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Official Report

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Wednesday 3 December 2014

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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 3 December 2014

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

Portfolio Question Time

Education and Lifelong Learning

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): Good afternoon. The first item of business is portfolio question time. As ever, short and succinct questions and answers would be appreciated.

Foreign Language Teaching (Support)

1. Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government how it supports the teaching of foreign languages in schools. (S4O-03761)

The Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages (Dr Alasdair Allan): We want all young people in Scotland to have excellent language learning opportunities from a young age as a normal and expected part of a broad and relevant school education. That is why our one-plus-two languages policy is supporting local authorities and schools with significant extra funding—£9 million over two years—and it is why we are working closely with Education Scotland, Scotland's national centre for languages and others to create the conditions in which early and continued language learning becomes the norm.

Jamie McGrigor: Does the minister agree with the finding of the foreign language learning inquiry that the Parliament's European and External Relations Committee conducted last year—that foreign language assistants can play a very important and cost-effective role in helping our school pupils to learn modern foreign languages? Does he share my concern about the fact that the number of foreign language assistants in Scotland's schools in 2013-14 was down by almost three quarters from 2005-06? What action will the Scottish Government take to reverse that situation and to ensure that as many pupils as possible can benefit from working with foreign language assistants?

Dr Allan: I share both Jamie McGrigor's view on the importance of native speakers in the class and his enthusiasm for language learning. As he knows, I met the cross-party group on Germany to discuss that and other issues only last week.

It is important to mention that in the past year or so the overall number of language assistants has gone up. I appreciate that there is much to be

done, but it is worth saying—given that Mr McGrigor has a particular interest in German—that 30 German trainees have been brought into the system. The Scottish Government works with the British Council and others to ensure that we continue to improve the availability of modern language assistants throughout the school system.

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP): Does the minister agree that the one-plus-two policy is the most ambitious language learning programme in the United Kingdom and that the economic and cultural opportunities that can be gained from learning a second or third language in addition to the mother tongue are extensive?

Dr Allan: It is true that the benefits are very extensive. We can probably agree across the chamber that cognitively, culturally and economically it is in Scotland's interests for us to develop a culture of language learning at a much earlier age than has been the case in the past. I appreciate that that will require a lot of work by all of us, together with the education system, but I believe that the end makes that well worth doing.

Bullying

2. Siobhan McMahon (Central Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what measures it is taking to combat bullying in schools. (S4O-03762)

The Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages (Dr Alasdair Allan): Our national approach to anti-bullying, which was developed in partnership with stakeholders, sets out a common vision and aims to make sure that work across all agencies and communities is jointly focused on tackling all types of bullying.

To support the implementation of the national approach we have established and wholly fund respectme, which is a national anti-bullying service, in order to build confidence and capacity to tackle all types of bullying effectively. We are committed to refreshing the national approach to ensure that it remains current and reflects policy developments. A working group will be set up early in 2015.

Siobhan McMahon: The minister will be aware of Enable Scotland's new campaign #bethechange, which is aimed at tackling abusive and offensive language about people who have learning disabilities. By working in collaboration with a number of partners, Enable Scotland has developed a school resource for teachers of secondary 1 and 2 pupils that will raise awareness of learning disability and take an early-intervention approach to promoting positive attitudes to learning disability.

Does the minister support Enable Scotland's campaign? What action will he take to encourage

local authorities to implement in secondary schools the four-week lesson plan, which will focus on educating children about learning disability, from the 2015-16 academic year?

Dr Allan: Siobhan McMahon is right to point to the particular importance of ensuring that young people grow up with respect for, and understanding of, the issues that are faced by people with learning disabilities. One of the things that the Scottish Government and the education system in general focus on is promoting positive behaviour. That is central to what we do, and it is central to our understanding of the kind of dignity that everyone should expect and respect as a right in our schools.

Teachers' Workloads

3. Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to address teachers' workload issues. (S4O-03763)

The Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages (Dr Alasdair Allan): The Scottish Government is working with teachers' representatives, local authorities and other partners to address teacher workload issues. That includes an unprecedented package of support and resources to implement curriculum for excellence. Our curriculum for excellence working group on tackling bureaucracy is taking forward a strong set of actions to support schools in reducing unnecessary bureaucracy.

Dr Simpson: Does the minister share the concerns of the Educational Institute of Scotland, which says that there is a "workload crisis" in our schools, or the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers, which says that

"The Scottish Government is facing a ticking time bomb"?

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning's predecessor said that he wanted to maintain or increase teacher numbers, but every year since 2007 there has been a decrease. In fact, there are 4,000 fewer teachers than when the Scottish National Party took office. On top of that, there have been cuts in classroom assistants and support staff.

Are teachers unions right to voice their concerns? Will the minister inform Parliament whether he intends to reverse the cuts, to maintain the current level or to cut teacher numbers even further?

Dr Allan: Teacher numbers have stabilised since 2007. Dr Simpson is aware who the employers are: local authorities. The Government works with them to ensure that numbers are maintained in line with the existing teacher to pupil

ratio, which I am sure local authorities also want to happen.

On the broader issue of workload that Dr Simpson raised in his question, I have never tried to shy away from the fact that the introduction of a completely new set of qualifications has involved work for teachers, but the work that has been done since the successful implementation of those qualifications, to involve teachers and teachers unions in planning the way ahead, has been entirely positive.

Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): Does the minister agree with comments that were made by Terry Lanagan, who is the executive director of education in West Dunbartonshire Council, at the Education and Culture Committee on 30 September, when he said,

"I am quite clear, having worked in education for 37 years, that there has been no initiative in Scottish education during that time about which there has been more communication or more support"—[*Official Report, Education and Culture Committee*, 30 September 2014; c 13-14.]

Dr Allan: I certainly welcome the spirit and content of those comments. Of course, they tie in with comments from elsewhere in the sector. For instance, Ken Cunningham, who is the general secretary of School Leaders Scotland, said:

"The preparation, consultation: there's been more than I can ever remember. The amount of effort that's gone into this knocks the others into the corner".

I do not take anything away from the amount of work that has been involved, but in all parts of the education sector, the work that has gone in has been significant and we have all benefited from it.

Falkirk Council (Early Learning and Childcare)

4. Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with Falkirk Council regarding its obligation to provide a flexible approach to parental choice for early learning and childcare. (S4O-03764)

The Minister for Children and Young People (Aileen Campbell): The Government meets regularly with local authorities and discusses a range of issues that include childcare. It is for each local authority to implement the provisions in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 that relate to early learning and childcare, taking into account local needs and priorities. The act includes new duties on local authorities to increase flexibility year on year, based on consultation of representative local populations of parents, and to publish plans that show how they will do so.

Angus MacDonald: The minister might be aware of a privately funded nursery that serves my area, the Little Stars nursery, which has been trying for seven years to gain partnership status with Falkirk Council but has been refused, despite rating standards of 4 and 5. Parents claim that that is discrimination because it denies their children access to local education services. There is no doubt that Falkirk Council is falling short of the Scottish Government's objective in that regard. What can the Scottish Government do to ensure that Falkirk Council enables proper parental choice through a flexible approach?

Aileen Campbell: I thank Angus MacDonald for raising the issue. We expect local authorities to meet their statutory responsibilities, and it is for each of them to decide how best to do that to meet local needs. That includes using a mix of providers, including family centres, childminders and private providers such as the one that Angus MacDonald mentioned, which he knows well.

I reiterate that local authorities are now required to consult groups of parents at least once every two years on patterns of childcare provision that would best meet their needs. That should introduce greater levels of flexibility and choice in the system as we work with local government to further develop and expand the provision that is so important to so many families across the country.

I would be happy to meet Angus MacDonald to discuss the issue further if he thinks that that would be helpful.

School Curriculum (Software Engineering)

5. Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it plans to introduce software engineering as part of the school curriculum. (S4O-03765)

The Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages (Dr Alasdair Allan): Curriculum for excellence enables young people in schools to develop their skills and focus on the learning that is needed for our modern dynamic economy, consistent with the developing Scotland's young workforce agenda. Within the curriculum framework, and through the suite of computing science national qualifications, learners have many opportunities to develop the understanding and skills that will enable them to take up careers in software engineering and programming.

Willie Coffey: The minister will be aware that, despite those considerable efforts over recent years, we are still well short of producing the number of software engineers in Scotland that we require. Estonia seems to have made great strides in establishing a world-class reputation for software excellence and software engineers. What

more does the minister think we might be able to do—particularly in schools—to raise the profile of careers in software design, so that youngsters can see the fantastic career opportunities that lie ahead?

Dr Allan: I am always happy to learn from the experience of other countries. However, it is worth saying that in Scotland £250,000 has recently been provided to BCS to provide learning opportunities for teachers as part of our professional learning and networking for computing—PLAN C—project to make sure that teachers have the skills and confidence to keep up with this fast-changing subject.

On teacher numbers, the Government recognises that this subject deserves some priority, given the demand that exists for it. It is also true to say that understanding the career opportunities that exist is an important message to put out in the curriculum. That message has been reflected in national careers events as well.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Has the Scottish Government given any thought to the call from the Royal Society of Chemistry to broaden the science curriculum to include subjects such as engineering and to start having dedicated science teachers in primary schools?

Dr Allan: The Royal Society of Chemistry and others have made very important contributions to the debate about science, particularly, as the member mentions, at the primary school level. There is now a much wider acceptance of—and, more important, an understanding of—the need for science in primary schools, and a great deal of work goes into creating the skills and the confidence to use them among primary classroom teachers, to ensure that science is firmly grounded in the primary curriculum.

Raising Attainment for All Programme

6. Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how the raising attainment for all programme is raising the standards of education in schools. (S4O-03766)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Angela Constance): Raising attainment and reducing educational inequality is a top priority for the Scottish Government, Education Scotland and all our partners. The raising attainment for all programme was launched in June this year. It involves more than 150 schools from 12 local authorities and it brings a structured approach to improvement into Scottish schools. The raising attainment for all programme will complement the other work that was announced in the programme for government, including the read, write, count campaign and the creation of

attainment advisers for every local authority through Education Scotland.

Stewart Stevenson: I welcome the minister's answer and the Government's ambition. Can she explain further how the programme is going to make a difference in breaking the connection that currently exists between social deprivation and the level of educational achievement for too many pupils?

Angela Constance: Of course, poverty does not stop at the school gates. We know that poverty can undermine our efforts to make progress and Westminster policies are undeniably making the situation more challenging. However, education brings choices and opportunities. It brings routes out of poverty for children and young people and it can and should be the key to breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty, which can be all too real in modern-day Scotland.

The raising attainment for all programme and the other interventions that I mentioned will indeed help schools to focus relentlessly on doing everything that they can to erode that connection between deprivation and poor educational attainment.

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): I congratulate the cabinet secretary on her appointment and wish her well in her new role.

Last week, the First Minister said that, against every main measure, education is improving. We would expect that, given that her party has been in government for seven and a half years, but it is not true. In areas such as numeracy, the Scottish Government's own figures show that standards are falling. Does the education secretary count numeracy as a main measure of educational achievement? What action will she take to address numeracy standards?

Angela Constance: Absolutely—numeracy is an important priority and must be given parity of esteem with and the same importance as literacy. Numeracy is at the heart of curriculum for excellence, and we have committed £1.2 million over the next three years to accelerate the development of local authority numeracy hubs. There are currently six numeracy hubs in various areas up and down the country.

It is true to say that our attainment record in Scotland is good and is improving. That is true whether we look at the PISA—programme for international student assessment—results; at the attainment gap, which has closed in maths, reading and science; at school leaver destinations; or at the record number of passes at higher and advanced higher level. Nonetheless, I make it clear that attainment for all and closing the equity gap is my top priority, and we must pick up the pace.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): With regard to attainment, 35 per cent of secondary 2 pupils in 2013 were not working at their expected level of numeracy, in comparison with 2 per cent of those in primary 7. Why is there such a deterioration in only two years?

Angela Constance: Ms Scanlon makes an important point. When we compare similar surveys to measure progress in literacy, attainment remains at a good level of 80 per cent plus. There is something that happens, perhaps in the transfer between primary school and the first few years of secondary school.

As I indicated in my answer to Mr Bibby, numeracy is a priority for the Government, and I have outlined the actions that we are taking. Numeracy, along with literacy, is core in ensuring that all our children attain more and are prepared for the world of work.

Autistic Spectrum Disorders Pupil Support

7. Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how it assists general teaching staff in helping them to ensure that pupils with autistic spectrum disorders receive full support. (S4O-03767)

The Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages (Dr Alasdair Allan): To help teachers and educational support staff to meet the needs of pupils with autism, the Scottish Government funded Scottish Autism to produce the autism toolbox website. That online national tool will encourage best practice among all education staff in schools to enable them to support pupils with autism. The toolbox website will also provide a forum for continually updating and disseminating good practice. Scottish Autism has offered all education authorities awareness sessions on the autism toolbox.

Christina McKelvie: I thank the minister for that answer and reassure him that some of the teachers and parents to whom I have spoken welcome the toolbox website.

For many children on the autistic spectrum, homework is a very stressful time, which strays into the challenges that young people with autistic spectrum disorders face out of school. What the minister says about the toolbox is welcome. Will he join me in asking what work can be done to better support children with autism spectrum disorders in dealing with the work that they have to undertake away from the structure of their classroom?

Dr Allan: Christina McKelvie rightly points out that homework can provide a particular source of stress for children and young people with autistic spectrum disorders. For that reason, the

Government and the education system are keen to provide support. One of the most important forms of support is continuing professional development for teachers. Also, through the autism strategy, which was launched in 2011, there are a number of one-stop shops aimed at providing many forms of support, one of which is in Lanarkshire.

Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): I am dealing with a constituency case involving a teenage autistic boy who considers that his teachers do not understand his literal interpretation of remarks or his lack of tact. That has led to him becoming disengaged educationally. Can the minister tell me what support is in place to enable existing teaching staff to gain greater understanding through CPD, and to enable new teaching staff, through teacher training, to be given a greater understanding so that, when they start in post, they have a much firmer understanding of autism and autistic spectrum disorders?

Dr Allan: As the member rightly says, one of the biggest tasks is to ensure that teachers understand what autism is and what it can mean for a child or young person. One of the central tenets of the standard for full registration is that new teachers can identify barriers to learning that may exist and respond to them appropriately. The autism toolbox, among its many functions, performs an important role in ensuring that teachers understand what autism is.

Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (Guidance)

8. Jayne Baxter (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the progress of the accompanying guidance for the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. (S4O-03768)

The Minister for Children and Young People (Aileen Campbell): Statutory guidance on part 6 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, on early learning and childcare, was published in August 2014 to coincide with that part coming into force. The remaining statutory guidance to accompany the act will be formally consulted on prior to publication and within the appropriate timescales ahead of commencement of the relevant parts of the act.

Jayne Baxter: The minister will know from her recent meeting with the Scottish kinship care alliance how strongly kinship carers feel about some of the proposed changes to the support that they receive. The getting it right for every child provisions in the 2014 act are vital for many kinship carers. Will the minister give more detail on the guidance that is being developed on the child's plan and any other aspects of the GIRFEC

guidance that could determine what support will be available to kinship care families?

Aileen Campbell: I might be able to follow up in writing on some of the more detailed issues on the implementation and the consultation on guidance. We intend to consult from February to April next year on the statutory guidance on parts 4, 5 and 18 of the act, which include the measures on the child's plan and on wellbeing. That should give some clarity for kinship carers. We will also consult on the guidance that will accompany the kinship care order under the act.

I am happy to continue to engage with the member on the timescales for the guidance on different parts of the act, which will all commence at different times. I will keep in touch with her on those points.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 9 has been withdrawn, for understandable reasons.

Getting it Right for Every Child

10. James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on progress with the getting it right for every child strategy. (S4O-03770)

The Minister for Children and Young People (Aileen Campbell): The key driver of our getting it right for every child approach is the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, which received royal assent in March. The GIRFEC duties in the act are to be implemented in August 2016.

James Dornan: Does the minister agree that a large share of the credit for the success of GIRFEC to date should go to voluntary bodies such as Home-Start, which does invaluable work in my constituency, for the role that they play in the strategy? Will she agree to visit Home-Start to see for herself the good work that it does? Will she update members on what the Scottish Government is doing to ensure that that aspect of GIRFEC continues to thrive?

Aileen Campbell: I thank the member for raising the good work that Home-Start has done in his constituency. I am aware of the good work that happens in other parts of the country, not least in the Highlands, to support families with young children and to ensure that parents have the necessary skills and confidence to build better lives for their children.

The work of Home-Start and other non-statutory bodies is a crucial component of getting it right for every child and young person in Scotland. That is why we have key relationships with a number of groups and organisations that do the sort of good work that Home-Start does and which James Dornan outlined.

I am happy to arrange a visit, although I am not sure whether it will be by me or my maternity replacement, Fiona McLeod. Regardless of who it is, we would be pleased to go and see the work to which James Dornan referred.

Further Education

11. Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to encourage people to attend further education courses. (S4O-03771)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Angela Constance): Our reforms mean that courses are increasingly tailored to student and employer need, which makes them more attractive to people who want to progress to good jobs or further study. The developing the young workforce programme will build on that by providing more and better pathways for people to benefit from a first-class vocational education that is closely linked to labour market need.

Neil Findlay: Short non-certificated courses are often enough to begin a person's journey back into education. The minister will know that her Government's cut of 140,000 college places is having a serious impact on adult education. What is the Government doing to support adults into the further education sector and to support the courses that were crudely and outrageously described by some of her colleagues as "hobby courses"?

Angela Constance: Although the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council has undoubtedly moved away from supporting very short courses, it is the case that very short courses have huge access and economic benefits. It is not true to say that we have moved entirely away from them; they still exist.

We have worked hard to get the right balance of provision. I make no apologies for prioritising young people, because, at the end of the day, it is always young people who are hit the hardest in times of recession. We should be proud of our record on young people in further education, which is that more young people are studying full-time courses that lead to recognised qualifications that boost their prospects of getting good work and sustainable employment.

Education and Lifelong Learning (Budget Priorities)

12. Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what the budget priorities are for the education and lifelong learning portfolio in 2015-16. (S4O-03772)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Angela Constance): The

First Minister made it clear last week in publishing the programme for government that attainment is our top priority. The full budget priorities are set out in the budget document, which was published on 9 October 2014.

Gavin Brown: What will happen in real terms to the higher education resource budget in 2015-16?

Angela Constance: The Scottish Government is proud to continue to invest £1 billion—that is £1,041 million—in higher education. Within that, we have asked the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council not to allocate £22 million, which represents 2 per cent of the budget. We want to have flexibility as we move forward with our ambitions for post-16 education and training, and there is a commitment to maintain the unit of resource for teaching.

Scotland's Schools for the Future (Investment)

13. Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how much will be invested in the programme, Scotland's schools for the future. (S4O-03773)

The Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages (Dr Alasdair Allan): Some £1.8 billion will be invested in the Scottish Government's schools for the future programme, in partnership with local authorities. That will bring about the construction of 91 new schools. Further projects to benefit from a fourth phase of the programme will be announced in December 2014, which will take the figure to well in excess of 100 schools built, for over 60,000 pupils, by March 2020.

Mike MacKenzie: How many schools in the Highlands and Islands region will benefit from the funding?

Dr Allan: The Scottish Government has committed to providing Highland Council with funding of almost £26 million for two secondary schools—Wick high school and Inverness royal academy. Moreover, through phase 4 of the programme, Highland Council will receive a further £10 million for a new three-to-18 campus, which will encompass Tain royal academy, Craighill primary, Knockbreck primary and St Duthus school.

Unannounced School Inspections

14. Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what consideration it has given to making school inspections without giving prior notice. (S4O-03774)

The Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages (Dr Alasdair Allan): Education Scotland's inspectors carry out

unannounced inspections when they are aware of serious concerns about the care and welfare of pupils at a school. Inspectors have carried out five unannounced school inspections in 2014. Education Scotland is discussing with its stakeholders how to develop school inspections for the future.

Kenneth Gibson: Does the minister agree that, at present, ordinary school inspections do not give an accurate picture of a school, because the weeks of notice that are given create a flurry of activity that enables the school to look its best and ensure that the work is more ordered than might normally be the case? Does he agree that unannounced visits, as is the case in the care sector, would better reflect what is happening in a school, for better or for worse?

Dr Allan: I have confidence in the inspection regime. I understand the points that the member raises, which have been discussed in the past within Education Scotland and with stakeholders.

There are pros and cons to the proposal. The pro side involves a reduction in stress and the creation of an accurate impression; the con side involves the need to be careful about protecting the relationship between inspectors and the schools and ensuring that inspectors are inspecting in partnership with the schools rather than merely inspecting the schools.

However, as I said, five schools have had a no-warning inspection, although I concede that those inspections were for unusual reasons.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Has the minister considered further whether the state of buildings should be included in the school inspection?

Dr Allan: The responsibility for assessing the state of buildings lies with local authorities. However, it is worth saying that the work and the money that have gone in centrally have significantly reduced the number of schools that are in category C or D condition. The number of pupils in a condition C building is 104,000 and the number in a condition D building is 6,000, which are significant reductions on the numbers in previous years.

Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (Agreement on Education Services Funding)

15. Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what agreements are in place with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities regarding the funding of education services. (S40-03775)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Angela Constance): The majority of funding for education services is

provided to local authorities as part of the annual local government finance settlement. However, there are specific agreements with COSLA with regard to some elements of education funding.

The Scottish Government has agreed to fully fund the expansion of early learning and childcare that was introduced through the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. That amounts to £329 million over financial years 2014-15 and 2015-16. We have provided £41 million in this financial year to maintain teacher numbers in line with pupil numbers and £37.6 million to secure a place for all probationers who need one. We have agreed to provide £24.8 million in capital funding this year and £70.5 million revenue funding over this year and next to cover the delivery of free school meals to pupils in primaries 1 to 3, starting next January.

Bruce Crawford: Given that the Tory and Labour parties on Stirling Council voted through a council tax reduction for 2012-13, does the cabinet secretary agree that the council should have no reason to reduce education services in Stirling or complain about grant funding levels from the Government?

Angela Constance: As the Scottish Government has fully funded the council tax freeze, it should have no impact on the level of education services. As Stirling Council was able to reduce its council tax in 2012-13, that would suggest that the money that the Scottish Government provided was more than sufficient for the council to maintain the level of all its services.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 16 has been withdrawn and a satisfactory explanation has been provided.

Access to Education Fund

17. Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government how many applications to the access to education fund it has received, how many were successful and how much has been awarded in grants. (S40-03777)

The Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages (Dr Alasdair Allan): There were 609 eligible applications to the access to education fund, of which 247 were successful. A total of £1,500,023 has been awarded to the successful applicants, which will directly benefit 303 schools across every local authority area in Scotland.

This morning, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning visited Forthview primary school in Edinburgh to hear from children, parents and staff how the funding will make a difference to them. The school's successful application to the fund will enable it to develop a library to focus on literacy skills and foster a

culture of reading across the school and wider school community. Its strong focus on parental engagement and working with others, and the clear commitment to access to education for all, make this a great example of how the funding is helping to break down barriers to learning across communities.

Kezia Dugdale: The access to education fund is for new projects; it is not supposed to supplement core funding. Given the cabinet secretary's answer to Bruce Crawford, will the minister tell me why, if the council tax freeze is fully funded, some schools are asking parents to pay for paper, books and art resources? Does the minister accept that those things are happening and that some parents cannot make up the difference?

Dr Allan: The fund's purpose is to ensure that nobody faces barriers to education. For that reason, many of the successful applications have ensured that children who face disadvantages are not disadvantaged by a barrier in the form of information technology or kept from enjoying school trips, and that everyone is fully included in the life of the school.

Applications can be for up to £5,000 per school, and I believe that we have been successful in ensuring that our education system benefits all.

Modern Studies

18. Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on whether modern studies should be made available at all secondary schools if 16 and 17-year-olds have the right to vote in elections. (S4O-03778)

The Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages (Dr Alasdair Allan): We are delighted but not surprised at how the referendum engaged 16 and 17-year-olds, and their thoughtful and impassioned engagement in the debate created an overwhelming case for giving 16 and 17-year-olds the vote in future elections. We are pleased that the Smith commission report calls on the United Kingdom Parliament to devolve the relevant power in time to allow the Scottish Parliament to extend the franchise to 16 and 17-year-olds for the 2016 Scottish parliamentary elections. All young people learn about democracy and political systems as part of their broad general education.

Rob Gibson: The problem in Scotland is that the teaching of modern studies is fairly unevenly spread. How many secondary schools are there in Scotland and how many of them provide modern studies courses?

Dr Allan: The most recent information is that 80 per cent of schools teach modern studies as a

specific subject. Around 70 schools in Scotland do not teach it and many of those are smaller schools; I suspect that that is what the member is referring to. It should be said, however, that democracy and political literacy feature in the requirements of a broad general education up to the end of secondary 3. The Scottish Government takes very seriously the arguments that were successfully made that we deserve a generation of young people who are engaged in political debate.

Educational Attainment (Child Poverty)

19. Michael McMahon (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government how it will tackle the link between child poverty and educational attainment. (S4O-03779)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Angela Constance): The Scottish Government and all its partners have a strong shared commitment to raising attainment and achievement for all and to closing the equity gap between children and young people who are most and least advantaged.

We support a range of activities including raising attainment for all, which works with more than 150 schools across Scotland to drive forward sustainable and consistent improvement, the school improvement partnership programme, our access to education fund and, as announced in our programme for government, attainment advisers to be based in every local authority across Scotland, as well as a clear focus on improving literacy and numeracy in primary 1 to primary 3 pupils through our read, write, count programme.

Michael McMahon: Recent reports indicate that students from more affluent backgrounds are 50 times more likely to obtain five higher A grades than students from more deprived areas, and other statistics show a huge gulf in academic achievement between affluent areas and deprived areas. Will the cabinet secretary indicate clearly what practical measures are being taken to reduce that gulf? We cannot allow our education system to maintain a situation in which students who have strong academic potential do not achieve their aims and ambitions because of the geographical area in which they grow up.

Angela Constance: Mr McMahon and I agree that inequity anywhere in our education system is not acceptable. The Government will do everything within its existing powers to tackle poverty and inequality. I have already said to members today that my top priority as the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning is to raise attainment for all and to do everything that we can to close the equity in attainment gap.

I regret that we do not have more welfare powers so that we can tackle poverty. Nonetheless, with the powers that we have, we will focus on pragmatic measures on the front line in schools that will make a practical difference to the lives of our children every day and ensure that more of our children reach their full potential.

Early Learning and Childcare

20. Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how the expansion of funded early learning and childcare will benefit the most disadvantaged people. (S4O-03780)

The Minister for Children and Young People (Aileen Campbell): Through the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, we are investing £329 million in this financial year and next to expand annual funded early learning and childcare for three and four-year-olds to 600 hours. That represents an increase that will save families up to £707 per child per year. We have extended that entitlement to our most disadvantaged two-year-olds, with around 15 per cent becoming eligible in the current school year, rising to 27 per cent next year. That is more than any of our predecessors, and more hours of childcare than in any other part of the UK.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Briefly, please, Mr MacDonald.

Gordon MacDonald: What is the Scottish Government doing to raise awareness of funded childcare among parents and carers?

Aileen Campbell: Following an initial phase of public information in the summer, we have just launched the second phase of our marketing campaign to raise awareness among parents and carers of the expanded childcare entitlement. The launch of this new phase of the campaign coincided with the cabinet secretary's visit to Melville Street nursery in Edinburgh, and I hope that that will address some of the concerns that the member has raised.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Many thanks. That concludes question time.

NHS Grampian (Healthcare Improvement Scotland Reports)

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is a statement by Shona Robison on NHS Grampian—Healthcare Improvement Scotland reports. As the cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of her statement, there should be no interventions or interruptions.

I call the cabinet secretary. You have 10 minutes, Ms Robison.

14:40

The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport (Shona Robison): In March, the then Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, Alex Neil, was made aware of concerns about quality of care and patient safety by a number of senior consultants at Aberdeen royal infirmary. The Scottish Government acted swiftly in response to that contact and within a week Healthcare Improvement Scotland had arranged to begin the first stage of the work that has culminated in the reports that were published on the HIS website yesterday morning: "Aberdeen Royal Infirmary: Short-Life Review of Quality and Safety" and the report on care for older people at Aberdeen royal infirmary and Woodend hospital.

A third report on NHS Grampian has also been produced by the Royal College of Surgeons of England. The board has published on its website the terms of reference and the recommendations arising from that review, but it has not yet published the full report because of legal action that has been initiated by individuals named in it. However, Healthcare Improvement Scotland has seen the report and has made its own recommendations to address many of the issues that the college raised.

The reports highlight significant failings in the management of NHS Grampian that, as the leader of the HIS review team has said, make sobering reading and which we take very seriously indeed. They also highlight the important role of the inspection regime that this Government has put in place to scrutinise safety and quality in the national health service in Scotland. This statement sets out the Scottish Government's response to the findings of those reports and the action that we expect NHS Grampian to take both immediately and in the longer term.

It is important to make clear up front that HIS's work did not identify consistent or widespread concerns about patient safety. Without minimising the importance of some of the concerns raised by the HIS reports, I note that the review highlighted

that Aberdeen royal infirmary is not significantly different from the Scottish average for a range of indicators of quality and safety of patient care, including the hospital standardised mortality rate and infection rates. During the inspection of care for older people, patients and carers also provided very positive feedback on their experiences, with 89 per cent stating that the care that they had received was good and staff being described as “compassionate and considerate”.

However, the report highlights a number of issues relating to leadership, management and staffing that, if not addressed immediately and decisively, pose a clear risk to the quality of patient care. That they have not yet impacted adversely on the care of patients is, as the report makes quite clear, due to the hard work of dedicated and highly committed front-line staff who have gone above and beyond to compensate for weaknesses in NHS Grampian’s structures and processes. I put on record my sincere thanks to every member of staff in Grampian for their work in ensuring that their patients continue to get the best possible care, and I assure them that we will do everything possible to support them in making things better.

The review was a complex and thorough piece of work. Headed up by Angus Cameron, who is currently medical director at NHS Dumfries and Galloway, the HIS review team agreed with NHS Grampian that it would examine two main areas, the first of which was the culture, leadership, values and behaviours in operation in the board. Although such things can be difficult to pin down, they shape the day-to-day interactions in any organisation and are essential in supporting the on-going delivery of a safe and high-quality healthcare system. Secondly, the review team looked in detail at the actual quality and safety of care in a focused number of specialties and services, including the emergency department, general surgery and care of the elderly, with a clear focus on outcomes and the experiences of patients using those services.

The review team worked with NHS Grampian for more than five months and gathered information from a wide range of sources. In addition to analysing nationally available data, the team spoke to around 530 members of staff; received feedback from 362 patients and carers; reviewed 49 case files; looked at 32 complaints; and analysed 13 adverse events. Its work has created a rich picture of healthcare provision in Grampian.

The picture that Dr Cameron’s team has painted is a worrying one. The review describes a climate of mistrust between clinicians and senior managers in several specialties; unprofessional behaviour by a number of consultants that impacted on morale and the effectiveness of the

service and which went largely unchallenged; and a failure to respond effectively to concerns about staffing pressures and vacancies. There is also evidence that managers were distant, trainees were inadequately supported, complaints were poorly handled and systems of governance and performance management were weak, muddled or, indeed, absent.

Make no mistake: those things are unacceptable in the NHS in Scotland, and they will be resolved. Let me send the clear message that, no matter who a person is or at what level they work in the NHS, the behaviours that are highlighted in the HIS review will not be tolerated in our national health service.

The key issue now must be how those findings are responded to. The report on quality and safety contains 13 recommendations, which are grouped under the headings of “Patient outcome”; “Leadership and culture”; “Governance and accountability”; “Staff governance”; and “Complaints management”. They are accompanied by 22 more detailed areas for improvement in the report on care for older people.

I visited Aberdeen royal infirmary yesterday and spoke to staff and the board to emphasise how much importance we attach to seeing real improvements being made. I was given assurances that NHS Grampian accepts every single one of the recommendations and that, under the leadership of its new interim chief executive, Malcolm Wright, it has already begun work to address many of those areas. The board has apologised for those instances in which its patient care did not meet the required standard and has committed to improving leadership, management and engagement at the ARI and across NHS Grampian.

The report highlights some particular concerns around nursing staffing levels and vacancy rates. The board is continuing to experience challenges around recruitment, with factors such as the high cost of living and the competitive job market contributing to the challenge. However, the board invested in the creation of 100 additional nursing posts in the year to March 2014 in priority areas such as theatre, the emergency care centre and mental health services. A further almost 100 posts have been added to the nursing establishment since March, and funding has been allocated for up to 40 posts in 2015-16.

NHS Grampian is also actively recruiting to vacant medical and nursing posts using every means at its disposal, including social media and executive search as well as more traditional means, such as medical careers events and graduate nurse recruitment, which resulted in 88

graduate nurses from Robert Gordon University being placed in 2014.

The HIS reports on NHS Grampian are challenging to read, but they must be seen as a vindication of our unflinching resolve to shine a light on poor practice through the systematic use of independent inspection processes, and to hold to account healthcare providers that fail to provide the quality of care that the people of Scotland deserve and the support that those who work in the NHS in Scotland have the right to expect.

We recognise that we have a role to play in supporting the board to improve, and that improvement will not happen overnight. The Scottish Government is providing record levels of funding to NHS Grampian to support its recruitment efforts. In 2015-16, NHS Grampian's resource budget is planned to increase by 4.4 per cent, to £812.6 million—the increase is above inflation and is the largest increase of any board—and it previously increased by 4.6 per cent in 2014-15. Those increases include sums of £15.5 million this year and £17.5 million next year to move the board closer to its target share under the NHS Scotland resource allocation committee funding formula. The intention is that, by 2016-17, NHS Grampian, along with all the other territorial boards, will be no more than 1 per cent away from NRAC parity.

In addition to the financial support that we are continuing to provide, we have put in place a comprehensive support team to advise and work alongside the new interim chief executive and his executive team in implementing the improvements that are needed to strengthen key systems, structures and processes. That vital organisational development will be supported by an additional allocation of £100,000 to help to develop and strengthen leadership at all levels within NHS Grampian.

We are also fast-tracking the identification of a new chair for the board. Interviews are taking place today, and there is an expectation that the new chair will take up post very early in the new year.

The report of the quality and safety review makes it clear that the board is expected to develop a detailed and considered improvement plan that sets out exactly how it intends to implement the report's recommendations, along with timescales for action and clear accountability. The plan will also be expected to set out clearly what success will look like. However, these are serious issues and although we expect immediate action to be taken in relation to several of the key findings, we cannot expect changes to culture and leadership to happen overnight.

The changes must be taken forward in partnership with clinical and staff-side representatives from the very beginning if they are to be woven through the fabric of the organisation—as we expect them to be—and we must accept that that will take some time. The Scottish Government will monitor the implementation of the plan very closely in the coming months, and I will receive regular updates on progress as work goes forward.

This has been, and will continue to be, a difficult and challenging time for NHS Grampian. However, by putting patient outcomes and patient experiences at the heart of its services—and with the involvement of the committed and dedicated staff who we know work in NHS Grampian—I am confident that NHS Grampian can turn the situation round and begin to live up to its ambition of providing top-class healthcare services for all the people of north-east Scotland.

The Presiding Officer: Thank you. The cabinet secretary will now take questions on the issues raised in her statement. I intend to allow around 20 minutes for questions, after which we will move to the next item of business.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): I thank the cabinet secretary for the advance copy of her statement. This week's three reports into NHS Grampian and Aberdeen royal infirmary paint a grim picture of the NHS in the north-east: weaknesses at board level; poor management; low morale; bullying; lack of accountability; concerns ignored by managers; a staffing crisis; a system of cover that staff felt was unsafe; a surgical unit described as dysfunctional; patient flow and capacity at Aberdeen royal infirmary and Woodend hospital not fit for purpose and putting patient safety at risk; inappropriate boarding; ineffective discharge systems; and wards continually short-staffed—just some of the problems that were experienced.

Many of those issues are common across the Scottish NHS and not unique to NHS Grampian, but it is evident that there is a small group of consultants at Aberdeen royal infirmary who appear to think that they are above the rules that apply to everyone else. What will the cabinet secretary do to ensure that we have a culture in which systematic failings are evident early and a nurse, support worker or cleaner can raise concerns without fearing for their job, with action being taken to address those concerns; and which does not rely on a powerful group of consultants with a hotline to a friendly minister to expose failings that have an impact on the wellbeing of staff and patients? How does the cabinet secretary intend keeping not only the Parliament but, more important, the patients and taxpayers of Grampian informed of progress?

Shona Robison: I reiterate the point that is made clearly in the report, which is that patient safety was not adversely affected by the circumstances in Grampian. It is important to reiterate that because we do not want patients to be afraid of using the services in NHS Grampian. The services that it provides and the results and outcomes for patients are as good as those in other parts of the health system in Scotland. It is clear that certain behaviours did not help to improve patient care, but the efforts of front-line staff who went the extra mile ensured that some of the management and clinician challenges that could have adversely affected patient safety were overcome.

On the small group of clinicians whom Neil Findlay described as thinking that they were above the rules, I said very clearly in my statement that no one working in the NHS—no matter who they are—is above the rules. That type of behaviour would not be accepted in any other workplace and it should not be accepted in the NHS. We will absolutely ensure that those issues are addressed. Neil Findlay will understand, though, that a number of processes are emerging from the report, including the General Medical Council looking at the issues and the internal processes of NHS Grampian, which will have to take their course in addressing the behaviours of individuals as the investigations go forward. However, I can assure him that that is exactly what will happen.

On whistleblowing, we already have processes that encourage anyone working in the NHS who has concerns, no matter who they are, to raise those concerns, and that is exactly what people should do.

On keeping the Parliament and, importantly, patients and the public informed, I certainly expect NHS Grampian, as it takes forward its implementation plan for change, to be very good at communicating the changes to staff, patients and the public, and I am happy to keep the Parliament informed, whether that is through the Health and Sport Committee or through an update to the Parliament on the progress that is being made in NHS Grampian.

Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for the advance copy of her statement. For those of us who represent the north-east, the on-going problems facing NHS Grampian are both concerning and upsetting. The reports clearly point to a number of areas for improvements to be made.

NHS Grampian is, like health boards across Scotland, facing significant pressures from the increasing demand on health services and difficulty in recruiting and retaining key specialist and nursing staff, especially given the added pressures of the oil and gas industry.

Patients want to be reassured that, when they go into hospital, they will receive both first-class care and a well-managed service. It is reassuring that the reports about NHS Grampian are clear that, to date, patient safety has not been compromised, and that is due to the hard work of its loyal staff. However, a number of failures in strategic leadership have been clearly articulated. I know that that is being urgently addressed and I am pleased that NHS Grampian has already undertaken to act on all the recommendations that have been made to it.

However, Scottish National Party ministers are ultimately responsible for the NHS in Scotland and they must work to address the increasing problems that we are facing within our health service. Will the Scottish Government undertake a review of all current vacancies in the NHS Grampian area and look to publish an action plan to address staffing problems with the minimum of delay?

Shona Robison: It is important that we are clear that NHS Grampian accepts all the recommendations without reservation and is going to act on them.

Nanette Milne highlights the increased demand for NHS services, which is absolutely a pressure on NHS Grampian in the same way that it is a pressure on other parts of the health service. Recruitment challenges, though, are a particular issue for NHS Grampian because of the issues that she cited in her question. We are looking at the use of the medical workforce bank. The nurse bank has operated successfully in other parts of the country and the medical bank has worked well in Lothian, and I know that NHS Grampian is looking at that as well.

On the management of vacancies, there are some specialties in which, for a variety of reasons, it is much harder to fill vacancies because of their challenging nature, 24/7 availability and the pressures, therefore, within those posts. Again, we are looking at how we can make those posts more attractive and potentially more flexible. We are working closely not just with NHS Grampian but with other boards to look at how we can address those difficult-to-fill posts.

The member can be absolutely assured that we are not just sending the new interim chief executive, who started in his job on Monday, to sort out these problems himself. He has a team behind him and he has a lot of support from the Scottish Government in taking forward all these issues.

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): I appreciate the interim chief executive of NHS Grampian meeting MSPs on Monday and the comprehensive briefing that we received there. I

recognise that resources are in place to recruit for clinical and nursing vacancies and that there are funded plans to expand the nursing workforce even further. However, key workers often have difficulties in getting affordable housing in the area. How many houses will be allocated to health service staff on the Craiginches site and what further plans does the Government have to increase the number of affordable homes that are available to NHS staff in Aberdeen?

Shona Robison: Kevin Stewart raises a really important issue. We have to look at how we can tackle some of the underlying recruitment problems, which are an issue not just for the health board but for the local authority as well. The cost of living in Aberdeen is without a doubt a critical issue.

I reassure the member that I have asked for an update on the plans and the discussions between the NHS and the council about the affordable housing solution. I will be very happy to share that update with the member and I will be happy to keep other members up to date on how the matter progresses. That is absolutely the type of innovative solution that we need if we are to be able to overcome some of the recruitment challenges in the public sector in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): The cabinet secretary will be aware of the statutory duty of candour that applies in the NHS elsewhere in the United Kingdom, which would require publication of a report such as that of the Royal College of Surgeons, which she mentioned. Although such a duty does not exist in the same form in Scotland, will she, in the spirit of candour, urge NHS Grampian to publish the conclusions as well as the recommendations of the report as soon as possible?

How does the cabinet secretary intend to reassure individual patients that they will be told at the earliest possible date whether their care has been affected by the unacceptable behaviour of a small number of consultants, which was identified by Healthcare Improvement Scotland?

Shona Robison: On the effect on individual patients, in its inspection the HIS team looked carefully at the issue to ensure that individual patients had not been adversely affected. There was a degree of follow-up on patients. I hope that I can reassure the member in that regard and I am happy to provide him with additional information, if he would find that helpful.

On the conclusions in the Royal College of Surgeons report, the member will understand that there is a legal process around the report, in that certain individuals who were named in it have taken legal action to stop it being published. NHS

Grampian has to work through the legal issues to get to a position in which the report can be published at some point.

However, the main findings on the dysfunctional relationship between some clinicians and management and other clinicians are pretty much laid bare in the HIS report, because the HIS team had a copy of the RCS report and reflected that in its findings. I do not think that anything is preventing us or NHS Grampian from getting on and resolving the issues. People certainly do not have to wait for the publication of the report, and they are getting on with resolving the issues.

The member will be aware that a duty of candour is being considered in the context of the forthcoming public health bill. I think that we should be taking such a measure. Our whistleblowing procedures are good, but there is something about an explicit duty of candour that sends a clear message to the NHS. We will take the matter forward in the bill.

Alex Salmond (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP): As we think about the serious problems of NHS Grampian and compare them with the tragedy in the Vale of Leven hospital, was not the essential lesson of the Vale of Leven tragedy that the health service must develop systems that enable problems to be identified before they impact on patient care and safety? Surely that has happened in this case, through Healthcare Improvement Scotland. For example, accident and emergency rates are vastly better in NHS Grampian today than they were in 2006.

The cabinet secretary put that down to the excellence and hard work of the staff of NHS Grampian, and she was right to do so. Is it not incumbent on every member of this Parliament to rally behind the staff and the new leadership of NHS Grampian as they take matters forward?

Shona Robison: I absolutely agree with the member. Although a report can make uncomfortable reading, I, as the health secretary, would rather know where problems lie in our health service—warts and all—because only then can we take steps to address them. Before we set up systems of independent inspection we had no ability to look in detail at problems in the health system. The huge lessons that have been learned from the Vale of Leven are a case in point.

I absolutely agree that we should rally behind the staff. I got the sense yesterday, when I met staff at Aberdeen royal infirmary, that we have a group of very dedicated staff who were clearly under a lot of pressure regarding the reports, which make difficult reading. However, they had a resolve to go forward and to ensure that NHS Grampian can become one of the top-performing health boards in Scotland.

I met the board, and many of the non-executives were very keen to step up to the leadership plate and to help NHS Grampian become the top-performing health board that we all know it can become.

Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD): The cabinet secretary mentioned 100 additional nursing posts. The HIS reports are not the first to warn that wards must have not only sufficient numbers of nurses, but the right skills mix. What planning is the Scottish Government doing with NHS boards to ensure that the right people are in the right place at the right time, so as to maintain quality of care?

Does the cabinet secretary believe that, in these circumstances, NHS Grampian has the capacity to move at the pace that is required in order effectively to achieve the integration of health and social care?

Shona Robison: I set out in my statement the nurse numbers and the additional investment in nurses. The investment is significant. However, the member is right with regard to the skills mix. I found it heartening yesterday that one of the care-of-the-elderly wards that I visited had absolutely looked into the skills mix. Not just nurses but allied health professionals and healthcare assistants were helping with some of the issues around food and fluids that had been highlighted in the reports, and were ensuring that those personal care tasks were in place. I am sure that I am not the only member who regularly sees that issue coming up in our mailbags. It is important to get the right skills mix, and we are helping boards to do that.

It is important for NHS Grampian and all the other boards to make progress on health and social care. Only by integrating health and social care, by preventing people who do not need to be there from turning up at the front door of the hospital, and by discharging people from hospital in a timely fashion if they no longer need to be there can we reduce some of the pressures on our acute sector, while giving patients a better experience. As we know, an acute hospital ward is often the last place where a vulnerable elderly person should be.

From what I saw yesterday, I can say that NHS Grampian is doing a lot of work to deal with delayed discharge. I have every confidence that the board will be able to take forward the integration plans.

The Presiding Officer: We are extremely short for time this afternoon, and I will not fit in everyone who wants to ask a question. I urge short questions and answers.

Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): Message received and understood, Presiding Officer.

Part of the responsibility of leadership at local level rests with the board. Does the cabinet secretary share my concern that the board appears not to have had a grip or sufficient proactive oversight of many aspects of the performance of the NHS in Grampian, and that it has contributed to some of the leadership vacuum that existed? How will she make clear to the new board chairman or chairwoman the expectations on the board to provide effective scrutiny of the issues and to challenge the executive of NHS Grampian?

Shona Robison: Mark McDonald must have been a fly on the wall when I met the board yesterday. One of the things that I was asked by one of the non-executive members was what more those members could do around the board table. My answer was for them to ask questions, to scrutinise and to question anything that comes before them. As far as I am concerned, that is a key role of the non-executive members around the board table.

As I said in my statement, there is a fast track to get a new chair in place. That chair will have a key leadership role in ensuring that the board goes forward with renewed vigour, while supporting the interim chief executive.

I can reassure members that the view that I got from the board was that every person around the table wanted to take the opportunity to reset relationships in NHS Grampian, to reset the way in which they go about their business, and to get NHS Grampian back on track to where it should be.

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab): The cabinet secretary's predecessor said that NHS Grampian would be brought more quickly towards parity of funding under the NRAC formula if more funds were made available for the NHS by the UK Government. Is that still the Government's policy?

Shona Robison: As I laid out in my statement, with the significant additional investment—I must remind the member that such investment was not seen previously—by 2016-17, we will move to within 1 per cent of NRAC parity. That is a great deal more progress than was made in previous years. I would have hoped that the member would welcome that.

Christian Allard (North East Scotland) (SNP): Patient feedback is important. I want the cabinet secretary to understand that many comments on the patient opinion website tell us about patients' good experiences in Grampian. However, the Healthcare Improvement Scotland report highlighted the poor response rate to complaints made to NHS Grampian. How does the Government expect the board to respond to

complaints and to positive patient feedback, such as through the patient opinion website?

Shona Robison: The Government has provided updated guidance and training to all boards on responding to feedback and complaints. Yesterday, I made it very clear that that area needs to be addressed.

I reassure the member that the Government has provided support and worked with NHS Grampian to ensure that it not only responds timeously to complaints, but addresses them as fully as they should be addressed. That is a key priority. I will keep the member updated on progress.

Private Sector Rent Reform

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-11763, in the name of Mary Fee, on private sector rent reform.

15:12

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): In opening for Scottish Labour, I put on record our party's support for Shelter Scotland's make renting right campaign. As always, Shelter Scotland is at the heart of putting forward proposals on what is best for Scotland's residents.

The campaign, among others, best exemplifies why Shelter is important to our housing sector: its proposals come from its users' experiences. Much of what Shelter requests was proposed by Labour during consideration of the recent Housing (Scotland) Bill, but the Scottish Government blocked our amendments.

A consultation asking for views on a new tenancy for the private rented sector has been launched; yesterday, we submitted our response. Will a bill follow the consultation? Will the minister tell the chamber the bill's timetable?

We support many of the Government's proposals, but others could go further. For example, the minimum duration of a new tenancy should be three years, unless the tenant specifically requests that it be shorter. The 28-day period for repossession might also be too short in some circumstances.

It is important to consider why Scottish Labour has brought the debate to the chamber. The private rented sector is broken and in need of reform. The number of tenants in the sector has doubled in the past 10 years, the gap between private and social rents in Scotland is the second highest in the United Kingdom, and private tenants are spending more of their income on housing in comparison with a decade ago.

With that in mind, let us assess what the Government has achieved: housing bills that failed to address new and existing pressures in the private rented sector; fewer houses built than at any point since 1947; and an expert working group that reported on what could happen with a yes vote but set no ambition for Scotland's place in the United Kingdom. That said, we hope for a consensual debate, given that many Government back benchers have signed up to support the Shelter campaign.

As I have repeated many times and will continue to repeat, the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 was a missed opportunity. Although Labour agreed with the Scottish National Party Government on

aspects of it, we remain disappointed that the Government and its back benchers voted against our amendments, which would have made a difference to tenants in the private rented sector.

The make renting right campaign calls on the private rented sector to offer stability, flexibility and fairness to its tenants by modernising tenancies. That can be achieved only with the full support of the Parliament and the political will of the Government. A modern tenancy must strike the right balance between tenants' rights and landlords' rights. In our response to the private rented sector consultation, we stressed that the tenant must have the utmost protection from unnecessary evictions, poor security and unfair rent rises, while the landlord has a right to make returns on their investment in their property.

I recognise that there are many exemplary landlords. We do not seek to punish landlords, as many of our proposals would not apply to them. That is why we in Scottish Labour believe that the proposals that we put forward for inclusion in the Housing (Scotland) Bill and as part of our response to the private rented sector consultation could standardise the protection for all tenants and their families.

We know that a quarter of the Scots who live in poverty do so as private renters and that almost half of private rented sector households are families with children. The sensible and practical option for the minister and her Government would have been to support a cap on rent rises earlier this year. Given that new figures show that there has been an average rent rise of 2.7 per cent across Scotland and that there have been higher increases in different regions, I hope that she will see her error of judgment and act sooner rather than later.

This is not just an English or, more specifically, a London problem as the Scottish Government would like us to believe. For example, in the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire areas, average monthly rents have increased by almost two fifths since 2010 and, in the Lothians, private rents have increased by 17 per cent over the past four years. The cost of such increases pushes more families and tenants into poverty, yet the SNP refuses to take action. The average monthly cost of a two-bedroom property in Aberdeen is £898, while the Scottish average is £537. It is clear that there is a postcode lottery.

In June, an Ipsos MORI poll on behalf of the Chartered Institute of Housing showed that four in 10 private renters worry about meeting rent payments, and 43 per cent of respondents expressed concerns about not being able to afford their rent in 12 months' time. A cap on the number of rent rises to one per year would allow tenants to manage their finances much better and would

allow landlords to plan for investment while maintaining the tenancy. Let me be clear: Scottish Labour does not back rent control and we are not advocating rent control.

Living with a disability can present many challenges. One challenge that often goes unmentioned is access to suitable housing, especially in the private rented sector. As more people turn to private rented housing as a result of growing waiting lists for social housing, people with disabilities also find themselves looking to private lets.

Recent statistics from the Scottish Housing Regulator show that, on average, it takes social landlords 66 days to complete adaptations for medical reasons, and in some cases social tenants wait almost a year for such adaptations to be completed. That is shameful, and it backs up what Leonard Cheshire Disability warns us about in its briefing for today's debate.

It is often expected that private landlords cannot compete with the resources that social landlords have to meet demands for repairs and adaptations. As no statistics are available for comparison, I share my support for the changes that Leonard Cheshire would like to be made, as I worry that the needs of many disabled people in private housing are not being met. When grants can be applied for, there are means of financial support. However, pressures on local government mean that demand is not being matched by supply.

Leonard Cheshire shows in its briefing why disabled-friendly homes are more cost effective in the long term. For example, installing a stairlift in a lifetime home can cost around £2,500. However, if a property's wall is not suitable for a stairlift, the cost of adapting it could exceed five or 10 times the lift's original cost.

Building homes that meet the needs of the elderly and the disabled requires commitment from the Government and developers. Without that, the necessary standards cannot be met.

I talked a few minutes ago about worries about meeting rent payments. The stress on finances, health and mental wellbeing caused through the lack of security cannot be overemphasised. Children's education can suffer if they have to relocate every year or two. Research suggests that they can develop anxiety and stress because of the stress of moving. The average time that a family spend at the same address in the private rented sector is two to three years, in comparison with 10 years in the social rented sector.

Modernising the tenancy by scrapping the short Scottish secure tenancy, creating greater security of tenure and introducing an annual cap on rent increases would help to mitigate and tackle many

of the direct and indirect problems that result from a lack of security.

Our motion does not seek to create division between members. It highlights the need for change in how the private rented sector works. The number of private tenants has doubled in a decade, as has the number of households living in poverty in the private rented sector. I hope that we can all agree that we want a well-regulated and stable private rented sector.

I move,

That the Parliament notes that, over the last 10 years, the number of households in the private rented sector has doubled to 368,000; notes with concern that the number of households in poverty in the private rented sector has doubled in the last decade to 120,000; further acknowledges that, in parts of Scotland, rents have risen by nearly 40% in four years and that the average Scottish rent now stands at £537 a month; welcomes Shelter Scotland's Make Renting Right campaign; supports its calls for reform of the private rented sector, and, in particular, believes that private rented sector tenancies should be reformed to provide tenants with greater security of tenure, including longer standard tenancies and predictable rents for tenants and landlords, including supporting in principle the introduction of a cap on rent rises and the limitation of rent reviews to one per annum.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott): We have absolutely no spare time this afternoon. I call Margaret Burgess, who has up to seven minutes.

15:22

The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess): I am glad to have the opportunity to debate the private rented sector. The sector's growth might be news to some members, but the Scottish Government identified it as an issue as far back as 2010, when we recognised that an increasing number of people, including families, were spending part of their housing journey in the sector.

At that point, we committed to developing a strategy for the private rented sector and set out to do so by working with the Scottish private rented sector strategy group, which comprised stakeholders who represented tenants, landlords and others with interests in the sector. The result was the first-ever strategy for the sector in Scotland, which we published in May 2013.

The strategy set out our vision for the sector and identified three aims: improving quality, delivering for tenants and landlords, and enabling growth and investment to help to increase overall housing supply. In those aims, we recognise not only that the private rented sector plays a valuable part in meeting housing need for many people but that more could be done to make it more attractive to those who, for a range of reasons, prefer not to buy.

We have made good progress in taking forward the strategy. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014, which the Parliament passed in June, will improve quality through a regulatory framework for letting agents and additional powers for local authorities to deal with poor landlords. The consultation on a new tenancy for the private rented sector, which I launched in October, sets out proposals to give tenants improved security of tenure.

James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab): The minister tells the chamber that the Government has made good progress on issues in the private rented sector. Will she tell us why there was nothing in the legislative programme to address rent rises and the lack of security of tenure?

Margaret Burgess: I say to the member that, when the strategy group met and consulted together, what he raises was not recognised as an issue. It was not part of our Housing (Scotland) Bill when it was introduced, it did not come up in the consultation and it was not raised by the Labour Party. We committed to consulting on a new tenancy for the private rented sector. That is the right way to proceed and that is what we are doing. We are consulting on that and we want to ensure that that provides safeguards for landlords, lenders and investors, as well as security of tenure for tenants.

I am pleased that Shelter welcomes our ambition for changes in the sector. I confirm to Shelter and to other stakeholders that the Government remains committed to passing, in this parliamentary session, the legislation that is necessary to establish a new tenancy regime for the private rented sector. We will say more about that in the spring next year, once we have considered the consultation responses.

The Scottish Government is supporting Homes for Scotland in its work to drive forward initiatives to build more homes for rent by attracting new sources of investment. As part of that commitment, we have funded the appointment of a private rented sector champion to lead on that.

In the context of the debate, increasing supply is particularly relevant. Where rents are high, the long-term answer is more supply, in every tenure, to meet growing demand. I recognise that rents are high in some hotspots across the country. Where that is the case, it reflects conditions in local housing markets. However, statistics published by the Scottish Government last month showed wide variations in average rents. For example, average monthly rents for two-bedroom properties range from less than £450 a month in Dumfries and Galloway to almost twice that in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire.

Likewise, increases in rents vary. Our statistics show that, between 2010 and 2014, most average

rents increased at below the rate of inflation and some rents fell. In particular, 16 of the 18 rental market areas across Scotland have seen below-inflation changes in average rents for two-bedroom properties—the most common size of property in the private rented sector.

James Kelly: Will the minister take an intervention?

Margaret Burgess: If it is brief.

James Kelly: I think that the minister has been listening too much to the letting agents saying that rents have increased at below the rate of inflation. Does she think that the average rent level of £537 per month is acceptable?

Margaret Burgess: I say to the member that we did not listen to letting agents to get that information. The information is based on Scottish Government research, which shows clearly that 16 out of the 18 rental market areas have seen below-inflation changes in average rents.

Where rents are high or rising, the answer is to build more houses, not just for private renting but in all tenures, and we have taken decisive action on that.

We recognise that an inability to find affordable housing in Aberdeen has been causing difficulties in the recruitment and retention of key staff in the national health service and other parts of the public sector. Such workers are now set to benefit from various forms of affordable housing that will be developed on the Craiginches site in the city, which, importantly, will be targeted at them.

We have boosted housing supply budgets by investing £1.7 billion in affordable housing over the lifetime of this session of Parliament. Last month, we announced a £200 million increase in funding to stimulate Scotland's housing industry.

Despite challenging economic conditions and despite Scottish budgets being cut, our rate of house building per head continues to outperform that in other parts of the UK. We have delivered more than 22,700 affordable homes, which is three quarters of the way towards our target of 30,000 affordable homes. More than 15,900 of those homes are for social rent, which is 80 per cent of our social rent target. I remind the Parliament that, in the last four years of the previous Administration, just over 20,000 affordable homes were completed. In the following four years, we increased that by 34 per cent. In fact, there was no single year during that period when this Government did not complete more homes.

The Scottish Government is working with our stakeholders to deliver better quality and more security in the private rented sector and to deliver

the variety and number of affordable homes that are the answer to high rents in the sector.

I move amendment S4M-11763.3, to leave out from “notes with concern” to end and insert:

“recognises that, in May 2013, the Scottish Government published *A Place To Stay, A Place to Call Home*, which is Scotland's first ever strategy for the private rented sector; welcomes the progress that has been made in implementing the strategy, in particular the publication by the government of the consultation on its plans to improve security of tenure for tenants in the sector while providing appropriate safeguards for landlords, lenders and investors; notes that, in most parts of Scotland, rents rose by less than inflation between 2010 and 2014 and that the consultation invites views on rent levels in the sector; considers that the government's approach to reforming the private rented sector will deliver the outcomes sought by Shelter Scotland's campaign, *Make Renting Right*; encourages stakeholders from all sides to respond to the government's consultation, and looks forward to stakeholders' views being reflected in the bill to reform private tenancies that the Scottish Government plans to bring forward later in the parliamentary session.”

15:29

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):

I welcome Mary Fee's motion because it gives us an opportunity to address an issue at the centre of the discussion on the private rented sector: the parties' various positions on rent controls.

I hear what was said in the opening speech—that the Labour Party is apparently not in favour of rent controls—but I also hear that it is in favour of limits on annual rent increases. I am beginning to have some difficulty in understanding what is meant by rent controls, and why Labour wants one of those things and not the other.

It is sometimes said that there is nothing new under the sun, and rent controls have been tried often enough before. They were first introduced in the UK in 1915, so an opportunity exists next year for us to celebrate their 100th birthday by burying them deep in our history.

Any student of housing policy history will acknowledge that the introduction of rent controls in 1915 had a catastrophic effect. The number of houses to rent in the private sector collapsed dramatically as landlords sold off their stock, and the levels of investment in improvements also fell. The reintroduction of controls in the present day would make it more difficult for landlords to access finance, as lenders may be nervous of future interest rate increases against a backdrop of severely limited rent increases.

The year 1915 was not the only time that rent controls have been attempted in this country. They returned during the second world war, with significant effects. It is important that we do not make the mistake, whoever we are, of going

forward with a third-time-lucky approach and our fingers crossed.

Although rent controls were abandoned in the UK many years ago, they have, in various forms, continued in many places throughout Europe. However, in those examples the effect of the rent controls is to keep rents at or around market levels. It may be, then, that introducing rent controls here would either result in the negative impact that I described earlier or, if the Scottish Government chooses to follow a European model, have little or no impact on rent levels.

Of course, it no longer surprises me that Labour, bereft of its own ideas, appears to use the position of Shelter as a default setting for its housing policy. However, I have discussed the private rented sector with Shelter, and it seems to me that it enjoys a much more sophisticated and realistic understanding of the issues than do some members in the chamber.

James Kelly: On the point about a realistic understanding of the housing situation, does the member recognise that one in four of those living in the private rented sector are living in poverty? What help are the Conservatives offering to those who require much-needed assistance?

Alex Johnstone: We have to be careful of using inappropriate statistics. We have already heard one set of statistics balanced with the Government's statistics in the two opening speeches.

A recent poll, far from showing that tenants in the Scottish private sector are concerned about escalating rent levels, found that 86 per cent of tenants who were surveyed had never received a request for a rent increase during their lease, and 90 per cent had never experienced a rent rise that was deemed to be unreasonable. In addition, 91 per cent of tenants thought that the frequency of rent reviews on their property had been reasonable.

Those statistics demonstrate that, unlike the Labour Party claimed at the start of the debate, the system is not broken. If we address the issues correctly, we can continue to rely on the private rented sector to make its contribution to the housing problems that we face in Scotland today.

I recently met representatives—I have met a lot of representatives—of the private rented sector, all of whom are open to working in a constructive manner with the Scottish Government to improve the industry. They are ready to engage, but they are also deeply concerned about the impact that some of the proposals might have.

The private rented sector is playing an increasingly important role in accommodating home seekers at a time when the private sector is

picking up the slack from the lack of investment in affordable housing by both the current Government and its predecessors. For that reason, it is essential that we take a constructive, engaged and measured approach that does not have the negative impact on the private rented sector that all of us would regret should it happen.

I move amendment S4M-11763.1, to leave out from “; notes with concern” to end and insert:

“and that the demand for private rented properties is expected to continue to grow, which is why private landlords are a vital part of the Scottish housing sector and should be given the flexibility and support necessary from the Scottish Government to flourish in Scotland; notes the Scottish Government's proposals for a complete reform of the current tenancy regime and considers that many of the proposals are welcome and will improve the private rented sector in Scotland; is concerned, however, that some of the provisions are very inflexible and will act as a disincentive for landlords, and is opposed to the introduction of rent caps as international and historic evidence indicates that this will have a catastrophic impact on the available rented housing stock.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate, with speeches of up to four minutes, please.

15:34

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): The private rented sector is clearly changing and growing, so we need to keep legislation up to speed with those changes. My constituency of Glasgow Shettleston used to have a huge number of council and housing association houses, a fair number of owner occupiers and a traditional private rented sector. However, that has changed hugely, especially through the right to buy, and previous council or housing association properties as well as bought houses have moved into the private rented sector.

It seems to me that people use the private rented sector for a number of reasons. One is that some people, particularly younger people, just want a property for the very short term. I have been in that situation, as I am sure have other members. The second reason is that some people cannot get affordable housing, so they are forced unwillingly into the private rented sector. Part of the answer to that is ending the right to buy, which is absolutely the correct thing to do, and the other part is to build more affordable homes over time. The third reason is that some people cannot or do not want to buy, and private renting is their preferred route for the long term. That is much more common in other countries, but it seems to be becoming more common here, too.

Quite a number of the antisocial behaviour issues that are raised with me relate to private rented flats. There can be difficult residents anywhere, but the lack of stability for private

tenancies makes things worse. If a tenancy is likely to be very short term, where is the incentive to build up relationships with neighbours and the wider community or to maintain, improve or invest in the property? If improving the property means that the rent goes up—as one of my colleagues told me that they had experienced—there is a positive disincentive to do that.

In Shelter Scotland's make renting right campaign, I am very much attracted by the words "stability" and "security". I was less comfortable with the phrase

"to stay as long as they want"

under the heading "Flexibility". However, I was interested to see in the briefing that we received from Shelter that it is now talking about

"Flexibility for people to stay in their home as long as they need."

I suspect that people will be more comfortable with that. Some of Alex Johnstone's chums were perhaps a bit frightened off by the idea of people staying as long as they want.

There is a reasonable balance in the social rented sector. On the one hand, there is security and stability but, on the other hand, people can be evicted if the worst comes to the worst. I am encouraged by the positive relationship between police and housing associations, who work together so that the neighbour from hell can ultimately be evicted. We would certainly want a similar approach in the private rented sector.

As we are debating housing, the minister and members might not be surprised that I will mention the Bellgrove hotel in my constituency. It is privately owned and the residents are renting, although I accept that it might not be typical of the properties that Mary Fee talked about. One lesson from the Bellgrove hotel, which is in effect a hostel, is about the condition of private rented accommodation, which is another factor in the debate. If I took members to a range of tenement properties in Parkhead or Shettleston, they would know within seconds of entering them which are private lets and which are run by housing associations. I hasten to add that there are some very good private rented flats, but others are pretty grim, and that can be seen immediately.

A linked issue that has been raised is that of electrical safety. I hope that the Government will be open to input from the Electrical Safety First campaign.

Clearly, there is work to be done in what is a changing landscape, but we have to be positive about the achievements that have been made so far. Ending the right to buy has been a huge improvement and investing in new affordable housing whenever there is spare money has been

great. Initial steps to register landlords and letting agents are moves in the right direction.

I see that I have run out of time, Presiding Officer.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Your time is up, Mr Mason. I appreciate your brevity—thank you very much.

15:39

Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): In our previous debate on housing, I described the difficult and anxious situation facing a resident in East Renfrewshire who came to see me for advice and any assistance that I could offer. The resident was a young man with two children at local schools but whose partner had left and who could no longer afford to live in the family home.

With few priority housing points, there was next to no chance of that man getting a council or housing association property on the Eastwood side of the authority and, although he has worked all his life, a mortgage in the area was well out of his reach. I am pleased to tell members that, along with his children, he has found a private rented flat on the south side of Glasgow, which is close enough for the children to get the bus up to school, and is, more importantly, just about affordable.

How many cases like that have we all heard about over the past few years, some with far less satisfactory outcomes?

Problems with housing supply are helping to drive huge changes to the way that we live in Scotland. We are simply not building enough homes. The number of new private homes has more than halved in recent years, while the population is increasing. In terms of council or housing association property, Audit Scotland has identified a shortfall of almost 14,000 homes in the past decade alone, and there are up to a dozen local authorities in the same situation as East Renfrewshire, where the waiting list for a council house has increased over the past five years. An estimated 150,000 people find themselves in that predicament around Scotland. The fact that the number of Scots who live in private rented accommodation has doubled over the past decade demonstrates precisely how important the sector has become.

My constituent and his family landed on their feet but, for many more families, moving into a private let leaves them feeling insecure or, worse, it becomes a move into poverty. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has found that private renters spend 23 per cent of their income on housing, which is up from 18 per cent just 10 years ago, and that the number of families in the

private rented sector who are on housing benefit has increased from 60,000 in 2008 to 97,000 in 2013.

Last year's Scottish household survey highlighted the insecurity of tenure in the private rented sector compared with the alternative. The average length of time for someone in the private rented sector to stay at the same address is between two and three years, compared with more than 10 years in the social rented sector and 15 years in an owner-occupied home. As John Mason has pointed out, some of that might reflect choice or people in transition to home ownership but, with so many families now leasing privately, there is a danger of such instability having a detrimental effect on the more vulnerable.

There is no one solution to Scotland's housing problems—although we clearly need to build more homes—but reform of the private rented sector should be at least part of the way forward. At the moment, many people are fearful of moving into a private let but are forced by circumstance to do so. The constituency case that I gave as an example is far from unique. As I am sure that most colleagues recognise, renting privately is the least favoured option of the majority of tenants. Similarly, many landlords are increasingly wary of renting to bad tenants who they then cannot get rid of. I do not believe that that is a sustainable basis on which the sector can develop.

Shelter's campaign to make renting right could help tenants and landlords. It could provide stability and security for both and introduce a fairer system for resolving problems when they occur. There are plenty of examples of places in Europe where private renting is seen as a safe, affordable and desirable option; here in Scotland, on the other hand, the gap between the tenancy regime for public and private landlords simply aggravates the sense of inequality that is created by the difference in rent levels between the two. According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the average private rent is 86 per cent higher than the average social rent.

The proposal is not an anti-landlord measure. Shelter has shown the way forward, and Labour has put that into the parliamentary process. I urge all members to support the motion.

15:43

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP): I want to start by picking up on some of the comments of my colleague John Mason about the quality of tenancies.

I chair the cross-party group on accident prevention and safety awareness. We are aware of the dangers that exist in the home, and we have covered that issue on many occasions. Indeed,

our most recent meeting was about the challenges of electrical and gas safety, and the responsibility of landlords. It was an informative meeting. We had presentations from SELECT, Electrical Safety First—formerly the Electrical Safety Council—and SGN, on the gas issues. All of those organisations provide guidance and information to landlords and tenants, and their presentations are available on the website of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. I commend them to members who have concerns.

I would welcome an updating of the electrical guidelines, following amendments to the Housing (Scotland) Bill, which were championed by my colleague Bob Doris, so that we can tighten up some of the issues around electrical safety. I would also welcome any further information that the Government might have on the tightening up of the regulation of electricians in Scotland.

Although we are having a very good debate this afternoon and we all recognise that we could be doing more in Scotland, I take issue with Mary Fee saying that this is a Government that has not taken action. This is a Government that acted very responsibly on housing, with its action on affordable homes and on tackling the problems in the private sector, as have just been outlined.

Mary Fee: Clare Adamson says that the Government has acted responsibly. Would a responsible Government have a record on building housing that is the lowest since the second world war? Is that responsible?

Clare Adamson: I remind Mary Fee of the Labour and Liberal Democrat record on this area. "Housing Statistics for Scotland 2014: Key Trends", published by the Government, shows that on average, for housing association build, local authority build, rehabilitation and conversion, Mary Fee's party's former Government built an average of 5,856 houses a year. This Government's average, under austerity and with our capital budget slashed, is 6,193 houses. The average local authority build levels were 43 under Labour and the Lib Dems and under this Government they have been 658. That shows that this Government has been taking action and has been responsible on housing in Scotland.

Jim Hume (South Scotland) (LD): Will the member give way?

Clare Adamson: No, I only have four minutes. Sorry.

We have taken action on tenancy deposit schemes and we have launched a consultation on tenancy, which will gather information that will allow us to introduce a tenancy bill that is relevant to what is happening in Scotland.

We also took action on the right to buy, which will be transformational for the opportunities for local authorities to build housing. We have taken action on landlord registration and we are tackling supply with innovation, as announced by the cabinet secretary this morning. We will use the charitable bond model to invest £25 million next year, which could lead to an additional 450 affordable homes in Scotland.

Alex Neil said this morning:

"In a fair and ... just society we want to make sure that everyone in Scotland has access to good quality housing that meets their needs."

I am very glad that this Government is taking that forward.

15:47

Siobhan McMahon (Central Scotland) (Lab): I am pleased to be able to take part in this afternoon's debate. I will highlight just one of the housing issues that my constituents face.

I was contacted some months ago by a constituent who works as a porter in the national health service. He was forced to take a private rented flat after his long-term relationship broke up. As a result, he finds that his NHS wage meets only his rent and household bills. His situation is so bad that he has to go to his parents every night for his evening meal. This man is in his 40s and has worked his entire adult life, and he cannot afford his rent. That is nothing short of scandalous, and it is one of the many reasons why I am supporting Shelter's make renting right campaign.

I am particularly pleased to support Shelter's call for more flexibility with regards to the tenancy agreement. Shelter states:

"The private rented sector is changing. Current demand suggests that while some people want the option of a tenancy that lasts for as long as they need it, others want flexibility if they need to move. We want a tenancy regime that can respond to people's needs and work for both landlords and tenants. For tenants, it is about striking the balance between being able to live as long as they need in a property, with due consideration given to the landlord in terms of adequate notice when they want to leave."

I believe that that is a practical measure, which will benefit not only tenants but landlords, too. By offering an agreement that benefits both parties, greater trust and commitment will be established, and as a result there will be greater belief in the system—something that is missing from the current tenancy agreement.

We need to take action on the spiralling costs of private rents. It is simply not good enough that hardworking people have no other choice than to get themselves into huge amounts of debt to keep a roof over their heads. Given that 13 per cent of housing stock is in the private rented sector and

that one in four private rented households have children, we need to address the massive problem in the sector quickly. It must be a priority for the Government and for this Parliament.

Only a few weeks ago, I asked the minister a very straightforward question in this chamber. I asked her whether she supported Shelter's campaign. It was a question that needed a simple yes or no answer, but I got neither in return. I hope that she will be definite in her answer today, will once and for all pledge her support for the campaign and will confirm what action she will take given that—in her own words—the Government has known about this problem since 2010.

To hear that the number of people who are living in poverty in the private rented sector has doubled in the past decade should make all politicians extremely uncomfortable. That is why we need action now and that is why I ask the minister to support Shelter Scotland's campaign and to back Scottish Labour's proposals to introduce a bill on the private rented sector. We want a bill to provide people with greater security of tenure and we wish to see a cap on rent rises. That would make a huge difference to tenants' lives, and it could be legislated on quickly. I hope that the minister will back our proposals.

On a separate note, I was delighted that the Smith commission suggested that our Parliament should receive the power to legislate on socioeconomic areas. I hope that that will mean establishing an equality impact assessment. I called for that in my submission to the Smith commission. Such a power would allow the Government to truly assess whether its policies are making the difference it would like to see by reducing poverty in our communities. An equality impact assessment would be particularly useful in assessing how effective the Scottish Government's policy on housing and housing stock has been in reducing inequality in Scotland.

I hope that the minister is listening to the requests being made of her today and that she can find a way of addressing the concerns of members, charities, campaigners and—most importantly—tenants, who need action now, not more warm words.

15:51

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): I welcome this debate because housing is an important and basic need and the Scottish Government takes it very seriously. As members have already said, it is a major issue in all our constituencies as we see from the cases that we deal with every day.

In my constituency, there is proof of the Scottish Government's investment in private and social

rented housing, which is being built right smack in the centre of town. This is not a case of a Scottish Government that is refusing to take action. Those buildings are right in the centre of town, creating homes for families and helping to regenerate the town centre in the face of all the challenges that face town centres such as Paisley's.

There are many challenges around the private rented sector, but affordable housing is the main solution, and it is the solution that the Scottish Government is using. As the minister said, the Scottish Government plans to spend more than £1.7 billion on affordable housing during the current parliamentary session. That is part of an on-going bold and ambitious plan for housing.

In 2015-16 £390 million will be invested to deliver—

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): Will George Adam take an intervention?

George Adam: Unfortunately, I have only a short time.

That money will be invested to deliver a further 6,000 affordable homes, of which 4,000 will be in the social rented area. Those are the homes that will make a major difference in constituencies across the country. [*Interruption.*] It appears that although I said no to Mr Findlay, he still wants to shout from afar. This is a very important issue and it should be taken seriously by members, who should not bring the chamber into disrepute.

Since 2009, the Scottish Government has spent £135 million on council housing. Housing is a main priority for the Scottish Government, which is taking steps to realise its vision for the private rented sector by dealing with the sector's many issues. One such step is the strategy that was set out for the private rented sector, which will help many of our constituents by improving the quality of property management, condition and service, delivering for tenants and landlords, and meeting the needs of people who are living—

James Kelly: Will Mr Adam take an intervention?

George Adam: I am running out of time, and the more interventions I get, the more time I seem to lose.

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): Will the member take an intervention?

George Adam: If Labour Party members such as Mr Bibby believed in doing something for the constituents in my area, they would have had more than a short, last-minute debate on housing; they would have taken the full time for it.

The issue affects every single one of our constituencies. [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order!

George Adam: I am not going to listen to members of the Labour Party showboating when we are dealing with people's lives. We represent those people and we have to make sure that we can make a difference for them. This is not just about politics; it is about people's basic need for a roof over their head—for a home. We need to debate the issue in a mature manner. I urge the Labour Party to become serious about the issue, rather than sitting there, playing some back-and-forth political game of tennis.

I have already said that housing is a very basic need, but it is also an extremely complex and challenging issue. I appreciate the work that the Scottish Government has done and its on-going vision, and I am only too aware of the difference that its policies are making in constituencies such as mine and throughout the country. It is time for everyone else in the chamber to take this debate seriously and to begin to represent their constituents.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Many thanks, Mr Adam. I appreciate your brevity.

15:55

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I thank the Labour Party for bringing this debate to the chamber. To be fair, I should point out that it is by no means the first debate on housing that Opposition parties have brought in the current session, and in those debates I have repeatedly argued that we cannot afford to treat housing like any other commercial transaction. It is different, because it is intimate. It impacts on our physical and mental health, our access to friends, family and neighbours, and our ability to live as part of a community; it impacts on our access to employment and public services; and it impacts on our dignity and our very identity.

However, it is not just that the nature of housing is such that it goes beyond other commercial transactions, but that, as John Mason said, people lack availability and choices. So many people in our society no longer have social rented housing available to them, and many of them can no longer afford to become owner-occupiers at any point in their lives. Private rented housing is the only housing that our society makes available to them for large parts of their lives. That is why we need to take the issue seriously, recognise that this is social provision, expect that of it and regulate it as such.

Mary Fee said that there are many exemplary landlords out there, and I suspect that everyone will recognise that tenants have a wide spectrum of private rented sector experience, ranging from exemplary landlords to quite the opposite. There

are those who recognise that the provision of housing is significant and meaningful and that if they charge more rent than they are paying to service the debt that is secured on a property they need to earn the profit that they make. Being a landlord is a job, and there are landlords who understand that and take pride in providing a decent standard of service and ensuring that their tenants are well looked after. There are also landlords who feel a sense of entitlement in raking in the profits. Both ends of the spectrum exist, and there are all forms of behaviour in between.

It is not enough simply to say that more people are going to be in a sector that has doubled in 10 years, and which wants to double again. It is not enough to say that, because the sector is going to be part of the mix, we have to support all landlords. We should support good landlords, and good landlords who provide a standard of service that they can be proud of will have nothing to fear from the imposition of a decent regulatory expectation on the sector.

In her speech, Margaret Burgess recognised that many families spend time in the private rented sector as part of their housing journey—but where is that journey to? The Joseph Rowntree Foundation recently issued a report entitled “Young, working and renting” that highlighted the changing nature of poverty and inequality in this country. It said:

“The number of private landlord repossessions is now higher than the number of mortgage repossessions”

and that

“The end of a private rented sector tenancy”

is the primary reason for people becoming homeless. Those are UK statistics, and I would be interested if the minister could confirm whether they are also true at a Scottish level.

Finally, I sound a note of caution about the term “home seekers”, which we heard from Mr Johnstone.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must close, please.

Patrick Harvie: Given that we have already seen the use of euphemisms such as jobseekers for unemployed people, we should not make the same mistake and talk about home seekers instead of recognising the significant reality of homelessness in our society.

15:59

Richard Lyle (Central Scotland) (SNP): I commiserate with Mary Fee on her sore throat, and I hope that it gets better.

I read the Labour Party’s motion with interest and, indeed, found it interesting that it

“believes that private rented sector tenancies should be reformed to provide tenants with greater security of tenure”.

I understand that the Government is taking action to improve that area, so it is already doing that.

Members may have read, as I have, the private rented sector tenancy review group report, which took forward the work of the private rented sector strategy group. The review group was set up by the Scottish Government in 2013 with the purpose of examining the suitability and effectiveness of the current private rented sector system, and, crucially, to consider whether changes in the law are needed.

It will be of interest to the Labour Party that the Scottish Government accepted the group’s main recommendation, which was that current private rented sector tenancies—the assured tenancy and the short assured tenancy—should be replaced by a new tenancy for all future lets.

James Kelly: Will the member take an intervention?

Richard Lyle: No thanks. I have only four minutes.

The Government then published its draft consultation on the proposed new type of private rented sector tenancy. I am sure that, after considering the views of the people who responded to the consultation, the Government will act accordingly.

The Government has a track record of looking carefully at the issues that the private rented sector faces. It has been clear about the private rented sector, particularly in “A Place to Stay, A Place to Call Home: A Strategy for the Private Rented Sector in Scotland”. It has set out a vision and strategic aims for the private rented sector, including clear aims to improve and grow the sector by enabling a more effective regulatory system, having tougher targeted enforcement action and attracting new investment, which can only improve the situation for tenants.

In a nation such as ours, which is rich in natural resources, it is simply an utter scandal that people are living in poverty. That is mainly due to the UK Government’s benefit cuts and austerity measures, which are increasingly hurting Scottish families. We are also now seeing an increase in the use of food banks.

The Scottish Government is doing everything that it can to help those who are in that situation by working with stakeholders to mitigate the worst of the impacts of welfare reform on those who are on the lowest incomes through the various measures and decisions that it has taken. I note that it is providing nearly £33 million of support to the most vulnerable through the new Scottish welfare fund.

Mr Findlay will find it interesting that last night at an event, I had a very interesting discussion with an official who is involved in the housing sector—no, he was not lobbying me. He informed me that there are currently three types of rent: social rent, middle rent and private rent. In his opinion, the Labour Party's proposal is totally unworkable and would cause many owners in the private rented sector to withdraw from the sector, which would put undue pressure on families who currently rent.

At an event before I came to the chamber, I had a discussion with representatives from the Glass and Glazing Federation, who—

Neil Findlay: Will the member take an intervention?

Richard Lyle: No. I do not have time.

Those representatives informed me that the UK Government is charging 20 per cent VAT, instead of 5 per cent VAT, on replacement windows. That is another example of where we could improve matters and help to address fuel poverty, if we were minded to do so and if the UK Government would do so.

I am sure that the Scottish Government is committed to taking action on the issues that the private rented sector faces and, moreover, that it is whole-heartedly committed to tackling poverty in Scotland and its various symptoms.

I support the Scottish Government's amendment.

16:03

Alex Johnstone: There have been a couple of mentions of Shelter Scotland's make renting right campaign, which it has been asking politicians to sign up to. I have discussed the campaign with Shelter Scotland. I have not signed up yet but, to be honest, there is much in it that I support, and I have come very close to agreeing to put my signature to it. The strange thing is that it would be impossible for me to sign up if it turned out that what it means is what the Labour Party thinks that it means.

As has been demonstrated during the debate, people have different opinions in different parts of the chamber, but there is a disconnect. For example, we have heard much talk of the average rents in the private sector in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, but there has been no attempt to understand that the current private rented sector in the north-east includes people who are extremely high earners renting extremely expensive property—I am talking about properties and certainly rents that would make our eyes water in the chamber. However, those figures have been taken into the average and misrepresented in the debate.

The comment was made that many people rent as part of their housing journey. In fact, that is simply what happens. For a while, many of my family rented in the private sector while preparing to take on a mortgage. That happens all over the country, but those people, too, are included in the statistics.

Patrick Harvie: Will the member give way?

Alex Johnstone: I am afraid that I do not have the time to do so—I need to get to my conclusion.

Ultimately, we need to understand that the private rented sector does different things in different parts of the country, and different things in different streets that are close together. Such things are not easy to compare. This is a complex marketplace, and during the debate some members have demonstrated a much greater understanding of that than others. Whether by accident or by design, the private rented sector has become an essential part of housing strategies, although there are people out there who are very tempted to blame the sector for many of the problems that we face. I do not think that that is justified in every case. The last thing that the sector needs is a politically inspired witch hunt like the one that is currently being visited on landowners.

There are aspects of the Scottish Government's proposals that are worthy of consideration and support, but the bottom line is that any form of rent control or tinkering with tenancies will achieve little when the primary issue is a lack of investment by the Scottish Government in bricks and mortar. I was surprised to find myself agreeing very strongly with George Adam's comment that we cannot legislate our way out of a housing crisis—we can only build our way out of it. Making more houses available for rent means that landlords in the private sector will have to compete for tenants and offer higher standards and lower rents. If we build houses, the market will deliver the changes that many members have asked for in the debate.

However, at the moment, we cannot do without the private rented sector plugging the gap. We will need the private rented sector until we can build an adequate number of houses. If we make the wrong decision and the mistake of undermining the private rented sector without taking action elsewhere to plug the gap, the only result will be homelessness.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Margaret Burgess, who has up to six minutes.

16:07

Margaret Burgess: The debate has certainly confirmed the growing significance of the private rented sector and the increasing role that it plays

in helping to meet our people's housing needs. On the Shelter campaign, which has been mentioned a number of times, I say to Siobhan McMahon that the Scottish Government has been working with Shelter and other stakeholders in developing our proposals for a new private rented tenancy. Indeed, Shelter's make renting right campaign states that it supports the Scottish Government in making rent right across Scotland.

Siobhan McMahon: Will the minister take an intervention?

Margaret Burgess: I will take one in a moment.

Shelter is supporting us because we have put forward proposals that seek to improve tenants' security of tenure.

Siobhan McMahon: The question was about whether the minister supports Shelter, not whether Shelter supports the minister.

Margaret Burgess: As I said, I support the wider aims of Shelter's campaign to make rent right across Scotland, and I have never said that I do not support it. We are working with Shelter, but we are also currently consulting on our proposals, so it would not be appropriate for me to come down in favour of one set of proposals over another. A consultation is about looking at all proposals, so we are talking to all those who are involved in the housing sector. We consider that to be the right way to proceed before we change any policies for the private rented sector. We are seeking views on rents and tenancy reform in the consultation, which does not close until 28 December, and we will reflect carefully on all the responses before we decide what will be in our forthcoming bill on tenancy reform. We will announce our plans in spring next year, and we hope to introduce our bill in the autumn.

I have stressed in this debate, as have other members, that the best way to tackle high-level rents—

James Kelly: Will the minister take an intervention?

Margaret Burgess: I will take one more intervention.

James Kelly: I thank the minister. Even on the timetable that she has outlined, by the time any bill is enacted it will be another two years before tenants in the private rented sector get any support on the issues that they face around security of tenure and rising rent levels. That is unacceptable. Does the minister accept that legislation should have been included in the programme for government last week?

Margaret Burgess: No. We are currently consulting and we have to take time to do that and look at the responses. That is the proper and

measured approach, and our stakeholders in the sector are aware that that is the timescale according to which we are moving forward. We said from the outset that we would legislate within the current session of Parliament. That is what we intend to do.

Patrick Harvie talked about the housing journey. I want to make it clear that the housing journey that I was talking about is different for different people at different times in their lives. It is not automatic that people move from social rent to private rent to owner occupation. Some people will stay in one sector because that is what suits them and their needs. I was not in any way suggesting that there is an automatic transition. Patrick Harvie also asked about figures on homelessness. I cannot tell him whether we have those figures, but we will look at that, and if we record the information I will pass it on to him and Parliament.

We have talked about increasing the supply of housing, so I want to remind Parliament of some of the Government's achievements on that score. I say again that we have in the past seven years built more social rent, housing association social rent and affordable housing than any previous Administration. We have also boosted the house building industry in a time of recession. We are on track to deliver more homes, but we are also helping the house building industry with our help to buy scheme, which has boosted the industry and jobs. We have boosted our affordable housing supply budget over five years, we have committed more than £300 million to our help to buy scheme and we have our national housing trust scheme. We are constantly looking at ways of boosting the housing supply.

I am also proud that we have legislated to end the right to buy—John Mason mentioned that in his speech—and that we have provided £55 million for the period 2013 to 2015 to mitigate the effects of the bedroom tax.

We continue to work with partners to develop new housing investment models that are capable of attracting large scale long-term funding from the capital markets in order to expand delivery of housing for affordable and private rent. An example is the plans by Hearthstone Investment for a £150 million fund to invest in more than 1,000 homes across Scotland, which has secured £30 million from the Falkirk Council pension fund.

We continue to use innovative financing approaches—for example, our successful national housing trust, which is the first guarantee-based model for housing in the UK and is helping hundreds of households to secure a high-quality home that meets their needs.

We continue to work with stakeholders and our partners and we will publish a joint delivery plan for housing in Scotland by the end of April 2015.

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

Margaret Burgess: That follows on from our housing event in November, which was unique in that it brought together councils, housing associations, house builders, lenders, landlords and many others who have contributions to make to our shared ambition that everyone in Scotland has access to good-quality and affordable housing that meets their needs.

16:13

James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab): The Labour Party has used one of its slots—not for the first time—for a debate on housing because of the important issues that are being faced in the private rented sector. Because there is a shortage of housing supply and a lot of people lack the finance to be able to afford mortgages, the private rented sector has really grown—in recent years, it has doubled in size to 368,000.

Two problems that have been brought out in Labour's motion and during the debate are rising rent levels and security of tenure. It is a fact that rents have been going up in every region. The average rent in Scotland is now £537 a month, which is a staggering figure.

In the context of high rent rises in Aberdeen, Alex Johnstone said that there are high earners in the city. I point out to him that people in Edinburgh have to spend on average 47 per cent of their income on rent. That tells us about the issues that people have to face on the ground. Mr Johnstone would not have to walk far from the Parliament building to find out about the issues that people in the private rented sector face.

Margaret Burgess: Does James Kelly accept that in 16 out of the 18 broad rental market areas in Scotland the average increase has been less than inflation?

James Kelly: I think that the minister has been listening to letting agents too much. She can go to postcode areas in Glasgow, Dundee, Aberdeen and Edinburgh and find staggering rent rises—up to 40 per cent, in Aberdeen, for example. That is unacceptable, and it is the Government's job to intervene and take action on rent levels.

Another issue that has come up in the debate is security of tenure. People tend to stay in private rented accommodation for only two to three years, compared with 10 years in the social housing sector. Given that there are children in one in four households in the private rented sector, that has a big impact on children, as Siobhan McMahon said.

People are vulnerable, because a landlord can end a tenancy or put up rent at short notice. As Ken Macintosh said, people struggle to find alternative accommodation.

It all comes down to power. The power lies with the landlords and the letting agents, and it needs to be shifted towards tenants, with more consideration being given to tenants' rights. That is why Labour lodged practical amendments to the Housing (Scotland) Bill, which would have addressed rising rent levels and security of tenure. SNP member after SNP member talked about the importance of addressing issues in the private rented sector, but when they had the opportunity to do that, every one of them voted down the Labour proposals—every one of them voted down the opportunity to help their constituents.

We can all quote statistics at one another, but what Siobhan McMahon said about her constituent, whose rent is so high that he cannot afford to feed himself and has to go to his parents' house for meals, showed the reality of what is happening on the ground. The Conservatives and the Government need to open their eyes to the issues.

It is unfortunate that the Green amendment was not selected for debate, because it would have given us an opportunity to focus on rent levels for students. There is no doubt that students are hit hard by issues such as security of tenure and rent levels.

The Tory amendment lauds the growth of the private sector and the benefits to the economy, as Alex Johnstone did in his speech. However, the Tories have not acknowledged rising rents and the rising number of people in the private rented sector who are in poverty. It is one thing to laud growth in the sector, but rising poverty is a real problem in communities throughout Scotland.

The SNP amendment is staggeringly complacent. As it says, and as various SNP members have told us, the Government published its strategy for the private rented sector in 2013. According to the amendment, the Government has made great progress on its strategy, because it is running a consultation. So: a strategy was published 18 months ago, and there is now a consultation to talk about the issues.

Margaret Burgess: Will James Kelly not accept that the strategy covered a number of other areas, including repair and tenancy deposits, and that we now have regulation of letting agents? We have done a number of things with regard to the private sector, and we are now consulting on the tenancy regime and rents.

James Kelly: The minister acknowledged in her opening speech that she recognised in 2010 that there were issues with the private rented sector.

The present Government has had two bills, a strategy and a consultation. There was nothing in last week's legislative programme to address rent increases and security of tenure. The Government is on a go-slow when it comes to housing. It is time that we saw some action.

People are asking the question: the SNP Government is in power, so what is it going to do with that power? If people cannot pay their energy bills or pay for their food, or if their landlord imposes an excessive rent rise at short notice, they will see that the response of the SNP Government is to have a strategy and a consultation. It is not enough to chat about it; it is time we had some action, and it is time the SNP Government stood up on behalf of tenants, instead of backing the Tories and the rogue letting agents and landlords. We want action now.

National Health Service

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-11766, in the name of Neil Findlay, on the state of the national health service.

16:22

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): The national health service is without doubt the greatest social policy of any Government. The collective pooling of our taxes to provide healthcare for all, free at the point of need, was a revolution in healthcare, resulting in a system to which we contribute according to ability to pay and which each citizen of this country can use according to need. That is something that we should never take for granted and which all of us should work to protect.

Our NHS is under pressure like never before. From the front door of the general practice through to the social care sector, the pressures across the system are immense. In primary care in my region alone, 27 GP surgeries have full or restricted waiting lists. Workforce pressures are piling up. When a GP is off sick or retires, finding a replacement or a locum is almost impossible.

I recently met managers at two practices. Both of them told me that there were no applicants for their vacancies. Yet, rather than addressing those pressures, the Scottish Government has been cutting GP funding. The budget for general practice has been declining steadily. Next year, there is a further real-terms cut of 2.2 per cent. The Royal College of General Practitioners has raised concerns about the

"dangerous consequences for patients in the light of continued underfunding".

Waiting times for appointments are up.

The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport (Shona Robison): Will Neil Findlay recognise the £40 million that was announced by Alex Neil for investment in GP surgeries, particularly in more deprived communities and rural areas? Surely he will welcome that.

Neil Findlay: Of course we always welcome more money, but the issue applies across the board and over a long period, when the budget has been declining.

Waiting times for appointments are up and consultations are getting shorter, weakening the relationship between the doctor and the patient. All of that contributes to a "crisis in general practice", in the words of the royal college. The situation is evidence of a Government failing to face up to the pressures on our local doctors and on the wider NHS.

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Neil Findlay: No thanks.

Let us look at what Audit Scotland, whose report should have been a wake-up call to the Government, says about the NHS:

“The current level of focus on meeting times targets may not be sustainable when combined with additional pressures of increasing demand and tightening budgets.”

Whatever anyone thinks of targets, they are there to monitor and drive performance. The role of the Government is to ensure that the NHS is given the right level of resources to meet those targets successfully.

Bob Doris: Will the member give way?

Neil Findlay: No, thank you.

The Government is failing not only to meet its initial targets but to meet the lower targets that it then set.

Audit Scotland also said:

“There are signs that NHS boards are facing increasing difficulty meeting their financial targets, and some are doing this in unsustainable ways. Four boards required additional funding from the Scottish Government to break even, and five continue to rely on high levels of non-recurring savings.”

Those financial constraints are undoubtedly related to the real-terms reduction in the funds allocated to the NHS. As was recently reported by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the Scottish Government budget for the NHS in Scotland has fallen by more than the NHS budget in England. So much for the progressive credentials of this Scottish National Party Government and its promise to protect the NHS.

Shona Robison: We have said very clearly that we are committed to a real-terms increase not just in this parliamentary session but in the next one. In the Labour leadership elections hustings debate, Neil Findlay refused to give that commitment. Will he do so now?

Neil Findlay: I will deal with the leadership election outwith the chamber; that is a different matter. Let us deal with what we are dealing with in here.

The consequences are being felt everywhere. Accident and emergency departments are full, unable to cope with increased demand and expectations. Staff tell me that they are frazzled. There is a recruitment crisis and junior doctors are under huge pressure, looking after up to 100 beds while working hours that are far too long.

I know through my family and friends how skilled our NHS workforce is; I also recognise that, when people are admitted to hospital, the vast majority

of the time they receive first-class treatment. However, the number of complaints is on the rise—it is up 23 per cent—as are staff complaints about bullying and intimidation, while whistleblowing procedures remain wholly inadequate. If it was not for the dedication and commitment of NHS staff, I fear that the system would be on its knees.

One of the biggest issues facing our health and social care system is delayed discharges. In 2011, the cabinet secretary at that time took action to reduce delayed discharges when the figure reached 200,000 bed days lost and said that the matter would be resolved. Now what do we see? Last year, we saw 421,000 bed days lost and patients stuck in hospital when they could have been at home—all at a cost of £78 million. That represents an abject failure of this Government's stated policy of shifting the balance of care.

Last week, Theresa Fyffe of the RCN said:

“The figures published today on delayed discharges are further evidence that our NHS is under pressure ... One of the worrying aspects of the figures published today is that we've not yet hit the winter months. If this is happening over the summer months, what's it going to be like in between December and February, when many more patients – particularly our most elderly and vulnerable - are admitted to hospital?”

The Minister for Public Health (Maureen Watt): Will the member give way?

Neil Findlay: No, thank you.

Directly linked to the issue is social care, which is one of the greatest scandals of our times. Our elderly and vulnerable friends and relatives are being cared for by staff who are desperate to care but unable to do so. Council budgets have been cut by 11 per cent, with authorities shackled, unable to raise money. The norm is 15-minute care visits and the sector pays the minimum wage, with carers staying in the job only until they can find a job elsewhere.

Recently, I met a young girl who got a social care job. She received four days' training in an office and shadowed another carer for one and a half days, after which she was sent out on her own. On her first day, she had 30 clients to visit. The first was a man with a catheter; she did not know what it was, never mind how to deal with it. The next person she went to had a personality disorder and was abusive to her. Again, she did not know what to do. Her day went on like that. She was paid until 5 pm, but only finished her day's work at 10 pm. She was rewarded with £5.13 an hour.

That is what we are doing to our elderly loved ones and to the young carers of the future. What is the Government's response to that situation? Last week, the First Minister week announced that an

extra £5 million would be put in place to deal with delayed discharges but that councils would have to match fund the Government's contribution.

What planet is the First Minister living on? Council budgets are being hammered by the Government, and services are closing, jobs are being lost and assets are being sold. Can the cabinet secretary give me and our councils some idea of where the money will come from? I will give way if she can tell us where it will come from.

Shona Robison: Unlike the member, local government has been very constructive in responding to the challenges. We should remember that it is a tripartite funding agreement between local government, the health service and the Scottish Government. That is what constructive proposals are all about. Perhaps the member could give us a constructive proposal in the remainder of his speech.

Neil Findlay: We do not know where the money will come from, but local government has to find it—that is how the Scottish Government treats local government.

We have similar problems in the care home sector, where there are staff shortages and low pay, training budgets have been cut and standards are falling. Every week, there are stories in the press about neglect and the poor care of residents. Across Scotland, care home places are vacant because councils will not allocate people to them because of concern about the quality of care, yet neither the Government nor the Care Inspectorate knows the extent of the problem, because neither of them collates the information. That cannot go on. We must make social care a fairly paid, rewarding career, and we must raise standards to ensure that we genuinely shift the balance of care. That will never happen with a system that is based on a race to the bottom, as the present one is.

The two previous cabinet secretaries for health operated a denial strategy—they pretended that everything was okay when reality was staring them in the face. We now have staffing shortages across many disciplines: GPs, midwives, specialist nurses, paediatricians, psychiatrists, emergency medicine staff, anaesthetists—the list goes on. Vacancies for consultant posts have doubled, spending on locums is up by 60 per cent, spending on agency staff is up 106 per cent over the past two years and money continues to leak out of the system into the private sector. In the past few days, we have had the reports on the Vale of Leven hospital, Aberdeen royal infirmary and NHS Grampian, and there are serious issues in Fife, Lanarkshire, the Lothians and across Scotland. If ever there was a time to accept our argument for a wholesale review of our NHS and the establishment of a truly independent health

regulator, that time is now. I hope that the new cabinet secretary will reject the arrogant approach of her predecessors and do exactly that.

I move,

That the Parliament commends the NHS Scotland staff who work tirelessly under increasing pressure to deliver high quality care to patients; is concerned by recent statistics that show that accident and emergency waiting time targets are being missed, the number of patients delayed over four weeks increased by 106% between October 2013 and October 2014, the number of bed days increased by 22% to 154,588 between July to September 2013 and July to September 2014 and that the BMA suggests that consultant vacancies are almost double the official figure; notes the concerns of staff regarding the ongoing scandal of 15-minute social care visits, falling standards and a race to the bottom in quality, wages and conditions, and calls on the Scottish Government to conduct a full-scale review of the NHS, as supported by the Royal College of Nursing, to address the broad range of pressures being identified in all areas of the NHS by staff and patients and to build a health service that meets the demands and needs of the 21st century.

16:32

The Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport (Shona Robison): The NHS is a fantastic institution. As the new Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport, I am grateful for the opportunity to put on record my appreciation for the effort and dedication of those NHS staff who work tirelessly day in and day out to deliver a high-quality service. This is also my first opportunity to say what a privilege it is to have responsibility for the NHS in the Scottish Government.

The NHS must always strive to seek further improvements in the delivery of care, but we should not lose sight of where we have come from and the progress that has been made. We have a clear vision and direction for our health service as part of the 2020 vision for health and social care, which has secured and will continue to secure huge benefits as we move forward with integration over the next few years.

The NHS is our top priority and we are making significant financial investment in our health service. The NHS front-line resource budget will be protected and will receive an above-inflation increase in 2015-16. Indeed, the total health budget will receive a real-terms increase in 2015-16, which will take it to more than £12 billion for the first time. I think that there should be a shift in the debate towards considering how we can better use that significant resource. My job is to ensure that we use it to achieve the things that we need to achieve.

Neil Findlay: Will the cabinet secretary reflect on the social care resource that is available?

Shona Robison: Of course, that is why we have moved to the integration of health and social care. In his speech, Neil Findlay called for more money for health and more money for social care. We need to make sure that the £12 billion that is in the system for health and the huge resources for social care are delivering the improvements that need to be made, and that is what I will focus on doing.

As I said earlier, we have committed to ensuring that the health resource budget receives real-terms rises in each and every year of the next parliamentary session. I note that, when he was given the opportunity to make that commitment, Neil Findlay did not do so, which somewhat pulls the rug from under his argument about resources.

This Government has increased the number of NHS staff to record levels. Yesterday, members saw the workforce statistics, which showed that there are 7.6 per cent more staff working in the NHS. That translates into more than 9,600 staff. It means more doctors, dentists, allied health professionals, nurses and support staff.

The NHS is treating more people than ever before while, at the same time, reducing how long people have to wait for treatment. The number of in-patient cases has increased by more than 162,000 under this Government and day cases are up by more than 45,500. The latest statistics show that 97 per cent of new in-patient and day cases are seen within 12 weeks. There is more resource, but more people are being treated.

John Pentland (Motherwell and Wishaw (Lab): If the cabinet secretary believes that we are making progress, does she share my concern about the current plans to close accident and emergency departments in Lanarkshire and agree that we need urgent action to address staff shortages and a full independent review of future plans to address the many issues that affect health provision in Lanarkshire?

Shona Robison: The member could do with a dose of self-awareness, given where we have been with the A and E departments in Lanarkshire. It was this Government that saved the A and E department at Monklands.

A recent report by the Nuffield Trust for Research and Policy Studies and Health Services into elective waiting times across the four United Kingdom countries found that Scotland had the shortest waits for nine out of 11 common procedures, including hip replacements and cataract removal.

On unscheduled care, it is clear that challenges remain, although it should be noted that performance in Scotland's core accident and emergency departments remains the highest

among all UK countries and significantly above the level that we inherited.

We could not deliver that performance without the dedicated, highly motivated and hard-working staff in the NHS. We have a clear vision for our NHS workforce and, of course, we have committed to ensuring that NHS Scotland staff are rewarded fairly for the work that they do. That is why, unlike England and Wales, we have accepted the recommendations of the independent pay review bodies on pay for 2014-15 and why we have a policy of no compulsory redundancies. We are ensuring that all NHS staff are paid at least the living wage. That will ensure that our staff are well motivated and well rewarded for the job that they do.

However, I am not complacent. I spoke earlier today about the challenges that have been identified in NHS Grampian and last week about the Vale of Leven report. The Government will not shy away from acknowledging and addressing the challenges that the NHS faces, and neither will I.

Winter planning is a key part of our unscheduled care programme. With boards and their partners, we have developed winter plans to prepare for the disruptions that winter can bring. NHS boards are also testing and communicating their business continuity plans to ensure that critical services are maintained.

I am clear that, to deal with those challenges, my focus in the next few months must be on driving forward the shift in the balance of care, driving forward health and social care integration and dealing with delayed discharge. In presenting the Government's programme for the year ahead, the First Minister made it clear that addressing delayed discharge is one of our key priorities and it is one to which I give my personal commitment.

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife (Lab): In 2008, the cabinet secretary said that the Government had reached Labour's target of zero for delayed discharges. In the 24 quarters since then, the target on delayed discharges of more than six weeks has not been achieved and the Government now has a four-week target, with a two-week one coming in in April. Let us have a little bit of realism.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): Cabinet secretary, you are in your last minute.

Shona Robison: My saying that delayed discharge is my top priority gives Dr Simpson a sense of realism. Of course, when I dealt with delayed discharge, it was an inherited problem that the previous Administration left us. [Interruption.]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order, please. [Interruption.] Order, please. The cabinet secretary is concluding.

Shona Robison: We dealt with delayed discharge, and I will deal with it again. I did not want to leave Dr Simpson under any illusion.

In the absence of any other policies, the Labour Party continues to call for a Beveridge-style review. The Beveridge review took four years. I do not want to put the NHS on pause for four years; I want to get on and solve the problems. We know what the problems in the NHS are. We do not need a review to tell us that. We need the action to deal with the problems and ensure that the NHS continually delivers the high level of service that we expect.

I move amendment S4M-11766.3, to leave out from “is concerned” to end and insert:

“believes that, to give certainty to future health service planning, the NHS revenue budget should rise in real terms for the remainder of the current parliamentary session and the next; welcomes that the protection of the NHS budget in Scotland has seen the health workforce rise to a record high; further welcomes that, in the last year alone, NHS consultant numbers have increased by 6.6%; notes that, while delayed discharges today are significantly lower than they were in 2006, action between the Scottish Government, the NHS and local government is required to reverse recent increases; recognises that the successful integration of health and social care will be key to the delivery of the long-term sustainable solution to delayed discharge, improved patient flow and effective and coordinated care at home, and supports the Scottish Government’s aim to work with stakeholders to take forward the continued development of the 2020 vision, as it has in the past, to reflect the increasing demands from patients and the new way that services will be delivered under integration.”

16:39

Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): I will begin, in the short time that is allotted to me, by endorsing the opening statement of Labour’s motion and by paying tribute to the staff of NHS Scotland. The vast majority of those people work in the NHS because they want to help patients, and they work tirelessly to that end. That applies right across the board, within the community and in our hospitals, from the most senior consultants to the most junior medical staff, from nurses and AHPs to the cooks, cleaners, porters and secretaries, who all play their parts in running the vast organisation that is NHS Scotland in the 21st century. Compared with many people in the private sector they are not well paid, but by and large they derive immense satisfaction from the work that they do, and they deserve our gratitude and our support.

When I think back over the near half century since I qualified in medicine, the achievements of the present-day NHS are incredible and are

growing, due to the many advances in technology and medical research and the development of more and more sophisticated medicines and procedures. In 1965, hip replacements were a dream, transplants unheard of, and cancer unmentionable and virtually incurable.

The flip side of that is that more and more people are living much longer and with complex medical conditions, and of course the NHS is under pressure to provide the expected—and, sadly, often taken for granted—services. There has to be new thinking about how demand is to be met, and the silo mentality and professional empires that I grew up with have to change. That is not easy when none of us really likes to change our habits and get out of our comfort zone.

The pressures are evident in the difficulty in meeting waiting time targets, in increasing attendances at accident and emergency departments, in delayed discharges from hospitals, in maintaining the NHS estate and infrastructure and developing it for future needs, and in attracting sufficient members of staff at all levels to deal with patient demand. Those pressures are not just within the NHS in Scotland; they are present across all modern systems of healthcare. We have to learn how to cope with them.

The pinch points are well known and we all have to work together to address them. That is why I do not particularly like the inflammatory language in Labour’s motion about a “race to the bottom”, because the aim of people who are associated with the NHS is to maintain and improve quality and to do that, it is imperative that patient wellbeing is our focus and that we move forward with that in mind, using the increasing—but finite—resources that are at our disposal to try to achieve the laudable 2020 vision that is the Scottish Government’s target.

We are fortunate that the NHS budget has been protected in recent years, not least due to the Barnett consequentials from the UK Government’s health policy, which have given Scotland an extra £3 billion since 2010, with more to come every year following today’s autumn statement. However, there will always be a demand for more money, and how it is spent is clearly a matter of political choice. For example, Scottish Conservatives would pledge an extra 1,000 nurses and midwives, paid for by restoring the prescription charge—except for the young, pensioners, pregnant woman and people on low incomes, who would remain exempt, as they always have been.

I believe that new ways need to be found to make the best use of resource, rather than spending valuable time and money on a wholesale review of the NHS. To do that, our total focus must

be on the best outcomes for patients who want where possible to live at home or in homely community settings. To that end, we must involve people early in their lives and instil in them the importance of taking responsibility for their own health by making appropriate lifestyle choices that help them to keep well and active for as long as possible, thereby reducing their demands on the NHS.

It is also vital that integration of health and social care moves forward apace, which will mean more emphasis being placed on primary care—

Shona Robison: I am certainly very willing to offer Opposition members a briefing on our plans and on the progress that is being made on the integration of health and social care, as well as on winter pressures and delayed discharge, if Nanette Milne would find that helpful.

Nanette Milne: The cabinet secretary has just stolen a bit of my speech.

It is vital that integration move forward, in relation to not just doctors but to AHPs and nurses of all grades, local authorities and third sector organisations that provide much of the care within communities, so that patients can experience relatively seamless transitions between levels of care as they progress through life. To make that a reality, all interested parties will have to come together, forget their professional and cultural differences and work towards achieving a long-term effective plan to secure the future of Scotland's NHS.

The previous health secretary was very keen to progress in that way and was particularly keen to involve politicians from all sides in moving forward—as evidenced, for example, by the Scottish Government's welcome investment in 500 extra health visitors. That is a group of health professionals who are greatly valued by my party and we would seek to have even more of them. Therefore, I am pleased that the cabinet secretary has indicated that she will perhaps follow in the previous health secretary's footsteps in that regard. If so, she can be assured of our support and involvement in pursuit of a sustainable and high-quality NHS for Scotland.

I move amendment S4M-11766.2, to leave out from "falling standards" to end and insert:

"; considers that, for the successful integration of health and social care, there needs to be a clear focus on primary care, including allied health professionals and the third sector, and on the interrelationships between the health and social care professionals; further notes Audit Scotland's call for a major overhaul in the running of the NHS to cope with future needs, particularly those of an ageing population, and calls on the Scottish Government to work urgently and constructively with all parties to achieve a long-term effective plan to secure the future of Scotland's NHS."

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We come to the open debate. We are very short of time, so speeches should be up to four minutes, although I am afraid that our last two speakers may not get four minutes.

16:44

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): The Labour motion identifies a number of pressures on Scotland's NHS. However, the motion is one-sided and partial, and it gives an incomplete picture and impression of our national health service.

I appreciate that it is an Opposition's job to oppose, but it remains my hope that on Scotland's NHS, even despite the motion, we can still garner a good degree of consensus across political parties.

For every statistic that signals pressures on our NHS—there certainly are pressures—there is always another statistic that points to progress and improvement in patient care. That could be in waiting times: for example, by June 2014, 97.2 per cent of people were being treated within the 12-week waiting time guarantee. I remind members that in March 2007, the figure was 85 per cent for an 18-week wait. That is progress.

Progress and improvement could be in patient safety: there has been a 14.2 per cent improvement in the mortality rate. Surely that is progress. On hygiene for our elderly patients, the incidence of *Clostridium difficile* has fallen by nearly 82 per cent. Surely that is progress. On staffing, there is a record number of consultants in comparison with the number in 2007, representing a 36 per cent increase. Surely that is progress. There has been an increase in numbers of trained nurses and midwives. Surely that is progress. *[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Bob Doris: Admitting that progress exists does not mean that we deny that pressures remain. That is a key aspect of the tone of the debate: we can admit that there are pressures without denying that there has been progress. Labour's motion signally fails to do that.

Let us look at what a root-and-branch review or a full-scale review could mean. Perhaps it could mean tackling unscheduled care, and people turning up at accident and emergency units. Yes—let us do that, and let us look at preventative action and patient flow through hospitals. Let us call it an unscheduled care action plan and put £50 million towards it. Hang on. We are already doing that.

Perhaps we should look at delayed discharge. Perhaps the Government should put in an additional £10 million, and perhaps we should

work with our partners in the NHS and local authorities to provide a £20 million pot and create a delayed discharge action plan. Hang on. We are already doing that.

Perhaps we have to ensure that health and social care integration works better; indeed, perhaps we have to legislate to ensure that it happens because some local authorities were not doing it. Hang on. Once again, that is precisely what we have done.

I am trying to make the point that the NHS is an institution that is under constant review. I know that very well as deputy convener of the Health and Sport Committee, in which I work in partnership across parties to improve the NHS. One example is the £40 million new medicines fund, following our root-and-branch review of access to medicines. We did that by keeping the NHS under constant review.

Another example is the tackling of issues in regulation and care inspection of older people's homes throughout Scotland, and making the system more robust. We already did that, through the Health and Sport Committee working in partnership with the Government.

A third example is working out whether the targets on which the NHS collects information are the appropriate ones in the appropriate place at the appropriate time. Anyone who is following the budget scrutiny in the Health and Sport Committee just now will have seen that we have already taken evidence on that.

There are undoubtedly pressures in the NHS, and I am delighted that the Scottish Government has agreed to a real-terms increase. I note that Neil Findlay would not guarantee such an increase. The NHS is under constant review; more important is that it is making constant and persistent progress and advances.

16:48

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I welcome the cabinet secretary to her post, and to her first health debate. However, it is surely telling that she has in her two short weeks in post already made two statements to Parliament—both dealing with the crisis in the NHS.

The Labour motion mentions the sad state of the NHS in Scotland. The deterioration has not happened overnight: the Scottish Government has presided over it for a number of years. I wonder how bad things will get before the Government takes our advice and carries out a root and branch review of the NHS in Scotland. Is the Government's reluctance due to its own mismanagement and the fear that a review will highlight its incompetence?

Shona Robison: Will Rhoda Grant give way?

Rhoda Grant: In response to questions on the cabinet secretary's statement earlier today, she said that she wants to

"know where problems lie in our health service—warts and all—because only then can we take steps to address them."

Perhaps the cabinet secretary wants to comment on that point.

Shona Robison: That is why we have set up an independent inspectorate to do that.

Can Rhoda Grant tell us how long the review would take and whether all the things that we are doing on health and social care integration would be put on pause while the review happened? If the intention is not to stop the changes that we are making in the NHS, what is the purpose of the review and what will be its outcome?

Rhoda Grant: The review would take as long as it needed to take to ensure that we have an NHS that is fit for the 21st century. Alongside the review, the Government would have to tackle the problems that occur weekly and which the cabinet secretary has to talk about in the chamber. We must not only address those problems but look at the NHS to ensure that it is fit for the 21st century. The only way of doing that is to have a review to identify the pressures and to plot the way forward. Otherwise, we will fail the patients who use the NHS and the staff who work in it. It is not good enough to depend on the good will of staff to keep the service from crumbling altogether.

In the short time that I have available, I will touch on one of the issues that impacts on the NHS: the inadequacy of healthcare in the community. The Scottish Government's cuts to council budgets have led to choices being made between feeding old people and educating young people. That is the choice that councils face today. The Government promised to fund the council tax freeze, but it has not done so, which has left the most vulnerable people in our society paying the care tax and with little or nothing to live on. That scandalous care tax needs to end now.

Maureen Watt: Would Rhoda Grant like to tell us which budgets all that money should come from?

Rhoda Grant: It is interesting that the Scottish Government is looking forward to receiving consequential from the UK Government. Surely that could go towards ending the care tax and allowing people to live with dignity.

Bob Doris: So, should the money not go to the NHS?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order, Mr Doris.

Rhoda Grant: I hear sedentary comments about the NHS. Surely the NHS operates in our communities as well as in hospitals. That is the nub of the issue—the Government believes that the NHS operates only in hospitals. We need to treat people in the community because, if we do not, people go into hospital. The Government policy is resulting in people going in for unscheduled care because of inadequate healthcare in the community. That leads to bed blocking. If people cannot get out into the community with adequate healthcare there, they remain in hospital, which is a dangerous place for older people. They get stuck—they become frailer and lose their strength and the ability to look after themselves, all because of inadequate care in the community.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must come to a close, please.

Rhoda Grant: We need to change the NHS, and the Government must take responsibility for that change. We need a Beveridge-style review. Sooner or later, the Government will be forced to do it. I just hope that the NHS does not go further back before that happens.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am afraid that I do not have any time to add on for interventions, so members must take them in their own time.

16:53

Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): It is interesting to hear Rhoda Grant calling for consequentialists to go to local government when the Government has said that it will put them into health, and especially when some of her party's members have called in *The Press and Journal* for consequentialists to go directly to NHS Grampian.

Rhoda Grant: Will Mark McDonald give way? He is misquoting me.

Mark McDonald: Labour members seem to have a very flexible attitude to the number of times we can spend the same pot of money. It is little wonder that they find themselves in opposition.

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab): Will the member give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is not taking interventions.

Mark McDonald: It is also interesting to listen to Labour members when they are questioned about the review that the Labour Party wants to set up. The review appears to have no terms of reference, no defined timescale and no person identified to lead it. Labour members just want somebody else to do their work for them, because there is an utter policy vacuum in the health brief in the Labour Party, which has not come up with one single

proactive or constructive policy initiative since Mr Findlay took on the health brief.

If that is the approach that we have to look forward to from a Neil Findlay leadership of the Labour Party, he has my full backing in the leadership contest and I look forward to him leading the party. After all, the candidate for deputy leader who is aligned to Neil Findlay has said today that any other outcome would lead to certain defeat for the Labour Party in 2016. I am sure that Mr Findlay would endorse Katy Clark's view that Kezia Dugdale represents certain defeat for the Labour Party in 2016, given that he has aligned with Katy Clark in the campaign. *[Interruption.]* I hear Mr Findlay calling from a sedentary position. I know that he is an adherent of Marxist principles, but today he is a bit more Groucho than Karl. To be honest, most of us yearn for the day when he is a bit more like Harpo.

There has undoubtedly been progress in the NHS in Scotland. I offer this quotation as an example:

"we have come a long way. A decade ago, many of us who are sitting around the table were inundated with cases involving people who could not get an operation. They have disappeared in my case load ... so there have been tremendous gains."—*[Official Report, Health and Sport Committee, 4 November 2014; c 39.]*

[Laughter.]

Labour members may laugh, but those words were spoken by Duncan McNeil—the convener of the Health and Sport Committee and a Labour MSP. He clearly recognises that there has been progress in the NHS. However, there are undoubtedly pressures; there have always been pressures, since the inception of the NHS. I think that Nanette Milne summed that up well by talking about the medical advances that have been made over time and which, although they have benefited the population, have increased pressures on the NHS.

That leads me to the demographic trends that we are now seeing. We need to get beyond talking about demographic trends as if they are a problem: people living longer is a good thing. What we have to do is ensure that people are living not only longer but healthier lives. That involves some of the early intervention work that this Government is focused on. The work around health and social care integration will assist greatly in that because, for too many people, there is a gap between those two silos, into which people all too often fall.

Delayed discharge is a key issue in that regard. When I was on Aberdeen City Council, delayed discharge was down to zero. However, at present, there is a real difficulty in the city in putting in place appropriate care packages for individuals. A large part of the reason for that problem is that the

City of Aberdeen Council—which is Labour led, by the way—has decided to hive off social care to an arm’s-length company called Bon Accord Care, which has zero democratic oversight by local councillors.

Neil Findlay: Will the member give way?

Mark McDonald: I am in my last 40 seconds.

Bon Accord Care has zero democratic accountability, which is leading to a real difficulty for my constituents in Aberdeen, many of whom are stuck waiting for appropriate care packages so that they can go home.

Finally, I accept that there has been a long-term issue around GP surgeries. The GP surgery in Inverurie, where I was born, has never been expanded, despite the exponential growth in the population there since I was born. Too many practices have failed to benefit as a result of planning gain. That has been a failure on the parts of health boards and local authorities in the past. I have had conversations with the previous cabinet secretary for health and I would be delighted to have conversations with the new cabinet secretary about how we can use planning gain to alleviate some of the pressures on GP premises, many of which are approaching or are at capacity.

16:57

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab): A health service under pressure, unable to recruit staff or meet targets, relying on the dedication of hard-working front-line staff to compensate for its lack of clinical assurance systems and to maintain the quality and safety of patient care—that is the picture of NHS Grampian that is portrayed in report after report published this week. It is a service that has been underfunded, against the Government’s own formula, to the tune of £158 million over five years and which has cut more than 400 nursing posts over three years just to balance the books.

Shona Robison: Can the member say what the funding formula led to for NHS Grampian under the previous Labour Administration?

Lewis Macdonald: Certainly. The previous Administration put in place the national resource allocation committee, which commissioned a review of funding. The incoming SNP Government accepted the recommendations of that commission. However, the gap between what it provided and what the national resource allocation committee said that it should provide was £26.6 million in 2010, and is £29.7 million this year. It is little wonder that Ellen Hudson of the Royal College of Nursing said yesterday:

“the Scottish Government should have recognised the problems in NHS Grampian earlier and taken action to address them.”

That is not all. In addition to the challenges that are facing other health boards across Scotland, NHS Grampian has also had to deal with a small group of senior staff who have claimed to be whistleblowers while actively undermining the first principles of public service. Yesterday’s reports revealed that a small number of consultants had exhibited

“unprofessional, offensive and unacceptable behaviour”;

that they had contributed to an environment in which 40 per cent of hospital consultants have not agreed a job plan, in spite of a contractual obligation to do so; and that many staff believe that in Grampian there are “no consequences” for consultants who behave in inappropriate ways.

Niall Dickson, the chief executive of the General Medical Council, said yesterday that the body was

“extremely concerned that large numbers of consultants had no job plans”

and said that

“there was minimal evidence that clinical governance structures were working effectively.”

This is not just about the failure of NHS Grampian to get to grips with unacceptable behaviour by a handful of senior staff; the Scottish Government also has questions to answer about its role in permitting the situation to develop.

Healthcare Improvement Scotland reports:

“the minutes of the medical staff committee suggest that this group sees itself as an alternative management structure rather than as an advisory body.”

Managers told HIS that

“clinicians would tell managers what to do and threaten escalation to Scottish Government,”

and, incredibly, HIS reviewers reported that

“we heard remarks by some consultants that confirmed this.”

The arrogance of repeating such boasts in front of external reviewers answerable to ministers says it all.

Shona Robison: Does Lewis Macdonald not accept that through HIS’s investigation all this has been exposed to the light of day and action has been taken? As soon as we became aware of those issues we took action.

Lewis Macdonald: I absolutely welcome that, and I welcomed it earlier this afternoon. However, we need to know why those consultants formed the view that they were “untouchable” and that they could go directly to Government if they did not get their own way. We need to know how often Government ministers entertained “escalation”

outwith the proper channels, and we need to know which ministers were involved.

Above all, we need to know what ministers will now do to support NHS Grampian in addressing the issues raised by the reports, given

“the potential for patient care and safety to be further compromised”

that they show. The recommendations in these reports have been accepted; they now need to be implemented urgently.

The recommendations made by the Royal College of Surgeons have been published, but its conclusions have not. They should be published now, so that we know what it found.

The interim chief executive at NHS Grampian deserves our full support. That must include urgent additional resources to address the pressing problems of inadequate levels of nurse staffing and recruitment across the board.

Urgency, openness, resources and local confidence are all needed to allow NHS Grampian to move forward. That is the challenge for the Scottish Government.

17:01

Richard Lyle (Central Scotland) (SNP): I begin my remarks by reflecting on the work that the NHS does. Scotland’s NHS is a world leader in healthcare and a public service that is absolutely essential to the lives of everyone who lives in our country. No matter whether we are young or old, at some point in our lives we will call on the services of our NHS.

I note with interest that Neil Findlay calls for a “full-scale review of the NHS ... to address the broad range of pressures being identified in all areas of the NHS.”

It may interest members to know that the document entitled “NHS Board Projected staff in Post changes for 2014/15”, produced by the Scottish Government, makes it clear:

“All NHS boards have been asked to develop Local Delivery Plans ... and workforce plans, as well as using workforce workload tools, in order to assess if service redesign or changes in skill mix are required to best meet the needs of their population.”

The people who know best are those at the heart of the issue: those who are involved in the delivery of our NHS at the local level. I believe that the roll-out of the local delivery plans and workforce plans is essential to identify the areas within a particular local service that need improved and those that are performing well.

Neil Findlay’s motion also asks the Government to

“address the broad range of pressures being identified in all areas of the NHS by staff and patients.”

I read with interest the latest report by NHS Scotland’s chief executive, and I noted that, as a component of its 2020 vision route map, NHS Scotland had developed its 2020 workforce vision, which concerns all NHS Scotland staff and has implications for staff across health and social care.

The document says that the vision was informed by 10,000 voices and was one of the largest qualitative exercises undertaken in NHS Scotland, in which it listened to the views of the staff and those working in healthcare. Therefore, I must say to the Labour Party that this Government has always had a commitment to engaging and discussing with and listening to staff, patients and others involved in healthcare.

I would like to look at the pressures that are raised in the motion. There can be no doubt that our national health service faces significant financial pressures. However, I am proud of the Government’s record of standing up and protecting our NHS. Our attitude towards the NHS is in stark contrast to that of those in government south of the border. To coin a phrase, a race to the bottom is taking place to privatise the NHS in England, but here in Scotland our Government’s commitment to protecting the NHS is clear.

In the draft budget 2015-16, the Government made it clear that, despite the UK Government having cut the Scottish Government’s resource budget in real terms, we have maintained our commitment that the NHS front-line resource budget will be protected and will increase at least in line with inflation.

Jim Hume (South Scotland) (LD): Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is in his final minute.

Richard Lyle: Our Government has a track record of protecting the NHS despite the cuts enforced by Westminster. The Labour Party would do well to remember that. Our Government is committed to engaging with and listening to all who are involved in healthcare in Scotland.

Our Government will always seek to improve, where possible. NHS Lanarkshire has improved rates for cancer patients, 95.7 per cent of whom start treatment within 62 days, which compares with 70.3 per cent in the first quarter of 2007. That is a massive improvement.

I thank all who are involved in our NHS for the outstanding work that they continue to do.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Jim Hume; I am afraid that I can give him only just over three minutes.

17:05

Jim Hume (South Scotland) (LD): I am pleased that the Labour Party has used its time to discuss our NHS. At the outset, let me do as others have done and say that the people who make our NHS do extraordinary work. They save lives but they also improve lives. I have a veteran friend, Chris McDevitt, who will go into the care of the NHS in 14 hours, and I am sure that the staff will do their utmost to get him mobile again. Our thanks go out to the NHS.

We know that the quality of patient care is directly related to having the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time. It is worrying therefore that the 2013 NHS Scotland staff survey showed that only 45 per cent of staff agreed that care of patients was the top priority of their health board. That is down 54 per cent from 2010. Only 32 per cent felt that they could meet all the conflicting demands on their time at work, and less than a quarter thought that there were enough staff for them to do their job properly. In the RCN members survey of 2013, 64 per cent of those who are working in NHS hospitals said that they were too busy to provide the level of care that they would like and 81 per cent recorded an increase in their workload in the previous year.

The Scottish Government's 2020 vision simply will not be achieved unless we have meaningful change. As I said to the previous health secretary, the Government rattling off a list of where it has made investments misses the point. This is not just about one-off injections of cash; it is about ensuring that the skill mixes are right.

Shona Robison: Will the member give way?

Jim Hume: I am sorry, but I have only three minutes.

The cabinet secretary must recognise that the system is at breaking point. Yesterday figures showed that more NHS posts are lying vacant and for longer than was previously the case. Last week, figures revealed an alarming rise in the number of delayed discharges; fewer patients being treated within the targeted 18 weeks between referral and first treatment; 56,252 patients waiting for one of the eight key diagnostic tests—a 19 per cent increase on the 2013 figure—and waiting longer for them; and the fact that accident and emergency four-hour performance times had worsened, with 242 patients spending more than 12 hours in A and E.

A full-scale review is not the best course of action at the moment. We know what the problems are and we have a good sense of the pressures. We need solutions. With that in mind, perhaps the Labour Party could come up with some suggestions. Perhaps it has three solid policy ideas that would go some way towards alleviating

the pressures on our NHS and transforming it into the service that we all want. A review will not achieve that change; it will put all on hold and slow down actions that desperately need to be addressed now.

17:08

Christian Allard (North East Scotland) (SNP): The cabinet secretary could not have been clearer earlier this afternoon in her statement on NHS Grampian. The work done by Healthcare Improvement Scotland did not identify consistent or widespread concerns about patient safety. Aberdeen royal infirmary is not significantly different from the Scottish average.

In June 2014, NHS Grampian's performance against the four-hour accident and emergency target was 96.1 per cent; across Scotland, the average is 93.5 per cent. We could compare that with the 91.3 per cent in April 2006 or with the figures from the Labour Administration in Wales, where the figure is 86.3 per cent. If Neil Findlay is concerned about recent statistics at accident and emergency departments, he will have to agree that Labour is not the answer to his concerns.

Where I agree with Mr Findlay is that NHS staff in Scotland are working tirelessly under pressure to deliver high-quality care to patients. Indeed, that is what the report on NHS Grampian found out.

We all know where the pressure is coming from: a lack of funding from Westminster, an ageing population and the increasing challenge of recruiting. I welcome the fact that, under this Government, the NHS budget is protected in Scotland, the health workforce is rising to a record high, and NHS consultant numbers are at a record level.

I agree with Bob Doris about the tone of the Labour motion. As far as patients' confidence in NHS Scotland is concerned, I want to paint another picture of our public health service. "Patient opinion: every voice matters", which is an independent online site that highlights patients' experiences of the health service, allows patients, carers, family and friends of patients to tell their stories. Like, I am sure, other members, I also receive regular emails about what is happening in health services across the north-east.

One such story comes from an Aberdeen patient, who says:

"I was in a lot of pain ... and went to the Aberdeen Health Village where a lovely woman ... treated me. She broke the news"

about the condition

"very considerately and was a huge support, offering me lots of different treatments and advice. I was scared and upset but she made me feel so much better about the

whole situation. Her kindness and sincerity is a credit to the health service offered in Aberdeen.”

There are a lot more such stories being told across the north-east.

We can all be rightly proud of the care that NHS Scotland staff deliver, day in, day out; indeed, that is why NHS staff have public support. The Government has public support because it has a vision for our nation’s public services: protecting funding for the NHS, preventing privatisation, and integrating health and social care services. There is no support in this chamber for Labour’s full-scale review, just as there is no support outside this chamber for the Labour Party itself.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We now move to closing speeches. I call Nanette Milne, who has four minutes.

17:11

Nanette Milne: It is fair to say that this has been an interesting and probably worthwhile debate, even though at times it has focused on the negative rather than the positive.

There are, of course, problems in the NHS—we need just to look at recent reports on the Vale of Leven and NHS Grampian to realise that—but there always have been such problems, and I am sure that there always will be. Nonetheless, the fact that in the 66 years of its existence our NHS has evolved and grown into the vast and complex organisation that we know today is testament to the many generations of staff and politicians who, like all of us in the chamber this afternoon, have been committed to it.

The current pressures on the NHS are proof of its success, which has resulted in our burgeoning elderly population living with multiple and complex long-term conditions and the health consequences of old age such as dementia and many of the cancers that are stretching its resources to the limit.

One of the last things that I heard Alex Neil say in this chamber in his role as health secretary was that the first person who will reach the age of 150 has already been born. That is quite a thought, and it is a clear indication that pressures on the NHS will continue well into the future.

We face huge problems with staffing levels, both in health and social care; with the management and maintenance of the NHS estate; and not least with dealing with the health inequalities that are still a blight on many lives in Scotland. The NHS and councils will also have to deal with many more people as life expectancy increases.

Neil Findlay was his usual fiery self, always pessimistic and always on the attack. I look forward to seeing his optimistic side, should he

become leader of his party in Scotland later this month. The cabinet secretary gave a fair representation of her Government’s position, and I wish her well in her new and undoubtedly challenging role.

Neil Findlay: The member must know that socialists are optimists—the two things go hand in hand. I am always optimistic.

Nanette Milne: I have to say that I have never found that to be the case.

As I said in my opening speech, we on this side of the chamber are willing to work with the cabinet secretary and give her our support whenever we can, and I hope that she will accept our offer in the spirit in which it is intended.

The Scottish National Party speakers all made predictable speeches that supported Government policy and attacked their number 1 political enemy; likewise, Labour highlighted every problem that could be used to attack the SNP, although I note that Rhoda Grant emphasised significant issues about the provision of care in the community, which will no doubt be a key concern of the integration bodies at locality level. I think that it is wrong to use the NHS as a political football, and it does nothing to help the patients who depend on it.

As I have already acknowledged, there are major problems in NHS Scotland that we need to deal with, but I do not think that we should despair. We are a resilient nation; we have survived and defeated adversity over many centuries; and we have evolved into a country that we can all be proud of.

I am confident that, with appropriate leadership from Government of whatever political persuasion and by working together in the interests of patients, we can overcome our current problems and achieve a Scottish health service that will be sustainable far into the future and which will, no doubt, face and overcome even more challenges that are not yet on the horizon.

Please let us work together to improve the health and wellbeing of our fellow Scots and cut out the political point scoring that makes us so unpopular with the public whom we serve. They put us where we are, and they deserve our support. Let us try to live up to and beyond their expectations.

17:15

The Minister for Public Health (Maureen Watt): I have listened closely to the debate and will start by picking up a number of points that have been raised. Neil Findlay, Rhoda Grant and Lewis Macdonald would love to have us believe that the NHS is a failing basket case in Scotland. It

is not. To say so is to do all NHS staff a disservice. People cannot praise the staff and then say that the NHS is failing—it cannot be both at the same time.

The resource budget is increasing in real terms, but where would the extra money that Rhoda Grant and others have asked for come from?

Rhoda Grant: Will the minister take an intervention?

Maureen Watt: Just hold on a minute.

Rhoda Grant said that NHS consequentials would not go to the NHS. She also said that hospitals are dangerous places. However, healthcare-associated infection rates are down and cleanliness levels are up under the Government's watch.

Rhoda Grant: On a point of clarification, the minister has, like one of her colleagues, misrepresented my position. Healthcare happens in the community, and that is underfunded. The Government needs to fund that.

Our concerns are not made up by us. The staff who work in the NHS are telling us that the NHS has never been like it is now. That is why the RCN, alongside us, is calling for a root-and-branch review.

Maureen Watt: The *Official Report* will show what Rhoda Grant said about NHS consequentials.

I have asked again and again, but Rhoda Grant and other Labour members have still not said where the money would come from.

Neil Findlay mentioned delayed discharges. In October 2006, 908 patients were delayed for more than four weeks; in October 2014, the number of delayed patients was 321. That is around a third of what the figure was.

Neil Findlay: In 2011, the current First Minister said:

"I have made improved care for the elderly a personal priority. The NHS and local authorities need to work together to ensure that fewer and fewer older people are left languishing in hospital unnecessarily."

At that point, 200,000 people were suffering from delayed discharge; now, the figure is 400,000. Is that a success for the First Minister?

Maureen Watt: Those figures are not the case, as the member well knows. [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order, please.

Maureen Watt: The up-to-date figures on delayed discharges are as I said. [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order, please.

Maureen Watt: We are integrating health and social care, and the budgets are moving with that. Just yesterday, I had a meeting on community planning partnerships dealing with just that sort of thing.

We are not denying that the NHS faces challenges, but the Government has a clear sense of vision and direction for our NHS and, through working with our NHS boards, we are putting in place a range of actions to support the delivery of our vision. That was highlighted by the constructive speeches that Nanette Milne and other members made. Members of the Health and Sport Committee know exactly the position on the front line and were constructive enough to point that out.

Scotland is leading the world through our Scottish patient safety programme and the person-centred collaborative, which are improving the quality of care that patients receive. We are also focusing our efforts on ensuring that the right people are available to deliver the right care in the right place at the right time. We need to make better use of workforce intelligence to support medical workforce planning within a more integrated healthcare system.

The partnership approach that we take with NHS employers and staff could be extended to Opposition members, if they would like. For example, our health and social care integration plans will help to address the challenges of delayed discharge. I hope that the Opposition will agree to address that matter in a cross-party way, as Nanette Milne indicated. We can take it forward at future cross-party meetings, as the cabinet secretary said.

I would be happy to take on ideas from Neil Findlay and others on how we could do things differently and how they could be done within the current financial settlement, but I have heard nothing about that today. There is no point in putting the NHS on pause while a review is carried out, but we are happy to meet Opposition members to talk about delayed discharge and winter resilience in the coming weeks.

We are supporting the delivery of high-quality care with significant financial investment. In addition to the investment in the resource budget, we are committed to investment in NHS capital and infrastructure that will provide the people of Scotland with world-leading hospitals, as in the new south Glasgow hospitals project, which will be completed in 2015. We will also deliver the Royal hospital for sick children in Edinburgh, a replacement for Dumfries and Galloway royal infirmary and a new maternity hospital and cancer centre in Aberdeen. We are developing much better and more robust intelligence on medical staff profiling and career choices to better inform

supply and we are working with boards to boost the sustainability of the Scottish workforce.

The NHS faces challenges, but we are meeting and dealing with them on a daily basis. For all the reasons that I have given, I urge members to reject the Labour motion and support the amendment in Shona Robison's name.

17:21

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I am pleased to sum up. Regrettably, the Government has initiated only a tiny number of health debates since 2007. The short debate that we have had is wholly inadequate to explore the major issues that I think all members agree that health and social care faces.

The SNP came into government in 2007 on a false prospectus, because it encouraged the electorate to think at that time—

Shona Robison: Is the member talking about 2011?

Dr Simpson: I am talking about 2007, when the SNP was first in government. The SNP manifesto committed the Government to not closing any acute beds, but the reality is that the Government has had to close a number of acute beds. It is also the reality that services need to be redesigned, but the SNP encouraged the electorate to think that the best way was to maintain every local service and keep every local hospital open. The SNP Government also rejected the Kerr report.

We are all signed up to the Scottish collaborative and co-operative model, which is based on managed care networks, and it is clear that it is delivering, but it requires further specialisation. The public sector model to which all five parties, including the Conservatives, are signed up is radically different from the path that the English NHS is following. As some SNP members have said, the most recent report shows that Scotland has narrowed the gap on waiting times. Long gone are the years before 1997 when patients could wait for years for hip operations and other procedures.

Labour will welcome and praise Government initiatives when they do the right thing, as in the case of the proposed major trauma units that have been announced. However, they come some years after such units were introduced in other jurisdictions and proven to be workable. That was also the case with the Healthcare Environment Inspectorate, which we welcomed, although it came in two years after England introduced a similar inspectorate.

Shona Robison: I remind Richard Simpson that the announcement on the Healthcare Environment Inspectorate was made a year after we came into

government. Does that not beg the question of what happened in the previous eight years?

Dr Simpson: In the previous eight years, we set up the HAI task force, which Shona Robison praised. The SNP Government developed that, but it still set up the new body two years later than England had set up a similar body.

That was also the case with the waiting times scandal, when the SNP took nine months to take over the matter and instigate a national inquiry, and it is currently the case on boarding out. After pressure from Labour, the Government rightly introduced a system whereby NHS boards are required to monitor boarding out. However, three years after that started, we are still unable to get information on boarding out from the boards, as we found from a recent freedom of information request that we made.

Bad boarding-out practices abound, as we have seen this week in the HIS report. Again under pressure, the Government finally agreed to set up with HIS an inspection regime for care of the elderly. Excellent. Well done. Fantastic. However, a recent FOI request by Scottish Labour showed that there is absolutely no cross-referencing between boarding out and cognitive impairment. The Government's systems are dysfunctional.

The SNP constantly acknowledges—rightly—that there are pressures and challenges for the NHS. The NHS has always faced pressures and challenges, but never in my experience has there been a situation such as the one that Brian Keighley, chairman of the British Medical Association Scotland—to which I should declare that I belong—has called a slow car crash over the past five years. He went on to say that he felt that the situation was like rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic. Now the Royal College of Nursing has added its weight to our call for a root-and-branch review, along with the campaign that is being run by *The Herald*.

Many groups—not just Labour—are saying that we need a vision of where we will be beyond 2020. We need to go on with the same work, to review what is happening now and to do service redesign, but we also need to come to an agreed decision about the position beyond 2020. We have agreed to the general principles, but we need a consensus on how we will shape health and social care and not simply to say that they will be integrated.

Mark McDonald: Will the member take an intervention?

Dr Simpson: I am sorry—I do not have time.

We have an independent inspection agency, but not one that can go in and do inspections by itself. The Government has to order it to go in, as in the

case of NHS Grampian. That was right and I praise the Government for that but, nevertheless, the agency had to be authorised and told to do the inspection by the Government. HIS should be able to inspect every aspect of the health service independently and robustly and, as the Government has finally agreed for HEI, it should have enforcement powers. Such powers have been in place in England for seven years.

Bob Doris: Will the member give way?

Dr Simpson: No, I do not have time—I am sorry.

Jim Hume made some valuable points. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has shown a cut in expenditure in Scotland against an increase in England between 2010 and 2013.

Shona Robison: Will the member give way?

Dr Simpson: No, I am sorry—I do not have time.

Let us look at the pressures. Every board is failing on a legal guarantee that the Government chose to give. It is not just a guarantee that we would like to aspire to but which is not a legal guarantee and where, if we fail, that is a pity. This year, there are more than 10,000 Scots who have been given by the Government a legal 12-week in-patient and day-case guarantee who are not having that legal guarantee met. I am really surprised that someone has not asked for a judicial review or taken out a case against the Government.

There are also 125,000 Scots this year who will not have their 18-week referral-to-treatment guarantee met—it will be breached—and that does not include a further 100,000 about whom we have no information. The figure could be 250,000.

I know that, if he had had time, Jim Hume would have mentioned child and adolescent mental health services and the fact that 200 young people every month have not had the 26-week guarantee met. We also have an 18-week guarantee coming up that is going to have problems.

What about the cancer guarantees? Hundreds of patients are not getting their cancer guarantee met, and we are not at the 95 per cent target—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Excuse me, Dr Simpson. There is far too much noise in the chamber.

Dr Simpson: Of course progress has been made. We would expect that. If it had not been made, we would have been criticising the Government far harder. Everybody would have been criticising it. However, the Government inherited double the money from Labour. We instituted the biggest increases in the health

service budget that had ever been seen. The Government inherited that—it was lucky.

Shona Robison: On the subject of money, we have learned today that Labour has refused to give a commitment to a real-terms increase and would refuse to pass on the consequential to health. Will Richard Simpson confirm both those things?

Dr Simpson: Well, we will see, but the—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Dr Simpson: We will see. The cabinet secretary has constantly repeated the lie that we would not have protected health. We would—it was in our manifesto. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Dr Simpson: It was in our manifesto, Mr Swinney. In addition, we have talked repeatedly about the fact that, if the Government does not protect social care, the health service cannot cope. That is the situation.

In the final few seconds of my speech, let me look at the numbers. The Government plans to cut the number of junior doctors by 20 per cent and to cut senior training grade figures by 40 per cent. It has cut the nursing student intake by 20 per cent and the midwifery student intake by 40 per cent. That will have consequences in future years.

The Presiding Officer: You need to wind up.

Dr Simpson: The Government failed to listen to what we were saying about junior doctor rotas until recently, when Alex Neil announced that he would stop junior doctors working 100 hours of night duty over seven days. However, junior doctors are still doing 65 hours over five days, and the response to our FOI request shows that not a single human resources department in the NHS is proactively asking junior doctors whether tiredness is affecting their work and their ability to journey home.

The Presiding Officer: Dr Simpson, you need to wind up.

Dr Simpson: There are failings, which need to be addressed seriously. We need a root-and-branch review. We need an inspection system, with enforcement powers, which is truly independent and does not need the Government to authorise it to go in. We need change now.

Point of Order

17:30

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. On 21 October 2011, the then Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Cities Strategy, Nicola Sturgeon, said:

“I have made improved care for the elderly a personal priority. The NHS and local authorities need to work together to ensure that fewer and fewer older people are left languishing in hospital unnecessarily.”

During today’s national health service debate, I referred to that comment and to the fact that, at the time, 200,000 bed days were being lost to the NHS each year as a result of delayed discharge, whereas today the number of lost bed days is more than 400,000. When I said that, Maureen Watt, the Minister for Public Health, accused me of misleading the Parliament and said that the figures are wrong. Will you allow her to come back to the Parliament tomorrow to correct the record?

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Mr Findlay, that is not a point of order. I have said repeatedly that what members say in the chamber is a matter for them and them alone. The minister is listening to you and, if she indicates that she wishes to speak tomorrow, I will give her the time to do so. She is making no indication that she wishes to do so.

Business Motion

17:32

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-11769, 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 9 December 2014

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Food (Scotland) Bill

followed by Scottish Government Debate: End of Year Fish Negotiations

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.45 pm Decision Time

followed by Members’ Business

Wednesday 10 December 2014

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions
Fair Work, Skills and Training;
Social Justice, Communities and
Pensioners’ Rights

followed by Scottish Conservative and Unionist
Party Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members’ Business

Thursday 11 December 2014

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister’s Questions

followed by Members’ Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Local Government and Regeneration
Committee Debate: Flexibility and
Autonomy in Local Government

followed by Ministerial Statement: Local Government
Finance Settlement 2015-16

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 16 December 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 17 December 2014

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions
 Finance, Constitution and Economy
followed by Scottish Government Business
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Thursday 18 December 2014

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 11.40 am General Questions
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions
followed by Members' Business
 2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Scottish Government Business
followed by Business Motions
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:32

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is consideration of six Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Joe FitzPatrick to move motions S4M-11770 to S4M-11773, on the approval of Scottish statutory instruments; to move motion S4M-11774, on committee membership; and to move motion S4M-11775, on a substitution on a committee.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Criminal Legal Aid (Fixed Payments and Assistance by Way of Representation) (Scotland) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2014 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Marriage Between Civil Partners (Procedure for Change and Fees) (Scotland) Regulations 2014 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) (Jurisdiction and Recognition of Judgments) (Scotland) Regulations 2014 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Scotland Act 1998 (Functions Exercisable in or as Regards Scotland) Order 2015 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Annabel Goldie be appointed to replace Alex Johnstone as a member of the Welfare Reform Committee and

Alex Johnstone be appointed to replace Annabel Goldie as a member of the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that Annabel Goldie be appointed as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Equal Opportunities Committee.—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

The Presiding Officer: The questions on the motions will be put at decision time.

Decision Time

17:33

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): There are nine questions to be put as a result of today's business. I remind members that, in relation to the debate on private sector rent reform, if the amendment in the name of Margaret Burgess is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Alex Johnstone falls.

The first question is, that amendment S4M-11763.3, in the name of Margaret Burgess, which seeks to amend motion S4M-11763, in the name of Mary Fee, on private sector rent reform, 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)
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 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, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 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)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (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)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahan, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahan, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 64, Against 53, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The amendment in the name of Alex Johnstone falls.

The next question is, that motion S4M-11763, in the name of Mary Fee, on private sector rent reform, 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)
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 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, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 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)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (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)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahan, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahan, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 64, Against 53, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

That the Parliament notes that, over the last 10 years, the number of households in the private rented sector has doubled to 368,000; recognises that, in May 2013, the Scottish Government published *A Place To Stay, A Place to Call Home*, which is Scotland's first ever strategy for the private rented sector; welcomes the progress that has been made in implementing the strategy, in particular the publication by the government of the consultation on its plans to improve security of tenure for tenants in the sector while providing appropriate safeguards for landlords, lenders and investors; notes that, in most parts of Scotland, rents rose by less than inflation between 2010 and 2014 and that the consultation invites views on rent levels in the sector; considers that the government's approach to reforming the private rented sector will deliver the outcomes sought by Shelter Scotland's campaign, Make Renting Right; encourages stakeholders from all sides to respond to the government's consultation, and looks forward to stakeholders' views being reflected in the bill to reform private tenancies that the Scottish Government plans to bring forward later in the parliamentary session.

The Presiding Officer: I remind members that, in relation to the debate on the state of the national health service, if the amendment in the name of Shona Robison is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Nanette Milne falls.

The next question is, that amendment S4M-11766.3, in the name of Shona Robison, which seeks to amend motion S4M-11766, in the name of Neil Findlay, on the state of the NHS, 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)
Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)
Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
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, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
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)
White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (Ind)
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)
Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)
Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
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)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Abstentions

Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (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)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (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 65, Against 38, Abstentions 13.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The amendment in the name of Nanette Milne falls.

The next question is, that motion S4M-11766, in the name of Neil Findlay, on the state of the NHS, 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)
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 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, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (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)
 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)
 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)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (Ind)
 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)
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 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)
 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)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Abstentions

Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (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)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (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 67, Against 37, Abstentions 13.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

That the Parliament commends the NHS Scotland staff who work tirelessly under increasing pressure to deliver high quality care to patients; believes that, to give certainty to future health service planning, the NHS revenue budget should rise in real terms for the remainder of the current parliamentary session and the next; welcomes that the protection of the NHS budget in Scotland has seen the health workforce rise to a record high; further welcomes that, in the last year alone, NHS consultant numbers have increased by 6.6%; notes that, while delayed discharges today are significantly lower than they were in 2006, action between the Scottish Government, the NHS and local government is required to reverse recent increases; recognises that the successful integration of health and social care will be key to the delivery of the long-term sustainable solution to delayed discharge, improved patient flow and effective and coordinated care at home, and supports the Scottish Government's aim to work with stakeholders to take forward the continued development of the 2020 vision, as it has in the past, to reflect the increasing demands from patients and the new way that services will be delivered under integration.

The Presiding Officer: I propose to ask a single question on motions S4M-11770 to S4M-11773, on approval of Scottish statutory instruments. Any member who objects to a single question being put should say so now.

As nobody objects, the next question is, that motions S4M-11770 to S4M-11773, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on approval of SSIs, be agreed to.

Motions agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the Criminal Legal Aid (Fixed Payments and Assistance by Way of Representation) (Scotland) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2014 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Marriage Between Civil Partners (Procedure for Change and Fees) (Scotland) Regulations 2014 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) (Jurisdiction and Recognition of Judgments) (Scotland) Regulations 2014 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Scotland Act 1998 (Functions Exercisable in or as Regards Scotland) Order 2015 [draft] be approved.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-11774, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on committee membership, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Annabel Goldie be appointed to replace Alex Johnstone as a member of the Welfare Reform Committee and

Alex Johnstone be appointed to replace Annabel Goldie as a member of the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-11775, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on substitution on committees, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that Annabel Goldie be appointed as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Equal Opportunities Committee.

The Engine Shed and Supported Employment

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S4M-11033, in the name of Sarah Boyack, on the Engine Shed and supported employment. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes with disappointment the announcement by the Edinburgh-based training organisation, the Engine Shed, that it is to cease operation; understands that the organisation, which has offered individuals with learning disabilities a successful transitional work-based training route into paid work with a variety of local employers since 1989, will be wound up over the next six months due to funding pressures; is concerned that the Engine Shed is the latest supported employment project in Edinburgh to cease operation following the recent closures of BlindCraft and Remploy in the city; is further concerned at the reported continuing gap between employment rates for disabled and non-disabled workers in Scotland; acknowledges the role of supported businesses in tackling the barriers that prevent many disabled workers from accessing employment; notes the Scottish Government's policy that every public body should have at least one contract with a supported business; notes with disappointment confirmation in response to freedom of information requests earlier in 2014 indicating that some 44 public authorities, including NHS boards, local authorities and central government organisations, do not meet this policy aim; notes the view that there is a need for a renewed effort to grow the supported employment sector in Scotland and prevent closure of further providers, and wishes the management team at the Engine Shed well as it explores potential alternative avenues for delivering placements to young adults with learning disabilities in order to continue to help them successfully make the transition into paid work with Edinburgh employers.

17:40

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab): First, I thank members from across the chamber for supporting my motion and allowing this important debate to go ahead. For many of my constituents, the issue is hugely important, and I am so pleased that staff, volunteers and trainees and their family members from the Engine Shed are in the public gallery to hear our debate.

For almost 25 years, the Engine Shed has provided work-based training placements for young adults with learning disabilities. Although the Engine Shed is a member of the Scottish Union of Supported Employment, its approach is slightly different: it offers transitional support, providing young people with the opportunity to access training and work experience in an integrated setting.

The Engine Shed operates a cafe, a bakery, a tofu production line and outside catering services. Trainees are taken on for up to three years,

initially working full-time in the business. They then move on to a mixture of work placements with mainstream employers and further training in the Engine Shed before moving into paid employment with a variety of workplaces.

As an MSP, I have been a strong supporter of the Engine Shed's work. I have attended graduation ceremonies and heard first hand from the trainees about the skills and confidence that they have gained from being part of the organisation. I have also heard from many family members who have spoken powerfully about the difference the Engine Shed has made to their loved ones and the opportunities that it has allowed them to pursue.

Unfortunately, in recent times, the organisation, in common with other voluntary organisations, has faced a yearly battle to secure funding. Funding from the council contributes about 40 per cent of the Engine Shed's total income, with the remainder coming from the organisation's social enterprise operations. The value of the Engine Shed's council grant has dropped—it is less now than it was in 2003, so there has been a significant drop in the past decade. The organisation has been looking for ways to maximise its income from its social enterprise projects but, as the Scottish Government has acknowledged, many social enterprises struggle in today's harsh economic climate. I understand that the Scottish Government's third sector unit has been considering the issue, so I hope that the minister will have some positive news for us in his response to the debate.

Earlier this year, following the failure to secure funding beyond March 2015, the Engine Shed's management team took the difficult decision to wind down the operation.

The situation has its roots in the review of employability services in Edinburgh. As part of its work, the review undertook to consider investment in services for job-seeking disabled clients. It found demand for an integrated employability service that would serve people of all disabilities, one-to-one services, greater involvement in the development and delivery of engagement with employers, and a clear desire for the service to ensure paid work opportunities with progression.

From next year, the council is moving to a supported employment model that is consistent with the Scottish Government's supported employment framework. Services will be provided under a single contract, and four of the existing providers of employment services for disabled clients are working together to take forward a consortium for the contract.

Although it is not part of the consortium, the Engine Shed has attempted consistently to

engage those involved to see whether there is an opportunity to retain the unique contribution to support for young adults in learning employment skills that the Engine Shed has provided.

The management team has been looking at alternative funding options and it has worked hard to make the operation more self-sustaining. Therefore, I was concerned at the characterisation that I have received from the council that the Engine Shed had somehow rejected an offer to be part of the process.

We are left with a difficult situation, with the Engine Shed's work simply not able to fit in with the council's place and support-based model. Therefore, it has become no longer financially viable.

I have spoken before in the chamber about the value and importance of supported employment opportunities. The Scottish Government urgently needs to address the fact that 46 per cent of working-age disabled people are employed, compared with 76 per cent of the general working-age population. As Inclusion Scotland notes, only 13 per cent of adults with learning disabilities of working age are in employment.

Moreover, disabled people are more than three times more likely to have been out of work for five years or more than their non-disabled counterparts. There is a real issue here that needs to be addressed. I campaigned against the closure of Edinburgh's Blindcraft and Remploy supported workplaces because I did not want the experience that they offered people with disabilities to go.

The Scottish Government encourages all public bodies to have at least one contract with a supported business. Earlier this year, when we debated the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Bill, Labour MSPs highlighted a freedom of information request that indicated that 44 public authorities, including national health service boards, local authorities and central Government organisations, do not meet that policy aim. There is a real gap between policy objectives and policy delivery.

I whole-heartedly support the ambition of supporting people into mainstream work when that is appropriate, but we need to recognise that some people will need more support than others. The client groups who benefit most from the work of the Engine Shed would not easily be served by the supported employment model that is currently being advocated. Many in those client groups have profound learning disabilities and, at the point at which they are referred, do not have the skills that they would need to get an immediate placement with an employer, regardless of the support that was offered.

Now that the Smith commission has proposed that responsibility for the work choice programme

be devolved to the Scottish Government, I ask the minister to seek to ensure that that new funding stream is devolved to local government. As the Learning Disability Alliance Scotland points out, supported employment for adults with learning disabilities has never had a clear source of funding. There is an urgent need for that to be addressed. I know constituents who have not been able to work since the closure of the Blindcraft and Remploy supported workplaces in Edinburgh.

The Engine Shed has served as an important bridge to the more traditional supported employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities. There is a real danger that, without the dignity that the Engine Shed has given them and the intense support that it has offered, they will lose out and will fall through the cracks in the system.

Let us think about a possible solution. We urgently need the Scottish Government to carry out a review to look at what the position is now, in the absence of opportunities with Remploy, Blindcraft and now the Engine Shed. That review should examine the funding opportunities that exist at a Scottish level. Given the pressure that local authorities are under, there is a real need to review the situation and to come up with an outcomes-based approach. We should not just look at our policy ambitions. We can all sign up to good policy ambitions, but this is an incredibly hard time in terms of employment for disabled people, particularly those with learning disabilities, and we in the Scottish Parliament need to do more to support them.

I look forward to the minister coming up with some new opportunities and new ideas, and perhaps announcing a review to identify where we are. That would give new hope to people who, in the aftermath of the closure of the Engine Shed, will not have opportunities.

17:48

Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP): I congratulate Sarah Boyack on securing this debate on the Engine Shed and supported employment and on what I thought was a very thoughtful and constructive speech. The subject of the debate is an issue of concern to many people in Edinburgh and it is close to my heart, as I am the vice-convenor of the cross-party group on learning disability. I would also like to put on record the proactive work of the constituency member for the Engine Shed, Marco Biagi, who last year had separate meetings with the Scottish Government, council employability staff and the Engine Shed's founder and chief executive officer, Marian MacDonald. Parliamentary protocol prevents Mr Biagi from speaking in the debate, as

he is now a Government minister, but he has joined us for it.

Like Sarah Boyack, I pay tribute to the Engine Shed and to Marian MacDonald for establishing the operation, which for more than 25 years has successfully provided a route into employment for thousands of young adults with learning disabilities by offering training programmes that lead to placements with employers and eventually to paid employment. The skill, expertise and experience of the Engine Shed's workforce has provided a shining example of the strengths of supported businesses in Scotland. The general secretary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress, Grahame Smith, rightly highlighted the importance of supported businesses such as the Engine Shed when he said:

"The value of on-going training, social interaction and mentoring offered to people with disabilities to become more independent, and play an active part in the workplace and their communities, cannot be underestimated."

It has been noted that the City of Edinburgh Council is moving to a new city-wide support service. However, a move to only one model of support surely raises the question of how much choice people with a learning disability will have if only one model is available to them. If that is a so-called results-based model and the provider is paid for each person they support into employment, how do we ensure that people being placed into employment are supported to sustain that employment over time?

Maureen Hope of Edinburgh, who wrote to my colleague Gordon MacDonald MSP, highlighted the importance of choice in supported employment. She stated:

"Choice is vital and the Council's policy simply will not be suitable for the Engine Shed trainees—they need much more help to get to the point where even considering employment becomes appropriate. That being said, they placed 80% of their trainees into employment before the recession and even now, over 60% go into paid jobs, my own son being one of them."

That good record of placing people into sustainable employment would not have been possible without the unique support that the Engine Shed is able to provide.

Ian Hood of the Learning Disability Alliance Scotland has captured the widespread concern that is felt about the council's proposals and what they could mean for the young adults who currently work at the Engine Shed. He stated:

"What the Council wants to do is help young people move straight to work with some support. But not all young people are ready for the workplace. The Engine Shed was helpful for them, they were able to work in a real environment with other people and a lot went on to get jobs afterwards."

It is important to note that there are concerns that withdrawing funding for services such as the Engine Shed in favour of one model of support will simply limit the opportunities that are available to some of the most vulnerable and marginalised members of our society. To be frank, I am not comfortable with that situation and nor should any other member of the Parliament be.

In the past year, more than 10,000 people in Edinburgh have signed an online petition and a further 3,000 have signed a paper petition to keep the Engine Shed open. How does the consultation to which the council is committed relate to the level of public concern that is expressed through those petitions?

The model of supported employment that is in place at the Engine Shed clearly has much to commend it. I would have hoped that the debate would be about how we make that model sustainable rather than casting it aside.

Although I deeply regret the fact that the Engine Shed is to close, I hope that the expertise and knowledge that have been built up during the time that it has been open might eventually form the basis for another scheme of a similar nature. The Engine Shed board is to be commended for seeking new ways of providing vital support for young people with learning disabilities from not only Marco Biagi's constituency but throughout Edinburgh and the Lothians to gain the skills that they need for a lifetime of work.

17:53

Cameron Buchanan (Lothian) (Con): The news that Edinburgh-based training organisation the Engine Shed is to cease operation is sad indeed. Like others, I commend Ms Boyack for bringing the issue to the Parliament for debate.

As I have said before, supported businesses that provide training play a valuable role in tackling unemployment among disabled people, and their role should be enthusiastically supported and applauded. If the Government is to make as much of a contribution to sustainable employment for disabled people as possible, there must be a greater focus on supporting training programmes to help the transition to the mainstream workforce. However, it must also be recognised that, for long-term sustainability, training organisations need to develop sources of funding that are independent of the Government.

Supported businesses in Scotland offer training opportunities for more than 400 individuals every year. It is a crucial role, but it seems that that figure should be increasing, as the approach is widely recognised as the best means by which disabled people can gain employment and start to live independently with a good standard of living.

The chief executive of Remploy, Bob Warner, said:

“There is now an acceptance that disabled people would prefer to work in mainstream employment alongside non-disabled people rather than in sheltered workshops”.

The closure of the Engine Shed is a terrible setback in that regard and I am sure that we would all rather not have such an event happen again. Add to that the reality that recent figures put the employment rate for disabled people in Scotland at just 44.3 per cent and it is clear that much more needs to be done.

The Government should focus its attention on supporting training programmes to help disabled people learn the skills that are needed in the mainstream workforce rather than propping up sheltered employment schemes. Ms Boyack is right to point out that the Government has failed by some margin to meet its own target of every public body having at least one contract with a supported factory or business, with almost 40 per cent of public bodies failing to comply.

That is not the only point to make. The direction, not just the implementation, of policy needs to be reviewed and much improved. Indeed, the Sayce review concluded that

“Government funding should be invested in effective support for individuals, rather than subsidising factory businesses”.

That is precisely what the United Kingdom Government is doing and I hope that Parliament can welcome that.

To effectively support the training model of businesses such as the Engine Shed, we must first recognise the challenges that it and many supported businesses face. As I have said many times before, commercial viability should be welcomed where it is genuinely achieved, yet it is apparent that preferential contracting can shelter some businesses from genuine market forces. That may detract attention from operations such as marketing, product development and, indeed, innovation, which the businesses need in order to increase revenue from product and service sales. Therefore, I will repeat what I have said before—I hope that the operation of all supported businesses will evolve to increasingly include working within market incentives.

Accordingly, I hope that we are not faced again with the sad news of the closure of a training business such as the Engine Shed. Such businesses do great work to bring disabled people closer to full-time employment, which is the object and which can make an invaluable contribution to their wellbeing. Furthermore, I hope that the debate will focus the Government’s attention on facilitating the training-based model of supported employment rather than the sheltered model.

These businesses and, most importantly, their employees or trainees, need stability going forward. Operating in a sustainable and commercial manner with focused Government support should deliver that.

17:57

The Minister for Business, Energy and Tourism (Fergus Ewing): I thank Sarah Boyack for bringing this extremely important debate to Parliament, and I commend her for her speech.

The Scottish Government firmly believes that all people of working age should be encouraged and supported to work when they wish. That applies especially to people who have a disability in respect of our obligations to do everything that we can to facilitate them to find employment, whether it be in supported employment, in supported businesses or elsewhere.

The benefits of having a job, including the respect and the sense of wellbeing that come from being in work, are widely accepted. Many people with disabilities—even those with severe disabilities—can and do choose to work and they work very well indeed.

I have had the opportunity to visit a large number of supported businesses—the Engine Shed is supported employment rather than a supported business. As I have said before in numerous debates on supported businesses, what struck me—I did not know this until I saw it for myself—was the commitment, the effort and the determination of the people in those businesses. Their commitment to the workplace and to their work colleagues was immense and quite forcibly striking.

There was perhaps a greater level of commitment than many people without disabilities display towards the conduct and pursuit of the duties of their work. In some cases, the absentee rate was actually lower, even for people with severe disabilities, than the rate for people who do not have disabilities. Perhaps that was because of the sense that those people had of overcoming their difficulties to show that they could contribute to society in the same way as the rest of us—and perhaps better.

It is quite shocking that the employment rate in Scotland for people with disabilities is at 42 per cent. However, it is even more shocking, as Sarah Boyack mentioned—and as Ian Hood, to whom she referred, commented in an email exchange with me—that the level of employment among those who have learning disabilities is so low in Scotland. Indeed, it is shockingly low.

As a constituency MSP for 15 years, I have observed that certain problems, in relation not only

to employment but to the ability to get proper training and education at school, college and university, are most acute for children, young adults and adults who have learning disabilities. The fight to enable them to obtain access to what others receive as of right has often been enormous, and it has often been sustained at great cost to the parents and other family members who are engaged in it. That has been a uniform characteristic in every single one of the 15 years for which I have been an MSP. I have dealt with individual constituents whose stories I probably cannot—or should not—tell, but I am sure that the territory would be familiar to other members who have represented such constituents for several years.

The difference is frankly shocking. Perhaps the most important thing that we can do is to say collectively, whichever party we are in, that we must address the issues more effectively. We must acknowledge that, although good things are done, we have, together, to do far better in Scotland.

We recognise, as Jim Eadie said, that one size most certainly does not fit all. We must consider that every disabled person is different and that provision for a range of support needs must be in place.

We also recognise that supported employment is a successful model. As Cameron Buchanan said, it provides a good environment to enable many people to flourish, and in some cases—as Sarah Boyack highlighted—it allows them to move into mainstream employment after a period of time. I have seen that happening with supported business. When I visited the Haven premises in Inverness in my constituency, I heard that the proportion of people who move on from those premises to mainstream employment, after receiving training and support to give them the confidence to make that journey, was around 15 per cent. One size does not fit all by any means.

I am a passionate supporter of supported businesses, and I have visited a great many of them in Scotland. There are also other services such as Project SEARCH, which is a six-month work placement and training programme that has had success in helping young people with learning disabilities into work in Scotland and which is now operating in a number of areas, including Edinburgh.

I turn now to the Engine Shed. We have heard moving, eloquent and passionate speeches from all the members who have contributed to the debate. Incidentally—and I do not often say this—it is sad that there are so few members in the chamber tonight. Be that as it may, we have heard from the members who have contributed that the Engine Shed is a social enterprise that has helped

many young people with learning disabilities to gain skills in a real work environment and which has supported them to move on to mainstream paid employment. Sarah Boyack and Jim Eadie described the Engine Shed's work in detail.

Partly because of changes in funding from the City of Edinburgh Council, the company has decided that it will no longer be financially viable and has taken the decision to cease its operation in 2015. I understand that the current position has arisen in part as a result of the council's adoption of the supported employment model, to which Sarah Boyack and Jim Eadie alluded.

We support the development of supported employment services, and we recognise that local government is best placed to implement that approach locally on the ground. As members have said, we are told by the council that the move will enable funding to help around twice the number of disabled people in the city. Given that—as I said—the employment rates for disabled people are so low, any increase in that number is a welcome change.

As has been said, and as Mr Hood has confirmed, the Engine Shed has made strenuous attempts to join the said consortium. Sarah Boyack alluded to the fact that, thus far, those attempts have been unsuccessful, but I hope that the City of Edinburgh Council will consider the matter further. I will ensure that I send a copy of the *Official Report* of the debate to the chief executive of the council, to convey the clearly expressed views of members from across the chamber that the issue should be looked at further if possible.

A range of potential business support is available from Scottish Enterprise and Just Enterprise, which is the Scottish Government's business development service for voluntary bodies and charities. In addition, we have invested £320,000 per annum in the supporting social enterprise alliance, which involves Sencot, Social Firms Scotland and Social Enterprise Scotland and which is an intermediary group that is funded to support the development and growth of social enterprises. We recognise the difficulties that such bodies face in remaining viable.

I understand that the Engine Shed has 13 employees who are at risk of redundancy and that 28 February next year is the expected redundancy date. The Scottish Government's partnership action for continuing employment initiative, which is known as PACE, is dedicated to helping individuals and employers by providing the advice and support that people need when faced with redundancy. PACE services have been offered and I understand that the delivery of support activities by PACE commences this month. A PACE presentation will be delivered onsite by

Skills Development Scotland and Jobcentre Plus advisers on 8 December. Other PACE support services will be on offer, including one-to-one interviews and workshops, at the request of the affected employees.

Jim Eadie: I am grateful that the services of PACE have been made available to the Engine Shed, but will the minister ensure that PACE speaks to Remploy, which has a good record in preparing people with a learning disability for job interviews to give them the confidence and skills that they need when seeking to gain employment in the marketplace?

Fergus Ewing: Yes, I will certainly take up Mr Eadie's suggestion. I think that PACE is probably planning to do so in any event. I have met Remploy and I am aware of the excellent services that it can provide.

In relation to Blindcraft in Edinburgh, of the 26 disabled people who left and sought new jobs, 17 have entered work or education. That is not enough, but it is a significant number. The closure of Remploy in Edinburgh had a huge impact, with only 11 of the 27 who lost their jobs being in work today.

We can all agree that we need to do more in Scotland to assist disabled people in general with employment, whether that is in supported employment or supported businesses. That is one of the most serious challenges in Scotland today; indeed, that was the sentiment that I expressed at the count when I was declared re-elected, because I feel that it is of such importance.

I pledge to do everything that I possibly can, working with Sarah Boyack, Jim Eadie, my ministerial colleague Marco Biagi, who has stayed for the debate, and Cameron Buchanan. Political parties are entirely irrelevant in this matter, which is about doing the right thing by disabled people and using the vast resources of Scotland to do far better. I feel ashamed that we have not been able to do more to get a better outcome. We must do better in future.

Meeting closed at 18:08.

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