



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 28 May 2014

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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 28 May 2014

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

Business Motion

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Good afternoon. The first item of business this afternoon is consideration of business motion S4M-10151, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a revision to today's business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees to the following revision to the programme of business for Wednesday 28 May 2014—
after

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions
Finance, Employment and Sustainable
Growth

insert

followed by Ministerial Statement: Caledonian
Sleeper Franchise

delete

5.00 pm Decision Time

and insert

5.30 pm Decision Time—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

Motion agreed to.

Portfolio Question Time

Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth

14:00

Oil and Gas Sector (Employment)

1. Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to support employment across the oil and gas sector. (S4O-03266)

The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism (Fergus Ewing): The Scottish Government has published its oil and gas strategy. The Scottish Government, together with the enterprise network, has delivered an extra 80 companies who are account managed. We have led delegations to many destinations all over the world and have provided an extra £6.5 million to establish Energy Skills Scotland. We have also ring fenced 500 modern apprenticeships for energy. We work with OPITO, Oil & Gas UK and many others in the industry to deliver skills in a co-ordinated fashion. We have set up the oil and gas innovation centre, and I have personally met more than 100 companies in the sector in Aberdeen and elsewhere to lead our support for this most important sector of the economy.

Dennis Robertson: I thank the minister for his comprehensive answer and I look forward to him visiting my constituency in the future.

I am sure that the minister will agree that, despite the Scottish Government's efforts, we still do not seem to have enough young girls and women coming into the industry. Could he perhaps engage with the new Cabinet Secretary for Training, Youth and Women's Employment to see whether we can rectify that?

Fergus Ewing: Yes—I am happy to and do work closely with Angela Constance on these and all other matters. Also, rarely a week goes by—including this week—when I do not visit Dennis Robertson's constituency.

I am pleased to say that Energy Skills Scotland and Education Scotland are working together to develop a co-ordinated long-term plan for better partnerships between industry and schools.

As far as attracting more young women to pursue and to wish to pursue a career in the oil and gas industry is concerned, it is a lesser-known fact that around 95 per cent of the jobs in the oil and gas industry are not offshore jobs. If we can explain that more, that may remove some of the misperceptions about the industry and lead to more young women being interested in taking up a

career in what is arguably our most successful sector.

Independence White Paper (Tax)

2. Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland's comment that the white paper on independence "contained very little detail on tax". (S4O-03267)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): "Scotland's Future" sets out how taxation will operate in an independent Scotland and how this Government plans to use tax powers to build a tax system that stimulates Scotland's economy, builds social cohesion and sustains our public services.

Independence will guarantee, for the first time, that decisions about what taxes apply in an independent Scotland and at what level they are set will be taken only with the approval of a Parliament that is elected entirely by people in Scotland.

Drew Smith: The only thing that we know for sure about a tax system in an independent Scotland is the SNP's desire to engage in a reckless tax competition by cutting tax for big business by 3 per cent more than the Tories ever would. ICAS has highlighted the complete lack of information from the Scottish Government on the cost of creating a new tax system. The Scottish Government has said that the cost would be small, and Scotland's accountants have asked how small. Will Mr Swinney tell Parliament how much he thinks that it will cost to set up a new tax system? Does he know?

John Swinney: The best way to answer Mr Smith's question is to say that, as has been acknowledged by a range of experts in the field, independence will provide the opportunity for Scotland to create a system that is simpler to administer, more efficient in its organisation and more focused on the particular requirements of an independent Scotland.

If we look at the United Kingdom system, which has more than 10,000 pages of tax legislation and which had 1,042 exemptions in 2010 alone, we can see that the complex approach that is being taken in the United Kingdom has not made for a straightforward or efficient tax system.

On the question of cost, the Government has set out detail on the way in which we would want to structure and take forward the tax system in Scotland. The proposals that we have brought to the Parliament in the Revenue Scotland and Tax Powers Bill demonstrate that we can undertake tax administration in Scotland at a cheaper rate than Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs can—

some 25 per cent cheaper. That illustrates for Mr Smith the way in which an independent Scotland could take decisions and approaches that would better meet the needs of people in Scotland and deliver a greater degree of efficiency into the bargain.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con): In this year's budget, there is £10 million for the transitional costs of the Scotland Act 2012 taxes, and next year the figure is £40 million. What would be the transitional costs of devolving all taxes upon separation?

John Swinney: The definitive answer to that would come as a result of the negotiations that we would undertake with the United Kingdom Government on arrangements for our use and application of the existing tax apparatus in Scotland—principally in relation to HMRC, pensions administration and the benefits system—in an independent Scotland. That is an argument for early negotiation with the United Kingdom to prepare for an orderly transition to an independent Scotland in the aftermath of a yes vote in the referendum in September.

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Question 3 is in the name of Marco Biagi. The member has not seen fit to join us to ask the question. I expect an explanation from him by the end of the day.

Question 4, in the name of Kenny Gibson, has not been lodged. Mr Gibson is abroad on parliamentary duties.

Economic Growth (Highly Skilled Workforce)

5. Alex Rowley (Cowdenbeath) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government whether it considers that the future growth of the economy lies in a highly skilled workforce and what steps it will take to attract businesses to Scotland that require a highly skilled workforce. (S4O-03270)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): Increased internationalisation with greater business investment and exports will drive future sustainable economic growth. A highly skilled and flexible workforce will help to facilitate that and to ensure that Scotland remains an attractive location for inward investors, therefore building on our success to date in securing inward investment. According to Ernst & Young, in 2012, the number of jobs that were attracted from inward investment was at its second-highest level in 12 years. Since 2008, Scottish Development International support has led to the creation or safeguarding of over 33,000 planned jobs in Scotland.

Alex Rowley: I have to confess that, in putting the question together, I had to add the bit about

attracting businesses to Scotland, so that the question qualified to be asked in this part of question time. For me, that highlights the issue that I am trying to get at. Does the cabinet secretary agree that we need to look at skills in terms of primary and secondary schools, colleges, higher education and, crucially, employers? Does he agree that skills are key to the Scottish economy, whether for inward investment or companies that are here? I have met companies that say that they are having to recruit abroad because the skills that they need are not here. Does the cabinet secretary agree that we need a more joined-up approach that brings all the partners together and drives the skills agenda so that people can get the jobs that are available in Scotland?

The Presiding Officer: Thank you for the speech.

John Swinney: After those words, Presiding Officer, I feel anxious about saying that I very much concur with Mr Rowley's remarks. Regardless of parliamentary decisions on the configuration of who answers which question, the member's point is entirely relevant to the issues that I confront. I agree entirely with him that we must have cohesion and alignment in all our approaches to skills and development, from the earliest years of education.

For example, some of the problems that we have with occupational segregation for employees in their 20s are, perhaps, determined by steps that are taken in primary school, when particular opportunities and areas of activity will be talked about and discussed with greater relevance to males than to females. We must tackle those issues throughout the education system.

The Wood commission report will give us a lot to think about and address in this area. Sir Ian Wood has taken meticulous steps to ensure that we have the type of cohesive discussion that Alex Rowley is seeking, and I look forward to the publication of that report shortly.

Alex Rowley makes an entirely reasonable point about the need for business to be at the epicentre of this discussion. Far too often, business is not closely immersed in the discussion about skills and the skills development pipelines in our society. If it were, we would be able to resolve many of the issues of demand and supply that Alex Rowley has rightly highlighted.

The Presiding Officer: Well, we got a speech in return. To allow us to make progress through the questions, I remind members that questions should be brief and I remind ministers that I would appreciate fairly brief answers.

Local Authority Elections (Turnout)

6. Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what measures it is considering to support turnout at local authority elections. (S4O-03271)

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Derek Mackay): The Scottish Government is committed to improving voter turnout at all Scottish elections, including local government elections.

On 9 April 2014 we published the consultation document, "Scotland's Electoral Future: Delivering Improvements in Participation and Administration". The consultation is focused on how we can improve the quality of democracy in Scotland by encouraging wider engagement and participation in elections. It draws on the findings of several earlier reports. Measures that are under consideration include all-postal voting, online voting and telephone voting, among other suggestions that will be informed by a cross-party stakeholder roundtable that I have convened and which met for the first time today.

Joan McAlpine: What specific measures could be considered to encourage more young people to participate in the democratic process?

Derek Mackay: In addition to some of the measures that I have just mentioned, the First Minister, the Deputy First Minister and I will attend a young voter event in Glasgow on Scotland's future, in partnership with stakeholders such as YoungScot, the Scottish Youth Parliament and YouthLink Scotland. We look forward to hearing their suggestions on how to further improve our engagement with young voters in the democratic process.

Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP): What more can be done to encourage people from minority groups, especially those with disabilities, to engage in the democratic process and especially to become candidates, so that they can be elected in local authority and parliamentary elections?

Derek Mackay: The stakeholder group that I referred to has a wide range of opinion and representation. In addition to our collective duties as political parties, we are working with Inclusion Scotland on a specific pilot project to deliver an internship for people with disabilities in order to give them greater exposure in Parliament and involvement in the democratic process. If it is successful, we can roll it out more widely. Inclusion Scotland has been allocated funding of more than £78,000 to run the programme.

Independence (Interest Rates)

7. Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what experts it has consulted about the consequences of independence for interest rates. (S4O-03272)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): The Scottish Government's views on monetary policy are based on the comprehensive work of the fiscal commission working group, which is comprised of internationally renowned economists. That group of economic experts published a detailed report in February last year that includes proposals for currency and interest rates. Although they outlined that Scotland would have a number of credible options, they concluded that a formal monetary union would be in the interests of Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

The Bank of England would continue to set a single interest rate for both Scotland and the rest of the UK, which makes sense for two economies with such close trading patterns.

Malcolm Chisholm: Does the cabinet secretary agree that, when it comes to the economics of independence, it is important that we listen to independent experts? Is it not the case that all independent experts agree that there would be a sovereign debt premium, even if there were to be monetary union? Is it not the case that the vast majority of those experts say that, without a monetary union, there would be an even higher interest rate premium? Indeed, if the Scottish Government were not to take on its share of debt, there would be an astronomic interest rate premium—around 5 per cent on interest rates, according to Jeffries investment bank.

John Swinney: The Scottish Government's proposal is for a monetary union between an independent Scotland and the rest of the UK. I am reminded that a significant amount of independent opinion has judged that that would be in the best interests of Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom. Not least, the most recent opinion came from Professor Anton Muscatelli when he was at the Parliament's Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee.

If we look at other contributions to the discussion, we find that, for example, Standard & Poor's has said that an independent Scotland

"would qualify for our highest economic assessment",

and Moody's has said that

"all possible outcomes point to Scotland being among the wealthiest sovereigns in the world".

Therefore, there is a great deal that enables us to be sure about the credit rating of an independent Scotland.

If I look at the credit ratings of small countries that are of a size comparable to Scotland, I find that Austria, Finland and Denmark—to name but three—all have lower debt costs than the United Kingdom.

If we look at all that evidence in the round, we find that it demonstrates the arguments in favour of the proposals put forward by the Scottish Government.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): I note what the cabinet secretary says about Austria. Will he explain how it can be that a smaller country such as Austria ends up with lower interest rates than a large country such as the UK?

John Swinney: Ultimately, it will come down to the stewardship of the economy in Austria. Anyone who looks at the stewardship of the United Kingdom's economy will see that the debt is heading for £1.5 trillion, which indicates the degree of economic mismanagement. In view of the strong public finances that existed around the turn of the century—from the late 1990s and throughout the first decade of the century—the fact that we have ended up with the level of debt that we have is a testament to the economic mismanagement of the United Kingdom.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con): For clarity, is it the Scottish Government's formal position that a separate Scottish Government would pay a lower rate of interest on Government debt than the UK Government?

John Swinney: I simply illustrate to Mr Brown the comments that ratings agencies have put in the public domain. They speak for themselves. They say:

"Scotland would qualify for our highest economic assessment."

Mr Brown should be cheerful about that and confident that he can go forward in future with great certainty about the economic foundations of an independent Scotland. I know that it is only a matter of time before he reaches that conclusion for himself.

Employment (Caithness and North Sutherland)

8. Jean Urquhart (Highlands and Islands) (Ind): To ask the Scottish Government what measures it is taking to sustain employment in Caithness and north Sutherland. (S4O-03273)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): Through the Caithness and north

Sutherland regeneration partnership, we are working to develop a resilient local economy and support sustainable job creation.

Between 2008 and 2013, the partnership's actions secured commitments from 190 local businesses to create or maintain 750 jobs. Those activities are complemented by more than £100 million in infrastructure investment in the past five years, including £20 million on developing Scrabster harbour. That investment supports jobs during construction as well as building the asset base to support future economic development and job creation in growth sectors such as renewables.

Jean Urquhart: Finding new employment for workers in Dounreay has been a continuing theme of the plant's decommissioning. How will that experience inform other future diversification in places such as Faslane in the event of independence?

The Presiding Officer: Cabinet secretary, this is about Caithness and north Sutherland.

John Swinney: Having met representatives of the Caithness and north Sutherland regeneration partnership and taken part in discussions that were hosted by the Caithness Chamber of Commerce when I was last in Thurso a couple of years ago, I have been impressed by the way in which the partnership's focused work has brought together all relevant agencies to try to find ways of reskilling and redeploying individuals who are involved in the work at Dounreay and, crucially, to find other sustainable business opportunities to support employment in the Caithness economy.

There are wider lessons to be drawn from a good exercise in addressing a change to the economic landscape in the north of Scotland that could have dramatic implications for the local economy unless it is properly managed—and it is being properly managed by the partnership.

Local Authority Representatives (Meetings)

9. Cameron Buchanan (Lothian) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government when ministers last met representatives of local authorities. (S4O-03274)

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Derek Mackay): Ministers meet representatives of local government regularly to discuss a wide range of issues as part of our commitment to working in partnership with local government to improve outcomes for the people of Scotland.

Cameron Buchanan: Following this weekend's revelation that the City of Edinburgh Council has spent approximately £60,000 on attracting foreign investment, or entertaining, and that it initially refused to release details of how those costs were

accrued, will the minister give an assurance that he will press home to Scottish councils the importance of transparency, particularly as resources are so scarce at the moment?

Derek Mackay: That is a matter primarily for the City of Edinburgh Council, and it will be judged by the electorate on how it chooses to use resources. I am not aware of the full details of the case, but I am happy to look at it and advise the City of Edinburgh Council accordingly. However, Scotland's capital city should herald its successes and promote Edinburgh and Scotland across the world, while using resources wisely and transparently.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): When the minister last met representatives of councils, did he discuss concerns about the planning system? In Kirknewton in my region, a planning application for a 190-foot turbine was rejected twice by the council and by ministers, only for the decision to be overturned behind closed doors by a second reporter inquiry. Will the minister look at reforming the planning system to ensure that it is fairer and more transparent? At the moment, it is heavily weighted against communities and in favour of developers.

Derek Mackay: I disagree with Mr Findlay's comments about the planning system. Essentially, the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006 was agreed on a cross-party basis. In fact, the Labour Party was largely responsible for much of that legislation. If the member thinks that the 2006 act has given the Government powers that he regrets, we should look across all parties and reflect on that. The 2006 act is bedding down well, and an appeals mechanism is necessary. I disagree that communities are not fully engaged, and I am making great progress with the delivery of the national planning framework and the Scottish planning policy on the ground, in partnership with local authorities. The last time I met Scotland's local authorities to discuss planning, they did not ask me to abolish the appeals system.

Low Pay

10. James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to tackle low pay. (S4O-03275)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): The Government is leading by example and helping those who are on the lowest incomes by ensuring that all staff who are covered by the public sector pay policy receive the Scottish living wage, which is above the statutory minimum wage. We encourage others to follow our example, and we have funded the Poverty Alliance to deliver a living wage accreditation scheme, which aims to increase the number of employers

that are paying the living wage, and to make decent pay the norm in our country.

James Kelly: Following the debates on payment of the living wage in public contracts during consideration of the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Bill, what measures will the Government put in place to monitor the payment of the living wage in public contracts? Will the cabinet secretary consider setting up a living wage unit to assist with that process?

John Swinney: I will certainly explore the monitoring issue that Mr Kelly has raised. In gathering information about contracts, we monitor community benefit clauses, for example, as part of the commitments that we undertake through public sector procurement, so there is certainly scope for us to consider the serious point that Mr Kelly makes. Our work with the Poverty Alliance has been designed to engage organisations that have been critical to advancing the arguments and gain wider participation in the living wage campaign. I assure Mr Kelly that consideration will be given to that idea, and I will write to him accordingly.

The Presiding Officer: Question 11, in the name of Christian Allard, has been withdrawn. The member has provided a most satisfactory explanation.

National Planning Framework 3 and Scottish Planning Policy (Publication)

12. Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government when it will publish the national planning framework 3 and the revised Scottish planning policy. (S4O-03277)

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Derek Mackay): We will publish national planning framework 3 and the revised Scottish planning policy on 23 June 2014.

Angus MacDonald: I thank the minister for his reply and for the imminent publication of NPF3 and the SPP. I particularly welcome the proposed inclusion of the Grangemouth investment zone as one of the national developments, as well as the carbon capture and storage proposals for Grangemouth, with appropriate environmental safeguards. How have the recommendations from the Parliament's committees been considered as part of the NPF3 process?

Derek Mackay: I provided an interim response to the recommendations from Parliament's committees earlier this month. The Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee highlighted local residents' concerns about the impact of the two proposed national developments at Grangemouth. We are currently finalising NPF3 and taking those concerns into account. A co-ordinated approach to development in that area, as proposed in NPF3, will be key to balancing

development aspirations and quality of life for local communities and the environment.

More widely, I have taken on board a number of process, policy and narrative contributions in response to the recommendations. I am sure that members will be aware that I have gone further on the scrutiny process than the legislation required me to. I have also offered to attend the Local Government and Regeneration Committee to outline the Government's final position.

That will all lead to an excellent plan to enable Scotland to deliver sustainable economic growth.

The Presiding Officer: Question 13, in the name of Rhoda Grant, has been withdrawn. The member has provided a satisfactory explanation.

Payday Lending Summit

14. Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what conclusions emerged from the recent payday lending summit. (S4O-03279)

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Derek Mackay): The Scottish Government is committed to tackling the rise in payday lenders and betting shops on Scotland's high streets. We have already taken steps to address the issue by securing the passage of the Bankruptcy and Debt Advice (Scotland) Bill and by removing business rates relief from payday lenders. However, we recognise that more needs to be done. I chaired a summit on 23 April that brought together a wide range of interests, including local authorities, financial advice services, welfare organisations and credit unions, to consider what further action could be taken. A report that outlines the summit's discussions and conclusions will be published later this week. Those conclusions include the development of an action plan that will build on existing commitments and will be finalised in the near future in collaboration with stakeholders.

Graeme Dey: Is there scope to use planning policies to tackle the clustering of betting and payday loan premises in town centres?

Derek Mackay: A number of options are being considered, including changes to planning policy. The forthcoming action plan will provide more detail on the way forward. I can confirm that emerging planning policies will assist in tackling the clustering of payday lending and betting premises. We have been working hard to maintain cross-party support to achieve that within local government and Parliament. I restate, however, that regulation would be much easier if the reserved powers were transferred to Scotland.

Community Planning Partnerships (Support)

15. Jayne Baxter (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what support it offers to community planning partnerships. (S4O-03280)

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Derek Mackay): The work of community planning partnerships is, in the first instance, primarily supported by Scottish Government funding for the statutory partner bodies. For instance, we are maintaining the local government finance settlements for 2014-15 and 2015-16 at more than £10.6 billion, and our initial revenue resource allocations for territorial national health service boards in 2014-15 total more than £8.27 billion, which is 3.1 per cent higher than in 2013-14.

The Scottish Government supports CPPs in other ways, too. We intend to legislate in the forthcoming community empowerment bill to strengthen community planning, which will include putting clear duties on public sector partners to support the work of CPPs.

We are running a national conference for community planning practitioners and others on 5 June to share good practice. With the Economic and Social Research Council, we are investing £3 million in what works Scotland, which is an independent centre that will support CPPs by building evidence on what works in order to deepen the impact of public service delivery and reform.

Jayne Baxter: There are many great examples of small community-based organisations in Mid Scotland and Fife, including the Resonate Arts House project in Alloa, which I visited last week. The project takes a holistic approach to working with local people to build community resilience and capacity. I urge the minister to ensure that support for community planning crosses all portfolios to ensure that there is a sustainable long-term future for organisations such as Resonate.

Derek Mackay: Yes, of course—that is a valid point. I had the pleasure of visiting Fife just the other day to attend a third sector conference. We heard from the third sector directly about some of the fantastic projects that it is delivering on prevention, integration, people and improved performance, which are the pillars of the Christie commission's report on public service reform and of our response to it. The capacity of the third sector and community-led regeneration and support is critical to delivering on that agenda, and I concur completely with Jayne Baxter's comments.

Wealth Inequalities (Tax Powers)

16. Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): I will send you a note, Presiding Officer. I am sorry that I arrived late.

To ask the Scottish Government how it plans to use tax powers to tackle wealth inequalities. (S4O-03281)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): The Scottish Government has limited powers, under its existing responsibilities, to exercise the use of tax powers to tackle wealth inequalities. However, where we have acquired new powers through the Scotland Act 2012, we have demonstrated our desire to deliver a progressive system. That is exactly the approach that we have taken in the design of the land and buildings transaction tax and we would seek to apply it in other forms of taxation, where we have the responsibility to do so.

Rob Gibson: I welcome the cabinet secretary's answer. However, in order to fund the public services that so many communities need and deserve, we need to tackle tax avoidance and trusts and so on among rural and urban businesses. Many of those tax powers are currently retained at Westminster, so is there any discussion about how we can get control over some of those tax powers in order to help our economy to deliver for those communities?

John Swinney: Clearly, if Parliament had a wider range of tax powers, it would have much greater flexibility to address those issues.

I reassure Mr Gibson that the Government has demonstrated in the Revenue Scotland and Tax Powers Bill its determination to tackle tax avoidance, which has, I think, been welcomed across the political spectrum in Parliament. The general anti-avoidance rule, which will be scrutinised by Parliament at stages 2 and 3 of the bill, is designed to establish our tax system on exactly the right footing in order to make clear our intolerance of tax avoidance, and to put in place measures that we believe have the widest possible scope to tackle it. However, as I have said to Parliament already, I am very willing to be challenged on the degree to which we could make that provision ever more effective than we have already designed it in the bill, which has been considered by Parliament at stage 1.

Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab): Will the cabinet secretary take the opportunity to remind the radical voices behind him about how slashing corporation tax for big business and forcing regressive tax competition on the rest of the United Kingdom would result in a more equal Scotland?

John Swinney: I simply remind Mr Smith that the Government has taken an approach that is designed to focus on how we improve and expand the economic base of Scotland.

However earnestly Mr Smith tries to put forward those views on corporation tax, I would take him more seriously if he was not a member of a party that on two occasions dramatically reduced corporation tax. Mr Smith's great intellectual logic seems to be that it is all right if the Labour Party does it, but it is not all right if anybody else does it.

The Scottish Government has set out our argument about the advantage of encouraging and motivating investment through a competitive tax base. That does not mean that people who are obliged to pay tax are somehow exonerated from paying it. Those who are obliged to pay tax have got to pay the tax that they are obliged to pay, which is exactly what the general anti-avoidance rule that I am establishing in statute is designed to do. It is to signal that whatever tax rates are decided and determined by Parliament must be followed and adhered to by all relevant parties.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): At last week's meeting of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, Dennis Canavan, who is the chair of the Yes Scotland campaign, said that he wants a radical redistribution of wealth in Scotland, and tax policies that would bring that about. Does Mr Swinney agree?

John Swinney: The first thing that I will say is that Dennis Canavan is a man for whom I could not have higher respect. I have sat with him in the House of Commons and in this Parliament and I have seen how courageously he has dealt with things—politically and personally. I have nothing but the highest admiration for Mr Canavan. He would be the first to say that he and I are not exactly two peas from the same pod, if I can use that analogy for the benefit of anyone on the Conservative benches who is interested in gardening.

Obviously, there will be differences of opinion among the various interested parties on the yes side, but what I and Mr Canavan are absolutely agreed on is that the only way we will tackle the inherent inequalities of the United Kingdom is by acquiring the powers of an independent Scotland. That will start to resolve the issues of inequality in our society.

Independence (United Kingdom Government Civil Servants in Scotland)

17. Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what would be the position of civil servants working for the United Kingdom Government in

Scotland following a yes vote in the referendum. (S4O-03282)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): The Scottish Government will work with the Westminster Government to preserve continuity of employment for all civil servants in Scotland, either by transfer to the Scottish Government as we take on new functions, or through continued employment by the Westminster Government, where it continues to require their skills. UK civil servants who transfer into the Scottish Government would benefit from our good employment practices, including the continued commitment to there being no compulsory redundancies.

Jamie Hepburn: In recent years, HM Revenue and Customs—which is a big employer in my constituency and across Scotland—and the Department for Work and Pensions have experienced large cuts to the number of people whom they employ. In 2004, 48,500 jobs were lost from those organisations, followed by further cuts in 2006, and we know that the current UK Government is cutting back, too. Does the cabinet secretary agree that the real risk to jobs in those organisations is the UK Government's handling of them, and that the white paper commitment to transfer workers to the employment of the Scottish Government, with the policies that he has set out, makes independence a much better prospect for such staff?

John Swinney: The Scottish Government took a deliberate decision, despite all the economic challenges that we face, to provide a more stable employment environment for civil servants in Scotland through our commitment to having no compulsory redundancies. That has been a very welcome measure among employees, who have the security of knowing that the continuity of their employment has been secured, and that if there were to be a requirement to reduce staff numbers in Government organisations, it would be done by negotiation and agreement with the relevant trade unions and individuals, as part of a voluntary severance arrangement. We have created, and have every intention of maintaining, a progressive approach to employment practices in the civil service in Scotland.

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab): Will the cabinet secretary tell me how far his policy of no compulsory redundancies extends in the public sector? I am thinking specifically about the compulsory redundancies of academic staff that are being considered at the University of Dundee.

The Presiding Officer: I am not sure that that question is quite relevant, but if you want to answer it, cabinet secretary, please do so.

John Swinney: The University of Dundee is a self-governing institution. Although the Government funds it, the University of Dundee is entirely autonomous in the decisions that it takes.

The Government leads by example, and the commitment to no compulsory redundancies applies to all bodies and bargaining units to which the Government's pay policy applies.

Social Enterprise Funding (Crowd Funding)

18. Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government when it last reviewed the funding sources for social enterprises and what steps it is taking to support crowd funding. (S4O-03283)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): The Scottish Government is in discussions with a range of stakeholders to identify opportunities for innovation and development, and to explore approaches to ensure that social enterprises and the wider third sector are buoyant and sustainable. The discussions will continue throughout 2014, and will include future funding sources.

Chic Brodie: The cabinet secretary will be aware of the rapid growth of social enterprises and the voluntary and third sectors in recent years. Associated with that growth has been the growth in the number of funding sources—both private and public. Will the cabinet secretary institute a full review of the many sources of funding, in order to ensure that properly directed and qualified financial support is given to likely winners in those sectors, and that crowd funding is considered as one such qualified investment vehicle?

John Swinney: Crowd funding is an example of real innovation; I have seen a number of successful measures to attract crowd funding for social enterprises that have reaped significant rewards. I can assure Chic Brodie that that will be explored as part of our review.

I also say to Chic Brodie that the Government set out in 2007 its priority to expand the scope of social enterprise activity in Scotland. We have seen that happen significantly across the country and I assure Mr Brodie that we have every intention of encouraging it in the years to come.

Business Start-ups (Glasgow)

19. Anne McTaggart (Glasgow) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what measures it has put in place to increase the number of business start-ups in Glasgow. (S4O-03284)

The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism (Fergus Ewing): The Scottish Government is committed to creating the

economic environment to enable businesses to start up and thrive. The latest official start-up figures, which were published by the Office for National Statistics in December 2013, show that there were 2,300 new business registrations in Glasgow in 2012, which was up from 2,220 in 2011. That is the third consecutive year in which the number of start-ups has increased.

The Presiding Officer: You will need to be brief, Ms McTaggart.

Anne McTaggart: Women in Scotland continue to be half as likely as men to establish a business. In the light of the fact that the significant entrepreneurial potential of Scotland's women remains untapped, what specific measures has the Scottish Government taken to address the concerning gender gap in business start-up rates?

Fergus Ewing: We have taken a large number of measures. Angela Constance is driving forward that work, as Anne McTaggart well knows. More than 92,000 businesses in Scotland pay low or no business rates, enormous support is provided by the business gateway and we encourage more women to consider self-employment as a successful means of supporting the economy. We entirely support the efforts that the member talks about.

The Presiding Officer: I offer my apologies to John Lamont, whose question I did my absolute best to get to. Unfortunately, time has caught up with us.

Caledonian Sleeper Franchise

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is a statement by Keith Brown on the Caledonian sleeper franchise. The minister will take questions at the end of his statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:41

The Minister for Transport and Veterans (Keith Brown): I am grateful to the Parliament for the opportunity to make a statement on the future of the Caledonian sleeper franchise.

This morning, I advised the Parliament that the procurement process for the Caledonian sleeper rail franchise had been completed on time and to plan. The competition has been evaluated rigorously on the basis of the most advantageous balance of quality and price, and the Scottish Government intends to award the contract to Serco Caledonian Sleepers Ltd.

The new franchise contract confirms the Scottish Government's commitment to transform this iconic Scottish rail service. It will commence on 1 April 2015 and will deliver investment in the service for the next 15 years. It is good for passengers, good for staff and good for Scottish business. In short, it is good for Scotland. The contract secures the future of the Caledonian sleeper and will ensure that it delivers a service that is fit for the 21st century and that it provides, as it has done for more than 100 years, a unique, valued and high-profile overnight service between Scotland and London.

Before I give some details on the contract, I wish to say a few words about the context of railway franchising. As members will be aware, franchising is a requirement under the Railways Act 1993, which was introduced by a previous Conservative Administration. That act precludes any United Kingdom public sector organisation from bidding to operate a railway service. However, no such barrier applies to state-backed organisations from Europe or elsewhere, and I believe that that is fundamentally unfair and constraining.

It is unfair because it discriminates against UK or Scottish interests, and it is constraining because it restricts the range of options that are available for the operation of our railway services. As I have stated publicly on many occasions, it is the unfairness of the restriction that I find objectionable as much as the relative merits of the case for private or public franchise operation. During my term of office, I have written to numerous secretaries of state to request a change in the law and each request has been refused.

I am aware that the Labour Party has hinted that it might move from its most recent stance. It now says that it would consider making changes to the law should it win the UK general election next year. I am pleased that the Labour Party is finally coming round to my way of thinking, because it did nothing to address the issue at Westminster from 1997 right through to 2010 and was happy to leave us operating patently unfair procedures.

We must follow the franchising rules that were imposed by Westminster and we have always stated that we would do so competently. Accordingly, we have set out a prudent programme and process for the Caledonian sleeper and ScotRail franchise procurements, which are managed by a properly resourced and expert team within Transport Scotland.

Following a pre-qualification process, we were delighted to have attracted three high-quality final bids from Arriva, First and Serco. The fact that all three bidders are well-established and well-respected railway service providers represents clear evidence of the strength of our procurement exercise. I am advised that each of the bids was of extremely high quality, although I should stress—as many members will appreciate—that ministers play no part in the evaluation of bids or in selection of the winning bidder. That is controlled by the process that is administered by officials.

After a rigorous evaluation exercise, Serco Caledonian Sleepers Ltd came out on top, but it would be remiss of me not to thank Arriva and First Group for their participation and their confidence in the Scottish Government's vision for our rail services. I also thank First Group and its hard working staff for their management of the service since 2005, and I acknowledge the hard work of Bill Reeve and the rail officials at Transport Scotland throughout the process. It is also appropriate to acknowledge the £50 million contribution to the sleeper that was announced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Danny Alexander.

Our specification stated that we would place passengers' interests at the heart of the service, and the new franchise will deliver on our commitments. The new Caledonian sleeper will transform the whole passenger experience from booking tickets through on-board comfort and hospitality to post-travel aftercare. Before boarding, passengers will benefit from a revamped website that will allow them to view information and book tickets, manage their booking and even pre-order food online. A new smartphone app will also be available in recognition of the fact that more of us are communicating that way.

At stations, lounges will be improved and special sleeper interactive information totems will be placed on platforms to provide real-time

information to passengers. On board, the franchise will deliver improvements for all passengers from backpackers to business travellers, increasing the pleasure of travel and opening the service to new audiences.

The Scottish Government's commitment to investment has led to real success. New trains that have been designed especially for this service and which have been developed in consultation with passengers will be built, and that new fleet will be ready and on the tracks in 2018. Its key features will include, in the seated accommodation, modern comfortable cradle seats and innovative pod seats that can transform into flatbeds; new standard-class sleeper berths; and business berths with en-suite shower and toilet facilities, making the train truly a hotel on wheels.

Improved security will be built in for all passengers and their luggage, and there will be closed circuit television in all public areas of the train. Wi-Fi and power points—facilities that the modern traveller rightly expects—will be available to all passengers.

The club car will be at the heart of the new trains, providing a welcoming place to eat, relax and socialise, and there will be special themed evenings to enhance the travel experience. Post journey, the guest services team will help passengers with onward connections as well as wider holiday and business planning.

The new Caledonian sleeper franchisee—as I have said, we intend at this stage to award the contract to Serco, but I point out that there is still the 10-day Alcatel period to go through—has been made well aware of the Scottish Government's policy of bearing down on rail fares wherever possible and ensuring accessibility to the sleeper for all budgets. The Scotland to London rail travel market—indeed, that travel market in general—is fiercely competitive. To meet its commitment to delivering strong growth in passenger numbers, the Caledonian sleeper franchisee plans to offer a range of competitive and attractive fares and ticket promotions and to widen interest in the service for all budgets.

I have also been careful to ensure that the interests of Caledonian sleeper staff are addressed in the new franchise contract. Accordingly, we have engaged with the rail unions to ensure that staffing issues are appropriately covered, and I am grateful for the unions' assistance in that respect. The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 will of course apply, and for staff who transfer to the new franchisee there will be continued inclusion in a fully funded section of the railway pensions scheme. We have also ensured that Caledonian sleeper staff who currently benefit

from the rail staff travel scheme will retain those benefits.

I can also confirm that the long-term future of Inverness train maintenance depot is secure. I have spoken to the chief executive of Serco Group and have asked for, and received, specific assurances about the living wage—staff currently receive in excess of the living wage and will do so in future—and assurances that Serco has no intention of using zero-hours contracts. According to the most recent figures, nearly 90 million passenger journeys are undertaken in the whole of Scotland, and the Scottish Government is investing in growing train service levels in the Highlands through franchising and rail infrastructure enhancements. Given that Inverness depot is well located to support that growth, we have required that the next ScotRail franchisee must maintain the depot at Inverness for the maintenance of its own trains, which constitutes the majority of the work there, as well as the sleeper carriages, which will continue to receive daily servicing at the depot. I am delighted that 15 apprentices will be taken on in the first two years, which underlines our commitment to investing in Scotland's future talent.

The franchise is good for Scottish business. The new Caledonian sleeper franchisee will partner with Scottish businesses to deliver the hospitality service, supply excellent Scottish produce and provide furnishings, and the franchisee has committed to increasing its annual hospitality and catering spend with local Scottish small to medium-sized enterprises to 75 per cent by year 5 and to 90 per cent through the life of the contract.

We have great produce in Scotland, and the sleeper will provide yet another opportunity to showcase it to the wider public. Many businesses, from Shetland to Stranraer and from Stornoway to Stonehaven, will directly benefit from contracts to support the service. The franchise is good for passengers, staff and Scottish business, and it will be good for Scotland in general.

The franchisee will manage the Caledonian sleeper business and the Government's substantial investment to deliver better value, obtain a good return on investment, and achieve a financially sustainable operation. Growing passenger numbers will drive growing revenue so that annual franchise payments will reduce by more than 70 per cent at current price levels over the life of the contract. That is a saving of around £130 million, I think, in the price of the contract.

This is a new beginning for night rail travel in Britain that will, as I have said, provide a hotel, an office and a restaurant on the move. With the skills of the franchisee and its partnering organisations, our investment will ensure that the Caledonian

sleeper endures, builds on its strong heritage, and is renewed for a great future.

The Presiding Officer: The minister will now take questions on the issues raised by his statement. I intend to allow around 20 minutes for questions, after which we will move on to the next item of business.

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): I thank the minister for advance notice of his statement.

As the minister said, the Caledonian sleeper franchise is unique, valued and high profile, but there are concerns about the franchise award. We would like to see a not-for-profit rail operating model. The Scottish Government has said that it, too, is committed to that, but that was nowhere to be seen in the First Minister's big six demands of the Scotland Act 2012. The next Labour Government is committed to giving the Scottish Parliament full powers over rail. Why was the franchise offered for 15 years? Will there be a break point to allow different models of rail ownership when we have those powers?

Concerns have been raised that train drivers will not be covered by the TUPE process, as they are employed on a sub-contract from ScotRail and DB Schenker. Serco has stated that it intends to employ GB Railfreight drivers for the franchise. Can the minister give a cast-iron guarantee that, after the award, existing drivers will have a job that is based in Scotland?

Finally, I am told that the new rolling stock will be procured and manufactured in Spain. Will the Caledonian sleeper service run with trains that will be built outside the UK?

Keith Brown: The not-for-profit issue was the first issue that Mark Griffin raised. We have said, and I have certainly said consistently, that we were more than happy—in fact, we were eager—to see a not-for-profit bid come forward, and we would have considered it on its relative merits, as we are obliged to do.

Talking about future powers that might come hides the point that the Labour Party had the chance and failed to deal with the matter over 13 years in government. It had every chance to deal with it. Two transport bills went through the Westminster Parliament in which it could have changed the ground rules, but it did not do so. It stuck with franchising.

The Labour Party supports franchising. The last words of its last transport secretary, Lord Adonis, were about the benefits and effectiveness of rail franchising. That is the process that Labour left us with. We cannot favour one particular franchise over another. We were bound to follow the process, and we have done it competently.

I think that I covered existing drivers in my statement. If Mark Griffin wants more information, I am happy to provide him with it, but we have said that TUPE will apply. That is the same guarantee that previous Governments gave. Existing staff, including drivers, will have the protection of TUPE. They will have the protection of the existing terms and conditions, the rail travel benefits that they currently have, and a new pension scheme established with the support of the Scottish Government to cover their pension requirements. That was perhaps the staff's most fundamental concern. I have also mentioned the increased training and apprenticeship opportunities.

That represents a very good deal for employees of the service. We have been very careful to ensure that we protect the interests of employees, and what I have said demonstrates that we have done that.

The last question that Mark Griffin raised was on rolling stock. It is of course down to whoever wins the bid where they place a contract for new rolling stock. We have no legal ability to influence that. I go back to the legislation that the Labour Government supported during its 13 years that means that we have no ability to prescribe that rolling stock should be built in a particular place. That is down to the discretion of the contractor, but Mark Griffin should at least welcome the fact that over £100 million will be spent on new railway rolling stock. What did his party do when it was in Government? Nothing like that. This is a good deal for business in Scotland and for the staff in the new franchise.

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):

I thank the minister for advance sight of his statement and I take the opportunity to congratulate Serco on achieving success in the franchising process. I extend my commiserations to those who were unsuccessful, particularly FirstGroup, a company based in the north-east of Scotland that provided an excellent service over the length of the previous franchise.

It is of some disappointment to me that the minister has taken the opportunity to attack the apparently successful franchising process. He demonstrated during his statement his long-standing aversion to private enterprise and fair competition, something that I will defend at every opportunity in this chamber.

The specific issue that I want to address, though, is the £50 million mentioned in the statement that comes from the UK Government. That fact did not seem to be highlighted in this morning's press announcement, which appeared to claim that the Government money was all coming directly from the Scottish Government. I am glad that it has now been acknowledged that £50 million will come from the UK Government. I

hope that the minister will take this opportunity to offer me further reassurances—I have asked after that money many times—that it is being properly looked after in its current temporary home. More important, will the minister explain how that money will be returned to the franchise to provide the sleeper service and how the £50 million of match funding that he promised—one month after the earlier money announcement—will be included in the financing of the franchise?

Keith Brown: I thank Alex Johnstone for his questions. I have made it very clear a number of times what the Scottish Government thinks of the franchise process and its limitations. It would have been nice to have heard from Alex Johnstone some condemnation of the fact that public-sector owned UK and Scottish businesses are precluded from the franchise process, whereas German, French or Dutch publicly owned businesses are not precluded. Perhaps he could have mentioned that.

At least we have done the franchising efficiently and competently. Look at the mess that the UK Government, which Alex Johnstone supports, made in relation to the west coast mainline franchise. Perhaps he could have mentioned that as well.

I have said already that the likely value of the rolling stock will be in excess of £100 million. Other work will also be done, on infrastructure and on services. All that shows where the £50 million pledged by the UK Government and the commensurate amount pledged by the Scottish Government—I think that our contribution will end up being perhaps £60 million—is going.

There are clauses in the contract that allow half of any excess profits to be taken by the Scottish Government—and all of them to be taken if they become particularly excessive. That money will then be reinvested in the service. We have ensured that the contract is constructed in such a way that we first have a step change in improvement in the service, then continuous improvement thereafter. I would have thought that the Conservative Party would have welcomed that.

The Presiding Officer: We now come to back-bench questions to the minister. Many members have requested a question. I remind them that there should be one question and that it should be brief. Minister, if we could also have brief answers, we will make progress.

Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): Can the minister tell the chamber how small and medium-sized enterprises can benefit from the new franchise more than they did in the past from the previous one?

Keith Brown: Yes, I can. I mentioned during my statement the increasing percentage that Scottish

SMEs will benefit from—75 per cent of hospitality and catering spend by year 5 and 90 per cent by year 15. I also mentioned the food hub in Cumbernauld, which will be used to facilitate the selection and provision of Scottish products. Glencraft in Aberdeenshire will be used to supply mattresses. Laundry services will be provided by Scottish businesses and Shetland wool will be used for blankets. The Inverloch Castle Management International group will help provide the food, which with the help of Albert Roux should be of world-class standard.

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): The minister rightly paid tribute to FirstGroup and its staff who deliver the current service. Given that any direct rail service between the north of Scotland and London has to compete with aviation, can he guarantee today that there will be no reduction in quality, comfort, reliability or frequency under the new contract? In particular, can he tell us whether the new contract will enable a direct nightly rail service between Aberdeen and London seven nights a week instead of six?

Keith Brown: Both we and the franchise holder have the ability to look at extending the services. That is written into the contract. If we think back to the rail 2014 consultation, the scare stories about the sleeper service going altogether have been proven to be pretty unfounded.

I can give the assurance that Lewis Macdonald seeks in relation to quality of service. I have tried to lay out the ways in which that can happen. It is bound to be improved, not least by the investment in new rolling stock, although that will take until 2018 to come on board. All the other customer-facing service improvements should happen as soon as the franchise holder takes over, so there will be that increase in quality of service.

As for extending the service, that is a matter for dialogue between us, the public and the franchise holder.

Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD): I am pleased that the minister has explained how he hopes to avoid the mistakes of previous franchising, not least his predecessor Stewart Stevenson's mishandling of the 2008 extension.

It is worth recollecting that in November 2011 the Scottish Government did not understand the value of the sleeper. It proposed terminating all cross-border services, day and night, at Edinburgh. It took vigorous campaigning by Liberal Democrats who are ambitious for the north-east and the Highlands and action from Danny Alexander in the Treasury to keep Scotland connected.

I am grateful that the Scottish Government belatedly recognises the value of the service.

The Presiding Officer: Can we get a question, Ms McInnes?

Alison McInnes: The minister has acknowledged the £50 million investment from the Treasury. Does that not show the importance of having strong Scottish voices in the UK Cabinet that are able to deliver investment in cross-border services?

Keith Brown: First, I should say that strong Scottish voices—*[Interruption.]* Strong Scottish voices—voices too, perhaps—in the Cabinet may be in short supply after the next election if Lord Oakeshott's poll is to be believed.

Alison McInnes is just making it up when she says that we proposed to abolish the sleeper. She is just making this kind of stuff up, and it is completely wrong. That is demonstrated by the fact that what we now have is a sleeper service that is about to have a huge amount of investment placed into it, with a qualitative jump from the time when her party was running the franchise. Perhaps she is a wee bit scunnered about the fact that we have done something that her party never managed to do, and perhaps that is why we have this sour note coming from the Liberal Democrats.

As far as I am concerned, the key things that we have tried to do were to ensure that the process was run properly, which she and her colleagues in the Westminster Government failed to do in relation to the west coast main line, and to ensure that we kept focused on passengers' needs. That is why the contract will be good for passengers and good for staff and Scottish business.

Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP): I thank the minister for ensuring that the interests of staff will be fully addressed in the new franchise contract, but what further assurances can the Scottish Government provide that, in realising its ambition for the Caledonian sleeper to become truly world class, that will at all times be reflected in the terms and conditions of the staff on whom its future success depends?

Keith Brown: In addition to what I have already said, I should say that I will be speaking to Tim O'Toole this afternoon about the efforts of FirstGroup staff over the previous term of the franchise and thanking them for the efforts that they have made and will continue to make when they transfer to the new franchise holder.

During the mobilisation period and beyond, we will ensure that pay and conditions are protected. TUPE will help us to do that, and I have mentioned the railways pension scheme. We will ensure that the commitment to training and apprenticeships is contractualised, and there is a personal guarantee on the living wage and the use of zero-hours contracts. That looks after the interests of staff to a great extent.

Dave Thompson (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP): I am absolutely delighted that Inverloch Castle Management International is going to be involved with the franchise. How does the minister believe that that will benefit local Highland and Scottish businesses and indeed the consumers who will use the service?

Keith Brown: Let us put ourselves in the place of somebody who travels on the new service. When they step on to the sleeper train in London, they will be confronted with the best of Scottish produce, with the involvement of world-renowned chef Albert Roux and the Inverloch organisation that Dave Thompson mentioned. That really starts to send a message about what we think of the service and what we want other people to think about it. With the attractiveness of the onward journey to the Highlands, we think that it will be a great selling point for Scotland with much wider benefits than merely the transportation of people from place A to place B.

James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab): Can the minister confirm the total value of the franchise payments over the 15 years of the contract, which was omitted from the ministerial statement? Can he also explain why the contract has been awarded for 15 years and no break has been put in place as is the case with the ScotRail franchise in order that alternative funding models can be explored to keep money in the public purse?

Keith Brown: On James Kelly's first point, the value is about £180 million-plus over the 15 years of the contract, which equates to a reduction of about £130 million on the subsidy that we would have paid if we had left things as they were.

There is the opportunity for a break around year 7. The conditions of the break relate to a dramatic change in financial conditions. One reason why the west coast main line franchise process was a spectacular failure was the difficulty in predicting inflation and other economic factors over the franchise period. We have built consideration of that into the sleeper franchise process.

We and the proposed franchise winner have said today that we fully intend to see the contract through its 15 years, because that will allow the long-term capital investment in rolling stock that I mentioned to take place. That is much more difficult to achieve with a shorter franchise term.

Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Will the minister provide details of how Serco will be monitored on maintaining quality and delivering improvements to the service?

Keith Brown: That will happen through a number of processes, including financial penalties, which could come from a break in the contract, as has been evident in other franchises. The franchisee will be measured against its execution

of the contract. As many of the contract's key measures, such as performance, will be in the public domain, the franchisee will have every incentive to ensure effectiveness.

Part of the contract's specification was a 50 per cent emphasis on quality. Serco will be kept to the quality commitment that it has made.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind): I thank the minister for the positive announcement about the depot and apprenticeships. I note that he got a personal rather than a contractual assurance on the living wage and zero-hours contracts. The trade unions have been in touch to express concern about how Serco discharged its industrial relations under the northern isles ferries contract. Will he work with Serco to ensure that a better relationship is maintained under the new franchise?

Keith Brown: I am of course happy to give the commitment to ensure that we have the best possible relationship with the trade unions and the franchise holder. The commitment that I asked for from Serco's chief executive is not just about the living wage, because the staff involved currently earn well in excess of the living wage. TUPE and other commitments will protect existing wages and conditions, and we will go well beyond that into such things as the rail travel that staff benefit from. Another concern of unions is about staff training and apprenticeship opportunities, which have all been protected.

We have spoken directly with the preferred bidder and it has given commitments but, in addition, we have written into the contract things such as TUPE. The pension scheme was a huge issue for the trade unions and we have gone the extra mile to set up a new pension scheme to protect employees' existing pensions.

Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): Given that, until recently, Serco was banned from bidding for any UK Government contracts, a few eyebrows might have been raised when people heard the news this morning. Will the assurances that the minister received from Serco's chief executive on zero-hours contracts, trade union recognition and the living wage also apply to indirectly employed and subcontracted staff?

Keith Brown: Perhaps the news should not have made people raise their eyebrows, especially in the Labour Party, given that the Labour Government in Wales has entered into a substantial contract with Serco in the past month and that Glasgow City Council has a contract with Serco whose value is greater than that of the contract that we are about to enter into. Perhaps the Labour Party has some thinking to do about its relationship to Serco.

We have written into the contract guarantees on TUPE, pensions and training. In addition, we have what we have mentioned on the living wage. We have done a pretty good job of looking after the interests of workers. It would be interesting to know whether that is true in Wales and in Glasgow, where the Labour Party deals with Serco.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I recently had to intervene for a Glasgow-bound passenger who, along with 20-odd others, was left to spend a long, cold night at Euston station after a delayed sleeper train left without them. Does the minister agree that co-ordination and co-operation between Network Rail staff and train operating company staff need to improve to prevent such situations from arising? Does he agree that the human touch is important, however good the smartphone app and the interactive information totems turn out to be?

Keith Brown: Those things are important to people, who want to be able to access their bookings and ensure that they have the best possible journey.

However, the member is absolutely right to say that performance—trains leaving and arriving on time—is extremely important. To achieve that, we have to have the maximum possible co-operation between Network Rail, which controls the track, and the people who control the trains. We have done a great deal to push forward that integration, although we are limited by European legislation in how far we can go, and we are getting more of it in the projects that we undertake. We will push to make the experience as seamless as possible for passengers.

If the member looks at recent performance figures across not the sleeper network specifically but the Scottish network, he will see that we have made remarkable advances. There is a challenge to ensure that that continues into the future.

The Presiding Officer: I apologise to John Mason, but we must move on.

Scotland's Future

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-10131, in the name of Kezia Dugdale, on Scotland's future. Time is extremely tight this afternoon, so the presiding officers will hold speakers to their times. Ms Dugdale, you have 14 minutes.

15:10

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): Thank you, Presiding Officer.

When the white paper was published in November, I was as surprised as the next person to see that childcare was front and centre. A policy area that is completely devolved was being sold as the cornerstone case for independence. The commentariat was quick to link the policy to the polls and the sizeable gender gap when it comes to support for independence.

Although we added our voices to the collective cynicism, we did not lose sight of the ambition for a transformation in the provision of childcare. Whatever the result of the vote at 5.30 today, the Parliament will have accepted

"That the Parliament resolves to keep childcare at the top of the political agenda",

as it says in the first line of the motion.

That is no mean feat. I hope that we will make good on that promise, because high-quality, affordable childcare can transform lives. It has a clear economic benefit, it has clear links to closing the educational achievement gap, it is central to gender equality and it is key to tackling child poverty. The issue lights the fire of the Labour Party, because it is at the heart of our pursuit of equality and social justice.

It is one thing to unite behind a single line in a motion; it is quite another to unite behind a long-term vision for childcare in Scotland, which carries the support of at least the two major parties in the Parliament. That is why the motion calls, again, for a cross-party Scottish childcare commission, which would set out a route map for the long term. I will return to that.

First, I want to spend a considerable amount of time focusing on the childcare policy that is outlined in the white paper, and on the various twists and turns that the policy has taken over the past six months. That needs to be on the Parliament's record and it is a matter of regret that that has not happened before today. I have been truly shocked by the spin, the vacuity and the handling of statistics around the issue. I cannot make up my mind whether there has been wild incompetence or deliberate deception.

Regardless of that, let me go through each twist and turn. I do not intend to give way until I have got to the events of May, when I will happily accept an intervention—preferably an apology—from the minister.

First, let us look at the white paper. The approach to childcare is set out in three phases. In phase 1, 600 hours of childcare, for 50 per cent of two-year-olds, will be delivered in the first budget in an independent Scotland. In phase 2, all three and four-year-olds will get 1,140 hours of childcare a year by the end of the first parliamentary session. In phase 3, all children from age one to school age or five will be entitled to 1,140 hours of childcare.

According to the Scottish Government, the associated costs are £100 million for phase 1 and £700 million for phase 2. That includes no capital costs whatever. The Government has not published the cost of phase 3, but the Scottish Parliament information centre tells us that it will cost £1.2 billion. Again, there are no capital costs associated with that phase.

When the Scottish National Party was asked where the £700 million would come from, it said that it would come from the tax receipts of the 100,000 more women who would go into work. In January, the Government published the paper, "Childcare and Labour Market Participation: Economic Analysis". Alex Salmond boasted that he had published that "very important" paper

"so that everybody can read and understand these things."

However, the paper contains an interesting footnote, which says:

"Note the analysis below illustrates the impact of a boost in female participation rates rather than a specific policy. The specific proposal will have its own unique implications for the economy and budgetary impacts. These are not simulated here."

Essentially, the Government had examined the impact of there being 100,000 more women in the labour market, but that had no direct or substantiated link with its own childcare policy.

On 6 March, the Institute for Fiscal Studies rang the alarm bells when it stated that there was little evidence that a major expansion of early learning and childcare would lead to tens of thousands more women getting jobs.

On 11 March, Tom Gordon from *The Herald* received confirmation in a freedom of information response that there was no modelling of the Government's childcare policy. The response stated clearly that the Government's modelling was of the impact of having more women in the workforce, not

"the impact of improved childcare itself."

A separate FOI request sought details of how long the Government had given itself to get 100,000 more women into work. Was it one year, five years or 10 years? That FOI request was refused on public interest grounds. Let me read out the response. It states:

"We recognise that there is some public interest in release as part of open, transparent Government and to inform public debate. ... However, there is a stronger public interest in high quality policy-making, and in the properly considered implementation and development of policies, particularly on such a significant issue as childcare. This means that Ministers need a private space within which to obtain the best possible evidence and advice from officials to be able to consider all available options and to debate those rigorously, to fully understand their possible implications. Disclosing this advice and evidence while the childcare policy is still under discussion and development may undermine or constrain the Government's ability to develop that policy effectively."

While the Government was touring the country saying that only independence could deliver transformational childcare, officials in Victoria Quay were desperately trying to work out how it could be done.

However, it gets worse. On 2 April, SPICe published its paper on early learning and childcare. It revealed what many of us already thought: there are not enough women. As outlined right at the beginning, the SNP maths was based on 100,000 women who have kids under the age of five joining the labour market. However, there are only 64,000 economically inactive women and only 14,000 of those are actively looking for work.

The SPICe paper added that a rapid increase in the number of women joining the workforce might lead to suppressed wages. It states:

"This could have wider implications for the labour market and on incentives for women to enter the workforce."

There is not just a problem with the number of women who have kids under the age of five and are looking for work. Another issue is the nature of that work. The calculations in the Government's paper released in January are based on the median salary of both men and women—£26,000 a year. However, the reality is that the median salary for women in Scotland is £17,000, because so many women work part time.

When Alex Salmond was questioned about that on "Politics Scotland", in both January and April, he cast that aside and arrogantly pointed to the employment statistics that show that 60,000 more women returned to work in the past year alone. In the January programme, he said:

"The vast overwhelming majority of these extra jobs are full time".

In April's programme, he said that they were "mostly ... full-time jobs". Neither of those statements was true, and in parliamentary

questions that were asked in my name and answered by John Swinney they were demonstrated not to be true. The vast majority of those jobs were, in fact, part time on a two-to-one basis. The major boost to female employment statistics comes from women aged over 50 who are returning to work, not from young mums.

That matters, not simply because the First Minister misspoke, but because it fundamentally undermines the maths once again. Part-time workers pay less tax and tend to have low-paid jobs. What about those jobs? The idea that a young mum who has been out of work for three years can walk into a £26,000 job is nonsense. I want transformational childcare for lone parents in Niddrie, Pilton, Wester Hailes and Gracemount. It is the lives of those women that I want to transform. Alex Salmond wants their votes.

Another, final twist came on 2 May, when the Government revealed, in response to an FOI request from Tom Gordon, that there was childcare modelling—it just would not be released. I will read out what the response said:

"While the strategic policy direction has been set out in the White Paper, detailed policy design work is continuing. The premature release of this detailed modelling-type work could be to the detriment of the full consideration of the entirety of the evidence and the options which underpin development of childcare policy. The modelling work forms only one part of a wider evidence base used to continue to develop this policy. Release of this information could therefore lead to a narrowly focused debate which may not allow for the measured consideration of all evidence on the best way to deliver the policy highlighted in the White Paper, and this would not be in the public interest."

That is "Yes Minister" speak for, "We scribbled all over the fag packet and we still can't make it add up." Forget the public interest; it is clearly not in the minister's interest for the information to be in the public domain. Let us get this absolutely clear—the Government refused to provide full workings for a paper that it published in January, which it published so that, in Alex Salmond's words,

"everybody can read and understand these things."

We were told that publishing some results in January was pertinent and a good thing but that publishing all the results in May would be premature and a bad thing. We understand the Government's childcare policy all right—we understand it to be an absolute shambles.

However, there is a road back. The Government could commit to a childcare commission and stop hijacking the debate on childcare for its own ends. The Labour Party has set up the every step campaign, and we have been touring the country asking parents for their first-hand experiences of childcare. We know that the quality and flexibility of childcare are just as important as the cost and we understand how important workforce issues

are to parents. Parents care about what people who work with their kids in nurseries get paid, their terms and conditions and their qualifications.

We understand that childcare does not stop when kids go to school and that, if anything, the issues get worse. The SNP's policy is based only on children who are three and four years old and some two-year-olds, but the challenge is much broader than that. Parents want wraparound care and they want more investment in breakfast clubs, but those are the two things that have faced the brunt of the Government's cuts to local authority budgets. Parents want council services to be joined up, and they want their politicians to join up, too. I note that the minister's amendment mentions my colleague Malcolm Chisholm and Willie Rennie. However, the Government can hardly boast about cross-party working when so much of the understanding of the Government's approach has had to be unearthed through parliamentary questions and FOI requests, many of which have been rejected or avoided along the way.

I want transformational childcare. I want to transform the lives of the mums whom I meet regularly at rhymetime in Craigmillar library. There is no incentive for them to work just now. I do not want to send them into a low-paid poor job on a zero-hours contract. I want them to go to college first and get the skills that they missed out on in school, but they cannot do that because of the cuts that the Government has made to the colleges budget. The task is made all the harder by the fact that there are 93,000 fewer part-time places for women in our colleges than there were in 2007, with nearly a quarter of a million women being denied a place in further education over the past seven years. That is the Government's responsibility.

I know that members on the Government benches share the passion to help those women get back into work. Those members see independence as the answer, but I believe that their proposal is in tatters. We need to get round the table and address the issue together. I see the ministers shaking their heads and saying that the proposal is not in tatters—they could not be more removed from reality. Their officials are telling them that they do not have the answers and that their policy is still in development, yet they sit and laugh. I find that truly shocking.

I look forward to the debate. Once again, let us take the politics out of this, get round the table and work out a long-term vision for childcare in Scotland that we can all get behind.

I move,

That the Parliament resolves to keep childcare at the top of the political agenda regardless of the referendum result; believes that the SPICe briefing, *Early Learning and Childcare*, which was published 2 April 2014, has

discredited the childcare claims made by the Scottish Government in the white paper on independence; notes that the Scottish Government has refused to publish its own economic modelling and, in the interests of transparency, calls on it to publish all of the information that the childcare claims in the white paper are based on; agrees that good quality, affordable and flexible childcare is essential in supporting many families; believes that all parties should work together on a long-term vision for childcare in Scotland and reach a consensus on the delivery, availability, affordability and financing of a comprehensive childcare strategy, and further believes that, to begin this work, a Scottish childcare commission with all-party support should be established.

15:23

The Minister for Children and Young People (Aileen Campbell): The Government has a significant and positive track record of achievement when it comes to childcare, so I welcome any opportunity to talk about the issue, and today is absolutely no different. It is worth reminding ourselves of just what those achievements are.

We are building on our previous increase in annually funded early learning and childcare provision, from 412.5 hours to 475 hours in 2007, with a further expansion to 600 hours from this August. That represents a 45 per cent increase in provision for three and four-year-olds since the Government came to office and is worth up to £700 per child per year.

We are working with local authorities and partner providers to deliver a phased, sustainable expansion of early learning and childcare that supports more children and families while maintaining quality and—for the first time in legislation—improving the flexibility of provision in line with local needs. We are backing that up with investment by committing more than £250 million over the next two years, including £3.5 million to strengthen the capacity and skills of staff, alongside the on-going expert review of the early years workforce.

We have done all those things because they are the right thing to do. Investment in our children's lives, in the earliest years, is crucial for the future of our country. Childcare enhances all-round development and wellbeing in children. Evidence also shows that childcare is particularly beneficial for disadvantaged children. The benefits of childcare persist through primary school, with evidence also suggesting that they carry on into secondary school and beyond.

Our commitment to children is evident in our world-leading early years policies and strategies, including our ground-breaking early years collaborative. We promote the measures that we do because they advance our economy and our society. Because we know what works and how

important it is, we continue to be hugely ambitious. However, our ambition absolutely requires independence.

In "Scotland's Future", we outlined our blueprint for achieving universal childcare in Scotland. Kezia Dugdale outlined our plans, but they are so good that further expansion is required. In our first budget, we will commit £100 million to extend 600 hours of childcare to nearly half of Scotland's two-year-olds. By the end of that first session of Parliament, those vulnerable two-year-olds and all three and four-year-olds will be entitled to 1,140 hours of childcare, which is broadly the same number of hours as is provided in primary school. To achieve that, we will invest a further £600 million.

In the long term, we will provide 1,140 hours to all children in Scotland, from the age of one to when they start school. When that is fully implemented, around 240,000 children and 212,000 families will benefit.

The transformational change of our childcare policy would improve care and learning for young children, boost economic growth and remove a major barrier to work for many parents, especially women. Indeed, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the European Union have stressed the importance of childcare in removing barriers to female labour market participation. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order. Let us hear the minister.

Aileen Campbell: Achieving all that will be one of the major gains of independence. The experts agree with that premise. *[Interruption.]*

Labour members may laugh, but if they want to learn, they should listen to what I am going to say.

Professor Sir Donald MacKay, an economic adviser to previous secretaries of state for Scotland, said in written evidence to the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee:

"No financially responsible Scottish Government would dare to implement the childcare proposals under the fixed block grant funding of devolution, unless they were prepared to take an axe to existing programmes".

Bronwen Cohen, the former chief executive of Children in Scotland, noted the difficulties in transforming childcare without independence because of "split responsibilities and policies".

Moreover, our plans for childcare have been widely welcomed, with experts recognising the potential that our proposals have for improving the lives of children and families across Scotland. Jackie Brock, the current chief executive of Children in Scotland, said:

"The White Paper proposals by the Scottish Government are really exciting. We call them a game changer."

It is therefore a real pity that, despite the enthusiasm over our ambitions for childcare, Labour persists with its negativity.

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): Will the member give way?

Aileen Campbell: On the point about negativity, I give way to Neil Bibby.

Neil Bibby: The minister has talked a lot about the childcare policy in the white paper. What will the total cost of the policy be, and how will it be paid for?

Aileen Campbell: I always listen to the cabinet secretary, who has just said, "Independence is the answer." That is exactly right. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Aileen Campbell: We have outlined the first phases of our childcare proposals. I am proud to stand by them. I will talk more about the costings and the attacks that Labour has made against our childcare proposals. If Labour members calm down and listen, they might learn some more. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Mr Bibby, will you stop shouting at the minister across the chamber?

Aileen Campbell: Given the progress that we have made on childcare, and our ambitions to do even more, we will absolutely reject Kezia Dugdale's motion this evening.

Members should be in no doubt that our childcare plans would boost female participation rates and the economy. The European Commission, the OECD and various experts all agree on that. A European Commission report from 2009, based on a study of 30 countries, concluded:

"Empirical studies of the relationship between childcare costs and labour force participation are consistent with this prediction; when costs go down, labour force participation goes up, especially among mothers."

The SPICe briefing, which was published on 3 April, states:

"there are currently 64,000 economically inactive women in Scotland with children aged 1-5. The second and third of the Scottish Government's modelled scenarios require 68,000 and 104,000 inactive women to enter the workforce."

However, the next sentence on page 26 states:

"In order to achieve the modelled scenarios, the policy would need to influence the labour market decisions of a larger group of women, which could include:

- women who do not currently have children or who have children aged under 1 year or over 5 years, and

- future groups of women, either before or when they have children (which could extend the timescale of the impact)".

In other words, SPICe recognises that the policy operates over more than one year and that women who re-enter the labour market as a result of free childcare stay in the labour market even when their children get older. Without the help that we propose, too many never come back into the labour market.

That point is made in the Scottish Government analysis that was published on 12 January, which noted:

"Such an expansion is modelled to take place over a number of years. However, the impacts of such a policy on output and taxation will build over time."

SPICe, of course, recognises that, every year, around 55,000 children are born in Scotland. Their mothers will benefit year on year.

I turn to the points that Kezia Dugdale raised this morning in her press release about our proposals. For her and her party's information, I point to the robust evidence and analysis on which our childcare policy is premised: the growing up in Scotland research and an international review of early learning and childcare policy, delivery and funding. In addition, our policy takes account of the OECD's starting strong work, which highlights the best type of childcare system, and the effective provision of pre-school, primary and secondary education study.

In contrast, let us examine Labour's recent performance on childcare. At the start of this year, Kezia Dugdale and her leader—who is in the chamber this afternoon—commenting on their spending preferences for the consequentials, said that they would invest in childcare to help 10,000 vulnerable children. Despite us pledging to help more than 15,000 children from August next year, Labour voted against those proposals.

On "Scotland Tonight" on 7 January, when challenged to say what she would cut to pay for her childcare pledges, Kezia Dugdale suggested removing funding from small businesses. The next day, her party colleague Patricia Ferguson confirmed on "Politics Scotland" that Labour would "certainly consider that". However, when John Swinney said on 23 January, on "Question Time",

"Kezia wanted us to increase business rates for companies within Scotland"

she protested:

"That's not true. It's not true."

Kezia Dugdale is getting quite a reputation for saying one thing in public and another thing in public.

Labour today—Kezia Dugdale in particular—has made big play of SPICe's commentary on our proposals, so we too have asked SPICe to analyse Labour's proposals for 25 hours of childcare. Given what Ms Dugdale said this morning about not creating policy on the back of a fag packet, members can imagine my surprise and astonishment to read SPICe's conclusions on Labour's policy proposals:

"Labour party researchers have indicated that they are still in the process of deciding the policy details and funding".

Kezia Dugdale rose—

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott): The member is in her last minute.

Aileen Campbell: I did not realise that the fag packet to which Kezia Dugdale referred this morning was about her own party's policies. My goodness! [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is in her last minute, Ms Dugdale.

Aileen Campbell: I totally subscribe to Labour's call to work together, but I say that with a feeling of déjà vu; I totally subscribed to that call when Labour leader Johann Lamont made it more than a year ago, but it fell short on any substance.

Our children's futures demand that we put aside differences and embrace the knowledge and expertise that can be found on these benches and beyond the party boundaries.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You should draw to a close, please.

Aileen Campbell: In response to Labour's calls today and echoing what I said one year ago, that is exactly why I work alongside Malcolm Chisholm and Willie Rennie on our task force. I recognise that we can put aside political differences and work towards the best interests of our children. Furthermore—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No, no furthermores, thank you. You should draw to a close.

Aileen Campbell: We should also welcome the cross-party approach to childcare in Scotland.

We will work together with others who want to. However, I regret that Labour's continual negativity shows that it does not have the interest that we have in putting children's lives first in Scotland.

I move amendment S4M-10131.3, to leave out from "regardless of" to end and insert:

“; acknowledges the significant progress made by the Scottish Government in expanding funded early learning and childcare to 600 hours for three and four-year-olds and the most vulnerable 27% of two-year-olds; recognises the

radical proposals for transforming childcare set out in *Scotland's Future: Your Guide to an Independent Scotland*, which would ensure that children from age one to five would be entitled to 1,140 hours of early learning and childcare, broadly the same number of hours that children currently receive in primary school; welcomes the valuable cross-party contribution made by Willie Rennie and Malcolm Chisholm as members of the Early Years Taskforce, which brings together practitioners, professionals and politicians to inform the strategic development of early years policy, including early learning and childcare, and further welcomes the establishment by Children in Scotland of the Partnership Commission for Childcare Reform as part of its Childcare Alliance, which will help to inform this important agenda".

15:34

Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD): I am pleased to have the opportunity today to discuss childcare once again. Members across the chamber will know the Liberal Democrats' ambition for nursery education, and thanks to our pressure and that of many others in this Parliament, thousands of two-year-old children will get 15 hours of nursery education each week from 1 August. That comes alongside the expansion in childcare for three-year-olds and four-year-olds to match provision in England. The SNP said that such provision would not be possible without the powers of independence, but it is being delivered under devolution.

I participate in today's debate with some sadness and sorrow. Let me be clear: the white paper's ambition for childcare is admirable. I doubt that there will be any disagreement with such an ambition. All members would support that aspiration and the ability to give children a great start in life.

However, we know that the sums simply do not add up. It is fine to have aspirations, but the sums need to add up. Kezia Dugdale asked the minister whether the policy can be afforded. I have to say that the minister needs a better answer than, "The cabinet secretary told me so." That is not enough; we need something much more substantial than that.

The Scottish Government says that it will cost £700 million to implement stage 1 and stage 2 of its childcare plan to provide, by the end of the first parliamentary session under independence, 1,140 hours per year of childcare to all three-year-olds and four-year-olds, and to vulnerable two-year-olds—or 48 per cent of two-year-olds. Underpinning the whole policy is the argument that an increase in female participation in the workforce would mean a significant increase in direct and indirect tax receipts. The Government's weak analysis suggests that increasing the female labour market participation rate by 6 percentage points, to Scandinavian levels, could benefit Scotland's economy by £2.2 billion and increase

tax revenues by £700 million. However, there is no detail on the estimates of the component tax revenue streams that would contribute to the £700 million.

Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Will Willie Rennie take an intervention?

Willie Rennie: No.

I know that the minister will say that there is detail, but one "illustrative example" is not sufficient. We cannot trust the Government's analysis because it will not release the workings; we do not have the full picture. I have lodged numerous parliamentary questions asking for further information on the costings of the plan that is set out in the white paper, but not one of the answers has provided any additional detail.

I am told that

"The Council of Economic Advisers considered the economic and social importance of improving childcare provision"

but there will be no full report on its findings. Instead,

"The analysis informing the council's deliberations will be reflected in the Annual Chair's Report of the Council of Economic Advisers."—[*Official Report, Written Answers*, 2 April 2014; S4W-20507.]

I look forward to seeing whether there is further detail available in that report.

It is not just tax receipts that do not add up.

Mike MacKenzie: Will Willie Rennie take an intervention?

Willie Rennie: I am not going to take an intervention.

Thanks to research that has been done by SPICe, we know that a 6 per cent rise in the female workforce is equivalent to approximately 104,000 women moving into work. However, in 2011, only 15,000 women of working age with children aged 1 to 5 said that they were looking for work, and 64,000 women were inactive, with the majority of those citing looking after family as the reason for not working. Only 14,000 of those said that they would like to work. Put simply, there are not enough women of working age with children to fulfil the SNP's childcare plan.

The fact is that the SNP and the Scottish Government could act now to improve the childcare that we offer. Thanks to the UK's budget and the improving economic conditions, the Scottish Government has the money now to implement in full the same childcare package as England. That would mean that 40 per cent of two-year-olds—rather than the figure that we currently have—would receive free nursery education, from this autumn. I welcome the figure that has been

given, but we are not even matching what England is doing.

I agree with parts of the Government's amendment, especially on the importance of cross-party work on the issue and the value of the partnership commission for childcare reform as part of Children in Scotland's childcare alliance. However, the SNP has played fast and loose on nursery education for too long. First, it held back on action in order to offer a carrot for independence, and now it exaggerates the numbers in order to make the case for independence.

I understand that SNP members are genuinely passionate about independence, but they must not allow that to emasculate this important area of public policy. The future of our children is more important than their passion for independence.

I am pleased that the Labour Party's motion acknowledges the continuing importance of the issue, so we will support it today. Education can never be taken away, no matter what happens to a person. A solid education gives people skills to fall back on, and pride in their achievements that cannot be taken away. Education stands alone in that enduring legacy of opportunity.

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

Willie Rennie: We should do everything that we can to ensure that every child in Scotland benefits from education.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mary Scanlon has up to six minutes. We are very tight for time today.

15:41

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): It was a bit rich for the minister to tell the Labour Party to listen and learn when the Government is debating its white paper flagship policy today with a huge absence from the SNP ranks. *[Interruption.]* I see that Mr Russell is laughing, but it is his party's flagship policy.

I am glad that the Labour Party has selected childcare for debate this afternoon. As all parties in the chamber recognise, we must go further in terms of the hours that are provided, and we must extend eligibility. One concern is the issue of birthday discrimination, which my colleague Liz Smith will come back to in her speech.

Recently in the Education and Culture Committee, we heard evidence on Scotland's educational and cultural future, with regard to the Government's white paper. During the final evidence session, we discussed childcare—rightly so—with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and

Lifelong Learning. Mr Russell gave a typically modest performance, which included the following statement. He said:

"It is wrong to try to deconstruct it"

—the white paper's childcare policy—

"and undermine it by taking a figure from here and a figure from there and saying, 'You hivnae worked this out.'" — *[Official Report, Education and Culture Committee, 29 April 2014; c 4098.]*

That was quite an extraordinary statement. To question the financial assumptions behind the policy is an exercise not of deconstruction, but of parliamentary scrutiny.

As the Labour motion makes clear, the Scottish Parliament information centre recently published a full and rather devastating brief on the white paper plans. Is SPICe, too, guilty of deconstruction?

Perhaps I could go a step further and ask whether freedom of speech is no longer accepted by this Government.

Secondly, there are very good reasons to conclude that the Scottish Government has not got its sums right on the policy—notwithstanding the fact that the projected 6 per cent rise in female employment is purely illustrative, as the journalist Tom Gordon and many others have pointed out, and is in no way related to the specific proposals that are outlined in the white paper.

As other members have mentioned today, in order for female employment to reach Swedish levels, 104,000 currently inactive mothers would have to enter the workforce. As SPICe has concluded, there are 64,000 women in that category at present, and only 14,000 indicated that they would enter employment. Economic modelling for the policy cannot have been done, or we would not be here today debating the issue and asking for information. That is a crucial point because, as the cabinet secretary said to the committee, the childcare policy—in particular the third phase of the plan—will be funded via taxation.

If there are not enough women who are able—or, indeed, willing—to enter the workforce, that raises questions about the proposal's affordability. SPICe has estimated that the third phase would cost £1.2 billion, which could rise to £1.5 billion if costs continue to grow. It is estimated that, in order to generate that kind of figure from increased workforce taxation alone, we would need a 10 per cent rise in employment rates, which is an extremely substantial advance in what would be a relatively short timeframe.

A further point relates to the nature of the work that it is anticipated those mothers will do. Kezia Dugdale raised that issue, too. In a press release that was issued the day after the white paper was

published, the Scottish Government indicated that the projected 35,000 additional childcare jobs will be “mainly for women”. We all know—in my case, I know from my family’s experience—that people who work in the nursery sector are low paid. Most of them are on the minimum wage and many are on zero-hours contracts. They are much more highly trained and qualified than they were a decade ago, and are all registered with the Scottish Social Services Council. In a debate such as this, we should all put on the record how much we value everyone who works in childcare.

It is not just about education. The great thing about childcare is that it offers the chance to identify children’s development needs at the earliest stage, so that they can be addressed pre-school rather than later.

I very much welcome Professor Siraj’s review of the early years workforce. However, unless conditions are radically altered, many part-time workers within the sector will not earn enough to go beyond the personal allowance. Since the coalition Government came to power, the personal allowance has increased year on year and is now more than £10,000. Overall, the increase in the personal allowance has taken more than 200,000 of the lowest earners in Scotland out of paying income tax altogether. Moreover, it is assumed that the earning potential of mothers who are presently economically inactive will be roughly equivalent to that of those who are in work.

It is not solely the absence of childcare that is holding women back; it is also the fact that better access to education is needed.

We know that the Scottish Government has not directly modelled the impact of improved childcare, and that there is public interest in its doing so. I hope that, if necessary, the Scottish Information Commissioner does what she did in relation to the legal advice on Scotland entering the European Union, and takes this Government to the High Court to get that information.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate. Speeches should be of up to six minutes, please. Less would be more.

15:47

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): Thank you for that subtle hint, Presiding Officer.

I am always happy to talk about childcare in the chamber. We have talked about it quite a lot, and I acknowledge the transformational change that the Scottish Government’s plan can make to constituencies such as mine. I am even more focused on it at the moment—I should perhaps declare an interest—because since we started talking about childcare, I have heard that my

daughter Jessica and her partner John are expecting their first baby. I will probably be looking at childcare in a lot more detail, because my daughter and her partner will be dealing with it in the future.

That focuses me on the future that I want for my grandchild. What kind of country do I want my grandchild to grow up in? We are sitting at a point at which we have two futures. We want Scotland to be the best country to grow up in. Independence is the only way that we can give that opportunity to children and to families like mine. The Scottish Government’s policy on childcare in an independent Scotland can and will make that transformational change.

That is backed by many experts. The minister has mentioned Jackie Brock, the chief executive of Children in Scotland, who stated, about the Government’s analysis paper:

“This demonstrates, undeniably, that quality early education and care has advantages for every child but is especially important as one measure to eliminate Scotland’s inequalities in educational attainment.”

I believe that high-quality childcare will make a difference. I look at it from the point of view of my constituency which, as other constituencies do, has difficulties. I have said often in the chamber that I do not doubt for a moment any member’s passion or beliefs, or that they got involved in politics to try to change things. In my constituency, Ferguslie Park has been an area of multiple deprivation for decades. As I have said before, to tinker constantly at the edges, as the union has done over the decades, has not made any difference in places like Ferguslie Park. We need the type of transformational change that independence and the levers that the powers that it offers can bring, which can make a difference to young people, children and families in such areas.

People in my constituency are fed up hearing the same old and tired arguments from the unionists; they are fed up hearing that we cannot make a difference. The same arguments are made from one election to the other—from Labour to Tory, back and forward. People are told that one more push for Labour will make a difference, but it never made a difference in the past and it will not make a difference in the future.

The difference that we have to make is to start from the beginning and look at how we can build the future that we want. Independence offers that opportunity. Our aspiration is to make Scotland the best country for our children to grow up in. Let us go down that route.

Let us move away from all the pettiness. When I listened to Kezia Dugdale, I almost thought that panto season had come early because her speech was so full of clichés and lack of vision. We have

to look at how we can promote the future for Scotland, and move away from the petty bickering that the public are quite clearly fed up with.

We need to debate the issues in a mature way.

Neil Bibby *rose—*

George Adam: We have to say how we are going to make things better. Just as I said “mature”, Mr Bibby got up. Here we go.

Neil Bibby: We have to look at the issue in a mature way, and people want substance and facts, so will George Adam support our call for the Scottish Government to publish all relevant costings and economic modelling on the childcare policy?

George Adam: “Substance and facts” do not go with Mr Bibby in any shape or form. Labour members should start looking at their own policies, which they recently announced. I think that the document was called “Together We Can”. The SPICe paper said that Labour’s plans

“don’t outline the anticipated impact on female participation in the work force and the supporting background information also does not show the likely scale of impact on female participation.”

Labour members have the cheek to lecture us when they have no plans and no ideas for the future.

I appeal again to everyone in the Labour Party to be positive and to work with us. Let us work together: let us ensure that we can make a difference. I do not doubt that there are good-minded people throughout the chamber who want to make a difference, but I do not hear that when we debate the issue. I do not want to sit here for two and a half hours to talk about strategy and ideals and what we are going to do. I want to create the policy, enforce it and then make a transformational change. That is what the responsibility of independence is and that is the difference that our ideas would make to Scotland.

With the aspiration that we have, surely we can do better than constant bickering. The Scottish Government has printed a white paper on Scotland’s future. It has shown quite clearly the way forward and how we can promote that. I have still—to this minute—to hear anything positive about our future if we remain in the union. I plead with the unionist party members here: if they want to remain in the union so much, what is their future for childcare? What will they do for young people and families in Scotland? We have not heard that yet, and I can guarantee you, Presiding Officer, that we will not hear it in the future.

We have to be aspirational and we have to be bold. We have to support the ideals that the Scottish Government is putting forward. Let us all work together so that we are not standing here in

10 years wondering why we still have problems with child poverty.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Many thanks for your brevity.

15:53

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab): Aileen Campbell said at the end of her speech that we can work together on this agenda, and it is exactly that that is at the heart of Kezia Dugdale’s motion. It calls for a childcare commission to develop

“a long-term vision for childcare”,

and she uses the word “consensus”. That is absolutely central to what is being proposed today.

There has been a great deal of progress on the early years agenda, particularly with reference to child development, which has been the focus of the early years taskforce, of which I was glad to be a member. However, there is a wider childcare agenda that is to do with parental employment, gender equality and childcare as a weapon against poverty, which we would like the commission to take up, as well.

Childcare is an area in which there was a great deal of co-operation and agreement. Obviously there were differences—we pushed a lot on more provision for two-year-olds, and to some extent the Government responded to that—but there was a lot of common ground. That all ended on the day that the white paper was published. I deeply regret that, as someone who has had a passionate concern for childcare for more than 20 years. Since the white paper was published, we have seen the hijacking of childcare for misleading constitutional debating points and spurious referendum point scoring.

It is particularly galling that, despite the First Minister’s never having had any interest in the subject in his 27 years in Parliament, when he saw the gender gap in referendum polling, childcare was suddenly thrust to the fore. I deeply regret that.

There are at least three fundamental problems with what the white paper argues on childcare. As a general proposition, of course it is true that if more people go into work, more revenues will be generated. Under Labour’s proposals for greatly enhanced fiscal devolution, more of that revenue will be kept in Scotland. That creates great incentives to increase employment.

However, that is not how things would work under independence. First, we would have to meet the up-front cost of £700 million in the first parliamentary session in an independent Scotland. All the independent experts say that the fiscal

position in the first few years of an independent Scotland would be more difficult and more bleak than our current fiscal situation. It would be easier to put in the childcare investment now than it would be to do it in 2016 in an independent Scotland.

As several members have mentioned, the fundamental deception is on the employment and revenue effects of what is proposed. The paper of 12 January is particularly deceptive in that regard, because it paints a picture of a Swedish model, a 6 per cent increase in the labour force and the generation of £700 million in revenue, but what the Scottish Government proposes in the white paper is not the Swedish model of childcare. The Swedish model is based on people achieving full-time employment. There is nothing in the white paper about after-school care. Even provision for the under-fives does not allow for full-time employment.

As we know from the SPICe paper, even if the Scottish Government were proposing something more like the Swedish model, the numbers simply would not add up. For the Swedish level of employment to be achieved, 104,000 additional women with children under the age of five would have to go into the workforce—that figure has been much quoted, but it goes to the heart of what we are saying—but there are only 64,000 women in that position, and SPICe estimates that only 14,000 of them want to go into employment, because quite a lot of parents—in particular, mothers with children aged under five—want to delay that. That is the deception at the heart of what we have been presented with in the white paper. We are told that, suddenly, all that would be possible. I am arguing that it is more possible now than it would be in the Scottish Government's first term in an independent Scotland.

That is not to say that, if the policies were implemented, there would not be advantages. There would be child development advantages and advantages for many parents who are currently working, who might be able to have more free care rather than informal care or paid care. I am sure that we would support those policies—a lot of what we propose on provision for under-fives and so on is quite similar—but they would not have the dramatic employment effects that are at the heart of the argument that the SNP puts forward as part of its referendum campaign.

One obvious way to improve what is proposed would be to build in after-school care, which we are arguing for now. We want after-school care to be central to our childcare priorities. That is in our current policy document. To return to the present, that is a big issue in my constituency, where there are simply not enough of the after-school care places that are fundamental to parental

employment. A particular issue in Edinburgh is the fact that there is not sufficient building capacity to meet that need. North Edinburgh Childcare, which I always mention in childcare debates, does a lot of after-school care in school buildings. It is under pressure to move out of those buildings because there is no space in the schools for the expanding roll. There are big issues with after-school care, so let us address them.

Another aspect that we have highlighted in our policy document is the need to invest in the childcare workforce. That is absolutely fundamental. North Edinburgh Childcare, which has a brilliant childcare academy that has won awards, faces the problem of not being able to train people who are aged 24 and over, as it used to do, because Skills Development Scotland is putting in money for training only people under 24. It is worth while putting the money in, but not at the price of exclusion of older people. Let us address the problems that we face.

Finally, I turn to affordability. We regret the fact that the UK Government reduced the childcare tax credit element to 70 per cent, but there are still possibilities for the Scottish Government to provide subsidy. North Edinburgh Childcare has benefited from such subsidy, and Save the Children has suggested that money should be allocated to childcare for children in deprived areas, which would have an anti-poverty effect, among many other advantages.

15:59

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): Listening to some of the Labour members' speeches this afternoon, I have found myself thrown back to my university days—a long while back now—when I studied social history and labour history, and I cannot help thinking about how the founding fathers of the Labour Party would have approached all this. They were inspired by a vision and set about realising it; today, however, Labour is crippled by an obsession with process and point scoring. I am so glad that Kezia Dugdale was not around to tell Tom Johnston that he could not electrify the Highlands because he had not modelled it properly, or John Wheatley that he could not build social housing because he had not got the numbers right, or Nye Bevan that he could not start the national health service because he had to prove how it would pay for itself.

Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): Does Ms McAlpine recognise that neither Tom Johnston nor Nye Bevan misled the Scottish people on the costs of electrification or the welfare state?

Joan McAlpine: I hope that the member will withdraw the word “misled”, because it is extremely inappropriate and unparliamentary.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I think that we can do without that word in future.

Joan McAlpine: It is a pity that we cannot call the Labour founding fathers, to hear what they make of the lack of ambition in the present-day Scottish Labour Party.

However, we have heard from people such as Dr Jim McCormick, an adviser to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, who last month gave evidence to the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee. When I asked him whether he agreed that

“a transformative approach to early years”

was

“the single most significant thing that we can do to close the attainment gap”,

which at the moment sets in before a child turns 5 and widens as they grow up, he said that he did. He also said that he had looked at the challenges of a yes outcome and a no outcome in the referendum. He thought that

“If there was a no vote and there was further devolution, there would need to be substantial devolution of tax credit powers so that we had the revenue that would allow us to make up for some of the income tax that we did not have.”

We know from Labour’s devolution commission that only a tiny proportion of income tax will be devolved and that there is certainly no plan to devolve tax credits or any other form of welfare. As for the situation after a yes vote, Dr McCormick said:

“the fact that transforming childcare has been the number 1 social policy issue of the year so far must bode well for the kind of political space that we might find ourselves in.”—[*Official Report, Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee*, 23 April 2014; c 4353.]

I was particularly interested in Dr Jim McCormick’s remarks because I am old enough to remember him in a past life. Back in 1996, he authored with one Wendy Alexander an article for an Institute of Public Policy Research study, “The State and the Nations”. The article is widely considered to be the first draft of the Scotland Act 1998 and, of course, Ms Alexander went on to work with Donald Dewar on drafting that legislation. Mr McCormick and Ms Alexander were the bright young things of their day—and in their day, back in the 1990s, they had ambition for the people of Scotland. In comparison with the people back then, today’s bright young things, such as Kezia Dugdale, on the front bench do not seem to have made a great deal of progress. Mr McCormick seems to have got more radical as he has got older, and he has showed that he can

move with the times. Labour, on the other hand, seems to be stuck back in the 1990s, unable radically to develop devolution in any meaningful way.

It is not just Mr McCormick who has grasped the opportunity of the transformative nature of a Nordic-style childcare system. Back in 2012, none other than Ed Miliband had his “Borgen” moment. In a speech to the Sutton Trust, he said:

“If you are born poor in a more equal society like Finland, Norway or Denmark then you have a better chance of moving into a good job than if you are born ... in the”

USA.

“If you want the American dream”

move

“to Finland.”

However, when the committees on which I have sat—the Education and Culture Committee and the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee—have examined what will happen in the area post-independence, all I have heard is how it is not affordable and how we cannae do it. Mr Bibby, in particular, has been telling us that we should not aspire to Nordic levels of childcare because they are unaffordable. In comparison, when Jackie Brock—

Neil Bibby: Will the member give way?

Joan McAlpine: No, thanks—I am running out of time.

When Mr Bibby more or less invited Jackie Brock to trash the white paper at the Education and Culture Committee, she said:

“Greater support from Government has been a significant milestone for those of us in the childcare sector.”—[*Official Report, Education and Culture Committee*, 1 April 2014; c 3928.]

I ask members on the Labour front bench to draw inspiration from the past and from the people who had vision, set about realising their vision and did not get bogged down with point scoring. Kezia Dugdale said that her party has not lost its ambition for childcare, but by constantly attacking the ambitious proposals in the white paper, she simply exposes that position as a lot of nonsense.

Kezia Dugdale talked about the need for a route map and coming together. We have a route map: the white paper is the route map. It is our vision for the future, and it is the vision that we will realise. Labour has no route map, no ideas and no vision.

16:05

Jayne Baxter (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I am pleased to speak in this debate, as it gives me the opportunity to return once more to early learning and childcare, which underpin the

wellbeing and potential of children across Scotland.

The issue of early learning and childcare does not go away, and will only become more acute. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has predicted a significant rise in child poverty in Scotland by 2020. The issue has not gone away for parents and carers, who have to juggle on a daily basis the challenges, responsibilities and commitments of family life, which include ensuring that they have access to good-quality and reliable childcare. Until that is delivered, the issue cannot go away for all of us in the chamber.

As anyone who has brought up children will know, it is not just the cost that matters when one is looking at childcare options. Families have to build their childcare around their work patterns and the availability of nurseries, childminders or day care in their local area. Crucially, we must consider wraparound care for school-age children, which has been missed in the current debates. If there is more than one child, there can be further complications with getting the children to where they need to be. That all adds time to the working day.

A nursery or childcare provider whose hours do not match the requirements of the main carers, whether because of work patterns or other reasons, will be of no use at all, no matter how high quality or affordable the provision. I know from listening to parents that decisions on childcare options sometimes have to be based around what is available, whether that is friends, family or voluntary, private or public sector provision, rather than what is perhaps best suited to the child's or family's circumstances. If any parent or carer who is in employment is asked, they will give a long list of childcare options that are turned to, depending on the circumstances. There will be childminders who take the children to and from school or nursery, or a day care centre, or combinations of those options. I speak from experience when I say that there can also be the emergency phone call to granny, asking her to step in when other options have been exhausted.

Flexibility and truly quality childcare can tackle significant inequalities in development and support working parents. For many families, the list of options may be limited due to financial or other circumstances, which is why it is vital that childcare provision in Scotland in the future is affordable and flexible in meeting the needs of all parents and carers.

As we all know, it is more than three months since the Scottish Parliament passed the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. It offered real positives for young people but, as colleagues have already pointed out, it remains an act over which some very large financial question marks

loom. Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of Opposition parties, the Finance Committee and third sector bodies, a number of questions remain over the costs of the childcare commitments that the Scottish Government outlined.

The questions are not just about childcare. Whether because of the absence of financial modelling data or because of the lack of an update on the revised capital costs in the financial memorandum, which the Finance Committee is still awaiting, other question marks loom over the financial implications of the 2014 act.

I have raised before my concerns about the delay in the publication of the financial review of kinship care. The Scottish Government promised to publish the review's findings at the end of 2013. It is crucial that kinship carers, who provide a vital role in caring for our children, are offered some financial security, but we are still waiting for the review's findings to be published. I hope that we will hear some indication from the Scottish Government of when the review will be published, as kinship carers play an essential part in providing love, care and security for many of Scotland's children. We must not forget the need to make those vital foundations secure before we build on the basic blocks of family life with other early learning and childcare opportunities.

It is clear that the quality of childcare is fundamental. The new definition of early learning and childcare, as set out in the 2014 act, is to be welcomed, as it recognises the crucial educational aspects of looking after children. I have raised in other debates the issue of opportunities for all children and the impact that a good-quality start can have on their life chances. That point is all the more stark now, as we hear from Save the Children that a quarter of all children live in families who are in relative poverty. Three quarters of those children are under 11, and they are at greater risk of poverty than those in any other section of society—a damning fact.

Although there is no silver bullet, we must come together to ensure that quality, flexible and affordable childcare offers children a route away from their persistent poor situations. It is absolutely vital to remember that, for too many children and young people, access to opportunities is bound up in a tangled web of poverty-related issues, including housing, food and nutrition, access to transport and opportunities for play, all of which impact on their health, education, interaction with peers and educational attainment.

Save the Children has shown that children living in poverty are twice as likely to be born underweight, three times more likely to have poor diets, nearly four times more likely not to have access to nutritious food, five times more likely to

live in poor-quality housing and seven times more likely to live in households that are in fuel poverty. In addition, the education gap starts to open up long before school even begins, with the result that children who grow up in poverty finish school with significantly lower levels of attainment, which limits their opportunities throughout life.

As much as a single change can begin to make a difference, providing flexible and quality childcare is that change. Our long-term vision for childcare in Scotland must tackle the crucial issues. However, it is a long-term vision that is in danger of being cynically used as a carrot by those pushing constitutional arguments without the facts and figures to support their proposals. Whatever the outcome of the referendum in September, the need for high-quality childcare will remain. It is an issue that we all know is well within the powers of this Parliament to consider now and in the future. We do not need independence to improve the lives of Scotland's children.

16:11

Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP): I begin by congratulating my friend George Adam on his impending status as a grandparent and by saying to Mary Scanlon that before she traduced the Scottish National Party in relation to its turnout for the debate, it might have been a good idea if she had cast a backwards glance first to see her own party's dismal attendance.

I welcome the chance to debate the provision of childcare in Scotland, which is an issue that I care about very deeply—a feeling that I believe is shared across the board. Unlike others, I will not question anyone's motivation in terms of their support for childcare. I am informed by my own experience as a father of two children. I have spoken previously of my good fortune in being able to secure first-rate childcare for them.

I have also spoken of the work that I have undertaken with Save the Children on childcare issues. I have hosted a number of parents from across the country who have struggled to access childcare. Many were young single parents— young women who had aspirations for themselves as well as for their children and who wanted to go to college to secure the qualifications that they needed to get the work that they wanted so that they could support their family. However, too many were unable to do that.

The question is how best we can ensure that we provide childcare to those in such a position in future. It is appropriate that we have the debate today, because today Save the Children released a study called, "A Fair Start for Every Child: Why we must act now to tackle child poverty in the UK", which looks at the impact of poverty on children. I

should perhaps also mention in passing that, at the Finance Committee earlier today, the Child Poverty Action Group reminded us that the number of children living in poverty in Scotland is set to increase by 100,000 by 2020 as a result of United Kingdom Government tax and benefit changes.

"A Fair Start for Every Child" states:

"Young children growing up in disadvantaged families are less likely to participate in formal pre-school care, which is designed to provide children with a high-quality early-years learning environment where they can learn skills that will help them in their later school careers. Many families cannot afford to send their children to pre-school because of the cost relative to household income."

It goes on to say that

"parents surveyed by OnePoll for this report repeatedly cited childcare costs as a reason for reducing expenditure on other goods, for getting into debt and for reducing the hours they work."

In an email to me today, Save the Children understandably said:

"Investing in additional state subsidised services is critical".

One of the demands in "A Fair Start for Every Child" is:

"Every family to have access to high-quality and affordable childcare".

That is an interesting conclusion, because it is exactly what the Scottish Government wants to deliver with the powers of independence.

I know that Willie Rennie does not support independence, but it was very welcome that he said that he supports the ambition for childcare set out in the white paper, as I do. He also said that he felt that everyone in the chamber would support that ambition. I am reminded of an exchange that Johann Lamont had with Glenn Campbell, who asked her:

"Do you ... support the idea that John Swinney has of equal access for all to any additional free childcare?"

Johann Lamont answered "No". Therefore, unfortunately, the white paper's ambition on childcare is not shared across the chamber.

I support the proposals because they will help parents with the burden of costs. Parents in the UK spend about 27 per cent of their household income on childcare. In contrast, families in Denmark and Sweden spend 9 per cent and 5 per cent respectively, due to higher levels of state investment in childcare. The proposals will help to ensure that young children get the chance to have the best start in life, and they will help to boost participation in the workplace. We know that many countries in the OECD—including Iceland, Sweden, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Canada, Finland and New Zealand—

have higher female activity rates than Scotland, although Scotland is in a slightly better position than the UK as a whole.

The OECD has stated:

“Financial support for (public and private) childcare providers and parents reduce a key barrier to employment participation for many parents with young children”.

The European Commission has stated:

“Empirical studies of the relationship between childcare costs and labour force participation are consistent with this prediction; when costs go down, labour force participation goes up, especially among mothers”.

Even the SPICe briefing, which some members have said traduces the Scottish Government's policy, states:

“studies find that an increase in subsidised childcare is associated with an increase in mothers' employment”.

We need independence to achieve what is proposed. Willie Rennie said that he understands the passion for independence on the SNP benches, but I do not think that he and many others in the Parliament who oppose independence understand why we are passionate about independence. We do not believe in independence as an end in itself. We believe in the power of independence to deliver for people in Scotland so that we can deliver policies such as universal childcare.

It is estimated that increasing receipts from the four main taxes that are collected in Scotland by 1 per cent, getting people into work and reducing core welfare spending by 1 per cent would boost the public finances by about £350 million. However, even under the powers in the Scotland Act 2012, only about £45 million of that would accrue directly to the Scottish Government. We would not be able to invest the rest back into childcare.

I will not read out the quote, but I thought that Donald MacKay's point that no Scottish Government would dare to implement the policy under the limits of devolution was a salient one. I cannot understand why Malcolm Chisholm and others in the Labour Party do not understand that. It is only with independence that we can deliver the policy.

16:17

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): I declare an interest on a personal level. I have Peppa Pig yoghurts in my fridge, I know the stories of “The Tiger Who Came to Tea” and “How to Hide a Lion” back to front, my TV is set to CBeebies and I know all about Katie Morag. I am an ad hoc member of—or a conscript to—that group known as grannies. Notice that I say, “I am a granny,” and

not, “We are a grandmother.” We make a big contribution to free childcare, and I thought that it was important to put that on the record for all the grannies, granddads, great aunts and what-not who do that work.

I turn to the motion. Obviously, everyone subscribes to putting childcare at the heart and the centre of any Government's policies, and this Scottish Government has delivered beyond those in the first eight years of this Parliament, when Labour and the Liberals were in power and money was flowing pretty freely from Westminster. That has not been happening for some time now, as we know.

Everybody in the Parliament knows that the Scottish Government works on a fixed budget, and we also know that in every portfolio, from education through to justice and health, about 80 per cent of the budget is fixed. It pays for staff, for transport, for buildings and for heating costs. There is only a very small sliver at the top that can be reallocated, and that is the rub. When Labour asks for additional childcare, we have to ask where the money will come from. That is a fair question, because we all know that it has to come from somewhere.

On “Scotland Tonight” on 7 January, Kezia Dugdale was asked where the cuts would come from to fund the childcare plan—we would have to have cuts, because the money is not floating about spare. She said:

“We found the money, we think the money is there”.

Rona Dougall said:

“Where is it?”

Kezia Dugdale said:

“The SNP don't think it is because they've spent it already on small business rates ... relief.”

When, later on, Stewart Maxwell, my friend and colleague in here—for the moment—said to Patricia Ferguson:

“So you would cut the small business bonus?”,

Patricia Ferguson said:

“We would certainly consider that.”

Let us be straight talking: if extra money is to be put into childcare, which we all want, somebody's budget will have to be cut in the little 20 per cent at the top that can be moved around.

As for releasing women into the workplace, Labour's spokesperson on childcare, Lucy Powell, has said:

“Enabling women to go back to work who want to go back to work, in the same jobs they were doing before—so that they don't pay that pay and status penalty for the rest of their careers—will increase revenues to the exchequer significantly, such that over time it pays for itself.”

Neil Bibby: Will the member take an intervention?

Christine Grahame: I do not have time.

That quote is about exactly the principle on which the white paper operates.

I have talked about the better times that we had in the Parliament's first eight years. I do not recognise Willie Rennie's picture of recovery. I am no accountant, but I can understand that the UK's debt is running at £1.27 trillion and that the debt interest bill remains on course this year to be £1 billion a week and is growing at a rate of £5,000 per second. I do not see a good future if we stay part of the UK with such debt hanging round our necks and with cuts en route to Scotland. What lies ahead for us is less childcare and cuts to our health service.

We are always told that we try to bamboozle with figures. The most recent figures have Danny Alexander telling us that it would cost £2.7 billion to set up new Government departments in Scotland. That has been immediately disowned and rubbished by Professor Dunleavy, who said:

"UK Treasury press release on #Scotland costs of government ... badly misrepresents LSE research".

He also said:

"The Treasury's figures are bizarrely inaccurate. I don't see why the Scottish government couldn't do this for a very small amount of money."

There is jiggery-pokery from the Treasury and there is jiggery-pokery from the Opposition benches. When I tell my granddaughter stories, I will add to my list a new storybook for bedtime reading, which I will write. I will call it, "Better Together's Funny Money Tree". It is a fable—and that is just my working title.

16:22

Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): A bit like Jamie Hepburn, I think that today's report on poverty from Save the Children could not be more timely in emphasising the importance of good-quality, affordable and available childcare. Its stark warning on alarming rises in child poverty across Scotland is accompanied by a direct call—it is Save the Children's first recommendation—for policy makers to minimise the impact of childcare costs on household budgets.

The statistics that accompany the report reveal what most of us as parents know only too well. Between 2009 and 2014 in Scotland, the cost of a nursery place rose by 31 per cent for a child who is over two and by 26 per cent for a child who is under two. At the same time as families are struggling even to find suitable childcare, let alone pay for it, there is ever-more abundant evidence

about the benefits for parents and children of good-quality care.

Barnardo's is one of the organisations that promote the importance of attachment. I have followed that issue for some time. Scientific evidence suggests that the link—the interactions or attachments—between very young children and the adults who surround them, be they parents, carers or nursery staff, is vital in supporting those children's development and can help those individuals to avoid problems later in life. Barnardo's is working on that through its five to thrive approach, which focuses on creating a common language—a common understanding—between parents and childcare staff about how attachment can strengthen the connection with a child.

As I am sure most members realise, it is crucial to the success of that approach that we have well trained and committed carers who know that their job is valued. Unfortunately, Unison Scotland recently found that the average salary for a nursery nurse, who is a qualified member of our pre-school staff, is £13,361 a year, which is half the UK average wage. We have a dilemma. Parents can barely afford childcare, yet we do not begin to pay childcare staff anything like the wages that would be expected in an educational environment.

Just this week, I was talking to a parent who said, only half jokingly, that she uses the only after-school club that is available to her as a threat to her children. She says, "If you don't behave, I'll put you in the after-school club." I suspect that a few members have experienced qualms about dropping off our kids at some childcare establishments.

I am conscious that there is a danger of my not distinguishing clearly enough between childcare and pre-school education. On the benefits of the latter, in particular, members of the Education Committee in the second session of the Parliament will recall the evidence that we took on the effective provision of pre-school education—EPPE—longitudinal study in England, which found that, although good-quality pre-school provision did not eliminate differences in social backgrounds, it reduced the disadvantage that children from some social groups experienced and reduced social exclusion in later life. In particular, the study found a positive effect on attainment in English and on social and emotional abilities. Children who had attended pre-school from an earlier age were generally more intellectually able and more sociable with other children.

There is no shortage of evidence to support arguments on the need for and benefits of childcare and pre-school education. There is also no shortage of political will in that regard. As

several SNP members pointed out, childcare was the subject of one of the first substantive debates in this Parliament. Labour and the Liberal Democrats agreed, in our making it work together programme for government, to put childcare firmly on to the policy agenda, and the agenda was supported by all parties in the Parliament.

In successive elections and in successive programmes for government from my party and from the SNP, the commitment to childcare has remained sincere. We have made considerable progress. By 2002, we had introduced a statutory right to free early learning for all three and four-year-olds. By 2007, we had increased provision to 475 hours, which was worth just under £2,000 a year per child to parents in Scotland. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 pledges to increase provision to 600 hours per year, and I am sure that we all hope that there will soon be progress on implementation.

There is political will in the Parliament for more action, and there could be cross-party support for how we should implement policy. I regret that the referendum has eroded that consensus. I regret that, instead of using all the means at its disposal to help families now, the Scottish Government is promising radical solutions only if people vote yes. I regret that, instead of working with all parties to find a sustainable way to increase childcare provision and improve the quality and flexibility of existing childcare with the powers that we have, the Scottish Government has turned the debate into one of those if-only-we-had-the-powers debates, as we heard.

What worries me most about the promises of transformation that the SNP is making is that, on all the evidence that we have seen and heard, the promises are based on nothing but assertion and assumption. I suspect that if the *Sunday Herald* had not chosen to take such a firm editorial line, we might have read more of Tom Gordon's research and more of the evidence that he exposed.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must close, please.

Ken Macintosh: I support the calls for the minister to publish all the economic modelling, so that we can see how the Government reached its figures. That would be a step towards rebuilding the consensus. The outcome of the referendum should have little or no bearing on this agenda.

16:28

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP): The childcare proposals in the white paper have the potential to transform outcomes for women in Scotland. They are much more than a policy outline and should not be seen in isolation; they

are an integral and important part of a vision for Scotland that embraces the removal of gender segregation from the workplace and values the softer, caring roles that mainly women perform in our society.

The proposals must also be seen in the context of the white paper's proposal for a fair work commission, the ambition for greater female participation in boardrooms and the ambition to address the barriers to women sustaining well-paid, career-rich professional lives, which the Royal Society of Edinburgh set out eloquently in "Tapping all our Talents—Women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics: a strategy for Scotland".

Such an approach is far from new for this Government; it is at the heart of what the Government has been doing. The "Equality Statement: Scottish Spending Review 2011 and Draft Budget 2012-13" states:

"We recognise that equality is an important driver of growth and that inequality detracts from our economic performance and social wellbeing. We make clear in our Economic Strategy, the importance of increasing participation in the labour market, removing the structural and long standing barriers which limit opportunities and harnessing the diversity and wealth of talent we have available to us as a nation."

This is about a new economics that challenges traditional thinking in this country. I am suggesting not that we throw the economic baby out with the bath water but more that we embrace the economic theorem that values the work of the person who puts the baby in the bath water, nurtures the baby and performs the caring roles that are so valuable to the economic future of our country.

The economist who first opened my eyes to this new thinking was Marilyn Waring, who in 1988 published "If Women Counted", in which she challenged the accepted characteristics of the calculation of gross domestic product, which counted the journey to work as economic activity but to which what happened in the home was invisible. It is notable that Finland and Denmark used the unpaid work of—in the main—women in their internal calculations for GDP. That is maybe why they are so successful in delivering childcare.

Marilyn Waring is a great hero of mine not only because of her academic work on economics but because she was fundamental in bringing about non-nuclear legislation for New Zealand. If we are not spending money on bombs, we have more money to spend on what is truly important to the people of Scotland: the future of our children.

I mention Marilyn Waring today because she was a great influence on Dr Ailsa McKay, whose academic research and contribution to the economics of Scotland have made a great

contribution to the development of the childcare proposals in the white paper. One of her final publications before her sad, untimely death was "Counting on Marilyn Waring: New Advances in Feminist Economics". Professor Gülay Günlük-Şenesen of Istanbul University has said of it:

"'Counting on Marilyn Waring' provides a timely reminder of the politics and economics underpinning what, how and by whom activities and outputs are valued. For those concerned with social justice and sustainable futures this important and powerful book provides an invaluable and practical insight into issues that are in need of greater visibility."

We have much to be thankful for in the work of Professor Ailsa McKay. In her address to the Educational Institute of Scotland, she stated:

"The current economic crisis is therefore a turning point. A time for reflection—a time for 'challenging the norm' and taking nothing for granted."

She had the ambitions that were eloquently spoken of by Ms McAlpine when she talked about the vision and ambition of previous leaders of the Labour Party. Ailsa McKay also contributed to the great work that has been done by the Jimmy Reid Foundation in looking at the value of universal services and welfare that is universal and valued by everyone in society and how those can transform the way we live.

In his tribute to Ailsa McKay on the Jimmy Reid Foundation's website, Robin McAlpine talks about Professor McKay's response to the First Minister when he first asked her whether she would contribute to the policy in the white paper. She said:

"If you're serious about the policy, if you mean it, then I'd be delighted. But you have to mean it."

He did mean it, and we are serious about it. The white paper is serious about it. I challenge Labour: is it serious about it? I have my doubts. Ed Miliband announced his pledge to crack down on zero-hours contracts in my home town of Motherwell. Unfortunately for him, North Lanarkshire Council, which is run by Labour, has 800 workers employed on zero-hours contracts.

I ask Labour again whether it is serious about the policy, because this week Unison released a press release that states:

"UNISON North Lanarkshire is stepping up the pressure on North Lanarkshire Council in the union's long running campaign to end the unfair treatment of low paid women."

According to the press release, John Mooney said:

"For an employer to purposely change job scores which lowered pay rates and to admit that they have destroyed the paperwork is astonishing and UNISON demand to know who sanctioned such disgusting behaviour."

Is Labour serious?

16:35

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green):

Childcare is one of the many issues on which we can make real progress in Scotland if we do not treat it as a political football. Scrutiny of how we are going to pay for it is welcome—obviously, the finances are important if any Government is to deliver on promises. I welcome the fact that the issue is getting the attention that it needs and merits, because it is fair to say that it has not had that until now.

I hope that we can see the debate in the round, as being about the care of children rather than childcare. Public policy should be able to help parents to ensure that their children have the best start in life. Increases in the amount of institutional nursery childcare that is available from local authorities will be welcomed by parents who struggle to afford to pay for additional hours. We all know that childcare costs here are among the highest in Europe.

There are other types of childcare, many of which are playing second fiddle in the debate but should not be forgotten. Informal care by friends and family is the most obvious example. Throughout human history, we have raised children by sharing responsibility among friends and family. That type of care has immense value, although it is not measured in economic terms, as Clare Adamson mentioned. Any public policy that we promote should welcome and recognise the important role of informal care.

For all sorts of reasons, many parents do not have such a network to tap into, so they look outside that circle. Just who by and where our children will be looked after is a massively important decision for any parent or carer. Many of us will have visited nurseries and childminders before coming to a decision, although many people experience a limited range of options—or no options—as well as limited availability for certain days, waiting lists and shortages, which necessitate increased travel, expense and inconvenience and make a long day even longer for parents and children.

It remains the case, however, that it is often easier to secure a nursery place for a younger child than it is to secure childcare that fits round the school day and makes working life possible for those with school-age children. Childcare is essential for those with children who juggle work and family life, and it can be challenging to find the right place or person to provide it. Fees can sometimes be comparable to mortgage payments and beyond consideration, particularly for those with more than one child. As I said, fees are particularly high in this country, yet that is not reflected in the pay packets of those who deliver the care, even though their job is surely one of the

most important that anyone could do. I agree whole-heartedly with the comments of Mary Scanlon and Ken Macintosh on that.

One size does not fit all. We need various flexible models of childcare that reflect that and address local challenges, but we need quality assurance, too, and mutual commitments to standardise excellence across the board. Day care should be part of a full childhood and not simply somewhere to park children when we head to work. It should be delivered by highly qualified, well-paid and valued staff and it should be such a positive offering that it will be taken up even when there is a parent at home.

The Food Standards Agency has suggested that 15 per cent of Scottish homes do not have cutlery. Quality childcare can introduce children to important life skills. Many children do not eat at the table and are not introduced to a knife and fork at home. We can look to the Copenhagen House of Food model and make good food habits an important part of a quality education.

We can address our children's lack of physical activity from the youngest age by making the outdoors accessible all year round. We can make days when children spend wet breaks indoors a thing of the past. We could stock nurseries and schools with waterproofs and wellies for all children. Our children are not as fit or physically literate as they used to be, and we are paying the price. We need to build links with sport governing bodies and introduce our nursery children to gymnastics and athletics—the basis of physical literacy—at the earliest opportunity.

Childcare needs to be educational, affordable and universal. If we achieve that transformation, we will enable the many women who wish to work to achieve their potential and realise their ambitions. As Professor Sara Carter has noted, if the level of business ownership among women matched that among their male counterparts, we would have more than 108,000 additional businesses in Scotland. However, as the Scottish Trades Union Congress has advised, many women choose economic inactivity when faced with high childcare costs and a lack of appealing choices. That inactivity can impact on career progression and on the value of women's pensions when they reach retirement age.

Single parents face particular challenges accessing childcare and making budgets balance. The great majority of single parents are women and, while children are young, there is a marked difference between the number of lone parents working and the number of women with partners working.

Women make up the overwhelming number of those working in childcare. Childcare has one of

the biggest gender imbalances among staff and it is important that we address that. Norway has set targets for male educators and has provided extra support to help with those targets, along with job advertising and recruiting campaigns. Sweden is also often quoted in this debate. In the 1970s, less than 10 per cent of pre-schoolers in Sweden could access a publicly funded place. Their parents took to the streets.

We need to recognise the important role of childminders. They look after 30,000 children in Scotland and, in too many areas, they are a precious rare resource. We need to ensure that we offer the support that will encourage more people to consider childminding as a career.

We must think about where our childcare buildings are located. Large institutions, colleges and universities should offer childcare provision for staff. This Parliament should consider such provision. There is a private nursery in a local college, but it is too expensive for the young mums who study there. That does not make sense.

We cannot achieve this transformation overnight, but we can achieve it.

16:41

Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP): I would like to begin with a quotation from the late Professor Ailsa McKay. Professor McKay was much respected and admired across the chamber for her hard work and dedication to improving outcomes for women and disadvantaged groups in Scotland. Writing in the *Sunday Herald* in December 2013 about her ambitions for the childcare plans that are outlined in the white paper, Professor McKay said:

"The highest rates of employment of mothers are in Scandinavia, where public investment in childcare is high. If Scotland could replicate this, tens of thousands of more women would be in work in Scotland. A higher female employment rate increases economic growth and productivity and has a positive impact on fertility, making it more likely that population growth will be above replacement rate ... additional investment in childcare provision would more than pay for itself in the medium term."

Labour talks about the importance of ensuring that childcare remains

"at the top of the political agenda, regardless of the ... result"

of September's referendum. That was a point that was made by Professor Mackay and I agree with the sentiment, although I must say that I am disappointed—but not surprised—that the Labour Party has chosen to attack the Scottish Government's childcare plans. If Labour really believed in a transformational change in childcare, it would be right behind the Scottish Government's ambitious proposals.

Of course, Labour has form on this kind of behaviour. A few months back, we witnessed Labour MSPs teaming up with the Tories to vote against the Scottish Government's proposals for free school meals and improved childcare provision. It appeared then that that was just another example of the Labour Party choosing to oppose for opposition's sake—particularly as the Scottish Government's plans had been welcomed by a wide range of children's charities and child poverty campaigners. Labour's actions at the time were rightly condemned in the press and in communities across Scotland, so I had hoped that lessons had been learned about the danger of attacking everything that is proposed by the SNP just for the sake of political point scoring. However, sadly, I was wrong.

In the childcare debate in January, I highlighted the work that has been carried out by Professor Edward Melhuish of the University of London. Professor Melhuish's research has demonstrated the long-term benefits of effective childcare, particularly for children from deprived backgrounds. Those findings were reinforced by a recent research paper that was published by the Scottish Government, entitled "Childcare and Children's Intellectual Outcomes", which concluded that high-quality nursery education not only enhances development in children in their early years, but aids attainment in children at all ages. The paper highlights evidence that pre-school education enhances all-round development in children and is particularly beneficial to children from disadvantaged backgrounds, in helping to improve cognitive development, sociability and concentration. Those benefits continue into primary and secondary school, with research demonstrating that pupils aged 15 who attended pre-school education tend to outperform those who did not.

Although there are for parents and children significant social benefits from improved childcare, there is also a strong economic case for investment in early years education. In written evidence that has been submitted to Parliament, Professor McKay and her colleagues at the women in Scotland's economy research centre at Glasgow Caledonian University highlighted research that shows how important investment in childcare is to stimulating economic growth.

Growth in the construction industry is often held up as a barometer of how well the economy is doing. The research centre at GCU suggests that, in economic terms, the development of a high-quality childcare sector is just as important as development of the construction sector, in that one creates physical capital and the other creates human capital.

It is argued that a lack of access to adequate affordable childcare is damaging to the economy and to society as a whole, because that lack acts as a barrier to participation in the labour market by parents—in particular, by mothers. Enabling more women to contribute to the economy through better provision of affordable childcare can help to lift families out of poverty and tackle inequality in earnings. That is an ambition that I hope all members share.

The social and economic benefits of improved early years provision are not in doubt; the question is how we can ensure that children and families here gain access to opportunities that are similar to those that are enjoyed by our Scandinavian neighbours. Childcare costs in Scotland and the rest of the UK are among the highest in Europe. We spend an average of 26.5 per cent of parental income on childcare, compared to the OECD average of almost 12 per cent. A recent report by the Family and Childcare Trust suggests that families are paying more than £7,500 per year in childcare costs for two children, which amounts to more than the average cost of a mortgage.

Under devolution, Scotland has made some progress in improving access to affordable childcare, and I welcome that. Since the SNP came to power, we have increased free nursery provision by 20 per cent. The improvements in flexible early learning and childcare that have been delivered through the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 will benefit more than 120,000 children in Scotland and help to save families about £700 per year. That will be welcomed by hard-pressed families throughout Scotland, although the reality is that only with the powers and resources of independence can we bring about the transformational change that is needed to provide the best possible start in life for children in Scotland.

Labour MSPs assert that that can be done now under the limited powers of devolution. If that is the case, why were those ambitious plans not advanced when the Labour Party was in power in the previous two Administrations, and why cannot it tell us now how it would pay for them under the devolution settlement?

Professor Sir Donald MacKay, who is a leading economist and a former chair of Scottish Enterprise, hit the nail on the head when he said that

"No financially responsible Scottish Government would dare to implement the childcare proposals under the fixed block grant funding of devolution, unless they were prepared to take an axe to existing programmes".

I look forward to hearing from the Labour Party what public services it plans to cut in order to finance more childcare now, under the current limited devolution settlement.

I have already outlined the benefits to the economy that increased access to childcare provides. The Scottish Government has been clear in its commitment to improving access to affordable high-quality early learning and childcare. The Minister for Children and Young People has spoken of her ambition to make Scotland the best place in the world in which to grow up. With the opportunities of independence, we can do just that. Our families, children and communities deserve nothing less.

16:47

Cara Hilton (Dunfermline) (Lab): Lack of affordable high-quality childcare is one of the biggest issues facing families in Dunfermline, Scotland and across the UK. Across the political divide, we all agree that action needs to be taken, and childcare is rightly rising to the top of the political agenda. That is welcome news to women across all political parties who have been making the case for childcare for many decades—a case that has often fallen on deaf ears in Parliaments and council chambers that have been full of men.

I am pleased that childcare is now at the heart of the mainstream political agenda, where it belongs, but for mums and dads the pace of change is too slow. We are still waiting for a childcare revolution, and parents deserve better than childcare promises that are simply uncoded and unworkable, or are taking too long to deliver.

Whatever the result in September, we have the powers at Holyrood to transform childcare in Scotland now, and we need to use them—not just talk about them. Our priority must be to ensure that childcare is free or affordable for every parent and, as childcare challenges do not end when children start school, that must include childcare for schoolchildren, too.

In Scotland, we have waited seven long years for the SNP's 2007 childcare pledge to be met. Finally in August, Scottish parents will catch up with their friends and family in England and Wales. That is an overdue, but welcome, step forward.

Pre-school provision will also be extended to workless families of two-year-olds. That policy is welcome, but comes with challenges because local authorities tell us that the new childcare pledge is not fully funded. Given how important childcare is in addressing the cycle of disadvantage, that is surely a big concern. Fife Council, for example, has identified a funding gap of about £500,000; that does not even factor in adaptations that need to be made to pre-school facilities to cater for two-year-olds.

I also know from speaking to early years workers in my constituency that there are real concerns about a reduction in the quality of early

education for our two, three and four-year-olds as a result of the 600 hours provision, because there will be less time for planning and setting up the nursery area and less opportunity to discuss the needs and development of individual children.

It is crucial that the Scottish Government and local authorities provide the right funding and support to ensure that all our pre-school children continue to receive high-quality childcare, especially given that curriculum for excellence starts at age three. The OECD's evidence shows that low-quality childcare can damage outcomes for children, so we need to monitor that carefully, especially in our more deprived communities, where high-quality childcare can make a huge difference to children's lives.

Delivering 600 hours of free nursery education is not exactly the childcare revolution that mums and dads are waiting for; it is not enough to transform lives. Parents in the rest of the UK have had that level of free childcare since 2010. With parents across Scotland spending a huge proportion of their hard-earned incomes on childcare, urgent action is needed now to ensure that every family can overcome the childcare challenges that they face.

Childcare costs continue to rise much faster than inflation, and certainly much faster than wages. Many families spend more on childcare than on their rent, mortgage and fuel bills combined, and the costs continue to spiral. As a couple of colleagues have already pointed out, a nursery place costs 30 per cent more now than it did in 2010. Working full time is simply not an option for most mums of young children; only 24 per cent of mums of three-year-olds and four-year-olds work full time.

The cost of a full-time childcare place for one child is almost £8,000 a year. Is it any wonder that so many parents find that they simply have to turn down jobs or reduce their hours, or that they are forced to abandon their career plans because of sky-high childcare costs? A Save the Children report found that 80 per cent of the poorest families say that cost is the main barrier to accessing childcare and getting back into work. Some families are locked out of the labour market entirely, and many families manage only by constant juggling, by working different hours to cover childcare, or by relying on friends, grandparents, and even next-door neighbours.

Elsewhere in Europe, men are more likely to reduce their hours in order to share childcare responsibilities, but in Scotland in 2014, many employers still view childcare as a mum's responsibility and fail to consider the growing needs of working dads who also want to balance work and family life. In that context, the Scottish Government's pledge to transform childcare after

a yes vote does seem to be attractive; if only there was any evidence at all that it could be delivered.

The reality is that the SNP's sums simply do not add up. The pledge is based on Scotland having 40,000 more pre-school mums who are able to return to work than even exist. SPICe has estimated that the pledge will cost an additional £1.2 billion at least to finance, and it still has not been backed up by any financial modelling, despite the policy's being one of the key highlights of the white paper.

Parents have waited long enough. They deserve better than a childcare policy that has been questioned by the Scottish Parliament's own team of impartial experts. It is time for the Scottish Government to publish the full costings of its childcare plans, and for us all to put aside our political differences and work together to transform childcare for mums, dads, carers, and grandparents across Scotland. Our proposal for a childcare commission would give us that opportunity.

Parents want real action on childcare. They are fed up with being treated as political pawns. Whatever the result of the referendum, we already have the powers at Holyrood to deliver on childcare. Let us use those powers now, and let us work together to develop a comprehensive strategy for childcare that does not end when a child starts school. Let us bring about a childcare revolution that will transform the lives of working parents. Let us end the childcare headache that has simply been endured by working parents across Scotland for too long. Now is the time to deliver a childcare system for Scotland that supports all our parents and gives all our children the very best start in life.

16:53

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): Despite some of the rhetoric I have heard this afternoon, I believe that every member wishes for expanded and flexible early years learning and childcare provision. On that front, the Scottish Government has delivered in part, and in partnership, including with Willie Rennie, but we have to go a lot further.

Willie Rennie *rose—*

Bob Doris: I do not have time to take an intervention; Willie Rennie should not get too excited.

To enable that to happen, policy has to be affordable and sustainable. That would be true whether or not we become independent following September's referendum.

On the Scottish Government's childcare commitments in the event of a yes vote in the independence referendum, I turn to the money

that an independent Scotland would divert from defence spending, including that which would be gained as a result of ditching Trident and its replacement. We would make an overt political choice to pump that money into childcare. I also point out the figures that show a surplus of £8.3 billion in Scotland when we compare money that has been raised and spent in Scotland in the past five years. Those two facts are powerful arguments for the resourcing of childcare with independence.

However, we must balance that by asking whether those commitments can be delivered anyway, without a yes vote and without independence. In theory they could be, but the political choices that would need to be made in order to fund such a revolutionary expansion would be between not Trident and childcare, but between our NHS or our education system and childcare. It may be our students, academics and universities that are deprioritised after a no vote or—dare I say it?—something else that is lurking in the so far undisclosed results of the Labour Party's cuts commission. Who knows? We are all in the dark.

Those are not the choices that I am in politics to make. As I said, there is a genuine commitment from members on all sides of the chamber. However, a no vote means that we will need, in order to deliver on childcare, to make a political choice that is quite frankly stark, unpalatable and unacceptable.

Turning to the tax and revenue implications of the Scottish Government's plan for childcare after independence, I say to Willie Rennie again—I am sorry for name-checking him twice and not letting him intervene—that I will leave members on the front benches to argue over the details of

“the component tax revenue streams”

to which his amendment refers.

I will give members another truism. To put it simply, while we might argue and debate the extent of the revenue boost through the taxation system, and likewise the extent of the reduced benefits burden, as more people, particularly females, move in to work, no one can argue, with any degree of credibility, that there will not be a financial gain to Scotland from the steps that the Scottish Government will take after independence. No one would have any credibility who would deny the fact that wealth would flow from that.

The question that we must ask is this: When the revenues start to flow from childcare policy, as they undoubtedly will, where should they go? Should they go to an independent Scottish exchequer or to an out-of-touch and undemocratic Westminster exchequer that is unrepresentative of Scotland and which will not refund one penny to

us from our good investment in our young people? I think that we, and the people of Scotland, all know the answer: an independent Scottish exchequer.

I welcome Labour's motion, because it shines a light on two levers of power that are essential to delivering revolutionary childcare expansion. The first is the ability to make in Scotland the political choices on all aspects of spending in order to prioritise what we wish to deliver. For members on this side of the chamber, that is childcare rather than Trident. The second lever is the ability to get the benefits of economic growth and for that money to flow to a Scottish exchequer and not to an out-of-touch London Tory Government.

We can have those two levers of power only with independence. Irrespective of whether the other parties wish to argue over the numbers in the Scottish Government's white paper, the process is clear. The levers of power are self-evident; we need them in Scotland and they can be delivered only with independence. We have had enough of the number-crunching. Members should accept that we need those powers in order to deliver on childcare.

Kezia Dugdale: Will Bob Doris give way?

Bob Doris: I am genuinely disappointed that I cannot let Kezia Dugdale in, but I want to move on to speak about something else. So far, no one has spoken about the wider picture of getting people into work in childcare. The reforms to the UK tax credits system have made working families in Scotland up to £1,560 worse off, and the changes to the family tax credit system have made many families in Scotland worse off by up to £3,870.

There is a story that I tell repeatedly in the chamber. Those changes—which mean that people get working tax credits only if they increase their part-time hours from 16 to 24 hours—have pushed two families that I know in Maryhill out of work and on to benefits. That is not a progressive system. The connection between childcare provision and getting families into work and giving them lifelong prospects dovetail: they are intertwined. That is the wider picture.

All those powers could deliver something that I am genuinely passionate about—not least for Beth, Emily and Hannah, who are my three little nieces. Those powers have to come to the Parliament in order for us to have a coherent, socially just, progressive and visionary childcare system.

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

Bob Doris: Only with independence can we achieve that.

16:59

Willie Rennie: Liberal Democrats support the principle of spend to save. Looking forward to see what we can invest now in order to make long-term changes is something that we would encourage. That is why, back in the 1990s, we had a strong policy of putting a penny on income tax for education. We recognised the value of investing in education and were prepared to make a sacrifice at the time by putting up income tax by 1p in the pound so that we could invest millions of pounds in improving education. We strongly supported that.

The difference between what the SNP is suggesting now and what we did then is that we had a transparent, costed process. We had set out in detail what the sacrifice would be—the income tax that would be raised in order to pay for education. We recognised that there would be returns to the Exchequer at a later date but our approach was a cautious one. We recognised that the money might not all come back to the Exchequer—it might not have that optimistic, desired effect. The cautious approach that we took is the approach that treasuries take throughout the world. They do not assume that the golden opportunity will definitely come. They recognise that what comes might fall short of that. They still have ambition and the desire to make that change but they are cautious with it. That is the problem that we have—

Jamie Hepburn: Will the member give way?

Willie Rennie: Not just now.

Alison Johnstone was right. We need to scrutinise proposals and that does not mean that we do not have ambition. I was disappointed by Joan McAlpine's contribution because she criticised the Labour benches for lacking ambition. To ask questions is not to lack ambition. We have got to have the right to quiz, to question and to scrutinise. That is what the Parliament is about. The reason why it is particularly important on this occasion is that if people vote for independence—

Jamie Hepburn: On that point, Mr Rennie.

Willie Rennie: I will come to Jamie Hepburn in a second. If we vote for independence on the basis of more childcare, and the SNP is wrong and the policy does not deliver the benefits to the Exchequer that the SNP says that it will, there is no way back. We cannot reverse the decision. We cannot decide to reverse independence. That is the difference between this spend and save proposal—[*Interruption.*] SNP members shout "Doom and gloom." They cannot accuse me of lacking ambition on nursery education.

Mike MacKenzie: Will the member take an intervention?

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The member is not taking an intervention.

Willie Rennie: Bob Doris and I—the love-in continues, Bob Doris—recognised, together, that we had done a lot on nursery education. We pushed it when many others in the chamber were sceptical. I do not think that it is right for people to criticise Bob and me for lacking ambition.

The Presiding Officer: Can we use full names?

Willie Rennie: Absolutely. It is the love-in, Presiding Officer. Bob Doris and I refer to each other by our first names.

Just because we question does not mean that we lack ambition.

Christine Grahame talked about blaming Westminster for the lack of funds. I gently remind her that, in England, they are delivering for 40 per cent of two-year-olds, which is far more than are being delivered for in Scotland, on the same budget.

Christine Grahame: Do you dispute the figures on the continuing debt of the UK and the continuing payments, which are now at £1.2 trillion?

Willie Rennie: The member is implying that Scotland would be debt free. The reality is that Scotland would have equally challenging financial circumstances. It is no different. It will be the same. She blames Westminster but, in reality, they are doing far more to deliver nursery education.

At the heart of all this is our desire to make a transformational change in childcare. We all agree on that in the chamber, despite the misquoting on occasion. Stewart Maxwell talked about it passionately. Jayne Baxter, Ken Macintosh and Alison Johnstone all talked about the different strands of benefit that nursery education brings, such as getting mothers back to work. Clearly, that is a distinct benefit. It has got to be affordable. We have got to have childcare that is affordable, so that people can get back to work, and that makes work pay.

At issue is child development, which Mary Scanlon talked about, but also education. As a Liberal, I strongly believe that education is the route out of poverty. This particular type of education at this early stage gives a significant benefit. Professor James Heckman, my favourite academic, talks about investing before the age of three to make that transformational change.

We all agree that this is the way to progress, but the question is how we do it. It is not unreasonable to question the SNP's sums and it is not unreasonable to ask the SNP to be forthcoming with a little more detail. This is not a normal

manifesto proposal; it is a referendum proposal from which we have no way back if the SNP is wrong, so it is important that we have the detail to scrutinise, so that people can go to the polls in September with full understanding of what the policy means.

17:05

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):

Given the very heated exchanges on some aspects of the debate, I do not think that there is any chance whatsoever that childcare—although Alison Johnstone made the very good point that perhaps we should be talking about care of children—will move out of the political limelight. Therefore, the first commitment in the Labour Party's motion is absolutely guaranteed, and that is a good thing. I hope that that is the case not because of the arguments about the referendum but because of the crucial importance of the care of children to the dynamic of social and economic policy in this country.

Malcolm Chisholm made excellent points, as did Jayne Baxter, Ken Macintosh and Jamie Hepburn, who talked very well about the principle. Together with the provision of nursery education, childcare provision is the centrepiece of not just the early years strategy but education policy more generally and the demographic influences on employment. As such, there is absolutely no surprise that all parties in this chamber are on record as calling for childcare provision to be broadened and for greater focus on its qualitative features, which everybody in this chamber agrees is just as important as the number of hours that we can deliver.

Although it is perhaps tempting, when it comes to childcare, to take Freud's dictum about the narcissism of small differences, there are—as the Labour Party pointed out—substantive points to be made: not about the general principles of the policy direction, but about the timescales and funding commitments that have been set out in the SNP's white paper. Nobody doubts the scale of the finances that are required to deliver what we would all like to see, or indeed the challenge that Clare Adamson referred to when she talked about the wider context of what we have to do on policy making. However, as my colleague Mary Scanlon rightly argued, the Scottish Government's figures—especially in relation to boosting female involvement in the labour market—do not stand up. That is largely because there is not sufficient evidence that the childcare policy under discussion will—not might—lead to the 6 per cent rise in female employment as outlined in the Government's statistical bulletins, of which we have seen several.

The dispute is not about different political parties arguing on different figures. The fact of the matter is that we do not have a policy model against which to make judgments about the policy.

Joan McAlpine: Liz Smith talked about evidence. She will be aware that both the OECD and the European Commission have presented evidence that increasing childcare provision and making it more affordable increases the number of women in the workforce. Is she suggesting that that is wrong?

Liz Smith: I am not disputing that in any way. I am disputing the specific figures that have been put forward as a guarantee—it is a guarantee—that the policy will deliver a 6 per cent rise in female employment. That is the problem, and I think that the SNP will find it very difficult to argue otherwise.

Willie Rennie, who made eloquent speeches, was absolutely right when he made it plain that the problem is a fundamental concern at the root of current policy. I pay tribute to Willie Rennie and Malcolm Chisholm for their commitment, over a long period, to making positive contributions to the debate.

Willie Rennie is quite right to say that it is not a problem to question; the whole point of a Parliament is to scrutinise. That partly explains the frustration that Kezia Dugdale rightly expressed when she opened the debate. There is a problem with a lack of scrutiny, which Tom Gordon encountered in responses to freedom of information requests. The difficulty that we have is not to do with the fact that we might hold different views; it is to do with the lack of scrutiny.

There are three essential aspects of policy development on childcare: its availability, its quality and its affordability. The minister has said that good progress is being made on the first two. Let us admit that that is true and let us rejoice in that fact. I do not think that that is in dispute, but there are questions about the affordability of the childcare that is being provided, as Alison Johnstone rightly said, because different local authorities take a different approach and there are wide variations across local authority areas. I think that we can probably get round that.

If, as a Parliament, we are to move forward in the way that we want to—and this has nothing whatever to do with the referendum—we have to accept that we must put forward credible and costed policy. It is against that that we will all be asked by the voters to make a judgment in deciding what we want to do in our manifestos. It is on that basis that we will support the Labour motion and Willie Rennie's amendment.

17:11

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Michael Russell): I want to start by agreeing with Liz Smith and Kezia Dugdale. It is true that the first sentence of the motion will be retained by the amendment in Aileen Campbell's name. As Liz Smith said, keeping childcare at the top of the political agenda is something that unites us. The Parliament will resolve to do that and I am sure that it will go on resolving to do so, regardless of the referendum result.

Childcare should unite, not divide, the Parliament. I am sorry to say that it is a measure of Labour's failure in Scotland that, having lost yet another election this week, it seeks to divide the Parliament, yet again, on something that should work for us all. We all agree on the need for transformational childcare, but if a party believes that that can be achieved without the full fiscal powers of independence, it must come to the chamber with ideas about how it can be done. Instead, regrettably, in the first 14 minutes of the debate, we simply had an attack on others. In its entirety, Kezia Dugdale's speech—I say so charitably—was a litany of negative ginning. There were no proposals, nothing new and not even a timescale; there was just negativity.

Clare Adamson asked a germane question. She wanted to know whether Labour means it. To be fair, I think that it probably does. What we have heard today from Labour is a failure of politics rather than a failure of policy, even if its policy is, as SPICe has pointed out, out of date and threadbare.

There is a parallel with 2003. In 2003, I was a member of an Opposition that thought that the Labour Administration was evil, deceitful, idle and all sorts of other things and that we just needed to tear away the mask. We demonised our opponents and we lost that election. In politics, negative is always beaten by positive. That is an important lesson. The longer Labour fails to realise that, the longer it will go on losing elections, just as it did last weekend. Character assassination is not a policy. Hatred is not a policy. Resentment is not a policy. Pious hand wringing is not a policy. Action is a policy, and there is action aplenty from this Government.

Willie Rennie commended to us the importance of fact. That is a little rich on a day when Professor Dunleavy has questioned the Lib Dem approach to facts. The facts show that transformational childcare cannot be delivered under devolution as it exists. That is a fact. Mary Scanlon attacked me for my remarks on deconstruction, but I repeat them. The Tory approach is often, "We want this policy, but we don't want the SNP to get the credit for it."

Liz Smith: Will the cabinet secretary give way?

Michael Russell: No. I want to make a lot of progress, because this is an important issue.

The Tories say, "We'll attack the Government for not publishing enough", then they say, "We'll attack it for resenting scrutiny." They say, "When figures are produced, we'll dismiss them without even considering them." What the Opposition will not do is publish its own plans. It will not dare face the fact that there are limits to devolution and that some things can be delivered only by independence. It will deconstruct, undermine and destroy because it knows—

Kezia Dugdale: Will the cabinet secretary give way?

Michael Russell: No—I want to finish this. It knows that what it wants cannot be achieved by devolution. That is why the Opposition is so scared. When the penny drops, it will become absolutely clear that the only way to achieve transformative childcare is through independence.

Liz Smith: I take issue with the cabinet secretary about costed interventions. In its last two manifestos, the Scottish Conservative Party has given a full commitment on its costings. The cabinet secretary might not agree with our policy objectives, but we have given the costings and I would appreciate it if he would recognise that.

Michael Russell: I do recognise that, but no one believed them. That is why the Conservatives were not elected.

When last month Donald MacKay gave evidence to the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, he said in his submission:

"No financially responsible Scottish Government would dare to implement the childcare proposals under the fixed block grant funding of devolution, unless they were prepared to take an axe to existing programmes when there was already strong downward pressure on the real value of the existing block grant."

That is the truth and the reality of this policy: this cannot be done under devolution. What we have heard this afternoon is a measure of frustration—

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): Will the cabinet secretary give way?

Neil Bibby: Will the cabinet secretary give way?

Michael Russell: No—I am sorry. I do not want to take either point, because Mr Bibby's frustration that he knows that this cannot be delivered unless we have the powers of independence will show again.

Neil Bibby: Will the cabinet secretary give way?

The Presiding Officer: The member is not taking an intervention.

Michael Russell: Ken Macintosh talked about the sincere commitment of the Liberal-Labour Administration. The commitment was sincere, but we are now coming to the limit of what can be achieved under devolution. The truth in that lies in remarks made by Lucy Powell, Labour's shadow minister for children, who, in talking about these policies, has said:

"Enabling women to go back to work who want to go back to work ... will increase revenues to the exchequer significantly, such that over time it pays for itself."

If we do not have the fiscal powers or an exchequer, we cannot make the policy pay for itself. I am afraid that that is the truth of devolution.

However, when a person cannot face the truth, they twist the words. The SPICe briefing does not say purely what Labour says it does. Certainly there is a paragraph that starts off with those words, but in the very next sentence—the sentence that Labour has not actually quoted—*[Interruption.]* Labour members seem to find that funny; perhaps they have not read it. Perhaps the only bit that they were given was the bit that stood up Kezia Dugdale's argument. The briefing says:

"In order to achieve the modelled scenarios, the policy would need to influence the labour market decisions of a larger group of women, which could include:

- women who do not currently have children or who have children aged under 1 year or over 5 ...

- future groups of women, either before or when they have children (which could extend the timescale of the impact)".

In other words, SPICe recognises that the policy operates over more than one year, and that women who re-enter the labour market as a result of free childcare stay in the labour market even when their children get older. Without the help that we propose, too many will never do so.

I want to bring my remarks to an end with some thoughts on Joan McAlpine's very wise contribution to the debate. She was quite right to draw attention to the contrast between the passionate ambition of what one might call transformative Labour and the managerialism of the current Labour party. Faced with what Jackie Brock from Children in Scotland has called "a game-changer" and extremely exciting, Labour retreated into the Bain principle of "If it comes from the nats, we don't support it—not now, not ever." Joan McAlpine said that Labour had no route map—that is absolutely true. In fact, it has no satellite navigation system, no gazetteer, no atlas, no compass—nothing to guide it at all. Its very principles have been lost in a fog of resentment about its electoral failure at the hands of the SNP.

As for what one might call, to use a local analogy, this haar of anxiety about the positive message of independence—*independence* is the

vehicle that is going to transform childcare and so much else. There are limits to devolution and we have reached them. It is time to go forward with the white paper and independence.

17:19

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): Labour brought forward this debate because we are committed to supporting families with childcare and we want to see real action. A number of good contributions on how that can be achieved have been made. Malcolm Chisholm, Alison Johnstone and Liz Smith made very good speeches, and Willie Rennie and Jamie Hepburn made very important points.

As Kezia Dugdale said in opening the debate, we are having this debate because we recognise the need to develop a long-term strategy that improves and increases pre-school provision, expands wraparound care for primary school pupils, and achieves a consensus across party lines. That is why we have repeated our call from a year ago to tackle the issue on a cross-party basis in the form of a Scottish childcare commission.

As our motion says, we should all share a determination to put

“childcare at the top of the political agenda regardless of the referendum result”.

Childcare is not a constitutional issue; it is an important social and economic policy. It is not a reason to break away from the UK, particularly as powers over childcare have been devolved to the Scottish Parliament since 1999 and have been under the responsibility of SNP ministers for the past seven years. Unfortunately, the nationalists sought to make childcare a constitutional issue when they launched the white paper in November. If they want to make childcare a constitutional issue, they need to offer substance and evidence rather than wishful thinking.

The SPICe briefing entitled “Early Learning and Childcare” blew apart the SNP’s childcare claims. Today, we have heard the same old arguments with no new evidence from the Scottish Government, when it had the opportunity to give it.

I want to deal with some of the claims that the nationalists have made today and in the white paper.

Jamie Hepburn: Will the member give way?

Neil Bibby: I want to make some progress.

First, we heard the claim from the minister, from George Adam and from Stewart Maxwell that we need the powers of independence to improve childcare. That is not true. The SNP already has

the powers to do that, but it has not used them until very recently.

We heard the minister say that the SNP’s ambition is to achieve transformational childcare. If the SNP has always been so ambitious about childcare, why is childcare provision lagging behind that in the rest of the UK right now? In August this year, 40 per cent of two-year-olds in England will get nursery provision, but only 15 per cent will get it in Scotland. That is some ambition.

Perhaps the biggest claim by the SNP that has been completely discredited by SPICe is that we need independence for childcare because it would then be completely self-funding.

Jamie Hepburn: Will the member give way?

The Presiding Officer: The member is not giving way.

Neil Bibby: I have no doubt that more childcare can help more women into the job market if that childcare meets their needs, jobs are available, they have the skills that they need, and, crucially, going back to work suits their circumstances. The SNP has said that an increase in female employment of 104,000 would fund the policy. The very big problem that it has with that claim is that SPICe found that, in 2011, there were only 64,000 women with nursery-aged children who were “economically inactive”, out of whom only 14,000 wanted to work. We know that the SNP wants to suspend the rules of arithmetic in the referendum debate, but 14,000 and 104,000 do not go.

The new claim from SNP ministers and members today is that we should ignore SPICe—that there are more than enough women. We have heard the SNP making up lots of things ahead of the referendum, but the one thing that cannot be made up is human beings who do not exist. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order. Mr Adam!

Neil Bibby: There are at least anywhere between 40,000 and 90,000 missing mums for the SNP’s policy to be self-funding. That is enough mums to fill Hampden park or even Wembley stadium.

We now hear the claim from the SNP, without any evidence to back it up, that the policy will not happen straight away; rather, it will happen over time. Really? How long will it take for its policy to be credible—10, 20 or 30 years?

Christine Grahame said that there would be cuts to childcare if we voted no. Talk about scaremongering from the SNP. I would be interested to know whether that is the official SNP line. Will it really say that there will be no increase in childcare if we vote no in the referendum in September? *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Ms Grahame!

Christine Grahame *rose*—

Neil Bibby: I note that the SNP is not making any comment on that statement. Obviously it is not the official SNP line.

The Presiding Officer: Mr Bibby—a minute.

Ms Grahame, I was not calling you; I was reprimanding you for shouting across the chamber.

Mr Bibby, please continue.

Neil Bibby: Mike Russell and Joan McAlpine said that we lacked the ambition of Nye Bevan. I would just say to Joan McAlpine that she is no Nye Bevan and to Mike Russell that he is no Nye Bevan.

Today was the opportunity for the SNP Government to come to the chamber and dispute the evidence from SPICe that its policy is unfunded and uncoded. The only new thing that we heard today was from Bob Doris, who said that Trident is going to pay for childcare. I thought that the policy was self-funding, Bob Doris.

Those are the things that the SNP has told us. However, what has it not told us? In terms of costings, I have asked the Minister for Children and Young People for the total cost of the policy before today, following the publication of the white paper, and again today, but she has consistently refused to answer that question. How incompetent is this Government when it cannot even tell us the total cost of its flagship policy? Perhaps that is not surprising given that John Swinney cannot or will not tell us 100 days before the referendum what the set-up costs of independence would be. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Neil Bibby: I am happy to take an intervention if any SNP member wants to tell me what the set-up costs of independence will be. There are no takers. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order. Can we just settle down, please?

Neil Bibby: We know that SPICe has given us an answer on the costs of childcare; it has estimated that it will cost in the region of £1.2 billion and that it could be even higher, at £1.5 billion.

What else has the SNP not told us about the SPICe facts and findings? The modelling that has been published is not even directly related to the SNP's childcare policy, because it does not consider whether that policy would cause an increase of 6 per cent in female labour market participation. There is no evidence whatsoever to

suggest that the white paper's childcare commitment would result in Scotland's female labour market participation rate matching Sweden's.

In addition, the SNP has based its figures on all women working full time, when we know that women want to work part time. The SNP does not base any calculations on the average female wage of £17,000 a year; it bases them on the £26,000 annual figure for men and women. The SNP does not tell us that in 2013 women's gross average hourly pay was 17 per cent lower than men's. There are many other issues to consider, too, including the potential downward pressure on real wages that SPICe identified.

There we have it: the SNP's white paper childcare policies. Never have I seen such a demolition of a misleading policy claim than the SPICe briefing in April. *[Laughter.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order. Let us hear the member.

Neil Bibby: There are no full costings for the SNP's policy and it is not self-funding. Where there are calculations, they are based on the wrong figures. Further, all is to be paid for without an increase in tax—at the same time as cutting corporation tax—and without cutting other public services by £1.2 billion.

The most revealing aspect of how little substance the SNP's childcare policy has is the lengths that the SNP is going to in order to hide the figures behind the policy. The journalist Tom Gordon sought to find out under freedom of information whether ministers had modelled their childcare policies. He was told no, but then the Scottish Government quickly retracted that and said yes. But guess what? The Scottish Government says that it is not in the public interest to publish it. How can hiding the truth be in the public interest?

We have asked in written and oral questions for the modelling to be published, and we have done so again in this debate today. It is not that it is not in the public's interest to publish the information; it is that it is not in the SNP's interests to publish the full economic modelling and costing. Why else would ministers go to such lengths to keep it hidden?

I will ask one more time: will the Scottish Government publish all the economic modelling and costings? Yes or no? *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Neil Bibby: As the Government does not say yes and as it has not disputed the SPICe claims, we need to get back to using the powers that we have in this Parliament and form a cross-party childcare commission to look at the issues, identify

the problems and fund the childcare that our families desperately need. It is regrettable that yet again the SNP chooses to put the constitution before childcare.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you. That concludes the debate on Scotland's future.

Point of Order

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): We have a point of order from Alison McInnes.

Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I refer to rule 7.3.1 of standing orders. During questions on the statement on the sleeper franchise earlier, I referred to the proposal to abolish the sleeper service north of Edinburgh. In response, the Minister for Transport and Veterans said:

"Alison McInnes is just making it up when she says that we proposed to abolish the sleeper. She is just making this kind of stuff up, and it is completely wrong."

However, any member can go to the Scottish Government website and follow the link to Transport Scotland, where the rail 2014 paper states at paragraph 11.12:

"We are considering a number of options for the future provision of sleeper services, for instance: removing or increasing financial support; and reducing the provision, either through removing the Highland or Lowland service, or by running the Lowland services to and from Edinburgh only."

[Interruption.]

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Alison McInnes: Given that we have an out-of-touch transport minister who does not know what his own agency was suggesting, will there be an opportunity for him to come back to the chamber after he has done some basic research and admit that the sleeper service was under threat and that only outrage from people in the north-east of Scotland and the Highlands changed that?

The Presiding Officer: I thank the member for the advance notice of her point of order. As the member is well aware, the Presiding Officers are not responsible for the veracity of the comments that members make in the chamber.

Business Motions

17:31

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is consideration of motion S4M-10134, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Tuesday 3 June 2014

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motion

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Air Passenger Duty

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 4 June 2014

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions
Rural Affairs and the Environment;
Justice and the Law Officers

followed by European and External Relations
Committee Debate: Inquiry into the
Scottish Government's Proposals for an
Independent Scotland: Membership of
the European Union

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 5 June 2014

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

12.30 pm Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Women
and the Economy

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 10 June 2014

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 11 June 2014

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions
Health and Wellbeing

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 12 June 2014

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

12.30 pm Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time—[*Joe FitzPatrick*].

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of four business motions. I ask Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, to move motions S4M-10135 to S4M-10138, setting out stage 1 and stage 2 timetables for various bills, en bloc.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Legal Writings (Counterparts and Delivery) (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 be completed by 28 November 2014.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Courts Reform (Scotland) Bill at stage 2 be completed by 27 June 2014.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Disabled Persons' Parking Badges (Scotland) Bill at stage 2 be completed by 13 June 2014.

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Revenue Scotland and Tax Powers Bill at stage 2 be completed by 27 June 2014.—[*Joe FitzPatrick*.]

Motions agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is consideration of a Parliamentary Bureau motion. I ask Joe FitzPatrick to move motion S4M-10139, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Single Use Carrier Bags Charge (Scotland) Regulations 2014 [draft] be approved.—[Joe FitzPatrick].

The Presiding Officer: Alex Fergusson has indicated that he wishes to speak against the motion. You have up to three minutes, Mr Fergusson.

17:32

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): Thank you, Presiding Officer.

Having opposed the draft Single Use Carrier Bags Charge (Scotland) Regulations 2014 when they came before the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee last week, I think that it is only right that I explain to the Parliament why I took that action.

I very much share the Government's desire to reduce litter and indeed to reduce the use of single-use carrier bags, as do my colleagues, but I simply do not accept that the draft regulations will bring about those laudable aims. We have been assured that they are evidence based, but I have asked myself several times on what evidence they are based, because much of the evidence seems to me to be conflicting.

In Ireland, it was claimed that the use of plastic carrier bags fell markedly—indeed, by up to 90 per cent—following the introduction of similar legislation, yet the demand for plastic film rose by more than 30 per cent to some 29,000 tonnes as consumers turned to different types of plastic carriers for their convenience. In Wales, the use of paper bags also fell dramatically following legislation, but paper bag usage is now back to the same level that it was at before the legislation was introduced. Those evidence bases have apparently been largely ignored by the Scottish Government.

My main concern lies in the field of food safety. I believe that the Government is wrong to include in the regulations carrier bags for the fast food and food-to-go sectors. There is evidence that the single paper biodegradable bag in which people receive and transport carry-out meals can actually help to reduce litter by acting as a receptacle for all the various individual items of packaging that such a meal requires. Those bags will not and indeed should not be reused, and some valid

concerns are being aired that show that the reuse of any bags for edible food purposes, especially hot food, carries real health risks.

If that is not enough, I hope those members who represent Kirkcaldy are aware that Smith Anderson of Kirkcaldy, which is a major supplier of paper bags to both Burger King and McDonald's, estimates that the legislation would cost as many of 40 jobs out of its workforce.

I do not believe that the measure will reduce litter or the overall demand for plastic. There is a real risk of reduced food safety by including the food-to-go sector, and I, for one, do not want 40 jobs to disappear in Kirkcaldy as a result of the legislation.

The Presiding Officer: You need to bring your remarks to a close.

Alex Fergusson: I hope that I am wrong about the measure, but the evidence that I have seen suggests that I will not be.

17:35

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment (Richard Lochhead): I will respond to the Conservatives' objection to what I believe will be one of Parliament's most progressive environmental policies. I am disappointed by Alex Fergusson's stance but not surprised that the Conservatives have chosen to try to block a good environmental measure.

As I told the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee last Wednesday, Scotland uses about 750 million single-use carrier bags a year—every year—from supermarkets alone, which is more per head than anywhere else on these islands. The committee agreed with me by a margin of eight to one that it is time to take action to reduce the number of those bags that are given out.

That is part of our wider work to tackle Scotland's litter problem. Carrier bags are a highly visible and damaging part of that problem in our communities, by our roadsides and particularly in our seas.

Placing a value on bags challenges the throwaway society. We want to promote the reuse of bags and other items in our society, to help get the most out of our increasingly limited resources and to cut carbon emissions.

The regulations are designed to offer a proportionate response. We have been careful to ensure that the administration will be as light touch as possible, particularly for small businesses.

The regulations will impose a requirement to charge, not a tax. Shoppers will be able to avoid

the charge by bringing their own bags to the shops.

It is clear that there is support for the measure from many retailers, their customers and environmental organisations. Last year's consultation received a strong response in favour of the charge and we have had constructive dialogue with all stakeholders during the process. I believe that the public support the measure. An opinion poll from Keep Scotland Beautiful just last week indicated strong public support—of those questioned, the number in favour of the charge was almost two to one.

Charges that are similar to our proposal are working well in Wales and Northern Ireland. Even the United Kingdom Government is set to introduce a charge in England. The Scottish Government's proposals are coherent and thorough. Mr Fergusson and his colleagues would have us make our proposals less coherent and less thorough, rather like what the UK Government is doing.

The proposals from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to exempt paper and biodegradable bags have been roundly criticised by the Westminster Environmental Audit Committee, in contrast to the Welsh scheme, which is in line with our proposals. That committee said:

"Exemptions for small retailers and paper and biodegradable bags make it confusing for consumers, potentially harmful for the recycling industry, and less effective than the Welsh scheme, where bag use has been reduced by over 75% with a straightforward 5p charge on all disposable carrier bags."

It is time for Scotland to take action on the issue. I urge members to back the regulations.

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

The next item of business is consideration of a further Parliamentary Bureau motion. I ask Joe FitzPatrick to move motion S4M-10140, on the suspension of standing orders.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that, for the purpose of allowing the Justice Committee to start consideration of the Courts Reform (Scotland) Bill at stage 2 on 10 June 2014, Rule 9.5.3A of Standing Orders be suspended.—[Joe FitzPatrick.]

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

Decision Time

17:38

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-10131.3, in the name of Aileen Campbell, which seeks to amend motion S4M-10131, in the name of Kezia Dugdale, on Scotland's future, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (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)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (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) (Ind)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 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 (Aberdeen Donside) (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)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (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) (Ind)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (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)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Rowley, Alex (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
 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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 64, Against 48, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S4M-10131.1, in the name of Willie Rennie, which seeks to amend motion S4M-10131, in the name of Kezia Dugdale, on Scotland's future, as amended, 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)
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (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)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Rowley, Alex (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
 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)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (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)

Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (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) (Ind)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 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 (Aberdeen Donside) (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)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (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) (Ind)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 48, Against 64, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-10131, in the name of Kezia Dugdale, on Scotland's future, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (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)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (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) (Ind)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 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 (Aberdeen Donside) (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)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (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) (Ind)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (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)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Rowley, Alex (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
 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)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 64, Against 48, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament resolves to keep childcare at the top of the political agenda; acknowledges the significant progress made by the Scottish Government in expanding funded early learning and childcare to 600 hours for three and four-year-olds and the most vulnerable 27% of two-year-olds; recognises the radical proposals for transforming childcare set out in *Scotland's Future: Your Guide to an Independent Scotland*, which would ensure that children from age one to five would be entitled to 1,140 hours of early learning and childcare, broadly the same number of hours that children currently receive in primary school; welcomes the valuable cross-party contribution made by Willie Rennie and Malcolm Chisholm as members of the Early Years Taskforce, which brings together practitioners, professionals and politicians to inform the strategic development of early years policy, including early learning and childcare, and further welcomes the establishment by Children in Scotland of the Partnership Commission for

Childcare Reform as part of its Childcare Alliance, which will help to inform this important agenda.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-10139, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, on single-use carrier bags, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 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)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (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)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 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)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Rowley, Alex (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

Against

Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 100, Against 12, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Single Use Carrier Bags Charge (Scotland) Regulations 2014 [draft] be approved.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S4M-10140, in the name of Joe

FitzPatrick, on suspension of standing orders, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that, for the purpose of allowing the Justice Committee to start consideration of the Courts Reform (Scotland) Bill at stage 2 on 10 June 2014, Rule 9.5.3A of Standing Orders be suspended.

Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments and Bobath Scotland

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S4M-09412, in the name of Siobhan McMahon, on recognising the work of the Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments and Bobath Scotland. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises the work of the Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments (SCCMI) in Cumbernauld for its provision of education and therapy services for children, young people and their families affected by cerebral palsy and other related conditions; understands that the SCCMI has assisted a wide range of disabled people from birth to 19 years of age and who reside in all parts of Scotland, since being established in 1991; further recognises the charity, Bobath Scotland, and the support that it provides for individuals and their families in a relaxed, non-clinical and fun environment; understands that children and young people affected by cerebral palsy and other related conditions may be affected by disorders of movement, disturbances of sensation, perception, communication and cognition; praises the work of both the SCCMI and Bobath Scotland in addressing the educational needs and the development of psychomotor, communicative and individual living skills in children affected by cerebral palsy and other related conditions through the provision of physical, speech and language, and Bobath Scotland therapies; acknowledges that primary teachers, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists and other staff work in close partnership to integrate educational and physical activities to address each child's needs and to maximise independence, and hopes that what it considers the excellent work of both the SCCMI and Bobath Scotland continues to support those with, or affected by, motor impairments.

17:43

Siobhan McMahon (Central Scotland) (Lab):

I thank all the members who signed my motion and everyone who has stayed behind to support the debate or take part in it. I know that many more members would have liked to have taken part in the debate but were prevented from doing so by other commitments this evening.

One such member is my colleague Patricia Ferguson, who cannot be here because she is attending a conference in Wales. She sent her best wishes for the debate and to Bobath Scotland. Patricia Ferguson is no stranger to Bobath. She is the constituency member who represents the charity and she has led a number of members' business debates that recognise the invaluable contribution that Bobath makes to young people throughout Scotland and their families.

Today's debate is about recognising the great work of not just Bobath Scotland but the Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments, particularly in relation to education and therapy services for children and young people throughout Scotland.

Last November, I took part in the HemiHelp professionals conference at the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh. As some members will know, I am one of the patrons of HemiHelp, which is a charity that aims to use specialist knowledge and supportive networks of families and professionals to create awareness and understanding in order to empower children and young people who are affected by hemiplegia across the United Kingdom to reach their full potential. I was asked to speak at the conference about my own experience as someone who grew up with hemiplegia and about what that means to me. As I spoke about my journey, I was not aware that there were representatives of both Bobath Scotland and the Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments in the audience. However, following my speech, they contacted me to tell me that, somewhat worryingly, some of the things that I had spoken about happening 20 years ago are still happening. They requested that I visit each of their centres to find out more, which I was delighted to do.

The Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments was established in 1991 and is one of Scotland's grant-aided special schools. It is based in Cumbernauld, in the Central Scotland region that I have great pleasure in representing. The centre helps mainly children and young people who have cerebral palsy and related conditions. When the centre was opened 23 years ago, the aim was to provide education for children with motor impairments based on the principles of conductive education and other progressive education methods. In doing that, the centre allows children and young people to achieve their potential, which, in turn, allows them to develop their independence and gain key life skills. All the staff who work at the centre have a background in either health or education, which allows for a holistic approach that involves teachers, physiotherapists and other staff working in close partnership. That leads to greater integration of educational and physical activities, resulting in each child's needs being met as they require them to be met.

Bobath Scotland is a Scottish charity that, I am sure, all members are aware of already as a result of the fantastic work that the organisation does not only in Glasgow, where it is based, but throughout Scotland. The Scottish wing of the charity has been devoted to improving quality of life for children and adults with cerebral palsy since 1996. Bobath also provides a holistic approach to

therapy, recognising that each person with cerebral palsy is an individual and will, therefore, have different needs and abilities. The therapy that is offered by Bobath Scotland is a transdisciplinary approach involving occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech and language therapy. Bobath Scotland believes that, by taking that approach, it can give people with cerebral palsy the skills that they require to explore the world, communicate their needs and participate as much as possible in all aspects of their lives.

As I mentioned, the conditions that both the Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments and Bobath Scotland deal with are something that I know a lot about. Having been born with hemiplegia, I know of the difficulties that people face when trying to access vital services such as occupational therapy and physiotherapy. I started attending the out-patient department at Monklands hospital in Airdrie when I was three weeks old. My frequent visits there ended in my early 20s, when I was transferred to hospitals in Glasgow. Monklands hospital was a place that I would come to know very well, and it will always have a special place in my heart. The friendly and dedicated staff that I dealt with throughout my time at the hospital made a massive contribution to the person I am today. Put simply, it is because of them that I have the ability to walk.

Given that I was in the health system from such a young age, it is somewhat surprising that I was not allocated a physiotherapist until I was around seven. My mum carried out some exercises on me that she had been given by the consultant at that time, but I do not think that it is appropriate to give that responsibility to a parent. The reason for that is simple—the guilt factor. Despite knowing that if she had not carried out those painful exercises on me I would not be able to do most of the things that I do today, my mum still feels immeasurable guilt at being the person who carried them out on me. Why that burden should be placed on parents when we have trained and capable medical staff available to us I really do not know.

That is, ultimately, where my frustration lies. It is not good enough that, in the 21st century, we have not achieved a more joined-up approach to healthcare. It angers me that hospital is treated differently from a GP, who is treated differently from an OT, a physio or a social worker. We need a far more joined-up approach that will help not only the patients but all the partners that I have mentioned. Given that there are already centres, such as the two that I have mentioned, doing such work, we should use their expertise as the model and roll it out to every part of our country.

One of the most important principles of both the Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments and Bobath Scotland is their family-

centred approach. Too often, siblings of children with disabilities do not receive the attention and focus that they deserve. I did not realise until a couple of years ago the impact that my disability has had on my younger brother and sister. They were not asked how they felt when they had to spend another endless night at the accident and emergency unit with me or when our holidays were shifted around to fit in with yet another operation for me. Indeed, they were not asked how they felt when other children said insulting things to me in the playground, yet, of course, they were affected.

That is why the work that is done with siblings at the centres is vital. It helps to maintain a close family bond, not because of the disability but in spite of it. The Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments employs a dedicated family support co-ordinator, which I think is a fantastic idea. To be clear, the support co-ordinator is for the family—not the parents or the child with the disability but all the family. The co-ordinator assists families in a variety of ways, which include providing information, helping them to secure appropriate services for their children and ensuring that all the family members' views and feelings are listened to when important decisions are made.

As members may know, the core services of the Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments are funded by the Scottish Government. However, some vital services, such as those for children under the age of two, the siblings group or the operation and maintenance of the hydrotherapy pool—at a cost of over £30,000 a year—are exclusively funded through donations. It costs about £650,000 to keep the Bobath Scotland centre open each year. I understand that 75 per cent of that comes from voluntary sources, although some national health service boards make contributions to the cost of therapy.

I have had the great pleasure of visiting both centres and I have seen for myself the incredible difference that the individuals at those centres can make in a young person's life. I therefore urge the Scottish Government to do all that it can to continue to fund both centres and others like them so that other young people can benefit from those vital services.

17:51

James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): I thank Siobhan McMahon for bringing the debate to the chamber and for her passionate and moving speech. It is clear to many members that Bobath Scotland provides a vital service for those who use it.

To emphasise the importance of its role, I want to tell a story about six-year-old Lachlan Morris, who I have had the pleasure of knowing since he was just a baby. Lachlan lives with his parents, Susan and Paul, and his three-year-old brother, Donald. Lachlan's dad, Paul, was a colleague of mine when I was a councillor. We worked closely together and I consider him to be a good friend. I remember well when Lachlan was born and I remember Paul telling me that Lachlan had a condition. It turned out that Lachlan has quadriplegic choreoathetoid cerebral palsy, which means that all four limbs are involved. In Lachlan's case, he is unable to speak clearly, sit, eat, walk or dress himself, so he can do very little without support.

However, Lachlan is also very bright and charming and, boy, can I vouch for that. He attends the mainstream Park primary school in Alloa and is supported at school by an excellent team of professionals. He regularly tops his class for spelling and numeracy. He uses a Tobii eye gaze computer system to communicate and is becoming adept at asking important questions and being cheeky, or so his father says. Paul shared some photos with me taken from Lachlan's computer. One was a birthday list, which included a ladybird seat pet. Do not ask me what that is, but Lachlan likes ladybirds because of Gaston from "Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom"—again, do not ask me, but I suspect that it is a children's programme. Of course, then he asked, "How much is it?"

Other photos were from the Scottish cup final, with the question, "How many fans are going?" Lachlan was one of the many Dundee United fans at the final. He had a great day but was disappointed by the result although, to be honest, I suspect that that is more his Arab-mad dad speaking than Lachlan. Lachlan loves football and loves going to Tannadice with his daddy and uncles. He also loves swimming and is a very sociable young man.

Lachlan has attended Bobath Scotland in Glasgow for annual blocks of therapy since he was three years old. The blocks can be taken in different ways and are tailored to suit the needs of the child. Lachlan has three one-hour sessions over the course of six weeks once a year. As has been said, the key to the Bobath centre in Scotland is that it specifically works with the aim of supporting local therapists. Bobath works intensively with children and invites the child's local physiotherapist, speech therapist and occupational therapist to discuss, observe and participate in sessions. Particular activities and exercises are developed that can be taken back to the community and worked on. Bobath also invites key workers, such as nursery workers and teachers, to come in for a session to observe and

practise things such as how to hold or support the child most effectively and how to build exercises into routines. Those skills and techniques are then used in Lachlan's care.

The regular therapy has had a marked impact on Lachlan's physical development, co-ordination and self-confidence. It has also had a positive effect on his mum and dad, who have learned a great deal about how best to handle Lachlan and to work with him to improve his body strength and co-ordination over time. Simple things such as how to sit and hold children such as Lachlan who cannot sit up on their own or control strong movements are important skills that Bobath can teach. Now that Lachlan is at school, the Bobath therapy also includes opportunities for support staff to learn more about the way in which the therapy can help Lachlan in his school context.

Of course, that specialised and vital service costs money, and it would not be where it is without the generosity of the people who donate regularly to the service or fundraise on its behalf, among whom are Paul and Donald—Lachlan's wee brother—who have raised £9,000 in the past three years by taking part in the annual bike for Bobath fundraiser, with Donald riding pillion, of course.

Bobath now has plans to extend its reach to assist adults with motor problems. That is a sensible and worthwhile pursuit, particularly as the youngest patients, who Bobath Scotland worked with in the mid-1990s, will now be reaching adulthood.

I know that Paul and Susan consider themselves fortunate that their national health service board area fully funds all of Lachlan's treatment but, apparently, not all NHS boards take that approach.

I hope that, through Lachlan's story, I have made the chamber aware of how crucial Bobath Scotland is to users and their families throughout the country. I am sure that members will do all that they can to support it, and I ask the minister whether there is anything that he can do to encourage NHS boards to consider funding the Bobath needs of people in their area.

17:55

Jackson Carlaw (West Scotland) (Con): I congratulate Siobhan McMahon on bringing the debate to the chamber. I hope that I can do justice to the subject in my brief contribution.

Many members are familiar with Bobath, as we have had a number of debates in the chamber on it. However, most members will be aware of the facility even if they are not aware that they are aware of it, because the Bobath centre can be

seen, near Springburn, as one drives through Glasgow on the M8. Stephanie Fraser and the team there have done an outstanding job in providing an outstanding facility—for many, a respite facility—for families in Glasgow and across Scotland.

Many members of the public became aware of the issue through the story of David and Samantha Cameron's young son, Ivan, who, sadly, died. Through that story, families who do not have the experience at first hand or even second hand of children with cerebral palsy became aware of the completely overwhelming involvement of the parents, the family, the friends, the carers and the support network, the tremendous love and dedication that are shown by all those people, and—as James Dornan said—the response of the children who are affected and the love that they give in return.

I was less aware of the Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments or of the fact that Siobhan McMahon had a direct connection with it. In preparation for the debate, I went to its website and saw that it was founded a little bit earlier than Bobath Scotland and provides a similar service to children over a wide area. It benefits from Scottish Government grant aid, which it complements through voluntary giving.

I am not a soft touch but, as I read the whole website, I eventually came to a button that said, "DONATE NOW", so I pressed it. Therefore, as a result of today's debate, I ended up making a donation to the centre. The word of thanks that I got back said:

"Fundraising is a very important part of our income with all funds raised going directly to helping the children and families we support. Fundraising supports in particular the Early Intervention Service, the siblings group and the hydrotherapy pool."

I think that Siobhan McMahon mentioned that hydrotherapy pool. It continued:

"Donations also allow us to purchase equipment to further assist in the children's development and to maintain our play areas, sense garden and learning garden."

I thought that I had done something a bit more worth while than writing a speech. I suspect that Stephanie Fraser will be on the phone tomorrow expecting a parallel donation to Bobath Scotland, and I pledge here in the chamber that I will also make that donation.

I congratulate Siobhan McMahon on her motion. The organisations do fantastic work. A generation or so ago, families were left to fend for themselves. We have moved beyond that, and it is incumbent on us all to see what we can do. Many of us are fortunate enough not to need the organisations' services but, for those who do, our donations make all the difference.

17:59

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife)

(Lab): I also congratulate Siobhan McMahon on obtaining the debate, which is another members' business debate on an important topic. As Jackson Carlaw said, our society has made progress. The two organisations that we are discussing are within a generation of being founded, which demonstrates how things have improved. The Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments was founded in 1991 and Bobath Scotland was founded a little later, in 1996.

The different ways in which the organisations are funded are interesting. As Jackson Carlaw said, voluntary contributions are important, but so are those of Government and local authorities, and it is important that they are co-ordinated. That is the issue that I will address in my speech, rather than some of the points that other members have already covered clearly.

I was one of a group who founded my local hospice, and when I was engaged as the fundraiser for it, we wrestled with the business of fundholding. In the mid-1980s, having got the hospice going and achieved reasonable funding, we were faced with really serious problems at a time of high inflation, as was the whole hospice movement. Action that we took at that point persuaded the then Government, represented by Michael Forsyth—this is one of the things that he did rather well—to agree to support the hospices through match funding. That saved the hospices in Scotland. It did not happen in England, where the hospices went through a much more difficult time.

I suggest to members that we should consider how we fund some voluntary organisations. We should acknowledge that they raise money through cycling, as Mr Dornan mentioned, running marathons and all sorts of other things, and we could encourage them through UK tax relief, which already encourages them through grant aid—it is excellent that that is the case. We could also offer to match what the public gives—in the way that the Government is currently offering to encourage Glasgow School of Art—involving us as a society in a much greater way.

I also suggest that, when the Government funds a voluntary organisation directly, not only should it do so on a three-year basis, which is the basic principle that is supposed to obtain, but it should extend that to include what I have called the stop-the-clock system.

Often, the decisions are made in Government at the very last minute, and many voluntary organisations have to give out redundancy notices that are then withdrawn because the funding is found. The stop-the-clock system would mean that

the funding clock would stop four months after the decision to withdraw funding, so the funding would continue for at least four months, meaning that redundancy notices would not be handed out.

There are a huge number of advances in this area. The University of Stirling, which I have been involved with since it was set up in the 1960s, set out to have good disabled access, which is not available in some of the older universities but which is very important. Many students with cerebral palsy and in wheelchairs attend the University of Stirling because of that good access.

Good access is important, as is knowing about it. In that respect, I commend Euan's guide, a website established by a young man with motor neurone disease that allows us to see reviews of access for disabled people. Such activity should be encouraged.

There are still problems with care and repair, but I do not have time to go into that now.

As we merge health and social care, we need to think about some of the allied health professions, such as speech and language therapy and occupational therapy, which Bob Doris and others have been considering in the Health and Sport Committee. They need to be integrated and properly funded to provide the necessary support to individuals who suffer from conditions such as cerebral palsy.

I thank Siobhan McMahon for bringing the debate to the Parliament and providing us with an opportunity to address some of the issues that are important for people with cerebral palsy as well as other disabled people.

18:03

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): I, too, thank Siobhan McMahon for securing the debate and for speaking passionately from the heart on something that is clearly close to her and her family. We can tell when members are pushing a line and when they are speaking from the heart and mean every word that they say. That is the light in which I listened to Siobhan McMahon's opening speech.

As an MSP for Glasgow, I know Bobath Scotland pretty well, given that it is located in the north of the city, and I have visited it on a number of occasions. As the motion suggests, I acknowledge the Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments and Bobath Scotland for what they do for young people and families living with cerebral palsy and other related conditions. I am less aware of the Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments. I intend to give the time I have to Bobath Scotland but no disrespect is intended.

Bobath Scotland came to Glasgow in 1995 after several families in the area joined together in an attempt to bring Bobath therapy, an alternative to conductive education, to Glasgow and closer to home. At its inception, it stood as the only centre in Scotland to offer that unique form of treatment and care to those who suffered from cerebral palsy. It remains the only bespoke centre to this day.

The therapy has been proved to be an effective means of increasing the sensory, communicative and functional skills of those who are living with cerebral palsy. Throughout the charity's life, it has delivered more than 33,000 therapy sessions, each of which has been tailored to the unique needs of those who benefit from it.

I would like to particularly note the adult programme that Bobath Scotland has recently developed. I understand that it has recently completed a two-year pilot that was funded by the Robertson Trust to determine the feasibility of fully developing and implementing that component of its services for the transition into adult life. I recognise that that is a major stepping stone for the charity. It comes with financial risks and several unknowns, so I commend the charity for its desire to extend its services to the adult community living with cerebral palsy, and I hope that the NHS, local authorities, and other partners can work with it and with families to make the therapy feasible for adults. Indeed, health and social care integration, which Richard Simpson mentioned, as well as the principles of independent living and the recent Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013, all knit nicely with the kind of empowerment that we want for those who are living with cerebral palsy and for their families so that they can reach their full potential. Bobath Scotland has a powerful way of making that happen.

I looked at Bobath Scotland's website before tonight's debate, and I want to read out a few words about a young boy called Alfie that show how Bobath therapy benefited him:

"Alfie attended the Bobath Scotland Cerebral Palsy Children's Therapy Centre in March 2009 for a two-week block of intensive therapy. Parents, grandparents, community physiotherapists and educational support staff joined in. Alfie began sitting up unaided for a little while, and demonstrated a determination and strength in his legs his family hadn't seen before. And, while he has no means of verbal communication as yet, like any other toddler, he makes his parents aware when he needs attention."

Alfie's mum, Emma, explained:

"The whole Bobath experience taught us that we're not alone in this. Staff were so professional, pleasant and unfazed by it all. Physically and emotionally, for Alfie and all of us, it was a fantastic experience. It really was a turning point for us—of acceptance of Alfie's cerebral palsy and that, although life will be very different for him, it does not mean it will be bad."

I have one final word from Alfie's mum, if you will indulge me Presiding Officer:

"Alfie is doing very well in comparison with many children with cerebral palsy. He is engaged and understands a lot. Don't get me wrong. I've had my dark moments and felt pessimistic, sad and guilty, but I do believe in my heart that everything really is going to be fine. His smile says it all!"

I think that everyone who has spoken in the debate is saying that when something works, we need to roll it out and maximise the opportunity for all families in Scotland to access that intensive benefit. Surely we can come together on that, and I am keen to work in partnership with the minister. I congratulate Siobhan McMahon once again on bringing the motion to the chamber.

18:09

The Minister for Public Health (Michael Matheson): Like other members, I congratulate Siobhan McMahon on securing time for this debate and thank her for the personal insight that she has given members about her experience of receiving services and how effective she felt that they were.

I am sure that all members recognise the importance of the way in which therapy is provided to people of all ages who have a motor impairment. It is essential that we have the right services in place to allow such therapies to be delivered effectively.

Although such motor impairments cannot be cured, it is possible to improve an individual's quality of life significantly through the appropriate use of therapeutic intervention. A key part of that approach involves considering how strong partnerships can be developed with the individual who requires the therapy and with their families, carers and others who work with them.

A number of members highlighted the important work that is undertaken by the Bobath centre in Glasgow and the Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments in Cumbernauld. I have visited the Glasgow centre—although not the centre in Cumbernauld—and I am aware of the extensive work that it undertakes in supporting individuals and their families and helping them to get the support and assistance that they require.

One important area of work that both centres are progressing involves building up their community outreach services by developing further partnerships with colleagues in local authorities, the third sector and the NHS. The objective behind that is to widen the impact that the centres can make on those who may not find the locations in Cumbernauld and Glasgow accessible.

Siobhan McMahon raised an important point about the way in which services can be disjointed

at times, particularly for children, and she talked about how we can ensure that there is much more joined-up working taking place between our agencies. The Government has implemented the getting it right for every child agenda and included it in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 to ensure that the whole process is underpinned in legislation.

The intention behind GIRFEC is to ensure that all children and young people in Scotland, including those with a disability, achieve their potential. We will achieve that by ensuring that there is a universal approach to improving outcomes for all children and young people that should be used by all agencies, in local authorities and in the NHS.

Such joined-up working is essential in ensuring that the appropriate assessments and services are provided to meet the needs of children and their families, including for children with a disability. We expect all services to plan for how they will deliver services to children and young people by taking that approach forward.

A couple of areas are particularly important. Richard Simpson referred to access to allied health professionals and the way in which AHP services are delivered. As a former AHP myself, I have an interest in that area and I am aware that the value and benefit that we can gain from our AHP staff is often not maximised.

I introduced the AHP delivery plan to transform the way in which we deliver our AHP services and to design them in a way that allows self-referrals to be made more freely and to ensure that the services are delivered flexibly for children and young people as well as for adults. We are already seeing some progress as a result of that plan and I believe that it will help to improve services yet further.

Several members have mentioned access to services such as the Bobath centre. It is worth recognising that, although Bobath is one form of therapeutic intervention for motor impairments, it is not the only form. Nevertheless, the service provides a valuable and useful skill set.

Recently, through our AHP national lead for children and young people, we facilitated a meeting with the chief executive officer and the therapy lead for Bobath Scotland, and the physiotherapy and occupational therapy leads from around Scotland, to discuss how partnerships can be better established. One clear issue that came from that particular meeting was the need to look at how the Bobath centre can help to support the OTs and physios in different board areas to deliver elements of the programme at a local level.

It is for each individual board to decide how they take that forward, but working with the Bobath

centre to support that type of service provision in a local area is an appropriate and useful approach. I would hope that the boards would be receptive to that offer of partnership from the Bobath centre and to the work that the centre in Cumbernauld undertakes.

Richard Simpson and other members mentioned funding. We provide funding to both those organisations. I am sure that members who regularly attend members' business debates know that there is often a call at these debates for funding for a range of organisations. I acknowledge Richard Simpson's point about the matched funding that has been provided for Glasgow School of Art. However, I sound a note of caution. There is a danger that smaller organisations that do not have as big a profile could be impacted by such an approach. We use section 16B of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978 in order to fund a range of organisations and allow them to undertake valuable work. I am always willing to consider whether there are better ways to support those organisations with the limited funds that we have.

I very much value the work that is undertaken by both organisations. I am more than happy to explore whether there are other ways in which we can work with them to support them in their work. I hope that members are reassured that our work at a national level is aimed at supporting those organisations to reach into communities beyond their own bases in order to ensure that those who could benefit from their services are able to do so.

Meeting closed at 18:16.

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