again at stage 2, the cabinet secretary struggled to identify circumstances in which it might be appropriate for such a power to be used or where that could safely be done without impinging on the curatorial, cultural or professional functions of the library, its board and its staff. Therefore, when we are being asked to put in a bill powers that have

never been used and for which no compelling case can be mounted as to why, when and where they might be needed, other than for general future proofing, I have grave concerns.

That is all the more the case against the backdrop of a Government that seems all too eager to exercise control from the centre. Ms Hyslop's colleagues the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning and the Cabinet Secretary for Justice are perhaps most noteworthy as serial offenders in that respect. On each occasion that ministers seek more powers and control, we are told that that will increase efficiency, improve accountability in how public funds are spent and safeguard the public interest, but that rarely, if ever, stands up to scrutiny.

As I said at stage 2, there are many things that would make the lives of ministers easier or the functioning of Government smoother, but not all of them—possibly even very few of them—can be said to be desirable, and those reasons are certainly not reason enough to enshrine them in law.

Fiona Hyslop deserves considerable credit for the way in which she has handled the bill, and for her willingness to respond to almost all the concerns that have been raised with her. Amendments 4 and 5 represent the exception. I urge her, with that praise ringing in her ears, to relent, even at this late stage.

I move amendment 4.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: A number of members have indicated that they wish to contribute, so I limit members to up to two minutes.

Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP): I recognise the content of Liam McArthur's contributions today and at stage 2, and his sincerely held views on the difficult balance that must be struck in these areas.

Liam McArthur quoted the NLS's view on these particular ministerial powers, but the NLS went on to say that it recognises that the Government has included substantial restrictions on the powers of direction, which have been extensively discussed with the present board of trustees. That is a slightly more balanced account of what the NLS said about the powers.

I point out to Liam McArthur that the powers that are being discussed today are in line with powers that have been included in previous acts. In fact, I have a list of previous acts that have been passed by the Scottish Parliament and for which, on all occasions, the lead minister was a Liberal Democrat. On all occasions, very similar—or almost the same—powers of direction were included in the bills. I will not embarrass Liam

McArthur by reading out the titles of the bills, some of which he may recognise from his previous employment.

The committee took written and oral evidence on this particular aspect of the bill. We examined it carefully and in some depth, and at stage 2 we debated both of the amendments and rejected them on a cross-party basis by quite a margin. I ask members to reject amendments 4 and 5, and to leave what are tightly drawn powers in the bill.

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab): Colleagues who took part in the stage 1 debate will recall that Scottish Labour raised its concerns about this particular area at that time. We are grateful to the cabinet secretary for listening to that debate, and for seeking ways in which the powers can be limited.

However, we believe that—as Liam McArthur has outlined—the powers that Scottish ministers already have in connection with the National Library of Scotland are more than sufficient to allow them the type of control that is commensurate with their role in that regard. To have any more powers is really just to be excessive.

We do not believe that there is a persuasive or compelling case for those powers to be described as they are, nor do we view them as having a place in the text of the bill. We allowed the cabinet secretary the opportunity to consider and to listen to the stage 2 debate, but we are not persuaded that she has come quite far enough as yet to allow us to be satisfied with the Government's current position.

Stewart Maxwell has indicated that he has a list of bills in which Liberal Democrat ministers have signed off similar powers of intervention. I remind Mr Maxwell that history has a habit of contradicting itself, and I remember him being vehemently opposed to ministerial powers of direction in a similar area not that long ago.

Fiona McLeod (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): I hope that my declaration of interests does not take up my whole two minutes, so I will abbreviate. I am a member of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals and chair of the Scottish Library and Information Council.

Liam McArthur was asking for a rebellion. Here is a rebellious librarian who can see sense and argue about what is before us, rather than about flights of fantasy and conspiracy theories as elaborated by Labour, which accepted the cabinet secretary's comments at stage 2 and in fact voted down the two amendments at stage 2.

At stage 1, I said that I was a proud and fierce defender of the independence of libraries. I

maintain that I am, and that the two ministerial powers of direction in no way interfere with that independence. Section 2(3)(c) is about ensuring that there is always accessibility to libraries and their collections—any librarian would go to the wall to ensure that—and that the National Library will continue that tradition.

Section 2(2)(d) is about collaboration and good practice. Why do members think that I accepted the post of chair of the Scottish Library and Information Council? I did not do so so that I could tell librarians what to do or what to stock; I did so so that I could be part of the library community and could go on the shared journey to excellence. As a profession and a public service, we achieve most when we learn from each other and when we work together within and across the library sectors.

The bill is about our National Library. I want to be sure that the National Library will fulfil a leadership role, when appropriate. With the proposed power of ministerial direction, I am sure that it will continue to do that, so I urge members to reject amendments 4 and 5.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I am grateful to Liam McArthur for lodging his amendments. We believe that the overriding need is to enshrine in the provisions of the bill and the subsequent legislation the facility to increase the efficiency and accountability of the National Library and, given the institution's structure, to ensure that there is a correct balance between the powers of ministers and those of the board.

In her evidence to the Education and Culture Committee on 24 April, the cabinet secretary acknowledged that the two key principles were balance and accountability. However, she went on to say that it was not a debate about "ministerial direction in general". It might not be in one respect, if we look at the technicalities of section 2(2)(d) and 2(3)(c), but I do not think that they can be separated from the wider issue of ministerial responsibility.

Some members of the committee were exercised about the fact that the cabinet secretary appeared to be hesitant when she was asked to identify the circumstances in which it might be appropriate for such a power to be used and how she intended to put in place safeguards to protect the independence of professional staff and the board when it came to the making of key decisions by the National Library. That vagueness, combined with the very strong concerns that many stakeholders voiced about the extent of ministerial powers, became the subject of the central debate in the committee, and rightly so.

I suggest that the cabinet secretary was much more comfortable about defining the circumstances in which she or any of her

successors would not interfere than she was about defining those in which ministers might interfere. At a time when technology is changing particularly quickly, that served only to accentuate the concerns. Those concerns remain, which is why we are happy to support Liam McArthur's amendments 4 and 5.

Fiona Hyslop: Amendments the same as amendments 4 and 5 were lodged by Liam McArthur at stage 2, when they were defeated by seven votes to two. I point out that we have reached stage 3 and that stage 3 consideration should be about the specifics, rather than the wider agenda of ministerial direction, which Liam McArthur and Liz Smith have raised.

Between 1999 and 2007, the passage of four out of the eight acts that included a ministerial power of direction was led by Lib Dem ministers. Of those four, the one that Liam McArthur will be most familiar with is the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005, which contains a power of direction in relation to the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council. Its passage was led by Jim Wallace, who was ably supported by his then special adviser, one Liam McArthur.

We are making law, so let us home in on the specific area that we are talking about. The debate about the power of direction is all about balance and accountability. As the convener pointed out during stage 2, a power of direction is a standard feature of modern public bodies. Of the 20 bodies in Scotland that have been established as statutory bodies since 1990, a power of direction is associated with 17 of them. Eighty-six per cent of the National Library's funding comes from Scottish Government grant, and it is correct that the National Library is accountable to taxpayers for how that money is used. At the same time, it is equally right that ministers should respect the National Library's curatorial responsibility and freedom to look after the collections on behalf of the people of Scotland. Section 8 of the bill provides that balance.

I want to take some time to explain the approach that we have taken in drafting the power of direction. To address Liz Smith's point, section 8 is deliberately drafted in such a way as to put beyond doubt those areas in which Scottish ministers cannot direct the National Library rather than to prescribe those areas in which the Scottish Government can exert an influence. Quite rightly, I cannot direct the National Library in relation to access or how it exhibits or interprets the collections. I cannot direct the National Library on how it encourages education and research or how it contributes to an understanding of our national culture. I cannot direct on acquisitions, deposits, disposals, borrowing or lending. Those are all

matters of curatorial judgment for the National Library. Furthermore, I cannot direct on matters relating to legal publications or the joint arrangements between the National Library and the Faculty of Advocates, nor can I direct on grants and loans. That approach of setting out clearly the areas in which ministerial powers of direction do not apply deliberately and explicitly supports and, indeed, underpins the arm's-length principle that applies to the relationship between Scottish ministers and our publicly funded bodies.

15:45

The committee's stage 1 report appreciated that the power of direction as drafted preserves the independence of the National Library. Furthermore the National Library recognises the limits of the power of direction. Indeed, the national librarian, Martyn Wade, stated during a stage 1 evidence-taking session that when he and the board considered the provision, they found that

"ministers are able to direct only in a very small number of areas".—[*Official Report, Education and Culture Committee*, 7 February 2012; c 707.]

The limited power of direction is very much a measure of last resort and would be applied only if all other requirements or financial controls had been exhausted. Members could ask why, if a power of direction is not intended for use, it should be included at all. I am ultimately accountable to the Scottish Parliament for the services that the National Library provides. I say to Liam McArthur that it is impossible to predict what might happen in the future, which is why I have chosen the ability to direct in relation to particular functions of the National Library.

Liam McArthur's amendments would remove the Government's ability to direct the National Library in relation to two of its functions: promoting collaboration and the sharing of good practice.

With regard to amendment 4, I emphasise that section 2(2)(d) concerns the promotion of collaboration and the sharing of good practice. It is important to emphasise that distinction. That function does not mean that the National Library could be directed to enforce collaboration or the sharing of good practice by others.

I want to make it clear why I believe that Scottish ministers should have a power of direction in relation to section 2(2)(d). The National Library and other libraries operate in a rapidly changing technological age and I want the bill to be sufficiently future proofed to enable it to cope with associated demands and uncertainties. Members have appreciated that at all stages of the bill. The National Library will have a duty to promote collaboration and the sharing of good practice, which thus supports public sector

performance, efficiencies and shared services—that is part of the accountability to the Parliament and to the taxpayers. That is relevant with regard to, for example, current digitisation work. I am sure that we all agree that services in that area should be shared wherever practical in order to avoid duplication and unnecessary additional costs. Our public bodies should be working together on that wherever possible. I cannot believe that the Conservatives would be happy to let the efficiency agenda slip on this issue.

Overall, the ability of ministers to direct in respect of promoting collaboration and good practice is in the interests of the public purse and public efficiency.

With regard to amendment 5, it is important that Scottish ministers have the ability to direct in relation to section 2(3)(c). The Government is committed to the equalities and diversity agenda. I believe that the question of the National Library promoting the diversity of people accessing its collection is a matter of public policy interest rather than purely a matter for the library's curatorial independence. By voting for Liam McArthur's amendment, members would be voting against Government's ability to ensure that linguistic, geographic and socioeconomic diversity is represented. I cannot believe that the Labour Party is seriously thinking of voting against diversity by supporting amendment 5.

A power of direction in respect of the promotion of diversity is consistent with the founding legislation for Creative Scotland and was accepted by the committee at stage 2—indeed, Liam McArthur did not move an amendment on the issue at that point.

For those reasons, I cannot support the amendments. I ask Liam McArthur to withdraw amendment 4 and not to move amendment 5.

Liam McArthur: I am grateful to all those who have contributed to the debate. Stewart Maxwell was fairly gracious in his acceptance of the fact that the committee had concerns about this issue from the outset. Those concerns melted away for some colleagues, but some of us held on to them for rather longer.

Stewart Maxwell quoted the NLS. I recall that the NLS told the committee that

“there are very strong and effective restraints on”

the power of direction. However, it also stated:

“What we regret is making a principle of the ability to direct the National Library.”—[*Official Report, Education and Culture Committee*, 7 February 2012; c 705.]

Stewart Maxwell made clear during stage 2 deliberations that, in previous times, he had been fighting the glorious fight with regard to ministerial

powers of direction. I suspect that that is what Patricia Ferguson was alluding to.

Stewart Maxwell: My opposition to the ministerial power of direction under the previous Liberal Democrat-Labour Government was to do with powers that would have interfered in the creative and cultural side of things, not the powers of direction that we are talking about today.

Liam McArthur: I accept the basis on which Stewart Maxwell was making those complaints. Nevertheless, I cannot see—and the cabinet secretary has yet to explain sufficiently—how the ministerial powers that are being sought in this instance will not bleed into curatorial and professional areas, and other aspects that are supposed to be safeguarded by the bill.

Fiona Hyslop: The bill, if passed by Parliament, will prevent by statutory force any interference in curatorial responsibilities. There is no risk whatever of that happening, and Mr McArthur's remarks belie the fact that his argument is really not strong enough.

Liam McArthur: I do not accept that at all. In this instance, it is assumed that the guardians of the public interest are only the ministers, not the board. As a result, the Government is seeking to load the dice unfairly in favour of ministers if any disagreements arise between them and the board.

To Fiona McLeod, a rebellious librarian who I would certainly think twice about taking on, I have to say that her claim that this is simply a conspiracy theory does not stack up. The cabinet secretary does not know how the powers will be used and I suspect that, as a fierce defender of libraries, Ms McLeod might well find herself on the barricades if my amendments are not agreed to.

I am grateful for Liz Smith's continued support on this matter and agree that it is a matter of concern that the bill defines where the powers cannot be used instead of setting out the areas in which the cabinet secretary envisages that they would be used.

The cabinet secretary repeated many of the arguments that she used at stage 2. She questioned why, having seen the amendments defeated at stage 2, I had brought them back at stage 3. I point out that I made an approach to the cabinet secretary after stage 2 to find out whether there were any areas of compromise but unfortunately there was a deafening silence, which was rather out of keeping with her approach to the bill up to that point. Nevertheless, I think that it is important for the whole chamber to take a view on the issue and will therefore press amendment 4.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The question is, that amendment 4 be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There will be a division. As it is the first division of the afternoon, I suspend the meeting for five minutes.

15:52

Meeting suspended.

15:57

On resuming—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the division on amendment 4.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McLetchie, David (Lothian) (Con)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)

Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 52, Against 62, Abstentions 0.

Amendment 4 disagreed to.

Amendment 5 moved—[Liam McArthur].

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The question is, that amendment 5 be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McLetchie, David (Lothian) (Con)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)

Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 52, Against 62, Abstentions 0.

Amendment 5 disagreed to.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: As we are nearing the agreed time limit, I consider it necessary to allow, under rule 9.8.4A, the debate on the next group to continue beyond the limit, to allow members with the right to speak on the amendments in the group to do so. In this case, that is the cabinet secretary.

Section 12—Commencement

16:00

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Group 4 is entitled “NLS: transitional arrangements”. Amendment 6, in the name of the cabinet secretary, is grouped with amendments 7 and 8.

Fiona Hyslop: Amendments 6 to 8 are about the transition from the old board of the National Library to the new one. Should the Parliament agree to pass the bill, I propose to commence it as a whole in the early part of 2013, by which time we hope to have completed the process of advertising, interviewing, selecting and appointing members of the reconstituted board. Professor Anderson, the current chair of the board of trustees, has indicated that he wishes to stand down after serving as chair of the National Library for 12 years.

The transitory provision in amendment 8 would modify the National Library of Scotland Act 1925, as a short-term measure until that act is repealed, to allow the new chair to hold office before full commencement of the bill. That will allow Professor Anderson to stand down after chairing his final meeting in October 2012. The new chair will then be appointed under the 1925 act to chair his or her first board meeting in December 2012, before the appointment of the reconstituted board under the bill, which will meet for the first time in the early part of 2013. It is essential that the new chair is in post in good time to take part in the selection of the new board and to benefit from a handover by Professor Anderson. My officials hope to advertise the post later this month, with a view to an appointment being made by October.

Amendment 6, which supports amendment 8, brings the transitory provision into force automatically two months after royal assent. It has the advantage of automatically commencing the transitory provision that will be introduced by amendment 8 and avoids the requirement for an initial commencement order for the appointment of the new chair. Amendment 6 also respects the convention that acts of the Scottish Parliament are not brought into force until two months after royal assent.

Amendment 7 provides that the existing trustees of the National Library of Scotland cease to hold office when the bill comes into force. As members will be aware, I want to maintain business continuity for the National Library. The point about the need for that was well made by members of the Education and Culture Committee at stages 1 and 2. That is why I have proposed that a small number of existing trustees will form part of the reconstituted board. That will be achieved through the appointment of those members under

paragraph 2(1)(b) of schedule 1 immediately after their appointment under the 1925 act ceases.

We seek to encourage applicants who have a wide range of skills and who can assist with the strategic development that continues to take the library forward. New members should have an enthusiasm for libraries and their contribution to Scotland’s national culture in this increasingly digital age. The board will also require specialised knowledge and skills, including knowledge of the world of education and research; an understanding of public library services in local areas; and general skills in governance, audit, financial management, fundraising and income generation. The recruitment process for board members will begin once the new chair is in place. It is anticipated that appointments will be made in the early part of 2013.

I take this opportunity to thank the current chair, Michael Anderson, for his commitment to the National Library during his 12 years as chair. His legacy will undoubtedly be the promotion of access to the collections. Record numbers of people now benefit from the new visitor centre, the increased size of the reading rooms and the availability of online material. Under his stewardship, the National Library secured for the nation the permanent acquisition of more than 200 years of publishing history from the John Murray Publishers archive.

I also thank the trustees of the National Library for their sterling work and for their support for the governance reforms that are proposed in the bill. The trustees have helped to ensure that the National Library of Scotland responds to the changing requirements of libraries in the modern age. The board has embraced the advancement of new technology to make the collections more readily available online, not only for those in Scotland, but for the enjoyment of a worldwide audience.

I move amendment 6.

Amendment 6 agreed to.

Schedule 1—NLS

Amendment 7 moved—[Fiona Hyslop]—and agreed to.

Schedule 2—Modifications of Enactments

Amendment 8 moved—[Fiona Hyslop]—and agreed to.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That ends consideration of amendments.

National Library of Scotland Bill

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-02878, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on the National Library of Scotland Bill.

16:05

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): I thank members of the Education and Culture Committee for their scrutiny of the National Library of Scotland Bill. Throughout the process, members have provided constructive comments on the bill. I thank the convener, the clerks to the committee and, of course, the Scottish Government's ever-responsive bill team for all their hard work. I also recognise the input of the external stakeholders who have informed our thinking and have helped us to shape the bill.

My particular thanks must go to the National Library of Scotland for its support and for helping my officials and me to understand more fully the true nature of its work and what it hopes to achieve as a result of the reforms.

I also value the contributions of all those who took the time to share their views and knowledge during the consultation period, including the Faculty of Advocates, to whom I will return later in my speech, and the Scottish Library and Information Council. I have listened to a variety of views and believe that the bill that we have in front of us is the product of those reflections.

I am confident that all those who have worked on the bill will agree when I say that collaboration across party lines, and with stakeholders, has been central to the successful development of the bill and the general consensus on it, despite the previous debate.

Throughout the bill process there has been strong agreement across the Parliament that the current National Library of Scotland Act 1925, which governs the National Library of Scotland, is out of date and out of step with its vision, both now and for the future. The bill will therefore support the development of the National Library by modernising the governance arrangements for the 21st century.

What will that mean in practice for the National Library and its users? First, the entire board of the library will be made up, for the first time, from those who have chosen to be appointed. Board membership will no longer be determined by the office that someone holds. Indefinite terms of appointment will also come to an end. Instead, the National Library will benefit from recruiting members with the skills and experience expressly

required by an ambitious organisation. There will be a regular refresh of board membership and an opportunity to review the skill set required each time appointments are made.

The National Library and the general public will benefit from the clear functions that are set out for the first time in the library's history. The National Library will have a specific objective of ensuring that the collections are accessible to the public. One of the ways in which the National Library will continue to make its collections accessible to all is through its exhibition programme.

The bill will safeguard the collections by placing a statutory duty on the National Library to maintain and develop the collections for generations to come. It also recognises that the National Library has a duty to ensure that researchers, students and learners continue to have access to the collections. The National Library's collections will need to be relevant to enable the research community to continue to produce high-quality work to maintain Scotland's place on the academic map.

To support the National Library's function of conserving and preserving its collections in a physical sense, I announced earlier this week that the Scottish Government has committed more than £2 million towards the transformation of the library's Causewayside building in Edinburgh. That will secure the conservation of the collections for years to come by rectifying long-term problems with the external fabric of the building. An additional advantage is that the transformation project will significantly reduce energy consumption.

I should at this point mention the library's strong record in carbon management. As one of 47 Scottish organisations selected in 2009 to take part in an ambitious programme with the Carbon Trust to realise vast carbon and cost savings, the library committed itself to a target of reducing CO₂ by 30 per cent by 2014-15. The library's carbon management plan involves potential financial savings of around £620,000 over the course of the project and £160,000 annual recurring savings thereafter. Aiming for a 5 per cent CO₂ reduction in 2010, the NLS exceeded that first target as it achieved 15 per cent reductions through the involvement and creativity of staff, contractors and unions. Progress has been maintained, and a cumulative 28 per cent reduction in CO₂ was achieved by the end of 2011-12. Thanks to investment in new plant, with support from the Scottish Government, the library is likely to exceed its CO₂ reduction target.

I turn to the content of the National Library's collections. One of the library's great strengths is the John Murray Publishers archive, to which I referred earlier. The library recently received the

final set of papers to complete the archive, which will be permanently housed in the library. The archive provides a remarkable insight into British life over three centuries. The final items that were received include unpublished material from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and “The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes: The Field Bazaar”, which appeared in an unnamed charity magazine in 1896 and has never been published since.

During the bill's parliamentary passage, members have heard about the National Library's involvement in great advances in digitisation and the use of modern technology. That is why the bill was drafted with future developments in mind. The bill is as flexible and future proofed as possible, to allow the National Library to respond to technological advances.

The bill has given the Parliament and the National Library the opportunity to raise awareness of how the library already champions cutting-edge technology to enable greater access to its collections, not only for those of us who are in Scotland but for the world, through the wide and ever-expanding availability of items that are displayed online.

A particularly imaginative use of new technology is the travel application called “Great Escapes: Moray”, which the library helped to develop earlier this year. The library collaborated on that with schools in Elgin and Lossiemouth, with community volunteers and with local authority libraries, and it had the assistance of a hotel chain. The app highlights 20 points of interest in Moray that have natural, industrial and cultural heritage. The library provided a range of archive films, images, maps and documents that the young people in Moray helped to bring to life through developing the app.

I will reflect briefly on the amendments to the bill, including those that we discussed a few moments ago. The bill and the National Library will be strengthened by the amendment to increase the minimum number of board members from six to eight, as was argued for at stage 1, and by the transitional arrangements that will be put in place for a new chair. The procedure for implementing the bill will allow a core group of current board members to be carried forward into the reconstituted board—members across the parties made a point about that at stage 1. The bill process has allowed us to think through and strengthen the mechanisms for giving the library continuity in the transition to its new modernised governance arrangements.

I do not want to prolong the debate that we had about the ministerial power of direction in relation to Liam McArthur's amendments, but I repeat my general view that the debate has been useful. In the end, we have struck the right balance between the library's curatorial independence, in which I

passionately believe, and its accountability as a heavily subsidised public body.

I will touch on the amendments that were made in response to suggestions from the Faculty of Advocates. The relationship between the National Library and the faculty was discussed briefly this afternoon and more extensively in committee. That relationship is historical and continuing and it prospers to this day, so recognising it appropriately in the bill was important.

The amendments to sections 5 and 6 replicate and modernise requirements on both parties that were set out when the relationship was first enshrined in the National Library of Scotland Act 1925 in relation to the organisation of and access to the collections. The bill as amended will ensure that there is no misunderstanding about what is meant by the faculty's collections, which are the books that are contained in the faculty's law library. The joint arrangements that section 6 provides allow the faculty and the National Library to agree the practicalities of their operational relationship in particular areas. That approach is consistent with the memoranda of understanding that both parties signed in December 2011.

It is right that the bill should set the overall principles for an effective continuing relationship between the faculty and the National Library. I make it clear that I am not imposing inflexible statutory requirements on either body. It is for the faculty and the National Library to agree and update arrangements as technology and library users' requirements evolve. I am grateful to the National Library and the faculty for their careful consideration of those aspects of the bill and I confirm that they are content with the amended bill.

We have an opportunity today to pass legislation that will modernise the National Library's governance and functions. Together, we have crafted a well considered bill that meets the library's needs and meets what Scotland expects of its National Library today and in the future. I invite the Parliament to agree to pass the National Library of Scotland Bill.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that the National Library of Scotland Bill be passed.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott): I call Neil Findlay. You have up to seven minutes. Any time that you can save will be gratefully received.

16:15

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): In this era of huge change in information technology, with digital books, online resources, web-based learning,

audio books and digital film, the role of modern libraries is rapidly changing. I apologise to any librarians among us, but the genteel and somewhat staid image is a thing of the past. Libraries are now vibrant hubs providing a range of services.

In my local authority area, we have developed a model of service provision in which the library and library staff are key to local service delivery. That partnership approach brings together health, police, sporting, council, advice and library services under one roof, increasing the skills of the staff and providing one contact point for all public services. The library hosts storytelling sessions, computer classes, genealogy courses, homework clubs and much more, as well as hosting local resources in book and online formats.

As libraries change, the arrangements needed to manage and govern them must also change. The bill recognises that. The National Library of Scotland is an important public resource. It is obvious, when we walk through the door, that past and present trustees have carried out their duties well and in the best spirit of public service. It has been well managed and developed, hosting not only extensive book and paper collections but digital and film archives, websites and other new media materials. That area of its work is one that can and will develop further over time.

The Education and Culture Committee's visit to the National Library was an interesting and rewarding experience. We could sense the unique atmosphere of the place and the pride that the trustees and employees have in it. It is an example of a public service that our taxes pay for—a public service that could never be delivered by the market and one that we have to support, protect and adequately fund.

Labour accepts that the governance of the National Library is in need of reform. We accept the insertion of the technical amendments proposed by the cabinet secretary and the insertion of the Gaelic name for legal, contractual reasons. We also accept that a governing body of 32—including, among others, Professor Anderson OBE MA PhD FBA FRSE, the Lord President of the Court of Session, the Lord Advocate, the First Minister, the dean of the Faculty of Advocates, the minister of the high kirk of St Giles in Edinburgh, the Crown Agent, the Lord Provosts of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow, and Marco Biagi—requires some reform, as it is rather unwieldy.

We welcome section 2 of the bill, which clarifies the functions of the National Library and makes it clear that the library is a national reference and research library and a resource for Scotland's research community. We welcome also that section 2 puts in statute that collections must be

accessible to the public. That is the main function of any public library.

We welcome sections 3 and 4, which cover acquisition, disposal, borrowing and lending, and sections 5 and 6, which relate to legal deposits and the role of the Faculty of Advocates. Those sections have made progress without any major contention, as has section 7 on grants and loans.

On the other sections of the bill, largely relating to technicalities, we have no major concerns. The cabinet secretary has generally listened to the views expressed about the size of board and the need to reflect diversity in its appointments. That is welcome. Overall, the bill has gone through its parliamentary process fairly easily and without any great division. I put on record our thanks to the committee convener and the clerks, who have ably assisted us.

We listened to the debate about section 8, on the ministerial power of direction, at stage 1, in the committee evidence sessions, and at stage 2. We were willing to give the cabinet secretary more time to come back with further changes and we regret that that has not happened. The minister accepted that a ministerial power of direction has never been applied to cultural bodies. When probed on that by Liam McArthur and others, the minister could not come up with any concrete examples of when a ministerial power of direction could be used. She also accepted that curatorial independence should not be compromised. It must be asked, therefore, why we would want to include a power that no one has ever used and for which the minister responsible sees no discernible use. There is undoubtedly a trend of centralisation in this Government, particularly in the way in which it deals with education and local government. Section 8 would appear to be another—albeit small—step in that direction.

The bill is to be welcomed. It puts the governance of our National Library on a sound footing. Parties throughout the Parliament have actively co-operated on the bill and worked to improve it. I hope that, collectively, we have developed a valued national institution, making it more able to meet the demands of a modern service environment. Scottish Labour will support the bill when it comes to the vote tonight.

16:20

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I add my thanks to those of Neil Findlay to Stewart Maxwell and the clerks. Stewart Maxwell has convened the committee with his normal sense of humour, and with good stewardship through a quiet authority, which is valued.

The Conservatives are of the opinion that the legislation needs to be modernised so that we can

maintain and enhance the National Library of Scotland. The National Library is a remarkable national asset. Like others in the chamber, I pay tribute to everyone who is involved in its work, and to the large numbers of the public who are increasingly enthusiastic supporters.

I mentioned during the stage 1 debate the move away from the National Library being what some people call the library of last resort that is used only when people have searched unsuccessfully for sources elsewhere. That is no longer an applicable definition. That is good news, but the changes clearly bring different challenges and that is why the bill is necessary.

The Scottish Government has set out its proposals for change. We fully support it in its recognition that, in a fast-changing world of technology, we must put in place structures that will help to create not only more efficient administration, but a better system of access to the National Library's archive, and better coherency and collaboration with the other national archives. It is simply not an option to allow things to remain as they are, and that was made clear to the committee throughout the process by the cabinet secretary and by the witnesses.

Throughout the committee's evidence taking, I was continually struck by the professionalism, the dedication and the expertise of all those involved, and by the careful thought given to the future working of the institution and its role in modern Scotland. That expertise is, in many cases, unique: it brings with it degrees of specialisms that are not seen elsewhere.

It is on that point that we had some initial concerns about the original stance of the Scottish Government, and it is the reason why we believe that the size of the National Library's board should reflect those who can represent the wider range of the specialist knowledge. I am grateful to the cabinet secretary for listening carefully to the views expressed at both stage 1 and stage 2, many of which were of genuine concern among the key stakeholders and MSPs about the minimum size of the board. The original suggestion from the Scottish Government that the concerns could be addressed by co-options to the board, when and where appropriate, did not address the more substantial concerns about the need for permanent access to a wide range of expertise.

Similarly, to argue that the Scottish Government is, in general,

"not in favour of large boards"

is not really a satisfactory way of persuading people that the appropriate size of a board is directly linked to the best advantage of the institution and the public that it serves.

A second major concern—and one that we have debated this afternoon—is the intended extent of ministerial direction. The policy memorandum lacks detail and clarity about the precise nature of the intended ministerial powers, which could conflict with other areas of the NLS's management in which ministers have no power. Some guarantees have been given about the promotion of greater collaboration and diversity, but my Conservative colleagues and I remain unpersuaded that the provisions in the bill are not simply about increasing ministerial power for the sake of having a little more control, but at the expense of greater efficiency in the institution.

I listened carefully to what the cabinet secretary said about that. I accept her argument in relation to some technical issues, but there is an important general principle to be considered. As I mentioned earlier, the difficulty for the committee was that the Scottish Government chose to reassure us by stipulating situations in which the cabinet secretary or her successors would not interfere. This afternoon, she again defined the issue by stating what she could not or would not do. I accept that, but there is still an important point about the powers that she could have as cabinet secretary. That approach sometimes took us into the realm of the theoretical rather than the practical, which made things less clear when it came to justifying the enhancement of public benefit.

Nobody doubts that there is a sensitive balance to be struck when it comes to the legitimate concerns about how public money is spent and the professional judgment of the trustees and the professional judgment and expertise of the librarians—some of whom are in the chamber this afternoon.

This bill brings opportunities for the delivery of a better service, for wider access to the splendid archive that is the National Library of Scotland, and for the exciting developments that the cabinet secretary outlined. On that basis, the Conservatives are happy to support the bill.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We now move to the open debate. I regret to tell members that we are short of time, so if they can confine themselves to three-minute speeches, it would be much appreciated.

16:25

Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP): I thank members for their kind comments about my convenership of the Education and Culture Committee throughout the bill's passage. I thank in particular the committee clerks for their support, because without their hard work, our work would not have been possible. I thank the Scottish Parliament information centre for its support of the

committee and I appreciate the dedication of the committee members in scrutinising the bill. I also thank the witnesses who provided oral and written evidence to the committee as it was extremely helpful in our deliberations.

As the cabinet secretary and other members—Neil Findlay, in particular—did, I also thank the National Library of Scotland for hosting us on our useful visit to the national library building on George IV Bridge. The visit helped us to identify some of the hotspots in the bill, and the issues and pressures that are faced by the National Library in its day-to-day work.

Obviously, the National Library of Scotland Act 1925 was passed some time ago. There is no doubt that it was time for change. I will cover some of the issues in my brief remarks.

Minimum board size was one of the things that particularly concerned the committee. We are pleased that the cabinet secretary agreed at stage 2 to increase the minimum board size from 6 to 8 people. That was a welcome change by the Government. I agree with Liz Smith that the original arguments did not really stack up in terms of how the board would operate at the smaller size, so I am delighted that the size was changed.

I want to pay particular attention to the relationship between the National Library of Scotland and the Faculty of Advocates, which is an important and practical relationship that we must protect. Given the history of the two organisations, it was absolutely critical that we got it right in the bill. I am delighted that the Government agreed to make amendments at stage 2 to ensure that the relationship between the two organisations will continue. That relationship benefits the organisations and it benefits all of us.

I will touch briefly on the ministerial power of direction, on which there has been a lot of discussion at stage 2 and today. For me, one of the cruxes of that issue—rather than the detail—was the idea of future proofing the bill. We must make sure that the bill will allow the NLS to carry out its activities into the future, so we have to look at the limited powers of direction that are provided for in the bill in that context. The purpose of future proofing is to ensure that, in a rapidly changing world, certain principles are protected through legislation. Promoting diversity of access and collaboration fall into the category of things that should be included in the bill, so I am delighted that they have been maintained.

It could be said that the bill is perhaps overdue. The National Library currently operates under legislation from a different time; it is not just decades old, but is from before the age of digitisation and the modern era. Future proofing the bill is essential because the National Library of

Scotland has a crucial role in Scotland's cultural life: conservation and preservation of our national treasures in print, film and digital formats are essential.

I am delighted to support the bill.

16:28

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): Over the past couple of centuries, libraries have evolved to become important institutions at the heart of communities across Scotland and the United Kingdom. Libraries' importance can never be underestimated and they should not be evaluated as being costly or ineffective. They have provided the working class with the tools to self-educate, enhance its knowledge and improve opportunities for gainful employment.

In my area, where child poverty is at 27 per cent, the previous Renfrewshire administration closed Gallowhill community library despite a wall of opposition. The administration brandished the closure as being cost effective, but at what cost was that to the children in the area who needed the tools and opportunities that would give them hope in the future? The closure of the library has also been a great loss to the area's older residents, many of whom have been avid readers and users of library services all their lives. However, we know that in times of austerity libraries are often the first things to be axed.

The bill is welcome in respect of reform of the National Library of Scotland, but what is unwelcome—as has been said—is the centralisation of powers to the relevant Scottish minister. With the previous bill being almost 90 years old, it was right to produce a new bill to repeal the National Library of Scotland Act 1925. After almost a century of social and economic advances, the new bill should enable the NLS to adapt to modern times, as it has been doing over the past few years with the use of new technologies and digital resources.

The reduction in the size of the NLS board of trustees is a must and was even backed by the NLS in its response to the consultation. The idea of reforming its governance was raised by the last Labour Executive in 2006, so I am glad to see that it has finally come to fruition. Yet, that reduction cannot be effective when the power of ministerial direction is implemented, no matter how general or specific that power is. The independence of the NLS board must not be compromised by the interference of a Scottish minister.

As the NLS stated in its consultation response, it is appropriate for ministers to indicate how public funding is used, especially during austerity, as long as a minister does not impede curatorial independence. As Neil Findlay has pointed out,

curatorial independence must be maintained at all times, especially given the record of the current Scottish Government. However, like my colleagues on the Labour benches, I am concerned by centralisation—irrespective of who is in power. The NLS has a prominent role in promoting and preserving our national culture and heritage, but I fear that if powers are given to Scottish ministers in the present Government, they will be tested to promote the nationalistic views of the First Minister and his bandwagon.

We cannot stress enough the importance of libraries, whether local or national, nor can we allow their freedom and independence to be damaged by Government interference.

16:32

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP):

The bill that is being passed today marks a new era for the National Library of Scotland, bringing its governance into the 21st century and freeing it to continue to be

“the world’s leading centre for the study of Scotland and the Scots.”

That is a quotation from its own website. The bill will also allow the library to remain a major European research library and, as the cabinet secretary has mentioned, to continue to hold its important world-class collections. The bill will strengthen the role of the NLS in safeguarding and sharing knowledge for current and future generations. On the launch of the consultation on the bill, Martyn Wade, the library’s chief executive, said:

“The Library has changed immeasurably since the previous legislation was passed in 1925. The Bill recognises and reflects our role in the 21st century and is very welcome.”

In the past, I have mentioned that I grew up in Motherwell, where we had a Carnegie library. The Carnegie UK Trust has just published “A New Chapter—public library services in the 21st century”, which sets out the findings of the research that it has carried out over the past six months. It provides clear evidence about the current use of public libraries and public attitudes to libraries. The Scottish data are very interesting and show that 76 per cent of those who were surveyed indicated that libraries are “very important” or “essential” for communities.

Service improvement was welcomed by the people who were surveyed: they were interested in online reservation and cataloguing and in building a community facility, including other attractions such as cafes. Many of our communities already benefit from such facilities and from innovations such as e-reader books—which have recently been introduced by North

Lanarkshire Council—and information technology provision within libraries.

There is no doubt that the Scottish people and our communities value library services and are comfortable with those services evolving to meet the needs of the 21st century. The innovation and leadership of the National Library of Scotland will be integral to evolving library services for the future. I pay tribute to the e-learning zone on the library’s website, which supports literature and language, creativity, science and technology, history, politics and society, and geography and exploration, thereby supporting education in our communities.

This is an exciting time for the National Library of Scotland. In March, the Scottish Government announced a contribution of £250,000 to the relocation of the NLS’s Scottish screen archive to Glasgow, as part of the planned redevelopment of the Kelvin hall, and the cabinet secretary has mentioned the £2 million that is being provided for refurbishment of the library’s store.

16:35

Annabel Goldie (West Scotland) (Con): When I read the bill as introduced, I had genuine doubt as to the status in law of the proposed new entity. The existing governance was clear: there was a statutory board of trustees, with obligations that were defined by trust law. The successor body’s status was more vague, so I am glad that an attempt has been made to clarify it.

However, a slight paradox remains. Section 1 says explicitly:

“The body corporate known as The Trustees of the National Library of Scotland, established by section 1(1) of the 1925 Act, continues in existence and is renamed the National Library of Scotland”.

Section 1 therefore reaffirms the existence of a body of trustees. That is good, because trustees have independent duties and obligations and operate under a well-developed framework of law—they know what their responsibilities are. Is it not then inconsistent of the bill never again to refer to trustees? Schedule 1, which deals with the entity that is the NLS, talks about “members”, not trustees. To guide us in the interpretation of the bill, it is confirmed that “the 1925 act” means the National Library of Scotland Act 1925, which schedule 3 to the bill will abolish. Will the minister clarify whether the NLS is to be run by trustees, as defined by the 1925 act? If that is the case, would it be wise to retain section 1(1) of the 1925 act, rather than to abolish it? I understand that that could be done by adding to the relevant provision in schedule 3 the words, “with the exception of section 1(1)”, and that that could be effected by a holograph amendment.

My other profound concern is the provision for ministerial intervention. I am vexed that the Scottish Government could not support Mr McArthur's amendments. If the minister desires to retain ultimate power of last resort to intervene in the event of gross incompetence, malfunction or dishonesty, the intervention power should be appropriately qualified. Otherwise, the potential for conflicts of governance and unreasonable intrusion by Government is manifest. The cabinet secretary should be more explicit about how the power could be used. If she is not explicit, what she is saying to us is analogous to saying, "I won't run you down in my motor car and I won't boil you in oil, but I might put arsenic in your tea or shove you off a cliff." That is not reassuring.

It is also relevant to observe that ministerial powers of intervention are less forbidding if the devolved Administration is a coalition or a minority Government, as was always thought would be likely in the Scottish Parliament. In the case of an Administration that has an overall majority, the opportunity for checks and balances is greatly diminished.

As Liz Smith said, we support the bill. It is necessary, and it is timely that we take account of circumstances that are vastly different from those that prevailed in 1925. However, I would like the minister to address my observations about the legal status of the new entity and I await her expanding on how she thinks the ministerial powers will be used.

16:38

Fiona McLeod (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): I welcome the Government's acceptance of an increase in the minimum board size, on which I commented at stage 1.

I do not understand the positions of the other parties—especially Labour, given its change between stages 2 and 3—on the powers of ministerial direction. I will use my three minutes to say that the ministerial power of direction is limited to two areas. Ministers will be able to give directions in relation to section 2(3)(c), on

"promoting the diversity of persons accessing the collections".

I would have thought that all members would want to ensure that the National Library's collections are always open and accessible to everybody, wherever and whoever they are, and that the minister can always guarantee that our national collection can fulfil that obligation.

Ministers will also be able to give directions in relation to section 2(2)(d), on promoting collaboration. I am a library professional and, as I said during the debate on amendments at stage 3, when professionals collaborate they produce their

best work. I do not understand why members would not want the Scottish Government ministers to be able to ensure that the National Library provides such leadership for the library profession in Scotland. For me, that is very important, as libraries are very important to the people of Scotland.

We heard Clare Adamson's figures, which show how valued libraries are in Scotland. In difficult times such as we are in, libraries can offer much more for people. As a professional, I have to say that there are many different ways in which libraries can provide a vital public service nowadays. It is about access to information. It is not necessarily the buildings that are so important; it is about what we do with information and it is about making it as accessible as possible to people of all hues and abilities.

We have heard about rebellious librarians and eco-librarians. I want to end on a positive note. As a librarian, I am delighted to hear that the public's affection for libraries is reflected across the chamber. Long may our MSPs' and the Government's commitment continue for our library services.

16:41

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I endorse Fiona McLeod's concluding comments.

We have finally managed to get Marco Biagi off the NLS board in order that he can spend more time with his family and his constituents.

I thank the National Library of Scotland, the witnesses, committee colleagues, the clerks and particularly the convener of the Education and Culture Committee, who was almost in danger of losing his much-famed calmness when he was told that he had only three minutes in which to deliver his speech.

I am indebted to Clare Adamson for furnishing me with a comment from Carnegie in the stage 1 debate. Carnegie said that

"the best means of benefiting the community is to place within its reach the ladders upon which the aspiring can rise",

which included free libraries. Clare Adamson talked about spending a lot of time in the library in Motherwell during her childhood. I did much the same in the Carnegie library in Kirkwall. Sometimes that was to avail myself of the books and research facilities there, but it was often to escape from the howling winds and driving rain. I continue to do that regularly in the new library building.

As many have said, the bill is welcome; perhaps it is overdue. It certainly succeeds in bringing the governance structures for the National Library into

the 21st century, and it begins to address the changing demands that we have placed on that library while still enshrining the strengths that we all very much admire.

As other members have indicated, there were a few areas of concern during the passage of the bill. The cabinet secretary responded constructively to the points that were raised about the size of the board and effecting as smooth a transition as possible to the new arrangement, but concerns remained to the end about the powers of direction. I will not try to reopen the arguments, but on the points that our ferocious librarian made, if we look at the NLS's other functions, ministers would want to be assured that the board was "encouraging education and research" and

"promoting understanding and enjoyment of the collections".

Ministers would want to be assured that all those functions are being delivered, but they are not seeking powers of direction over them. The cabinet secretary has made clear her position on that. Overall, she has adopted a very constructive approach in meeting the concerns that have been expressed, and I think that the concerns that have been expressed by other members today and previously are now a matter of record.

I acknowledge that the National Library of Scotland is a national treasure. The demands that we have placed on it have changed over the years, and we can undoubtedly expect them to change further in ways that we cannot predict at this stage. I hope that the bill will help to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of an ever-growing number of people.

In conclusion, I draw members' attention to the Orkney library and archive. Following its success in the golden twits for its contribution to social media, it is up for the library of the year award later this month. I hope that members wish it well in that regard.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I offer my congratulations to Orkney library and archive, too.

16:44

Liz Smith: The debate has been largely consensual, out of a need to ensure that we maintain and enhance one of Scotland's great national treasures for exactly the reasons that Fiona McLeod put on record.

I thank all the witnesses at committee and all those who have sent us exceptionally helpful briefing papers for their considered opinions and expert advice, without which—as the cabinet secretary acknowledged—many of us would have been ill-prepared to work through the bill.

The cabinet secretary outlined a great number of exciting developments that are taking place, such as carbon and digital advances and the work involving the John Murray archive. It is an extremely exciting time for the National Library, which means so much in terms of Scotland's place in world heritage.

I thank the cabinet secretary for her willingness to listen to concerns. Although we will undoubtedly remain divided on one important element in the bill—the extent of the ministerial powers—I acknowledge the work that she put in, which involved some complex technicalities. Although those technicalities may not capture the headlines, they are nonetheless an important part of our having confidence in the legislation.

It was good to see the cabinet secretary's willingness to move on the minimum size of the board and on ensuring that there will be as smooth a transition as possible when the current board ends its office to be replaced by the new one. That was helpful, and I am sure that it was appreciated by the stakeholders who had similar concerns at the initial stages.

Like all other members in the chamber, the Conservatives recognise the need to make changes to the National Library so that it can maintain its first-class reputation, its considerable professional expertise and its ability to be flexible and adaptable in the future, when technological change will bring a great many new challenges—just as it will to many other institutions with which the NLS will collaborate. That is precisely the reason why we wanted—and would still welcome—more clarity on the extent of ministerial direction. My colleague Annabel Goldie raised an important point. Aside from the two technical points—I accept what Fiona McLeod said about those—there is a fundamental principle at stake. If members read some of the statements in the bill, it is clear that there are potentially wider powers, and I hope that the cabinet secretary will address that in summing up.

Although we have, through the democratic process, not won that argument today, I hope that ministers will be mindful of the fact that there was—and remains—genuine and considerable concern among the Opposition parties, and that ministers will be held to account as those powers come into operation in the years ahead.

I wish the National Library well in the years ahead, and once again pay tribute to the outstanding professionalism of its staff. We will support the National Library of Scotland Bill at decision time.

16:47

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab): Scottish Labour, too, welcomes the bill and recognises that reform of the structures that support our National Library is necessary. The fact that the existing legislation has served for 87 years is testament to it, and I very much hope that the legislation that is before us today will prove to be equally durable.

We have been happy to be involved in the discussions on the form that the reforms should take, and we are largely pleased with the outcome. I know that Parliament as a whole recognises the need for change. I congratulate the Education and Culture Committee and its convener and clerks on their work in scrutinising the bill, and the cabinet secretary on being amenable to discussion with the committee about the way forward.

I congratulate the staff and the current board of the National Library—especially its outgoing chair—on their hard work and on the care that they take of one of our most precious assets on a daily basis. The Faculty of Advocates should also be praised for its co-operation, both at this time of change and in the past.

In the stage 1 debate, many members expressed reservations about specific elements of the bill, and many of those have been addressed. The size of the board exercised members, and I am pleased that the cabinet secretary has taken steps to allay those concerns and to ensure that the board is small enough to avoid being cumbersome and slow to act, but big enough to reflect the wide range of interests and expertise that we need if the National Library is to continue to be well managed.

I am pleased that some of the existing members will remain on the board to aid the process of transition. That is a sensible move, which will allow the transition period to be as smooth as possible.

At stage 2, the minister sought to clarify the issue of collaboration. It is right that the bill, as it is now amended, reflects the National Library's role as an active collaborator rather than just as a facilitator of collaboration by others.

The National Library is also often an exemplar of good practice and works with the other national collections, as well as with libraries and librarians, but a ministerial power is not necessary to make that happen—that is the core of the National Library's work. I think that it is going a step too far to include such a provision.

As I mentioned, the act that underpins the structure of the NLS is 87 years old. Although it has served us well in the past, the future is likely to see changes in the ways in which information

and data are exchanged and stored. As we probably cannot yet envisage the nature of those changes or the rate at which they will happen, it is good that consideration has been given to how the bill can be future proofed to accommodate such changes, as well as advances that we can anticipate, such as the imminent regulations for legal deposit libraries.

At stage 1, Scottish Labour made it clear that we would like the cabinet secretary to reconsider the ministerial power of direction. We are pleased that she has done so to some extent, but we had hoped that, following the completion of stage 2, she might have gone a little further and lodged a stage 3 amendment that would have prevented the chamber from dividing on the matter. Unfortunately, that did not happen and we felt compelled to back Liam McArthur's stage 3 amendments. I am genuinely sorry that the Scottish Government could not see its way clear to making such a concession and that we had to divide on an issue on which the cabinet secretary knew well the views of many members and stakeholders.

As a matter of record, I say to Stewart Maxwell that the previous Administration did not seek any kind of intervention into artistic matters. In any case, we would have removed the relevant provision entirely, because we took the consultation that we did on our proposed culture legislation very seriously and we would not have pursued that element. However, we are where we are.

I have rehearsed on previous occasions my real interest in the work of the National Library of Scotland and the impact that I know that it has on Scotland's culture. I look forward greatly to watching it grow under its new governance arrangements, and to continuing to be surprised, educated and enthralled by its collections and its exhibitions for years to come. I wish it well in its new format.

16:52

Fiona Hyslop: I welcome the tone of the debate and the genuine respect that members across the chamber have expressed for the work of the National Library of Scotland.

In relation to Annabel Goldie's legal point, section 1(1) modernises and updates the legal name of the governing body. The members of the NLS board can continue to call themselves trustees if they so wish.

The debates on the bill have focused on the National Library's role as a national centre of research and as a preserver and curator of one of Scotland's major national collections. That role is distinct from the particular functions of public

lending libraries that local authorities fulfil but, as Patricia Ferguson said, the bill gives the National Library a new function of actively promoting collaboration and the sharing of good practice between such services.

I appreciate the comments that members such as Neil Findlay have made on the importance of local authority public library services and the challenges that they face. However, the situation in Scotland is quite different from that in England—in Scotland, there have been fewer than a handful of closures over the past two years.

The recently published Carnegie Trust report on public library services, which Clare Adamson mentioned, raises questions that are being considered by local authorities across Scotland, as the statutory providers of library services, and by library professionals. It is appropriate to acknowledge that the City of Edinburgh Council's library and information service won the library of the year accolade at Monday's bookseller industry awards in London. I remain committed to continuing to help to facilitate library improvements by maintaining the provision of annual funding of £0.5 million through the Scottish Library and Information Council.

At earlier points in the bill's progress, members have raised points about the regime for electronic legal deposit. I agree that, nearly 10 years after the passing of the enabling legislation in Westminster, progress with finalising the regulations must continue as speedily as possible. Draft regulations were published by the UK Government in February this year, and public consultation on them is due to close at the end of this week. I understand that further work still needs to be done to find the right balance between the need, in our highly digital age, to preserve the national record and the legitimate rights of publishers, particularly as regards microbusinesses.

I hope that those issues can be resolved productively and speedily, as all members will be anxious to ensure that the regulations are in place to enable Scotland to preserve a record of significant events such as the Commonwealth games.

Members have commented this afternoon on the technological advances in libraries and collections that have occurred or are still to come. It is interesting to reflect that, even 10 years ago, the concept of the National Library taking on a film archive would have been novel. However, the National Library now keeps the Scottish screen archive and, as I announced at stage 1, plans to move it into the redeveloped Kelvin hall in Glasgow, a proposal that the Scottish Government has supported with a £250,000 grant.

Looking ahead to the future unknowns is, of course, more difficult. One seemingly unlikely clue may be found in the recent announcement that the late Freddie Mercury is due to make a return to stage as a hologram in a special 10th anniversary performance of Queen's popular hit show, "We Will Rock You". Who knows—data storage by hologram may be one of the future formats that any comprehensive collection such as our National Library will need to adapt to in the coming years.

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): There is far too much noise in the chamber. I ask members to settle down.

Fiona Hyslop: When I met other culture ministers in Brussels last week, I heard some fascinating insights from Professor Nigel Shadbolt of the University of Southampton about the potential for collaboration between online communities through new web-based methods such as cloud computing, which in turn could revolutionise concepts of access to public data. Those sorts of future developments are the reason why we have been at pains to future proof the terms of the bill.

With regard to forthcoming NLS projects, we can look forward to a major summer exhibition, "Going to the Pictures: Scotland at the Cinema", which will open on 20 June. It looks at films that have been made in or about Scotland from the early days of cinema up to the present day and will be opened by the actor and filmmaker Richard Jobson. The exhibition tells the story of Scotland at the movies, from the romantic world of photogenic landscapes, brave heroes, and eccentric locals that can be seen in "Highlander", "Braveheart", "Rob Roy" and "Local Hero" to more recent depictions of urban life in the likes of "Trainspotting", "Ae Fond Kiss" and "Hallam Foe".

US independence day will be celebrated at the National Library with the opening of a treasures display that will highlight the strong links between Scotland and the US founding fathers.

The library is supporting the Borders book festival in June by sponsoring an event with Sir David Frost and is taking part in the Ullapool and Boswell book festivals.

The library is working on a project that will allow smartphone users to call up historical maps, photographs and records of any location in Scotland, which is being developed in partnership with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland and the National Records of Scotland.

The library has also established a partnership with Wilbourn Associates, a leading firm of chartered environmental surveyors, to provide

online access to historical maps of Scotland from Victorian times up to the 1950s.

National libraries have been rather technocratically described as

“specifically established to store a country’s database ... to host the legal deposit and the bibliographic control centre of a nation”.

However, like Clare Adamson, I prefer the National Library’s description of itself, which is that it exists

“to advance universal access to knowledge about Scotland and in Scotland.”

It is part of our nation’s collective memory. It is a resource for the people of Scotland to learn about themselves and to challenge their own ideas about Scotland. It is, equally, a window for the world to learn more about Scots and our country.

By setting out simply what the National Library of Scotland should do and also who benefits from it and how, the bill addresses those prosaic and poetic descriptions of why we have a national library.

The bill has been designed to stand the test of time. I am confident that it is sufficiently well crafted to enable it to cope with the technological advances that the National Library will continue to embrace.

With the bill, we have the opportunity today to reform the National Library by setting out clear functions in legislation and to bring in a new modern board structure that will take this great institution forward in the years to come.

We should reflect our thanks to the current chair and previous chairs for their stewardship of the institution, and to all the trustees who have guided the National Library of Scotland.

With the purpose of looking forward, I ask members to endorse the National Library of Scotland Bill at decision time today.

Business Motion

16:59

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-02901, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Wednesday 23 May 2012

2.30 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Stage 1 Debate: Welfare Reform (Further Provision) (Scotland) Bill

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members’ Business

Thursday 24 May 2012

9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Why Languages Matter, Improving Young People’s Opportunities

11.40 am General Question Time

12.00 pm First Minister’s Question Time

2.00 pm Themed Question Time
Infrastructure and Capital Investment;
Culture and External Affairs

2.40 pm Stage 3 Proceedings: Alcohol (Minimum Pricing) (Scotland) Bill

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members’ Business

Wednesday 30 May 2012

2.30 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members’ Business

Thursday 31 May 2012

9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Land Registration etc. (Scotland) Bill

11.40 am General Question Time

12.00 pm First Minister's Question Time
2.15 pm Themed Question Time
Education and Lifelong Learning
2.55 pm Scottish Government Business
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business—[*Paul Martin.*]
Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motion

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motion S4M-02902, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 [draft] be approved.—[*Paul Martin.*]

The Presiding Officer: The question on the motion will be put at decision time.

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): There are five questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S4M-02888.3, in the name of Neil Bibby, which seeks to amend motion S4M-02888, in the name of Aileen Campbell, on the national parenting strategy for Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)

Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 38, Against 80, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The second question is, that amendment S4M-02888.1, in the name of Nanette Milne, which seeks to amend motion S4M-02888, in the name of Aileen Campbell, on the national parenting strategy for Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 55, Against 63, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The third question is, that motion S4M-02888, in the name of Aileen Campbell, on the national parenting strategy for Scotland, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament supports the Scottish Government's aspiration to making Scotland the best place in the world for children to grow up; acknowledges that the vast majority of parents in Scotland already provide excellent support for their children; recognises the vital role that parents and carers play, not only in improving outcomes for children and young people in their care, but also in creating stronger communities and a more positive future for all; agrees that all parents need support at times and that parents and carers bringing up children in difficult circumstances may need additional support; welcomes the development of a national parenting strategy as a way of driving forward the shared ambition for improving outcomes for children and young people across Scotland; supports the approach taken to gathering the views of a diverse range of 1,500 parents whose voices are not normally heard and using this as a foundation for the national parenting strategy; thanks the many organisations that have hosted discussion groups with parents on the Scottish Government's behalf, and welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to continued working in partnership with parents and a wide range of partner agencies to develop the detail of the work.

The Presiding Officer: The fourth question is, that motion S4M-02878, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on the National Library of Scotland Bill, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the National Library of Scotland Bill be passed.

The Presiding Officer: The fifth question is, that motion S4M-02902, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 [draft] be approved.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time.

“A Road to Health”

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

The final item of business is a member's business debate on motion S4M-01763, in the name of Alex Fergusson, on “A Road to Health”. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament commends the Dumfries and Galloway Third Sector Forum for its participation in the Parliament's Third Community Partnerships Project and the report on its public consultation entitled *Road to Health*, which has identified a number of issues relating to the transport of older people to and from hospital and clinical appointments; notes that the forum's conclusions highlight a belief that there is a need for NHS boards and local authorities to work together to maximise the effectiveness of transport for older patients and their carers attending hospital appointments and day care centres, and that adequate transport provision in remote and rural areas is vital for the health and wellbeing of older citizens; further notes the findings of the report that different regions of Scotland have different approaches to this issue, and believes that there is a need to develop a national strategy with best practice guidelines for the adequate provision of such transport to address the issues highlighted in *Road to Health* as soon as is practicable.

17:05

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): I am grateful to have the opportunity to bring this debate to the chamber. I am beginning to wish that I had entitled the motion slightly differently, because I see one of the health ministers here when the debate is more about transport than health. I have no doubt that the minister will pass on any comments to his colleagues if required, although health issues will also be discussed.

In March 2011, Dumfries and Galloway third sector forum encouraged a small team of volunteers—I am delighted to see some of them in the gallery this evening—to come together under the Parliament's community partnerships project to see what might be done to improve the provision of rural transport within the region for older people and their carers to maintain and, hopefully, improve their health and wellbeing.

The group states, in the summary of its excellent report, “A Road to Health”, which was published in March this year:

“We are seeking to influence the Scottish Government and Local Authorities by making them aware of the transport issues faced by older people and by presenting compelling arguments for changing practices in Dumfries and Galloway.”

That is exactly why the Parliament established the community partnerships programmes—to encourage communities to engage with this institution and, in doing so, to empower those

same communities in seeking to drive and influence change when they had identified a need for it. That is a true, bottom-up approach to policy making. I fully understand the budgetary constraints that have led to the CPP being wound up, but I, for one, very much regret its passing.

Nonetheless, through “A Road to Health”, the CPP is going out with a bang, because those volunteers who did the work have no intentions of resting on their laurels having published their report. They are to be greatly commended for their on-going commitment to bringing about the changes that they identified. That commitment stems almost entirely from what they discovered as they went about the project.

The project began with a questionnaire being widely distributed through a range of organisations. More than 1,000 were distributed, and a healthy number of 325 were returned from a remarkably even spread across the region’s postcodes. The questionnaire had been split into two parts, the first of which was on travel relating to healthcare, while the second was on travel relating to wellbeing.

In the section on travel relating to healthcare, the findings were that 91 per cent of respondents had to travel for healthcare appointments; 69 per cent of them had to travel more than 10 miles and 14 per cent had to travel more than 50 miles to attend their appointment. Such is the rural nature of Dumfries and Galloway and of other regions, and I do not suppose that those statistics come as any great surprise.

However, 29 per cent reported that they found the travel arrangements to and from their appointments either stressful or very stressful. That should come as a surprise to us and we should sit up and listen to that statistic.

More worrying surprises appear in the section on travel related to wellbeing. I can do no better than quote from my contribution to Jim Hume’s recent debate on community transport, in which I summed up a lot of the work in Dumfries and Galloway by saying that the survey

“found that more than 40 per cent of older people had difficulty getting out of their houses and that nearly half of that group found it almost impossible to get out. Finally, it found that a quarter of older people did not get out of their houses at all in a month—I find that staggering.”—[*Official Report*, 29 March 2012; c 8025.]

When those figures are extrapolated across the region, they become stark, suggesting that 15,000 older people in Dumfries and Galloway cannot do their own shopping; that 3,000 older people live more than 10 miles from shops; that 18,000 older people have trouble getting out; and—this is the one that really hits me—more than 10,000 people

get out of their houses less frequently than once a month. That is close to imprisonment.

Presiding Officer, not even the authors of this excellent report would argue that the survey was scientific, but even if we halve the figures, they are alarming in the extreme and should demand our attention.

What is to be done about the issue in these difficult economic times? Again, I refer to Jim Hume’s debate, in which Claudia Beamish, Elaine Murray, Aileen McLeod and I all made mention of the rural transport solutions pilot scheme in Wigtownshire. The scheme has encouraged out-of-the-box and joined-up thinking that has, for instance, freed up the school transport fleet for wider use when it is not required for its primary function.

Before the pilot project began, the entire fleet in Wigtownshire was in use for two and a half hours a day during the school term. In the first four months of the scheme, the fleet travelled an extra 22,000 miles, carrying 8,000 non-school passengers who would otherwise have had no public transport options. Commercial opportunities have been identified to allow Wigtownshire Community Transport to operate scheduled services, giving older people access to shops and amenities that they could previously only dream about.

That approach indicates a way forward and a way to alleviate some of the problems that are identified in “A Road to Health”. During Jim Hume’s debate, Aileen McLeod said of the initiative:

“I am not suggesting that that precise model could or should be rolled out across the country”.—[*Official Report*, 29 March 2012; c 8023.]

I do not disagree with Dr McLeod, but I think that the scheme should—indeed, it must—be looked at by the Scottish Government as a way forward in providing our older citizens in rural areas with a transport system that can genuinely be referred to as a road to health.

17:11

Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab): I congratulate Alex Fergusson on securing the debate, which highlights an important piece of research that was conducted by nine volunteers working on behalf of the Dumfries and Galloway third sector forum. The topic spans transport and health, and the Labour Party has spokespeople from both teams present. I congratulate the members of the third sector forum on their excellent report.

In last week’s Finance Committee debate on fiscal sustainability, I referred to the evidence from

Dr James McCormick of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation that the cost of emergency admissions to hospital among the over-70s in Scotland is around four times the entire budget for personal care for older people. Therefore, interventions that help to keep older people well and reduce emergency hospital admissions are to be welcomed. The research, which looked at travel to healthcare and travel that promotes the wellbeing of older people, is significant in the debate on preventative spend.

Those of us who live in and represent rural communities know that there are problems with travel for both purposes. Outside the main towns, bus travel can be sporadic. The entitlement to concessionary bus transport is meaningless if there is no bus to travel on. Many older people can no longer afford to run a car or might not be medically fit enough to drive.

Even for those of us who think that we are aware of the problems, the case studies that are referred to in the publication, which was produced under the community partnerships project, are startling. For example, an 82-year-old man from Kirkconnel was taken to Dumfries and Galloway royal infirmary via Stranraer. Going directly from Kirkconnel to DGRI takes around an hour, but going via Stranraer would add three to four hours to the journey time. The report does not state why that happened or who picked up the patient to be transported, but I presume that another patient had to be picked up in Stranraer. I do not imagine that the situation was similar to that of the probationary teacher from Glasgow whom I heard of who was rather late on his first day at Stranraer academy having travelled down to Dumfries and turned right. I hope that it was not a mistake of that type. However, such an extended journey can hardly have helped the elderly patient who was involved.

That is perhaps an extreme example but, as Alex Fergusson said, almost one in three of those who responded to the survey described travel to and from their medical appointments as stressful or very stressful. The forum is keen to stress that the issue is not just about travel to healthcare; it is also about the ability to get out and about to leisure facilities and shops and about what we now term wellbeing. Again, Alex Fergusson gave statistics on that. If people are to remain healthy as they get older, they need to be able to retain their independence as far as possible and to get out to enjoy a variety of experiences, meet friends, have a social life and do all the things that we take for granted. One respondent said:

"We should be doing things we're able to do and treated as equal citizens".

One of the things that is striking about the report is that the forum is not just demanding money; it

wants to see resources that agencies already possess being used more effectively and efficiently. The forum has already met officers from Dumfries and Galloway Council who are working on the rural transport solutions initiative, which Alex Fergusson mentioned.

One example is that a number of agencies have vehicles—school buses, or vehicles at transport resource centres—that spend much of their time not being used. Better partnership working between public sector agencies such as the Scottish Ambulance Service, the national health service, councils and the third sector can result in more effective use of the transport resources that are already available and in a truly joined-up approach being taken to help older people maintain good health.

Of course, there will be examples of good practice across the country, which need to be shared. As Alex Fergusson said, and as Aileen McLeod said in her speech in Jim Hume's recent debate, good practice is not necessarily transferable, but when resources are tight, learning from each other can be particularly useful.

17:16

Aileen McLeod (South Scotland) (SNP): I, too, congratulate Alex Fergusson on securing the debate. I welcome some of the authors of the report to the gallery. I also congratulate Alex Fergusson on the hard work that he has done with the volunteers over his terms in Parliament.

The Dumfries and Galloway third sector forum's excellent report "A Road to Health" comes at an important juncture in Scotland's policy-making process, coming as it does at a time when we as a Parliament recognise fully the importance of preventative measures and support for community actions in our ageing society. The report sets out very clearly the argument that the NHS and local authorities need to work together to maximise the effectiveness of transport for older patients in remote and rural areas. That is a sentiment that I could not agree with more and it is a priority that I hope local authorities across Scotland take on board.

However, I am sure that everyone in the chamber will be prepared for the standard argument that prohibitive costs often make such transport options difficult. I fully appreciate that the costs of fuel, staffing and vehicle maintenance make many such ventures very expensive before they are even operational. However, I also believe that we have a duty to overcome those obstacles and find solutions with our colleagues in the NHS and local authorities so that we can provide the standard of transport that patients in rural areas

need and deserve and which is crucial to the communities that we serve.

I appreciate that every patient will have his or her individual experience of attending a medical appointment to recount and that all MSPs will receive various sorts of feedback. In addition to what Alex Fergusson has said, I will set out some of the challenges that face patients in rural areas, as reported by the community partnerships project volunteers.

As Alex Fergusson rightly pointed out, 69 per cent of respondents to the report travel more than 10 miles for an appointment, with 14 per cent travelling between 50 and 100 miles. That is the equivalent of travelling from Edinburgh to Paisley and back, and is unacceptable.

The report also points out that 16 per cent of respondents had appointments before 10 am and that 29 per cent said that they found travelling to and from appointments stressful or very stressful. That only adds to the anxiety of attending a medical appointment in the first place.

As I said, we are always prepared to hear why solutions cannot be found. For that reason, I congratulate the Dumfries and Galloway third sector forum on including in its report ways in which we might overcome the challenge. The engagement with the forum of council officials who are leading the rural transport solutions initiative is extremely encouraging. I know that colleagues across the Highlands and Islands, Aberdeenshire and other rural areas face similar issues with rural patient transport, so I hope that what is happening in the south-west will give them hope that progress can be made.

The way in which the RTS pilot was run in conjunction with Wigtownshire Community Transport, which provided transport for the adult resource centre in Stranraer, is exemplary. Having identified the exact needs of the scheme, an extremely effective system was put in place. Co-ordinating the use of the vehicles and scheduling pick-ups and drop-offs meant that activities could be maximised, the system was more cost effective and the quality of the service improved.

As I said in the debate that was held in the chamber in March on Jim Hume's motion, the report published by the Christie commission last year provides

"a comprehensive statement of the principles that should inform our approach to community transport. In particular, transport services have to be designed around the needs of older and vulnerable people who live in our rural communities."—[*Official Report*, 29 March 2012; c 8024.]

I fully support the forum in its endeavours to have a co-ordinated approach and other good practice methods reproduced and adopted throughout Scotland. I congratulate all involved in

the Dumfries and Galloway third sector forum on their efforts in pioneering a programme to be built up and made fit for purpose by other community transport initiatives. I am keen to ensure that all their hard work pays off. In that regard, I look forward to continuing to work with them and with colleagues across this chamber to support our older and vulnerable citizens.

17:20

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I join in the congratulations to Alex Fergusson on securing the debate. Transport matters to us all at the best of times, and it matters even more when we have to get to and from lifeline services. Nowhere is it more important than in relation to access to local health services.

I was struck by the report of the Dumfries and Galloway third sector forum, which highlights the importance of travel for our older people. I join other members in congratulating the forum on the public consultation that it undertook. There is much to learn from the forum's conclusions about planning transport services more generally in rural areas, but members will forgive me if I focus predominantly on the challenges for health services.

Many communities in Scotland experience the issues that the report raises. I know that an argument is often—rightly—made about rurality, but the issues are also challenging in parts of urban Scotland. I will relate my experience with constituents from the Vale of Leven hospital catchment area who have had to travel to the Royal Alexandra hospital in Paisley for key services.

When the service change was made, travelling to the RAH—which I inform members from other parts of Scotland is on the other side of the River Clyde from the Vale of Leven hospital—meant a two and a half hour journey that involved two trains, a bus and a bit of walking in between. That was just one way, so getting back home doubled the time. That route, which took people into the centre of Glasgow and back out on the other side of the river, passed five hospitals. I am sure that members will agree that that was a ridiculous situation that defied understanding—it also shows some of the challenges in getting our transport right in urban Scotland, never mind rural Scotland.

Despite all our protestations about the lack of accessibility of services, the health board considered our concerns to be largely second order. Health board views on health service configurations tend to drive change, and any commonsense consideration, such as "For goodness' sake—how do you get there?", does not feature in boards' thinking.

A previous Labour Administration put in place legislation to require boards to consider transport arrangements in any proposal for change. The current Government party supported that, and the measure is welcome, but health boards have not always translated it into adequate service provision.

We now have a bus service from the Vale of Leven to the RAH that is subsidised by the health board and Strathclyde partnership for transport. It did not have the best start, but much progress has been made, so such services can be introduced. Now, people are not offered appointments at times before the bus service starts in the morning; the service is timetabled to link with bus services from outlying areas; it has even extended its area of operation; and more people are using it. There will always be room for improvement, but the key lesson is that the service was shaped by the experience of people in their community. I pay tribute to Helensburgh community council for its work on the issue. Another key lesson, which has yet to be properly learned, is that a transport service must be in place when a service changes and not two, three or four months afterwards.

The provision of patient transport is a matter for the Scottish Ambulance Service, which is often regarded as a Cinderella service but which is essential for getting people to appointments and to hospital. I know that one complaint from my constituents is echoed elsewhere. They say that, when they get on patient transport, they sometimes have to drive round for a couple of hours while everybody else is picked up, and then the same thing happens in reverse. I know that the Scottish Ambulance Service is now operating a new system that is much more demand responsive and I look forward to hearing how that has panned out, because that offers hope for the future.

Patients sometimes experience difficulty in securing transport because access is determined by their general practitioner on the basis of clinical need, which is not always well known, and because patients are reluctant to ask. The assumption is made that people somehow have their own transport.

In my area, the voluntary sector plays a critical role. The Red Cross provides transport and community transport schemes assist people in getting to where they need to be. More can be done to enable such flexible transport options that are community based. I hope that the minister will reflect on that further with Keith Brown, the transport minister.

I will make a general point in conclusion. The debate reflects positively not only on the group from Dumfries and Galloway and the work that it has done but on the Parliament. The Parliament's

community partnerships project was—I believe—an innovation of Alex Fergusson's when he was the Presiding Officer. It is very welcome and is to be commended to voluntary groups across Scotland.

17:25

The Minister for Public Health (Michael Matheson): Like others, I congratulate Alex Fergusson on securing the debate, notwithstanding his slight disappointment that it is a health minister who is responding to it. However, I will do my very best to—

Alex Fergusson: Will the minister give way?

Michael Matheson: Of course.

Alex Fergusson: Whatever I expressed, it was not meant to be disappointment.

Michael Matheson: I am very grateful for that, and I will try my best to respond to the points that have been raised.

I agree with Alex Fergusson that the Scottish Parliament's community partnerships project has proved to be highly successful. In this case, the Dumfries and Galloway third sector forum has proved to be an excellent example of the benefits that can be gained from that type of collaborative working between voluntary organisations and public bodies. It is something of a regret that, for financial reasons, it is unable to continue. It was very much a bottom-up approach to trying to engage with those who may not engage with the political process.

"A Road to Health" highlights a number of issues that are recognised not only in Dumfries and Galloway but throughout the country. As Jackie Baillie said, such issues are not exclusive to remote and rural areas. The underlying issues are challenging and are not unique to healthcare—they cover a number of areas of public service provision. Many of the relevant bodies need to recognise that challenge.

I am sure that members understand that it can be very challenging for planners and service providers to configure services, and the transport needs around those services, to ensure that they address the needs of communities effectively, particularly in remote and rural areas. I do not underestimate the huge challenge that some of them face in that respect.

Importantly, providers need to ensure not only that they are innovative in their provision of transport services but that they try to identify unique arrangements to ensure that they address the needs of local residents. The Wigtownshire pilot is a good example of such thinking outside

the box and of a more effective utilisation of existing resources.

The issues surrounding transport to healthcare services are well recognised, and a significant amount of work has been done over recent years to try to address them. It may be helpful if I highlight to members some of the actions that have taken place over the past couple of years in that respect.

In 2009, a healthcare transport framework was issued, providing guidance to all NHS boards in Scotland, which were responsible for preparing local plans on improving access to major healthcare facilities and for developing capacity to respond to the need for and deliver the necessary improvements to transportation.

A recent update highlighted a variety of approaches that have been adopted by health boards, often reflecting their individual local circumstances. A good example of that is at Forth Valley royal hospital in my constituency, which has configured the bus transportation service to help staff and patients to access that newly built facility.

More recently, the regional transport partnerships asked the Scottish Government to review the delivery of effective patient transport to healthcare services. As a result of that request, last year we established a short-life working group on transport for health. I can advise members that the group's report is being finalised and will be brought before ministers shortly. Although I cannot pre-empt its findings and recommendations, I assure members that we will consider those findings and recommendations very carefully.

However, I know that one of the aims was to examine how stakeholders might work together more effectively. That echoes some of the recommendations and findings in "A Road to Health." I emphasise that if we are to realise the integration that we wish to see in relation to transport, it is absolutely vital that all the relevant bodies are prepared to work together collectively to achieve that improvement.

"A Road to Health" includes a range of negative experiences that people have found in using patient transport services. I know of the variety of experiences of the service from my constituents' representations. I confirm that the Scottish Ambulance Service acknowledges the difficulties, which is why it is running an improvement programme that aims to make the service more reliable and responsive. There are already some signs of improvement gains as a result of the approach taken by the Scottish Ambulance Service.

Members may be aware that, in the north of Scotland, patients who are eligible to use the patient transport service can utilise a new direct

booking and management system that started up just last month. The system allows individuals to book ambulance transport directly through a dedicated call centre in Inverness, and they can talk to a trained member of staff when requesting patient transport. That can be done up to 28 days before transport is required. Some of the findings so far indicate positive responses from patients who are using the system.

The contact centre also looks at the other forms of transportation that may be available in the area, which patients can be advised of if they wish to make use of that transport for non-clinical purposes.

Members will be aware of the 2011 Audit Scotland report, which highlighted a number of areas that require further improvement. The Scottish Ambulance Service is considering what further progress it can make to ensure that some of the concerns are addressed. For example, it is considering using technology in vehicles to maximise punctuality and plan routes more efficiently so that patients do not find themselves going round the block time and again when they are being transported to hospital.

I recognise that the area is one where, for a variety of different reasons, there are considerable complexities in different parts of the country. From the health point of view, the Scottish Ambulance Service recognises the challenges. We, as a Government, recognise that there are benefits in establishing more partnership working across the health sector, and across local authority and other service providers, to make sure that we utilise the available transport resources more efficiently and effectively to ensure that, collectively, we improve peoples' health and wellbeing.

Meeting closed at 17:32.

Members who would like a printed copy of the *Official Report* to be forwarded to them should give notice to SPICe.

Available in e-format only. Printed Scottish Parliament documentation is published in Edinburgh by APS Group Scotland.

All documents are available on
the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.scottish.parliament.uk

For details of documents available to
order in hard copy format, please contact:
APS Scottish Parliament Publications on 0131 629 9941.

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact
Public Information on:

Telephone: 0131 348 5000
Textphone: 0800 092 7100
Email: sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk

e-format first available
ISBN 978-1-4061-8890-5

Revised e-format available
ISBN 978-1-4061-8903-2

Printed in Scotland by APS Group Scotland
